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Cabinet lends it support to nuclear new build in Sellafield

Cumbria County Council's cabinet has lent its support to a plan to nominate a site next to Sellafield as a candidate for the next generation of new nuclear power stations in Britain.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) is seeking site nominations at the end of March 2009 for potential candidates for nuclear new build. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has already indicated it will make a nomination for a plot of its land next to the Sellafield site.

West Lakes Renaissance has already commissioned AMEC Nuclear Ltd to collate evidence to demonstrate that the Sellafield site can meet the Government's nomination criteria and is capable of development for new nuclear build before 2025. Several commercial utilities are showing early interest in developing reactors on the plot of land.

At a Cabinet meeting in Carlisle today (February 3) it was agreed that the county council should back a NDA-led Sellafield site nomination without prejudicing future consideration of any specific development proposal that may come forward. Any specific development would require detailed examination and environmental assessment.

Cumbria County Council has already agreed that new nuclear generating capacity should be included in the future UK mix of low carbon energy sources and supports the Britain's Energy Coast Masterplan that envisages new nuclear build as a key contributor to West Cumbria's economic regeneration.

The paper approved by Cabinet makes it clear that resolving the issue of how electricity would be transmitted from a new nuclear power station at Sellafield to the national grid still needs to be resolved. But Cabinet has given its support to Sellafield going forward for consideration by DECC as a nationally favoured site.

A new nuclear reactor would create around 350 permanent skilled jobs as well as creating many thousands of jobs during the construction phase. Current projections from Sellafield say 5,000 jobs could be lost at the site by 2020, with the workforce decreasing from 12,000 to 7,000 as part of the ongoing decommissioning programme.

Cllr Tim Knowles, Cumbria County Council's cabinet member responsible for nuclear issues, said:

"Sellafield must be a clear candidate for the next generation of nuclear power stations. It makes sense for Cumbria because the nuclear industry is already well embedded in communities here and the skills exist in the workforce to make it happen should a developer step forward.

"It's important that we keep as many high value jobs as possible within Britain's Energy Coast. The ongoing industrial action over the use of overseas workers here in the UK reaffirms just how crucial jobs in this sector are right now. A new nuclear reactor at Sellafield would bring substantial investment into the area and reaffirm West Cumbria's position as the home of Britain's nuclear industry."

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