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Council welcomes Sellafield's inclusion on list for new nuclear build

Cumbria County Council's Cabinet member for nuclear issues has welcomed the news that Sellafield has been confirmed as one of eight sites in the UK that has been deemed suitable as a location for a new generation of nuclear power stations to be built by 2025.

The Department for Energy and Climate Change today published a series of national policy statements on future energy provision following a public consultation. The National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation named Sellafield as a suitable place to build a new nuclear power station. All eight UK sites approved by DECC are already adjacent to existing nuclear sites. The statements will now be debated in Parliament.

A new site would represent a multi-billion pound investment for West Cumbria. It is estimated that a new power station at Sellafield would bring approximately 800 permanent jobs, on top of 5,000 construction workers and an extra 1,000 staff when engineering shutdowns take place.

The DECC policy statement said about Sellafield: 'The fact that this site is adjacent to the existing Sellafield facilities and its location in West Cumbria will give it access to a qualified workforce and associated technical support. There is also strategic support for energy infrastructure in the region.'

The site also passes all the necessary criteria in factors such as proximity to military activities and flight paths, flood risk and sea level rise, coastal erosion, ecological sites, landscape and cultural heritage, site size and access to suitable sources of cooling.

Cumbria County Council first responded to the draft National Policy Statements in February 2010, when it said that Sellafield should be the preferred site in the county to build one of the next generation of nuclear power stations as there was a compelling argument there in terms of job creation and tapping into the existing nuclear skills base in the community in West Cumbria. The council also said that proposed sites at Kirksanton and Braystones would be unsuitable because "it is not convinced at either site that the benefits of development would outweigh the costs". In October 2010, DECC confirmed that Kirksanton and Braystones were unsuitable because of doubts about their ability to contribute to new nuclear capacity before 2025 and concerns about the visual impact on the Lake District National Park.

Today's statement also confirmed that the Government is satisfied that geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste, including waste from new nuclear power stations, is technically achievable and that a suitable site can be identified for the geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste which would meet regulatory approval. Safe, secure and environmentally acceptable interim storage arrangements will be available until a geological disposal facility can accept the waste.

Cllr Tim Knowles, Cumbria County Council's Cabinet member responsible for environment, said:

"I'm delighted that Sellafield has been confirmed as a suitable site for nuclear new build. The National Policy Statements will play a vital role in informing future planning decisions and West Cumbria is now right in the running for potentially billions of pounds worth of future investment, which will seal its position as being at the heart of Britain's nuclear industry and becoming a major platform for low carbon energy investment."

ENDS

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