

Government 'considering' extending Hinkley Point B to protect UK electric

The business secretary is considering whether to extend electricity generation at Hinkley Point B power station in Somerset to guard against potentially depleted gas supplies, a government minister has suggested.

Culture minister Chris Philp said Kwasi Kwarteng had taken some "precautionary measures" last week, amid reports that plans have been drawn up to ration electricity in the UK, if European supply issues continue to deteriorate in the winter.

Mr Philp told Times Radio Mr Kwarteng had asked the country's three remaining coal-fired power station operators to keep their power stations available, beyond the point of which they were due to be shut down.

He added that he was also deliberating on whether Hinkley Point B "might continue beyond its planned end of life as well", to prevent a possible "worst case scenario".

Mr Philp said: "That's a sensible precautionary measure, given that gas supply coming out of Russia and Ukraine is for obvious reasons, so heavily disrupted and we do of course, use quite a lot of gas to generate electricity.

"Only a very small proportion of that, of course, comes from Russia. A lot of ours comes from Norway and in the form of liquefied natural gas but of course, disruption to the global gas market will have a knock-on effect that may affect the gas that we consumed domestically in the United Kingdom.

"So, I think these are just sensible precautionary measures, just to guard against a potential worst-case scenario."

An EDF spokesperson said: “We understand speculation around the future of Hinkley Point B however the power station is due to stop generating this summer, after 46 years of safe and reliable output.

“This is a decision that was taken in November 2020, prior to the energy crisis. We recognise that nuclear power has an important role in enabling the UK’s energy security and net zero goals. Nonetheless, EDF would only consider delaying decommissioning if formally asked by Government and with the approval of the independent nuclear regulator.”

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The French energy giant previously announced the nuclear plant would stop generating electricity and move into the first stage of decommissioning no later than July 2022.

The facility near Bridgwater, on the same site as the under construction Hinkley Point C plant, was the first advanced gas-cooled reactor to generate electricity to the grid in the UK.

It started generating electricity in 1976 and since then has produced more than 300 terawatt hours of power – an amount of energy that would meet the electricity requirements of every home in the UK for three years.

The plant currently employs 535 full-time EDF staff, as well as 220 full-time contract partners. In March, staff and apprentices from Hinkley Point B [met with the Prime Minister](#) to discuss the future of nuclear power.

In 2012, EDF extended the estimated generating life of Hinkley Point B by seven years from 2016 to March 2023, more than 15 years later than originally planned in the 1960s.

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