

Hinkley Point B turned off after more than 46 years

Somerset power station Hinkley Point B has been shut off for good after more than 46 years. The nuclear plant, near Bridgwater, closed off its second reactor at 10am on Monday (August 1).

French energy giant EDF, which owns the plant, originally planned to stop generating power from the station in 2016, but announced in 2012 it could continue safely until 2022.

Hinkley Point B was first synchronised to the UK electricity grid in February 1976 and since then has generated 311 Terrawatt hours (TWh) of electricity – enough to meet the needs of every home in the South West for 33 years, according to EDF.

The station employs some 500 staff and 250 contractors, and contributes around £40m a year to the Somerset economy.

“This is a day of mixed emotions for all of us. We are justifiably proud of everything this station and its workforce have given to Somerset, and indeed the country, over decades of operations,” said Mike Davies, station director of Hinkley Point B.

“This tiny corner of Somerset has produced huge amounts of zero-carbon electricity, supported and enriched our community and helped sustain the South West nuclear sector by providing thousands well-paid, high-skilled jobs to our community.”



Hinkley Point B's station director Mike Davies
(Image: 'Fototek' Geoff and Tordis Pagotto)

Teams at Hinkley Point B will now undertake major maintenance and improvement projects across the plant to get it ready for the next stage of its life – defueling.

The process, expected to last around three to four years, involves removing the remaining nuclear fuel from the reactors and transporting it to Sellafield for storage. Once the work is complete, EDF will hand the station to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority for decommissioning.

The government's decision to close Hinkley Point B has come under criticism from some industry insiders, who claim that reducing the UK's reliance on nuclear power could increase the strain on electricity supplies this winter.

Neighbouring plant Hinkley Point C, also owned by EDF, is [not expected to be up and running until 2027](#) – a year later than originally planned.

An industry source told the *i newspaper* : “This was a huge missed opportunity for the UK government to secure extra power supplies this winter. We’re facing an unprecedented crisis, so we really should have thoroughly examined and exhausted every option we had. Hinkley Point B was right there – clean, reliable and British, and it had another winter in her.”

However, EDF [ruled out extending electricity generation](#) at Hinkley Point B in May after a government minister suggested it could be a “sensible precautionary measure” to guard against potentially depleted gas supplies.

EDF told *BusinessLive* while it understood the speculation around Hinkley Point B’s future, it was not planning to delay defueling. It said it would only consider doing so if “formally asked by government” and with the approval of the independent nuclear regulator.

A government spokesperson said: “Any extensions to operational dates of nuclear stations is entirely a matter for the operator and the independent regulator based on safety considerations. The government has no direct involvement in this process.”

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