

Hinkley Point C proposes changes to way radioactive waste is stored

Hinkley Point C nuclear power station in Somerset is proposing changes to the way it stores radioactive waste.

The Environment Agency launched a consultation on Monday (July 18) following the proposals by the plant, which is being built by French energy giant EDF.

Pressurised water reactors at Hinkley Point C, which is based near Bridgwater, will use uranium fuel to create heat and generate electricity when operating. Once used within the reactor, nuclear fuel will be stored on-site before being sent off-site to a geological disposal facility (GDF).

Hinkley was first issued a radioactive substances environmental permit in 2013. Under the original plans, radioactive waste was to be stored on-site in 'wet storage' – a method of submerging and storing in water.

The plant has now decided to change the technology by which it will store spent nuclear fuel – from wet to 'dry'. Dry storage will see used nuclear fuel stored in sealed containers within a facility, before it is sent to the GDF.

According to bosses at Hinkley point, altering the storage method will not change the expected radiation dose to the general public from discharges or the wider environment, which the environment agency said remained "incredibly small".

However, it means Hinkley will need to change its radioactive substances environmental permit. It will be seeking the necessary changes to its Development Consent Order for Hinkley Point C in the autumn.

The Environment Agency has now launched a four-week public consultation on the application, which is available to view via the agency's website.

The consultation closes at 23.59 on Sunday, August 14. After the consultation ends, all comments made during consultation will be considered before a final decision is published in September 2022.

In May, Hinkley confirmed it would begin [operating a year later than planned](#) and could cost up to £3bn more to build than originally budgeted. EDF announced the findings following a [review](#) of the project.

A [previous estimate in January 2021](#) revised costs up by £500m to between £22bn and £23bn, with bosses at Hinkley Point C saying there had now been a budget increase of £3bn. Full construction of Hinkley Point C [began in 2016](#). It was originally estimated the project would cost £18bn to build.

EDF said the plant was now needed "more than ever", with the firm saying its "reliable" electricity could help the UK to move away from reliance on gas, which it said was driving up record energy bills and contributing to climate change.

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