

Consultation on National Policy Statements

Nuclear Power Stations



What is Planning Aid?

Planning Aid offers people the opportunity to get involved in the development of their local areas. We provide free and independent professional planning advice to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. We work with communities to help them understand and play a role in the planning process. We are an independent source of advice and information on planning issues, not part of central or local government.

The new planning process for nationally significant infrastructure

The 2008 Planning Act introduced a new planning system for applications to build nationally significant infrastructure facilities in England and Wales. The new system covers applications for major energy generation, railways, ports, major roads, airports and water and waste infrastructure. Under the new system, national policy on infrastructure will be set out in a series of new National Policy Statements (NPS) which can be reviewed by the Secretary of State if there is a change in circumstances. A new independent body, the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), will examine and decide applications for new infrastructure development, using the criteria on national need, benefits and impacts set out in the NPS, and consideration of evidence put forward on potential local effects.

Why should I get involved in the debate on National Policy Statements?

In autumn 2009 the Government published the first set of draft National Policy Statements (NPS) for public consultation. It is important to make your views known because once finalised the NPS will provide the framework for future decisions by the IPC on individual applications. Issues relating to the need for a specific type of infrastructure will not be debated again. Each NPS will be accompanied by an Appraisal of Sustainability on which comments are also invited. Except for the NPS on nuclear power stations and airports, specific locations for infrastructure are not identified although criteria may guide developers to appropriate types of area.

Nuclear Power Stations

This NPS covers applications for new nuclear power stations and together with the Overarching Energy Infrastructure Policy NPS will form the basis for decisions by the IPC. The NPS establishes the need for new nuclear power stations, the locations considered to be potentially suitable, likely impacts which could result and measures which a developer will be expected to take into account to reduce adverse impacts.

In 2008, the Government decided that nuclear power stations should have a role to play in the future energy mix. Currently

there are 10 nuclear power stations in the UK, providing around 13% of the electricity supply and all but one of these will close by 2023. The Government expects the first nuclear power station to be operational from around 2018, and that by 2025 nuclear electricity generation could potentially amount to around 40% of the new energy provision.

The Overarching Energy Infrastructure Policy NPS (see separate leaflet) sets out the national need for the different types of energy infrastructure required over the next 10 – 15 years if the nation is to be able to reduce emissions, ensure security of energy supply, expand grid capacity, keep costs down and contribute to sustainable development. It also sets out

five key principles which will guide the IPC when deciding applications, these are:

- If the development contributes to meeting the need and is in accordance with the NPS, then consent should be given;
- Regard should be had to local impact reports (produced by local authorities) and other matters considered relevant and important;
- National, regional and local benefits (environmental, social and economic) should be taken account of;
- Adverse impacts should be considered, longer term and cumulative impacts, and proposed mitigation; and
- If the IPC considers that the adverse impacts (after mitigation) outweigh the benefits, then consent should be refused.

In the event of a conflict with existing planning policy, the NPS will be followed. The Overarching Energy Infrastructure Policy NPS must be read together with this technology specific NPS.

Earlier in 2009 eleven sites were put forward by energy companies as locations for new nuclear power stations. The Government undertook a Strategic Siting Assessment, assessing sites against a range of criteria, and considers ten of these sites to be potentially suitable. The NPS consultation is seeking views on all these sites and there is no hierarchy in terms of potential locations. The sites are:

- Bradwell in Essex;
- Braystones in Cumbria;
- Hartlepool in Cleveland;
- Heysham in Lancashire;
- Hinkley Point in Somerset;
- Kirkstanton in Cumbria;
- Oldbury in Gloucestershire;
- Sellafeld in Cumbria;
- Sizewell in Suffolk; and
- Wylfa in Anglesey

Dungeness in Kent is not included in the list of ten sites due to concerns relating to coastal erosion and associated flood risk. Three further potential sites were also investigated, but



found not to be suitable and as such are not listed in the draft NPS. The evidence to support these decisions is included in the NPS and views are invited.

The NPS sets out the Government's view on the management and disposal of radioactive waste and considers that effective arrangements will exist to manage and dispose of waste, and is satisfied that spent fuel and high radioactive waste from new build is expected to be disposable. Decommissioning can take 30 years and the IPC will need to be satisfied that funding is in place to cover the full costs of this and any share of waste management and disposal costs.

Operators will be required to obtain authorisations from, and comply with conditions set by, the regulators to ensure safety and protection. In addition security measures will need to be included in any plans. The Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency are currently assessing the suitability of two different designs for use in the UK.

Further information on the consultation process, the questions on which comments are sought, related events, the draft NPS and the supporting documentation is available on the Department for Energy and Climate Change website www.energynpsconsultation.decc.gov.uk. Welsh language, Braille and large print copies are available on request. Responses can be submitted online, by letter, fax or email. The consultation will close on 22 February 2010.



Contact Details

You can call the Planning Aid NPS advice line for independent advice. Initially advice will be given to all. If your enquiry is more complex and meets our eligibility criteria, you will be assisted by a qualified planning advisor or volunteer. If you can afford to pay, you will be referred to a planning consultant.

Planning Aid on 0121 214 2915 or
www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Planning Aid for London on 020 7247 4900 or
www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk

Planning Aid for Wales on 02920 485765 or
www.planningaidwales.org.uk

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