Delivering New Nuclear Build

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Background information and context

The construction of the new nuclear power plant Hinkley Point C (HPC), will require a workforce on-site that at its peak will reach 5,600 and will incorporate at least 25,000 individual roles over the course of the project. Due to the sheer scale of HPC, the supply chain will need to supplement the UK based workforce with skilled labour from other countries in order to meet the demands of the project.

Recent data collected in the UK by the Office for National Statistics and the CITB indicate that approximately 12-15% of total UK construction labour comes from inward migration.

On the French Flamanville nuclear new build project, approximately 30% of the workforce have been non-French nationals. If the proportion is similar for the first UK new nuclear project (HPC) this equates to 7,500 roles.

EDF Energy, working with the UK government, is committed and determined to improve the UK skills base and to inspire a new generation of indigenous workers. Comprehensive workforce planning is in place that looks at balancing the supply and demand of key skills, quickly identifying pinch points and where investment is required. Notwithstanding this effort and resource input, it is inevitable that the UK workforce will need to be supplemented by overseas support (from the EU and the rest of the world).

The primary issue that drives demand for non-UK workers is the requirement for niche or specialist skills. Welding, fabrication, installation and commissioning of nuclear power station components are niche specialist skills that are predominantly sourced and supplied through international Joint Ventures that have been specifically created to deliver the knowledge and expertise necessary to build new nuclear power plants.

Impact of withdrawal from Euratom

The Euratom Treaty provides for the free movement of workers in the nuclear industry, including express provision for the free movement of anyone involved in the construction of a new nuclear power station. Continued UK membership of Euratom would therefore have enabled the continued movement of skilled workers needed in the nuclear industry.

A tangible example of the potential problems that could arise is the need for steel fixers. The HPC project estimates that the supply chain will need to provide 1,400 steel fixers at the peak of the HPC civils construction phase. There are only 2,700 registered and certified steel fixers in the UK and this is an ageing population (average age 57). HPC will be competing with the other major infrastructure projects in the UK for these individuals.

Any position or system that puts barriers in the way of attracting, recruiting or retaining talent will be detrimental. A geographically and demographically diverse workforce will be essential in the delivery of HPC and other new nuclear build projects in the UK and across Europe, safely, on time, to budget and the highest standards of quality.

KEY MESSAGES

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