

Hinkley Point new nuclear power plant: the story so far

As EDF Energy says a decision on building reactors at Hinkley Point in Somerset is still months off, the Telegraph charts the long history of plans for the UK's first new nuclear plant in a generation.

By Emily Gosden, Energy Editor

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November 2005: Tony Blair, the then-Prime Minister, announces a review into UK energy policy that will consider development of new nuclear power stations.

May 2006: Blair backs new nuclear, saying the replacement of Britain's existing nuclear plants is "back on the agenda with vengeance" and that failing to take action would be a "dereliction of duty".

July 2006: Government's energy review gives **formal go-ahead for new generation of nuclear power plants** that it says can make a "significant contribution" to securing Britain's energy needs. Alistair Darling, then-Industry Secretary, says it will be up to the private sector to "initiate, fund, construct and operate" the nuclear plants.

February 2007: French nuclear energy giant EDF says it hopes to build Britain's first new nuclear power plant in a generation in time to provide electricity for Britons to cook their Christmas turkeys in 2017.

"EDF will turn on its first nuclear plant in Britain before Christmas 2017 because it will be the right time," Vincent de Rivaz, chief executive of UK division EDF Energy says. "It is the moment of the power crunch. Without it the lights will go out."





Meanwhile, the push for new nuclear suffers an early setback as **Greenpeace wins a High Court challenge against ministers' decision to give the go-ahead**. The court rules that consultation on the decision was "seriously flawed" and the Government is forced to reconsult on the plans.

August 2007: EDF Energy and Areva submit their power plant design, the EPR, to begin safety checks by regulators.

January 2008: New nuclear gets formal backing from the Government. John Hutton, then-Business Secretary, says he hopes the first new plant will be completed "well before 2020".

September 2008: EDF buys British Energy, owner of Britain's existing nuclear power plants, for £12.5 billion and unveils plans to build four new nuclear reactors in the UK.

October 2008: EDF begins consultation with local residents about building a new nuclear plant adjacent to the existing Hinkley Point B power plant in Somerset.



March 2009: Hinkley Point C in Somerset is officially nominated as a potential site for a new nuclear power station by the Government.

May 2009: British Gas owner Centrica takes 20 per cent stake in EDF's UK nuclear fleet and acquires option for 20 per cent stake in new nuclear plants.

October 2010: Coalition Government confirms **Hinkley Point as one of eight sites approved for new nuclear.**

November 2010: EDF is forced to defend its environmental record as it **relocates a colony of badgers off the land earmarked for Hinkley Point.**



February 2011: Mr de Rivaz says 2011 must be a "year of delivery" for new nuclear and that **Hinkley Point can be ready in 2018 if the Government moves quickly to introduce "market reform"** - in practice, new subsidies.

March 2011: Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant is badly damaged by earthquake and tsunami, leading to a meltdown and explosions. Chris Huhne, the UK's energy secretary, **commissions an urgent review into the safety of proposals for new nuclear in the UK.**

The Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency say their assessment of the proposed new reactor designs will be delayed as a result.





May 2011: Review by **Mike Weightman** concludes **Britain's strategy of new nuclear plants can proceed** but puts forward a series of recommendations to adapt the safety approval process in light of the Fukushima disaster.

October 2011: EDF submits 55,000-page planning application for Hinkley Point C to the Planning Inspectorate. **Mr de Rivaz** sets a **target of the end of 2012** to take a final investment decision on the project.



December 2011: Government admits the first new reactor **will now not be built until 2019**.

February 2012: Initial preparatory works begin at the Somerset site.

May 2012: Ed Davey, the Energy Secretary, confirms that talks have begun with EDF over the terms of subsidies for Hinkley.

Under Government plans EDF will receive a fixed "strike price", guaranteeing it a certain price for each unit of power the new plant generates - irrespective of the market price. The difference between the market price and the guaranteed price will be "topped up" with subsidies paid for by energy consumers.

August 2012: Vincent de Rivaz, EDF Energy chief, confirms he wants a deal by the end of 2012. **He says the company is also "opening the search" for more investors to join the project, but denies this is because Centrica is rumoured to be considering quitting.**



December 2012: EDF's reactor design gets safety approval, while **Mr de Rivaz admits the company will not take final investment decision** by the end of the year.

February 2013: British Gas owner **Centrica pulls out of new nuclear plans**, citing spiralling costs and delays. Nick Luff, Centrica finance director, says: "I'm sure EDF are very confident in their cost predictions and their timetables... We still think there is uncertainty."



March 2013: Talks over



subsidies stall as the Treasury intervenes in price negotiations with an offer well below level EDF was seeking.

EDF begins laying off staff at Hinkley Point C while **chief executive Vincent de Rivaz** warns staff the negotiations

are at a "critical" stage and "very challenging".

Meanwhile planning permission for Hinkley is granted by Ed Davey, the Energy Secretary.



July 2013: EDF group chief executive Henri Proglio says it expects to take a decision on building Hinkley Point by the end of the year.

October 2013: Government announces provisional agreement of deal with EDF Energy over subsidies for the project, the cost of which is revealed to have reached £16 billion.

The Government agrees EDF should receive a guaranteed a price of £92.50 – twice the current market price of electricity - for each megawatt-hour of power that the reactors

generate over a 35-year period.

The subsidies, which are heavily criticised by some, will be funded through levies on all consumer energy bills.

EDF says it plans to retain a 45pc to 50pc stake in the project. Reactor-maker Areva will take 10pc, Chinese groups China General Nuclear Corporation and China National Nuclear Corporation will take a combined 35pc to 40pc stake, and other parties will take up to 15pc.

EDF says that Hinkley will now not produce its first power until 2023, subject to taking a final investment decision in July 2014.

"In 2023, this project will arrive exactly when the country will need it," Vincent de Rivaz says.

David Cameron hails the agreement as "a very big day for our country: the first time we've built a new nuclear power station for a very long time".

December 2013: EC launches state aid investigation into the subsidies for the project, which it says **could reach £17bn and may be unnecessary.**

March 2014: EDF admits its **July deadline for taking a decision will not be met** as the EU investigation drags on.

May 2014: EDF begins the second stage of preparatory works at the site including building roundabouts and construction roads.

September 2014: **Austria vows it will bring a legal challenge** against any decision by the EU to approve Hinkley Point.

October 2014: EC gives state aid approval for the project and says the plant will in fact cost £24.5 billion.

December 2014: EDF says it wants to take a decision by the end of March 2015.

February 2015: EDF appears to abandon the March deadline, saying only that **a final**

investment decision is "possible in the next few months" and warning of long list of outstanding issues including agreeing deals with the Government and with investors.

"We are in the final phase of negotiations, but that phase can take a considerable amount of time, depending on the number of problems left to resolve," Jean-Bernard Levy, EDF group chief executive, says.

March 2015: Amid deepening financial difficulties at Areva, **EDF says the reactor-maker taking a 10pc stake is "not existential" to Hinkley.**

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