However the final investment decision on building the plant is not due till next year and it is by no means certain that the decision will be made to go ahead. This is because of problems with financing the project. The project is currently owned 20% by Chinese state company CGN and 80% by the French largely state-owned company, Electricité de France (EDF), now to be fully nationalised (see below). In September 2021 it was announced that CGN was to be "forced" to relinquish its stake in Sizewell C. This doesn't seem to have yet happened, presumably as no investor has come forward to buy the stake. EDF, for its part, has for some years been trying to find investors to take over a large part of its stake in the project but so far with no success.

The problem is that investors have shown a great reluctance to invest in UK nuclear projects, given the history of years of failure to build nuclear power reactors in a reasonable time and on budget.

Also, investors in building nuclear power stations would only see a return on their investment if and when the power station started selling its electricity, and this could take 10 years or more. The government is introducing a plan for new nuclear power stations where the risk is moved from investors to electricity consumers. This is by adding an extra charge to consumer's electricity bills to pay for the expense of building the power stations *while they are in construction*. This would mean larger electricity bills during this period with no guarantee that the nuclear power station in question would ever go into operation.

The government has also recently invested £100,000 in the project, hoping to stimulate interest among energy companies in also investing. To present there seems little evidence that these two measures have attracted any new investors.

With this background, Boris Johnson's recently announced "plan" for eight new nuclear power stations in the UK seems unlikely to ever be achieved. (Thatcher when PM also planned for eight new nuclear power stations to be built, but only one, Sizewell B, was, opening in 1997; in 2010 another eight nuclear power stations were planned, but only one of these, Hinkley C, has ever even started construction.)

HINKLEY B TO CLOSE DOWN

Meanwhile it has been announced the old 2-reactor Hinkley Point B "Advanced gas-cooled reactor" (AGR) station is to stop generating electricity for good on August 1st this year. This is the third 2-reactor AGR which has closed down in the last five years, leaving just five 2-reqct0r AGRs operating, all due to close down by 2028, and one 1-reactor Pressurised Water Reactor at Sizewell B.

It also means that there will be no nuclear electricity generated in the south-west of Britain for at least five years, or longer if Hinkley Point C fails to come on line on the currently predicted date of summer 2027.

There will be a celebration of the closure of Hinkley B at Hinkley Point on 1st August, from 10am to 2pm. There will be a demonstration on the approach road to the power station, highlighting the long-term nuclear waste legacy from the power station, with a banner and people wearing mock nuclear waste barrels. There will also be speakers.

CAN NUCLEAR ENERGY BE GREEN?

The European Parliament in its wisdom in early July voted to agree "that some gas and nuclear projects could be included in the EU taxonomy of environmentally sustainable economic activities, subject to certain conditions", as had been proposed by the European Commission.

The conditions however make nonsense of the claim of "environmental sustainability". In the case of gas, the condition for a sustainable investment is that "the same energy capacity cannot be guaranteed with renewable sources". But this seems to simply mean that if we can't get enough energy from renewables, then somehow getting energy from oil magically becomes environmentally sustainable whereas it hadn't been before.

In the case of nuclear energy the only condition seems to be that the radioactive waste is dealt with.

This ignores the enormous contribution to global warming caused by the mining of uranium ore, the extraction of the uranium and its enrichment to the concentration required for use in nuclear power stations, its transport to power stations, the building and eventual dismantlement of power stations and the building and maintenance of storage facilities for the safe storage over thousands of years of the highly-radioactive waste produced by the power stations and transport to these storage facilities.

In any case, the sole condition itself cannot currently be met as there is no satisfactory method of storing such waste.

In this country the plan is for this waste to be stored deep underground for 100 years or more when the waste will have cooled down sufficiently and the waste facility has been built. However, not even a site for such a facility has yet been found.

Such a method is the one generally preferred in theory world-wide, but it seems only Finland so far has actually started building such a deep storage facility, one that it says will store radioactive waste for 100,000 years. It began building in May 2021, with a predicted completion date of 2024.

In the vote in the European parliament, 282 MEPs did vote for an amendment against the inclusion of oil and nuclear in EUs list of "environmentally sustainable economic activities, but this fell short of the 353 votes required to pass the amendment.

FRANCE TO RE-NATIONALISE EDF

The new French Prime Minister, Elisabeth Borne announced to the French parliament on the 6th July that France was to renationalise the French energy company EDF (Electricité de France). Since the French state already has an 84% stake in EDF this will involve buying out the other 16%, for which France is proposing to pay €8bn.

Why now? The reasons given by Borne were for the government to have full control over France's electricity production and performance, in particular to have control over energy prices which as elsewhere are rocketing in response to the Russian war on Ukraine and consequent fuel embargoes.

EDF is one of the world's biggest nuclear, energy companies, but is heavily indebted largely through long delays and large budget overruns in building French-designed European Pressurised Reactors in Finland, the UK, China and France itself.

It also is suffering the cost of trying to maintain in operation in both France and the UK an ageing fleet of nuclear reactors. Indeed in France as many as 12 reactors are currently requiring to be taken off-line for maintenance, refuelling and repairs.

Under these circumstances, if EDF is to carry out the French government's plan announced in February to build six new EPRs in France and to launch studies for the construction of another eight by 2050, the French government clearly sees it necessary to take full control of the company.

KICK NUCLEAR

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The monthly newsletter of Kick Nuclear and the Nuclear Trains Action Group (NTAG)

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We hold **"Remember Fukushima – End Nuclear Power" vigils** in London **on the 2nd and last Fridays of each month,** from 11am to 12.30pm outside the Japanese Embassy at 101-104 Piccadilly W1, followed by from 1 to 1.30pm outside the offices of the Tokyo Electric Power Company at Marlborough Court, 14-18 Holborn WC1.

All anti-nuclear people are invited to join us.

SIZEWELL C GIVEN GO-AHEAD

On July 20th, UK business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng announced that the

Artist's impression of Sizewell C. Note proximity of sea. Minsmere Nature Reserve is close to the right of this area.

Government has given planning consent for the construction of the £20bn Sizewell C nuclear power station in Suffolk. In doing so he rejected the advice of the Planning Inspectorate who had opposed the scheme because of concerns over the station's impact on protected species and habitats in the nearby Minsmere nature reserve and the long-term problem of providing d sufficient water supply at the station.