

Overhaul of nuclear system to speed up building and cut costs

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Plan to overhaul nuclear system will speed up building, strengthen national and energy security, and cut costs.

- Government overhauls nuclear planning and regulation to deliver golden age of nuclear and boost UK energy sovereignty
- streamlining regulation to simplify the building of new nuclear projects whilst ensuring better environmental outcomes
- drive for clean power essential to get the UK off dependence on volatile fossil fuel markets and onto clean homegrown power controlled in Britain

The government is today outlining its comprehensive plans to speed up nuclear delivery after the independent Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce led by John Fingleton found an “overly complex” and “bureaucratic” system that favoured process over safe outcomes has held back the industry. The government is delivering reforms in a way that produces a win-win for building critical infrastructure while protecting nature and the environment.

The government is implementing the review’s recommendations, with all reforms expected to be completed by the end of 2027. These reforms could help speed up other types of infrastructure, such as looking at whether reforms to judicial reviews could apply to other major planning regimes.

The core of the plan is a move towards smarter regulation: proportionate, focused on real risk, rooted in evidence, and designed to effectively protect nature and biodiversity. This plan will support safe, cost effective, and rapid delivery across the entire civil and defence nuclear enterprise. The plan is expected to reduce the cost and timeframe of delivering new civil and defence nuclear projects, without compromising safety and environmental protections.

As part of its clean energy superpower mission and Industrial Strategy, the government is delivering a golden age of nuclear - greenlighting Sizewell C on the Suffolk coast which will support 17,000 jobs nationwide at peak construction, progressing Hinkley Point C in Somerset, backing the UK’s first small modular reactors at Wylfa in North Wales, and paving the way for further projects across the country with international partners.

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband said:

I am grateful to John Fingleton for his landmark review, and the government is today publishing our implementation plan to deliver his reforms.

As the current Middle East conflict shows, we need to go further and faster to build the clean energy we need to get off volatile fossil fuel markets and deliver energy security for our country.

A crucial part of this is ensuring that we speed up the building of infrastructure in a way that reduces costs as well as delivering better outcomes for nature.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, said:

To build national resilience, drive energy security and deliver economic growth, we need nuclear. That's why we're overhauling the system, getting rid of duplicative or overly complex guidance, rules and regulations that have been holding back our nuclear ambitions.

In a new era of global uncertainty, this government's economic plan is the right one. Through stability, investment, and reform we are building a stronger and more secure economy.

Defence Secretary John Healey said:

In this new era for defence, our nuclear weapons deter the most extreme threats to national security, sending the ultimate warning to anyone who seeks to do us harm. I am proud of all those working in our nuclear sector who play such a vital part in keeping Britain secure, and proud of this government's increased investment into defence nuclear.

Our triple lock shows that our commitment to operate, sustain, and renew our nuclear deterrent is total and these reforms will enable us to accelerate our work, supporting tens of thousands of skilled jobs and driving growth in every corner of the nation.

Our deterrent is deployed every minute of every day to protect our nation, our allies and way of life. It is a truly national endeavour that has existed for over 60 years – the bedrock of our nation's defence and the cornerstone of our commitment to NATO and global security.

To further unlock innovation in Britain's nuclear industry, over 500 doctoral students will be trained at universities across the country over 4 annual intakes, quadrupling today's intake of nuclear PhDs.

Government is backing 7 research programmes with £65.6 million new funding, delivered by UK Research and Innovation, from University of Bangor in North Wales to the University of Glasgow in Scotland to Imperial College London, investing in the next generation of scientists and engineers to support the clean energy mission and the nuclear deterrent.

The funding, which will be matched by industry partners, will support cutting-edge research such as advanced nuclear reactor components, nuclear waste disposal, innovative nuclear fuels and materials, and research of critical importance to national security and keeping the UK safe.

Meanwhile the Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE) – the partnership of organisations that operate, renew, and maintain the UK's nuclear deterrent – is projected to support 65,000 highly skilled, well-paid jobs by 2030, and depends on precisely the kind of sovereign technical talent this funding will develop.

The government is also constructing 4 new Dreadnought-class submarines that will deliver the next generation of the UK's independent nuclear deterrent, the replacement of the nuclear warhead, and major upgrades and investments across defence nuclear industrial sites and naval bases.

Mike Finnerty, Chief Nuclear Inspector and Chief Executive of the Office for Nuclear Regulation, said:

We welcome the government's acceptance of the Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce's recommendations and its plan to implement them.

As an enabling regulator, we look forward to working in close partnership with the government, industry and all stakeholders to drive forward the cultural and practical changes needed to safely deliver nuclear projects more efficiently and effectively in support of the country's clean energy goals.

We embrace this new era with ambition and purpose while maintaining our cornerstone principles of upholding the safety and security of workers and the public, which is at the heart of everything we do.

Andy Mayall, Deputy Director of Nuclear and Radioactive Substances Regulation Strategy at the Environment Agency, said:

We support the ambition to deliver a stronger and more streamlined regulatory framework and have been advising the government as it assessed the Nuclear Taskforce recommendations and prepared its response.

We are committed to enabling the UK to become a clean-energy superpower and enabling a safe, secure and sustainable nuclear sector that acts in the best interests of communities and the environment.

Simon Roddy, Chief Executive of Great British Energy – Nuclear, said:

We welcome the Government's commitment to implement the Taskforce's recommendations. A more streamlined and predictable regulatory system is essential to delivering new nuclear at pace, and we are ready to support the Government in turning these reforms into realworld delivery, including accelerating progress at GBEN's Wylfa site on Anglesey - home of the UK's first SMR project.

Nigel Cann, CEO of Sizewell C, said:

We welcome the government's response to the Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce report. It is an important catalyst for the cultural shift our sector needs, setting out a framework that will help us deliver major infrastructure projects more responsibly, more efficiently, and with better value for the UK.

Sizewell C is central to Britain's new era of nuclear power – an era that will secure our energy future for generations. With the continued support of our regulators, supply chain, and alliance partners, the recommendations in this report can further strengthen our project by putting outcomes ahead of unnecessary processes.

Charlotte Brumpton-Childs, National Officer for Nuclear at the GMB, said:

Nuclear power is essential to deliver our energy independence and achieve net zero. In these turbulent times the need to build strong energy infrastructure is crystal clear.

Just as Hinckley Point and Sizewell show the benefits for working people are huge: good, well-paid unionised jobs and more secure, affordable energy. Our members stand ready to build the next generation of nuclear power right across the UK.

David Peattie, CEO of Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Group, said:

We welcome the clear direction provided by the Government's response to the report, which sets out a vision for a regulatory environment which applies a proportionate, risk based approach to managing hazards, and can support timely, cost effective decommissioning while maintaining the highest standards of safety and security.

We're working closely with Government, regulators and the sector to identify early opportunities we can translate into practical improvements to accelerate our mission.

We also wholeheartedly support the investment in nuclear PhDs. It's vital we maintain critical skills across the sector and explore emerging technologies and innovations which are transformative for decommissioning.

Sue Ferns OBE, Senior Deputy General Secretary of Prospect, said:

The conflict in the Middle East demonstrates the dangers of continued reliance on volatile global fossil fuel markets, so we welcome that the government is pressing down on the nuclear accelerator. Nuclear power is not only clean and reliable, it supports thousands of highly skilled, well-paid, jobs across the country and is the foundation of many local economies.

It was never the case that speeding up nuclear meant compromising on safety or on the environment, and we are glad the government has rejected this argument in favour of a win-win approach. As the UK's trade union for nuclear specialists we expect to be fully involved in the implementation of this plan to ensure the views of nuclear workers are heard.

Sir Alex Chisholm, UK Chair at EDF, said:

The current volatility in global fossil fuel markets underlines the benefit of homegrown nuclear electricity to Britain. Its reputation for safe operation and construction must be underpinned by effective regulation. We welcome the opportunity to help make sure regulation is timely, predictable and proportionate.

On the environment, there is no need to choose between protecting nature and the delivery of essential national infrastructure, both can be achieved. The current approach can end up delivering small benefits to local wildlife at a large cost to the country. The

taskforce is right to ask if there is a better way.

Chris O'Shea, Chief Executive of Centrica Group, said:

We welcome the Government's plans to implement the Nuclear Taskforce's recommendations as the UK moves into a new golden age for nuclear. Centrica has a long standing commitment to nuclear power - supporting the existing fleet, investing in Sizewell C, and now working with X energy to deliver advanced modular reactors at Hartlepool and beyond.

Getting nuclear right will strengthen Britain's energy security, protect households and businesses from volatility, and support thousands of high quality jobs for decades to come. Centrica is investing, and the Government's leadership provides an important foundation for doing so.

Alistair Black, Vice-President, X-energy said:

This will significantly speed up the safe delivery of new nuclear. Having recently submitted our proposals for a new fleet of advanced modular reactors to the Government alongside Centrica, we look forward to working with them to deliver the benefits of our programme across the UK, starting in Hartlepool.

Shevaun Haviland, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

Bringing more nuclear power online is essential for the UK's energy security, economic growth, and new jobs. But the rate of progress in recent decades has been too slow, while the urgency to build new stations has only grown.

It is encouraging to see reforms that mean nuclear projects can be built faster, through smarter regulation that reduces timeframes and costs. These changes, alongside the Government's green light for Sizewell C, will power millions of homes and support thousands of jobs.

Tom Greatrex, Chief Executive of the Nuclear Industry Association, said:

This ambitious programme of nuclear regulatory reform is the most important thing we can do to cut deployment times and costs, and rebuild the backbone of our energy security.

We need more proportionate regulation that recognises the vital contribution nuclear makes to the nation's core interests, and driving through these recommendations offers our best chance in a generation of achieving that. We look forward to working with the Government throughout the implementation process.

Professor Charlotte Deane, Executive Chair at UKRI's Engineering and Physical Sciences Research

Council said:

The UK's nuclear sector is central to our national security, clean energy ambitions and economic future. Meeting those challenges demands a new generation of researchers and innovators with the technical expertise to make a real difference.

UKRI doctoral focal awards are a proven way to develop that talent. They bring together academic excellence, industry partnerships and cohort-based learning to give doctoral students the skills and experience to make an immediate impact in the nuclear workforce.

These new nuclear focal awards, developed in partnership with government, will continue building the research base that the UK's national security and clean energy future depends on.

Julianne Antrobus, CEO of United Kingdom National Nuclear Laboratory (UKNNL), said:

The Nuclear Regulatory Review sets out an ambitious and necessary vision for how we transform the UK nuclear sector. As the government's lead civil nuclear fission laboratory, UKNNL is ready to rise to that challenge.

We will work hand in hand with government, industry and regulators to deliver a smarter, more efficient and safer nuclear programme that enhances the UK's position as a global leader in this critical field.

Academia is crucial to this. UKNNL's pioneering post-doctorate programme was the first of its kind in the nuclear sector and we have welcomed dozens of talented people who will no doubt go on to deliver the next generation of nuclear in the UK.

Harry Holt DSO OBE, Chief Executive – Nuclear and Deputy CEO for Babcock International Group, said:

Babcock, together with Cavendish Nuclear, the UK's largest sovereign nuclear services provider, welcomes the Government's response to, and implementation plan for the Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce Review.

At a time when Britain's sovereign defence capability, energy security, and net-zero ambitions are more critical than ever, these reforms will help establish a clearer, more proportionate, and more effective regulatory system.

We stand ready to bring our full lifecycle expertise to support the safe delivery of programmes and to work with Government, industry, academia, and other key partners as we move into this next phase of implementation.

Notes to editors

The Prime Minister commissioned the Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce last year.

All reforms are expected to be completed by the end of 2027, subject to legislative timelines.

The funding for doctoral students is being provided by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and Ministry of Defence as part of the Nuclear Skills Plan, which brings together government, industry, and education providers to deliver the skilled workforce and 24,000 additional jobs required in the nuclear sector by 2030. The doctoral funding awards will be delivered by UK Research and Innovation.

The Environment Secretary has today provided regulatory justification for the Rolls-Royce SMR. Following the Nuclear Regulatory Review reforms to justify this type of reactor, this could be the last light water reactor to individually go through this step.

The Housing Secretary has today published a roadmap setting out how the government will bring forward Environmental Outcomes Reports to support the delivery of housing and infrastructure.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/overhaul-of-nuclear-system-to-speed-up-building-and-cut-costs>