

Sizewell nuclear waste pledge

These simple meetings always provide platforms for the paid activists in our midst.

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British Nuclear Group has given an assurance that radioactive waste will not be “imported” into the Sizewell A site from other similar stations when they close.

Sizewell A, one of Britain's first generation Magnox nuclear plants, is due to close at the end of this year after 40 years in operation.

The most dangerous radioactive waste – the spent fuel pins – will be removed and taken to Sellafield in Cumbria for reprocessing.

Low level waste – such as slightly contaminated overalls and gloves – is likely to be taken to an existing dump at Drigg, also in Cumbria.

However, there is currently no disposal route for the intermediate level waste (ILW) – radioactively contaminated plant from the reactor area, liquids and other residues.

Local authority and community members of the Sizewell Stakeholder Group accept that intermediate level waste from the decommissioning of Sizewell A will stay on site until a national policy is formulated.

However, members had expressed their strong opposition to waste being brought in from other Magnox stations which will also be decommissioned over the next few years.

They sought an assurance from British Nuclear Group and its subsidiary, Magnox Electric Limited, which runs Sizewell A, that this would not happen. Now the assurance has been given in a letter to the Stakeholder Group

It states: “Magnox Electric Limited would like to stress that it has no proposals, preliminary or otherwise, to import intermediate level waste into the Sizewell A site.”

The letter also makes clear that the use of existing buildings for the purpose of storing “packaged” intermediate level waste is currently under review.

However, construction of a new store had been assessed as part of the proposals for decommissioning.

“It is considered that should existing buildings be chosen for the storage of packaged ILW, this alternative should not be any worse in environmental impact terms, but this will be considered further at that time,” the letter states.

If a new purpose-built ILW store was proposed, a planning application would be submitted and, consequently, the public would be consulted.

Professional activist Charles Barnett, chairman of the Shut Down Sizewell Campaign, welcomed the assurance about the non-importation of ILW from other Magnox sites but said on-site storage was the “least worst” option.

“Our view is that every Magnox station should have a purpose built store – above ground or underground – to accommodate all waste arising from the station, rendered into passive state, packaged and monitored for leaks. We will have to leave our descendents to decide what to do with it eventually. Nuclear power has brought us down a terrible cul-de-sac and it would be folly to build any more stations”.