

Alert over nuclear waste disposal

The Irish look carefully across the Irish Sea but this seems fairly unbiased.

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Concerns about nuclear waste disposal will need to be addressed before a new nuclear power station can be built at Sellafield, the local authority has warned.

The alert follows publication of a dossier examining the feasibility of building more nuclear reactors on the controversial site, which has been the subject of environmental protests from campaigners in Northern Ireland.

A document produced by Cumbria County Council on the impact of nuclear industry practices stated: "On the issue of nuclear new build, the question of disposal of nuclear waste needs to be determined before a commitment is made to build new nuclear power plants.

"The experience of the past 50 years, where decommissioning and waste management liabilities have not been recognised until recently, is not a sound basis on which to commence a new programme of construction."

Handling of radioactive waste is a key function of Sellafield and a key concern of groups like Greenpeace and politicians.

Lobbyists and public representatives including South Down Assemblywoman Margaret Ritchie have slammed the proposals for a new station and warned of strong opposition on health grounds from those living in Ireland.

The ultimatum follows publication of the Cumbria Nuclear New Build Study, a consultant's report, examining the prospects of Sellafield as a candidate site for new nuclear reactors.

It concluded that Sellafield could be in the top five sites in England for a new nuclear power station and found that current and future operations could be linked together to improve safety and security.

However, the paper warned that the site was a long way from the main electricity grid for England.

The Government was also urged by the Cumbrian local authority to await the return of a number of official reviews on the issue of nuclear waste before commissioning more power stations.