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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

Energy White Paper- “Meeting the Energy Challenge” and consultation document on the ‘Future of Nuclear Power’

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Cleared by Giles Denham on 25 June 2007

Issue

1 The Energy White Paper “Meeting the Energy Challenge” and the accompanying consultation document ‘Future of Nuclear Power’ were published on 23 May.

Timing

2 Routine.

Recommendation

3 That HSC notes this paper for information.

Background

4 The Energy White Paper sets out the Government’s proposals following the conclusions of the Energy Review Report published in July 2006. In line with the Judicial Review judgment in February 2007, the White Paper¹ does not contain detail on proposals for new nuclear power stations. Instead, this is dealt with in the accompanying consultation document (CD) ‘The Future of Nuclear Power’² and related consultation document on justification and siting issues (see para 7 below). The consultation period ends 10 October.

Argument

5 The Energy White Paper sets out the domestic and international strategy for securing energy supplies and combating global warming. It sets out proposals to promote investment in renewable power and energy efficiency. HSE is reviewing the implications of the Energy White paper and the associated consultation documents for HSC/E interest in the non-nuclear energy sectors. A response is being prepared which will be submitted to the Commission in due course setting out the implications for HSC/E of the White Paper in the non-nuclear sector and where appropriate suggesting responses to the consultations.

¹ <http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/whitepaper/>

² <http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/whitepaper/consultations/nuclearpower2007/>

6 The Nuclear CD sets out the Government's preliminary view that it is in the public interest to give the private sector the option of investing in new nuclear power stations alongside other low- carbon technologies. The CD provides the supporting evidence and information on how nuclear power could have a key role in providing low carbon generation to help increase the diversity of energy supplies. The issues considered in the CD are:

- Nuclear power and carbon emissions;
- The value of having low carbon options: nuclear and alternatives;
- Safety and security;
- Transport of nuclear materials;
- Waste and decommissioning;
- Supply of nuclear fuel; and
- Reprocessing of spent fuel.

7 Alongside this is a related consultation document setting out the proposed 'Justification³ and Strategic Siting Assessment' processes for nuclear power. These are preparatory activities like HSE's nuclear design assessment process, which the Commission directed HSE to undertake on 15 May (paper HSC/07/45 refers). The Fees (Amendment) Regulations 2007, which will allow HSE to recover its costs for this design assessment work, have been laid before Parliament and are expected to come into effect on 2 July. Work on all three of these facilitative actions will be on a contingent basis alongside the main nuclear consultation. After the consultation period, the Government will consider all responses and publish a further White Paper on its conclusions.

8 The key question raised by the CD is whether interested parties support the Government's preliminary view in favour of nuclear power. HSC/E are neutral on this matter and do not need to respond to this consultation exercise. HSE is monitoring progress with DTI on the Justification and Strategic Siting Assessment consultations as these could have implications for HSE's work.

Action

9 That HSC notes the contents of this paper.

³ <http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/file39200.pdf>