

Meeting: Heysham Local Community Liaison Committee (LCLC)

Date: Friday 31st May 2024

Start time: 09:30

1. Introductions

- Mike Davies (**MD**) introduced himself as the new Station Director of Heysham 1 Power Station (**HY1**) and welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Martin Cheetham (**MC**) introduced himself as the Station Director of Heysham 2 Power Station (**HY2**), after being Station Director of Heysham 1 since 2021.

2. Station Director (SD) reports

- Mike noted the meeting was being staged during the 'pre-election period', a time in which some civil servants have activities curtailed. He explained it meant some answers posed during this meeting may not be as fully answered as they had been in other meetings.

Heysham 1 Station Director's report – Mike Davies

- Since the last meeting, Mike noted there had been six accident book entries, all of a minor nature, which were appropriately reported.
- Mike explained during the last statutory outage on HY1, a Key Way Root Crack was observed in the graphite in Reactor 1 and he used a model of graphite core bricks to show and explain Key Way Root Cracking (KWRC) to attendees.
- He explained that the crack had no effect on control and shut down of the reactor but added that regular inspections are held, and that those inspections are governed by what is observed and is monitored closely by regulators.
- A question was asked about how cracks were monitored and Mike told the meeting that fuel is removed from the reactors and then HY1 teams insert cameras to check for imperfections in the reactor core. A further question was asked about if cracks and review of safety cases would effect the station's lifetime.
- Mike said that there are aspirations to extend the life of the station but that the ageing graphite will eventually be a life-limiting factor. He explained that the inspections provide information to make decisions about ongoing generation. He added that regulators and inspectors must be satisfied that the station is operating within its safety cases for generation to continue. Another LCLC member asked if life extension reviews were being completed for both Heysham stations and was told a decision for both was expected by the end of 2024 following a rigorous technical review.
- Mike then went onto cover issues around the failure of a valve during the start up of Reactor 1 in December 2023, which led to a major steam leak. He said that the valve is a boiler valve on the non-nuclear side of the power station. As the valve opened, the bottom spindle became detached, resulting in a steam release. Mike reported that following a review of the steam valve event it was concluded that a similar issue impacted R2 and Hartlepool Power Station, so the decision was taken to pause generation at both sites whilst all SS/8 valves were inspected and replaced.
- A question was asked if it was fortunate that nobody was in the area where the valve failed when it did.

- Martin Cheetham replied that people could have been walking close to the area, and that, in different circumstances, there could have been potential to cause injury. The event was not related to nuclear safety, but it was an industrial safety incident and after the event the station prohibited access to the area while investigations were underway. Now normal access has resumed and Trillium, the original valve manufacturers, assisted with a forensic review of other valves and supported the contention they were in good condition.
- An attendee asked if Hartlepool and Heysham being offline affected the National Grid. Martin said that it could have meant the UK electricity supply was more carbon-heavy.
- Another attendee asked how the station would inform residents of other similar incidents in the future. Martin reported work was underway to review how public messaging is delivered in such incidents.
- Mike Davies then introduced himself more fully to the meeting explaining his background at EDF's Hinkley Point B and how he had shepherded the nation's most productive ever nuclear power station from generation into defueling.
- He stressed that whenever the end of generation occurs at Heysham 1 it was not end of life for the station.
- Mike discussed the careers fair as a highlight for pipeline development and reported that people came to the station to discuss early careers and meet staff members.
- A question was asked about what decommissioning involved and if Heysham could expect a third power station to be built at the site.
- Mike explained that defueling will take roughly four years to complete and that after that the station transfers to Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) for full decommissioning with the end destination of care and maintenance expected about 20 years after the start of decommissioning. A question was asked about if HY1 would be 'placed in a sarcophagus'.
- Mike said it would be a safe store, rather than a sarcophagus. and promised a fuller explainer about decommissioning at the next meeting.
- He said that as regards Heysham 3 Great British Nuclear had identified Wylfa in North Wales as the preferred next large-scale plant location, but that Heysham and Hartlepool were also mentioned and that the two sites remain on the list of eight Government designated sites for new nuclear.
- Mike then mentioned that the station had a minor environmental permit non-compliance in January 2024 due to a delay in reporting the results of monitoring to the Environment Agency. After an investigation HY1 identified actions to improve the timeliness of reporting monitoring.
- He finished by saying it had been 12 years since HY1's last significant environmental event.

Heysham 2 Station Director's report – Martin Cheetham

- Martin reported that in the second half of 2024 there were three unsafe working at height practices that classed as High Potential Event or Medium Potential Events. As a consequence, the Maintenance Team, Safety Team and contract partner Altrad had developed a working at height roadshow for all plant touching teams.

- He discussed a recently launched Safety Essentials campaign and how staff rewards were proving useful in engaging staff. An LCLC member asked if the working at height incidents all involved contractors. Martin said they did but that in-house staff needed to be more vigilant and that the site was having a lot of workers coming to it from other industries, meaning there was a need to embed EDF's safety standards with everyone working onsite. He stressed that EDF had no concerns using contractors but that standards needed to be monitored.
- Martin then discussed a hydrogen leak in the turbine hall in March 2024. A post incident investigation noted a leaking fitting as the cause, which has been resolved. He praised the responders involved in the incident and the teamwork between teams on both stations for how the event was managed.
- He went on saying a hydrogen leak can be serious but that this was a very small leak well within safety limits which could not have led to a wider issue because of the size of the leak.
- Martin reported no significant environmental events or near misses during the period since the last LCLC meeting in November - but said there had been minor permit breaches: In December 2023, a very small discharge of inert, non-radioactive resin was discharged from the water treatment plant and in March 2024, a monthly report of radioactive discharges was sent to the Environment Agency late, resulting in a technical breach of the permit.
- He also reported a small number of Fluorinated greenhouse gas leaks, the most significant on our Unit 7 Generator Transformer, which was being repaired during the May outage. An LCLC member asked if there had been component failures across two sites, why didn't EDF have spare parts in stock.
- Martin explained that the transformer was designed to not need spares, and that one of the challenges was that some components are no longer made so they have to be engineered, which poses a challenge. All parts are also subject to a strict nuclear regulation.
- A question was asked about a report noting personal contamination events to staff were low and asked what this meant.
- Martin explained that if work was underway on the reactors and someone picks up contaminated dust, then contamination levels on overalls was so low that it could often be removed with tape. He added that airborne conditions are constantly monitored and PPE is provided, all of which is governed by radiological work permits.
- Martin concluded by discussing how every few years the UK Government invites the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) to send an Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) to visit one of the UK's stations. Their work is about continuous improvement and sharing good practice. The review at HY2 took place before the November 2023 meeting, but that the team's report has since been published. He said the OSART review team noted nine areas of good practice at HY2, which could be replicated globally and provided eight recommendations for further improvement. Highlighted strengths were in training, operations and chemistry. The IAEA team has been invited back to review progress.

4. Regulator overview

Heysham 1 ONR

- The inspector reported that since the heatwave in July 2022 modifications have been made to how stations operate in extreme heat. A question was asked about the risk of fuel snapping as it was removed and was reassured this was not possible.

Heysham 2 ONR

- The inspector noted that there was an ongoing inspection into various sections of the plant and that if the site made changes or modifications to parts of plant the ONR would inspect the work project.

Environment Agency

- Kate Simpson of the Environment Agency noted that information regarding an oil leak reported in the previous meeting had been provided and it had been concluded that pipework failed and led to the leak. The inspector said there would be some non-compliance issues around the issue.
- She then explained about Heysham 2 water discharge permits and reported that the permit effects any areas where the station meets water as it discharges to the sea. HY2 had applied for two verifications to its permit and that permit change permissions sits with EA for approval.
- Another attendee asked about the EA report highlighting four issues with delays around environmental monitoring sampling and if EDF was making mistakes. Kate highlighted that samples were in line with EA compliance. Only one of these was a non-compliance due to reporting it slightly slower than usual as was mentioned earlier. She added that all samples were kept for two years so the Agency can compare and monitor any change in the area. The environment in Morecambe Bay also means the channel is consistently moving materials, but the same areas need to be sampled to ensure consistency.
- A question was then asked about sewage discharge and if this could impact the stations application to release more treated water?
- Kate replied that all business have to have a permit to release anything except clean rain water.

5. Any Other Business

- A question was asked about how decisions were made for social value and local contributions from the power station. Martin replied that there is an applications process, through the Heysham sponsorships and donations committee, and those in most need are given due consideration.
- The meeting was closed.