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UK Gives Green Light To New Nuclear Plants

10 Jan (NucNet): The British government has given the go-ahead for the possible construction of a new generation of nuclear power plants in the UK.

Energy Secretary John Hutton said he is inviting energy companies to bring forward plans to build and operate new nuclear power plants.

“Giving the go ahead today that new nuclear power should play a role in providing the UK with clean, secure and affordable energy is in our country’s vital long term interest,” said Mr Hutton, who announced the decision in parliament.

In a White Paper (policy document) on nuclear energy published to coincide with the announcement, the government says new nuclear power plants should have a role to play in the UK’s future energy mix alongside other low carbon sources.

The White Paper says energy companies should be allowed the option of investing in new nuclear power plants, and the government should take “active steps” to facilitate this.

Those steps include carrying out a strategic siting assessment and simplifying the planning process for new nuclear build.

The government also said it would bring forward legislation to ensure that the framework for funding decommissioning and waste management liabilities is clear and properly ensures that each nuclear operator meets its costs.

Proposed new energy legislation also published today contains clauses to ensure adequate funding provision is made by potential developers of new nuclear units for the full costs of decommissioning and their full share of waste management costs.

In the White Paper, prime minister Gordon Brown says nuclear is a “tried and trusted technology” and “more than ever before has a key role to play”.

In May 2007 the government launched a consultation to examine nuclear energy. Today’s White Paper is a response to that consultation.

The White Paper and other documents related to today’s announcement can be downloaded from the government’s nuclear energy website (<http://nuclearpower2007.direct.gov.uk/>).

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