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15th April 2011

Dear Mike,

RE: SUBMISSION TO THE REPORT ON LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE EVENTS AT THE FUKUSHIMA NUCLEAR POWER STATION

The Secretary of State wrote to you on 14th March requesting that you provide a report on the implications of the situation in Japan and lessons to be learned for the UK nuclear industry. The exact scope of the report is, of course, for you to decide in your capacity as Chief Nuclear Inspector.

The Government is keen to learn all relevant lessons from the events in Japan, in particular for the UK's existing nuclear installations and for any nuclear new build. For potential new nuclear power stations we need to ensure that relevant lessons are properly taken into account in any further policy development, whilst avoiding undue delay.

The Energy National Policy Statements set out planning policy for energy infrastructure including new nuclear power stations. The National Policy Statements do not duplicate points which are more properly considered in the regulatory regime. The Nuclear National Policy Statement also reflects an assessment of the sites that are potentially suitable for the deployment of new nuclear power stations. This assessment was a strategic level assessment, again not meant to duplicate regulatory considerations at licensing. Nonetheless, the Government has drawn on the advice of the regulators in developing the National Policy Statements and in the Strategic Siting Assessment of potential new nuclear sites.

The Government is currently reviewing these following the recent public consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny. In the light of the events in Japan the Government has also undertaken to review the National Policy Statements before proceeding with ratification. To ensure that the National Policy Statements continue to reflect the regulator's current expert advice, we would find it helpful if you could make provision for considering those issues set out at Annex A in your interim report.

We recognise that your report may highlight other areas of relevance. We are also aware that some of the issues listed are also significant for existing nuclear installations but we have not expanded the list to expressly highlight issues relevant to these given the comprehensive nature of the report that you provisionally set out in your statement of 29th March.

In addition, as you have stated it is paramount that the report is comprehensive and based on firm evidence, and we understand that consideration within the interim report will not preclude further consideration of such issues in the final report.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Higson
Chief Executive
Office for Nuclear Development