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Hitachi and Horizon halt £20bn Wylfa project

🕒 17 Jan The Japanese firm Hitachi has announced that it is to suspend construction work on the £20bn nuclear power station at Wylfa in Wales, with the loss of 400 jobs.



Above: Wylfa Newydd had been set to meet 6% of UK energy needs

Civil engineering contractors described the cancellation of the project as a “serious blow” to the UK’s future energy security.

Hitachi has directed its subsidiary Horizon Nuclear Power to suspend its entire UK nuclear development programme. Horizon is developing the Wylfa Newydd nuclear plant on Anglesey in north Wales and has a second site at Oldbury on Severn in south Gloucestershire.

The decision was taken at a Hitachi Board meeting on 17th January not to continue with the current programme of activities. Horizon Nuclear Power was formed in 2009 to develop new nuclear power stations in the UK. It was acquired by Hitachi in November 2012 for £697m.

Wylfa Newydd had been lined up to meet 6% of UK energy needs until the end of the 21st century.

Construction was in the hands of a US-Japanese consortium of Hitachi, Bechtel and Japanese engineer JGC.

In a statement Hitachi said: "Hitachi has held detailed discussions with the UK Government over various options about how the UK government might support the project including potential for equity and debt investments. The parties, with the cooperation of the Japanese government, have held discussions in good faith in regard to the financial structure for the project and various conditions for the building and operation of the nuclear power station.

"Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of everyone involved the parties have not been able to reach an agreement to the satisfaction of all concerned. As a result, Hitachi has decided to suspend the project at this time from the viewpoint of its economic rationality as a private enterprise, as it is now clear that further time is needed to develop a financial structure for the Horizon Project and the conditions for building and operating the nuclear power stations."

Duncan Hawthorne, CEO of Horizon Nuclear Power said: "We have made very strong progress on all aspects of the project's development, including the UK design of our tried and tested reactor, supply chain development and especially the building of a very capable organisation of talented and committed people.

"We have been in close discussions with the UK government, in cooperation with the government of Japan, on the financing and associated commercial arrangements for our project for some years now. I am very sorry to say that despite the best efforts of everyone involved we've not been able to reach an agreement to the satisfaction of all concerned.

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"As a result we will be suspending the development of the Wylfa Newydd project, as well as work related to Oldbury, until a solution can be found. In the meantime we will take steps to reduce our presence but keep the option to resume development in future."

Mr Hawthorne continued: "Clearly this will have a significant impact for all involved with our project. We will look to minimise this as much as possible as we move into this next phase and we will begin consultation on the implications immediately with our staff who have shown extraordinary talent, resilience and determination to take this complex and exciting project to this stage.

“We will also engage closely with the many international and UK-based stakeholders who have strongly supported the project’s development, especially our lead host community of Anglesey in Wales, represented by the Isle of Anglesey County Council and Welsh government, and the key representatives around Oldbury.”

Mr Hawthorne said that nuclear power remained critical to delivering the secure, low carbon and affordable energy the UK needs. “As shown by our completion of the generic design assessment for the UK advanced boiling water reactor, I am confident that the technology can play an important role in helping tackle our energy needs and meeting our climate change targets. Wylfa Newydd on Anglesey remains the best site for nuclear development in the UK and we remain committed to keeping channels of communication open with the government and our other key stakeholders regarding future options at both our sites.”

Civil Engineering Contractors Association director of external affairs Marie-Claude Hemming said: “This is an extremely disappointing decision that throws doubts on the future energy security of the UK.

“CECA has long campaigned for new nuclear as a vital component of the mixed portfolio of electricity generation Britain will rely upon in the coming years.

“New nuclear power remains the best way of ensuring a secure future supply of low-carbon base load energy that is not reliant on external factors such as the weather.

“Once completed, Wylfa Newydd will create up to 850 permanent jobs, stay online for sixty years, and offer employment to future generations of skilled workers. Its cancellation would be a serious blow to hopes for regeneration to the economy not only of Wales, but the whole UK.

“We call on the UK government to act quickly to provide certainty, demonstrate its commitment to the nuclear sector, and to engage with both industry and potential investors to ensure the scheme goes ahead.”



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A graphic for BCIS (Building Cost Information Service). It features the BCIS logo in large blue letters. Below the logo, it says "Independent Construction Cost Data" and "Find out more" in blue. The graphic includes illustrations of construction workers, a laptop displaying a bar chart, and a gear icon.

A graphic for Groundforce Shorco. It features three stacked boxes with icons and text: "Knowledge" (orange box with a book icon), "Quality" (dark grey box with a gear icon), and "Safety" (green box with a padlock icon). At the bottom, it says "Vp Excavation Support" and "Groundforce Shorco".

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