

25 March 2015

Fleas

The previous Secretary of State for Defence commissioned the MOD to review again the evidence on which the decision was taken not to build a new generation PWR3 reactor in a shore-based test reactor. The review was undertaken by three eminent nuclear experts, Professor Robin Grimes, Professor Andrew Sherry, and Professor Andrew Sherry.

The review found that it was a valid decision not to prototype PWR3 and they concur with the advice of the Propulsion Technical Authority that even given the fuel element technology available at the time, this advice still stands. They also agreed that the review should be built ahead of the first Successor submarine. I attach for your information the Written Statement the Secretary of State for Defence is making to the House of Commons of the outcome of the review.

The Secretary of State's statement to Parliament of 2nd November 2011, this means that the review will not be required to support reactor core prototyping activity until 2015, although we expect activities on the site to continue until 2022. Although not expected, this will still be disappointing news. I am sorry to hear of your letter of 6th August 2014 that there is now an excellent opportunity to support the Dounreay Stakeholder Group and MOD representatives. This opportunity has not yet been taken. I have received and I look forward to it continuing as the MOD continues to support the nuclear defuel and decommissioning programme.

Yours sincerely


PHILIP DUNNE MP

Royal Navy Nuclear Reactor

DEFENCE

Prototype Review

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Michael Fallon) announced his decision to refuel the UK's four ballistic missile submarines, during the period following the discovery of a microscopic breach in the cladding around one of the fuel elements in the prototype reactor plant at our Shore Test Facility at Dounreay in Scotland. My predecessor also asked the MOD Chief Scientific Adviser to review again the evidence on which the decision was taken not to prototype the next generation PWR3 reactor, due to be fitted to the Successor ballistic missile submarines.

Mr Michael Fallon: On 6th March 2014, my predecessor announced his decision to refuel the UK's four ballistic missile submarines, during the period following the discovery of a microscopic breach in the cladding around one of the fuel elements in the prototype reactor plant at our Shore Test Facility at Dounreay in Scotland. My predecessor also asked the MOD Chief Scientific Adviser to review again the evidence on which the decision was taken not to prototype the next generation PWR3 reactor, due to be fitted to the Successor ballistic missile submarines.

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The Panel concluded that it was a valid decision to prototype PWR3. They also agreed that there was no practical course of action that would have enabled a prototype facility to be built ahead of the first Successor submarine. The Panel have advised that, with no test facility, far greater requirements will need to be placed on other elements of the submarine enterprise to provide data, experience and assurance to underpin safety and availability especially those elements that are unique to the UK. As such, I have agreed with the Panel to support their recommendation that the Department undertake a Nuclear Capability Review to ensure the necessary capability and capacity is in place to sustain the Department's routine work at sea deterrence can be sustained now and in the future.

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The review confirms that the Vulcan Naval Reactor Core Prototype will not be required to support reactor core prototyping activities beyond 2015, as set out to Parliament on 2 November 2011 (Official Record, HC Deb, col 37WS). It is anticipated that defueling and

fuel management activities will continue at the site until 2022. The Vulcan Defuel and Decommissioning project is assessing detailed options which range from placing the prototype facilities into care and maintenance (while retaining the site's strategic capabilities), to decommissioning the site and returning it to Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Initial decisions on the future of the site are expected around 2016.

Wednesday 25 March 2015