

OPINION OF THE COMMISSION

of 26 February 1987

concerning the Heysham 2 Nuclear Power Station (United Kingdom)

(Only the English text is authentic)

(87/170/Euratom)

The General Data concerning the plan for the disposal of radioactive waste from Heysham 2 Nuclear Power Station were provided by the United Kingdom Government to the Commission, in accordance with Article 37 of the Euratom Treaty, by letter received on 12 February 1986.

In the course of the meeting by the group of experts set up pursuant to the Treaty, which took place on 5 June 1986 in Brussels, the representatives of the United Kingdom Government provided further complementary information and details.

On the basis of the data thus obtained and having consulted the group of experts, whose report is appended, the Commission drew up the following opinion:

1. The distance between the power station and the nearest territory of other Member States is 210 kilometres, in this case to Ireland.
2. Although the Heysham 2 authorized limits for gaseous and liquid effluents in normal operation have not yet been formulated, only 'best estimate' and 'worst case' forecasts of arisings being as yet available, it has been stated that the authorized limits will certainly not exceed the worst case values. However, even if the latter values are attained not only for Heysham 2 but also for Heysham 1, the discharges will not be liable to cause exposure, significant from the health point of view, of members of the population of another Member State.

It is important to recognize, nevertheless, that discharges into the Irish Sea are not confined to those from the Heysham site. Other installations, including in particular the Sellafield reprocessing plant, discharge into this sea and should be taken into account in the calculation of doses and environmental monitoring provisions.

The Commission also notes that the experts are of the opinion that the maximum envisaged discharge limits for liquid effluents appear to be unnecessarily high. It is, therefore, recommended that the limits be fixed at levels taking into account the 'as low as reasonably achievable' principle and in any case appreciably below the worst case values.

3. No disposal of solid radioactive waste is planned on the site. Spent fuel will be transferred to Sellafield for

reprocessing after temporary storage at the power station.

4. For the accident conditions considered in the General Data, unplanned discharges of radioactive substances are not expected to give rise in other Member States to doses through external radiation and inhalation which would be significant from the point of view of health. Ground contamination, however, could give rise in Ireland to potential doses which would require a temporary ban or restrictions to be imposed on the consumption of certain foodstuffs originating from the contaminated area.

In conclusion the Commission is of the opinion that the implementation of the plan to dispose of radioactive waste from the Heysham 2 Nuclear Power Station is not liable in normal operation to result in the contamination, significant from the point of view of health, of the water, soil or airspace of another Member State. However, as mentioned under Item 2, the Commission recommends that the liquid effluent discharge limits be fixed at levels taking into account the 'as low as reasonably achievable' principle and in any case appreciably below the worst case values given in the General Data. Moreover, the fact that other installations, including in particular the Sellafield reprocessing plant, discharge into the Irish Sea should be taken into account in the calculation of doses and in environmental monitoring provisions.

Unplanned discharges resulting from accidents of the type and magnitude considered in the General Data could give rise to a contamination requiring a temporary ban or restrictions on certain foodstuffs in order to ensure that the exposure of the population is not significant from the point of view of health. The Commission therefore recommends that the negotiations between the United Kingdom and Irish Governments on the arrangements which will apply in the event of an accident in a nuclear installation in the United Kingdom be pursued as a matter of urgency to a successful conclusion.

This opinion is addressed to the United Kingdom.

Done at Brussels, 26 February 1987.

For the Commission
Stanley CLINTON DAVIS
Member of the Commission