

Nuclear decommissioning costs

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[Nuclear decommissioning costs](#) Nuclear decommissioning costs are rising exponentially. I heard Chris Huhne the disgraced former Energy secretary on the today programme this morning. The UK government has had to pay out £100 million in compensation over the way it awarded a [clean up contract](#). However as Chris Huhne said this is not the real scandal. The real scandal is not how much money has been wasted here but how much nuclear decommissioning costs have risen and are rising. He helpfully gave some figures and those in the graph above come from him and I assume are correct I listened again and noted them down. I've taken the "present" to be 2016 rather than 2017 since he was not explicit about the year. What is truly frightening is how much nuclear decommissioning costs have risen in the last 5 years. The current total is £171 billion or 8% of the national debt. Chris Huhne gave a number of reasons for the very high cost. Even reactors with the same design name i.e. "Magnox" were individual designs with major differences even the design of the fuel rods, such as shape. Chris Huhne thought this would be better in the US where large numbers of reactors were built with the same design. Another reason was of course that no thought was given to dismantling the stations. The last reason is simply Sellafield. Its a radioactive disaster area and tellingly records have been lost so people do not know precisely is stored there. Whilst this cost is small when looked at from the point of view of spreading it over generations the frightening thing is the way is going up. (It should be stated that the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy have graph on their website stating that costs other than Sellafield are falling). This however all the above made me think. First I doubt if the situation is much better in the US. A large number of different designs were used there and the problem with nuclear power is that the individual plants take so long to build that design changes between plants are inevitable. I also doubt any thought was given of how to take them down. Secondly are we about to repeat the same mistakes? We could be. If EDF stagger through building Hinckley C its unlikely they will build any other reactors. (Notice how since the deal was signed last autumn nothing has happened). The Japanese have dropped out and there is talk of Chinese and Koreans coming in. Even if they do then they are going to build only the odd reactor or two. We will still end up with a number of completely different designs to cope with. As for planned dismantling which is supposed to be built in. First do not underestimate the difficulties of someone in 70 years time being to get hold of the instructions (how are they to be stored?) or understanding them especially with language difficulties. Neil

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