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Nuclear power industry aims to address staff shortage

Nuclear power industry aims to address staff shortage

- [Wil Crisp](#)

The nuclear industry has signalled low confidence in the UK's regulator as it embarks on one of the world's most ambitious new-build programmes amid a shortage of skilled workers.

Only 28pc of industry stakeholders are confident that the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) will have "the resources and capabilities to deliver in five to 10 years", claims a survey published in its corporate plan.

In the plan, out this month, the ONR warned that amid "increasing industry demands ... the loss of experienced regulatory staff will lead to **a thinning of our overall regulatory capability**".

The concerns about the regulator's ability to oversee safety and security at nuclear sites come at a time when **the UK's nuclear sector is experiencing a shortage of skilled workers and the workload for the regulator is rapidly increasing.**

Currently, the ONR regulates 36 licensed nuclear sites, which include operational power stations, sites that are being decommissioned, and the [construction site at Hinkley Point C](#), where two nuclear reactors are being built by EDF.

Ambitious plans are in place for a series of four new-build nuclear power stations each with a different type of reactor. At the same time, demands are being made on ONR resources by a surge in nuclear activity in other areas, including research projects, the Ministry of Defence's nuclear programme, and ageing power stations that require increased oversight.

Over recent years the ONR has seen lower levels of staff retention, with the average tenure of staff declining from 13 years in 2014 to 11 years in 2017.

The Department for Business said recently that only 13 inspectors and trainee inspectors had been recruited out of a targeted 20 to 25.

Tom Plant, the director of nuclear policy at the Royal United Services Institute, said : “If the ONR fails to build capacity it could take longer to approve projects. This certainly has the potential to disrupt build schedules and increase costs for companies.”

The ONR says that it has embarked on a series of projects in order to address staffing problems.



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