

The Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority yesterday issued the site licence required to build two new units at the Paks nuclear power plant, while the environmental licence is expected to be finalised within weeks. Attila Aszódi, the government commissioner responsible for the Paks II project, told World Nuclear News today that receiving the site licence is a “major milestone” and the target remains for the first unit to be completed in 2025 and the second in 2026.

Paks currently comprises four Russian-supplied VVER-440 pressurized water reactors, which started up between 1982 and 1987. These units account for about half of Hungary’s electricity production. An inter-governmental agreement signed in early 2014 would see Russian enterprises and their international sub-contractors supply two new units at Paks – VVER-1200 reactors – as well as a Russian state loan of up to €10.0 billion (\$11.2 billion) to finance 80% of the project.

Hungary received European Commission approval of the project on 6 March, accepting commitments it has made to limit distortions of competition. The Commission concluded that Hungary’s financial support for the Paks II project involves state aid, but it could approve this support under EU state aid rules on the basis of these commitments.

These commitments require Hungary “to establish a framework”, rather than create any “limitations”, Aszódi said. “So we can proceed with the project.”

Project company MVM Paks II received an environmental licence in late September, but this was challenged by two environmental groups, Aszódi said. The licence is now being reviewed by the regulatory authorities, but the “second instance” licence is expected to be granted in the coming weeks, he added.

“The first priority now is the construction licence application and in parallel with this some preparations are needed on the site to accommodate construction, such as some supporting infrastructure that will have to be licensed and built before ground breaking for the nuclear installation can be made.”

Russia’s Atomstroyexport, the general contractor for the Paks II project, will launch the first round of tenders for sub-contractors “quite soon”, he said.

Source: World nuclear news