



# Arc Energy gets fit for new build

Weld engineering specialist Arc Energy took part in the Fit For Nuclear programme to prepare for work at Hinkley Point C.

Founded in 1994 by Alan and Rosemary Robinson, Arc Energy specialises in weld overlay cladding to protect pipelines, valves and other assemblies from corrosion in hostile environments. The firm now employs over 70 people, and primarily works in the oil and gas sector.

**“Most of the things we do at the moment go under the water, for oil and gas production or for the defence industry on nuclear submarines,”** says Rosemary Robinson, Arc Energy director.

**“We have some understanding of nuclear standards because we’re used to working in defence, but haven’t done anything in nuclear power stations. We do know that our process is used there, so we’re hoping that’s a market to break into. And we’re based in Gloucestershire, so we’re local for Hinkley Point.”**

Arc Energy was introduced to Fit For Nuclear by the regional Manufacturing Advisory Service soon after the programme’s launch in 2011.

**“We were one of the first companies to take part in the Fit For Nuclear assessment – for us, that was perfect timing,”** Robinson recalls. **“We knew that any orders for us were going**

**to be a few years away, so we wanted to get ourselves ready so when the opportunity came along we could take advantage of it.”**

With the company used to audits for oil and gas clients, and for its ASME and ISO certifications, the online F4N assessment and follow-up visit covered some familiar ground. It did however highlight some additional areas looked for by nuclear sector clients.

**“It was quite interesting because the focus was slightly different, and went into some areas that might have been missed off our other audits,”** Robinson says.

**“One area they looked at was FMEA and design for manufacture which, because we’re not a design house as such, we didn’t think we were doing. But after the assessment, we realised we do actually do a lot of that but weren’t recognising we were doing it. It was something we could do and just needed to formalise it.”**

The assessment also recommended formalising procedures in areas such as shopfloor improvements and internal communications, to create a clear pathway between the business plan and the shopfloor.



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“That cascading of information in both directions was set up directly as a result of the assessment,” Robinson notes.

Arc Energy has used the F4N assessment to great effect, says Martin Ride, Nuclear AMRC supply chain consultant. “They have gone on to really use the programme to gain a much greater awareness of UK nuclear, the standards required, and what the market is and the expectations are. Arc Energy has used F4N as an enabler to determine what they needed to focus development work on, and managed the process superbly,” he notes.

The F4N review also helped the Robinsons address a common issue in family-owned businesses – management development and succession planning. They have appointed a new technical and quality director, Neil Cook, and invested in training at all levels – including strategic management courses and Institute of Directors training for their son Andrew. “We involved all levels of management, so everyone was training together,” Rosemary says. “It’s cost us quite a lot of money, but it is worth it.”

Having a relationship with the Nuclear AMRC has also helped the company prepare for the opportunities of the new build, she adds. “The networking has been very useful. I’ve been on courses with Areva to talk to other people already in the business to see how they work, and we have sent people up on various courses including Triple Bar Nuclear Manufacturing.”

Arc Energy is now receiving enquiries for nuclear work, and Robinson is confident that the company can compete and win.

“The last three years have been about saying that this is a market we’re going into, now we’re at the point where we’re able to tell people that we are fit for nuclear, and they can come and see what we can do,” she says. “I think in five years, we will be doing nuclear work and, hopefully, that’s a market for us for well into the future.”

[www.arcenergy.co.uk](http://www.arcenergy.co.uk)

**Fit For Nuclear (F4N)** helps UK manufacturers get ready to bid for work in the civil nuclear supply chain.



F4N was developed by the Nuclear AMRC with leading industrial partners, and is delivered in partnership with the Manufacturing Advisory Service, part of the government-backed Business Growth Service.

F4N also offers grants to companies based in England for business improvement or R&D projects.

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