



Newsletter February 2008

Study shows more infant deaths near Hinkley

A new study has shown a three-fold excess of infant mortality in nearby towns bordering the Severn Estuary, downwind of Hinkley Point.

The study by Dr Chris Busby of Green Audit has been supported by a former Director of the South West Cancer Registry.

Using Government figures, Dr Busby of Green Audit found there was an almost three times greater risk of infant mortality between 1996 and 2001 in the 'estuary wards' of Brean, Berrow, Burnham, Highbridge, Huntspill, Combrich and Pawlett compared with inland wards.

The rate of deaths in under one-year-olds was found to be ten per thousand compared with 3.5 per thousand further inland. The risk of this occurring by chance is one in five thousand. It adds weight to the theory that dangerous radioactive particles discharged into the sea and air at Hinkley are ingested by residents downwind from the power station and mudflats.

Neonatal deaths (in children up to 28 days old) were also found to be high, particularly in Burnham North during the period 1993-8 at six times the rate expected. The likelihood of this being a

chance occurrence was one in three hundred.

Dr Chris Busby was commissioned by *Stop Hinkley* to follow up earlier cancer studies which had shown excesses of breast cancer and leukaemia in the area adjacent to contaminated mud-flats between Hinkley and Burnham-on-Sea.

Dr Derek Pheby, former Cancer Registry head said these two findings were significant: "This is a serious finding, and most unlikely to have arisen by chance. The likelihood is that something happened environmentally at the beginning of the period in question and it is very likely, although this would be difficult to prove, that the accidental releases of radioactive material in 1994 to which the authors draw attention is implicated in this.

"Clearly this is a serious matter, which warrants further investigation. The South West Public Health Observatory [formerly the SW Cancer Registry] ought to take this seriously."

The ratio of male children born, compared with females was also studied in the report, as this is thought to be linked to radiation effects. The 'sex ratio' as it is known was found to be abnormal in

Burnham North at nineteen percent more boys born compared with girls. This ratio is a steady five percent higher in England and Wales but the Burnham statistic mirrors that of births in Hiroshima after the atom bomb contamination.

More supporting evidence of the Hinkley coastal effect was found by comparing infant mortality in distance bands from the contaminated Steart Flats. In years 1993-98 eleven infant deaths occurred when only six were expected within a close band of six kilometers.

A smaller proportion of ten deaths, against 6.5 expected, occurred between 6 and 12 kilometers but the trend reversed between 12 and 18 kilometers where 12 deaths occurred when 15 were expected. Outside the 18 kilometer band this healthier trend continued.

An accidental release of radiation from Hinkley A in 1994 led to a fine of £22,000 and may have been implicated in the extra deaths recorded, with a peak in 1995.

Documentary

The report is the subject for a documentary piece on 'Inside Out West' on Friday 29th February at 7.30pm on BBC West. In it we call for nuclear 'new build' plans to be abandoned and the Government radiation risk committee to be disbanded. BBC Points West is also expected to highlight the story during the same day, subject to other major stories not cropping up. A video of the news can be viewed on www.bbc.co.uk/bristol.

Previous studies:

- **Somerset Health Authority, 1998**

Dr Cameron Bowie found leukaemia in under 25's was 24% more prevalent near Hinkley Point from 1971-87.

1969-73 found nine cases when 2.27 were expected with a one chance in 1,700 of being coincidence. Hinkley A was commissioned in 1969. The study did not include Burnham and adjacent towns.

- **Dr Chris Busby, 2000**

Found breast cancer mortality excess of 89% (almost double) in Burnham North 1993-98. Low lying coastal downwind wards more affected than hilly areas.

- **Doorstep survey by Parents Concerned About Hinkley, 2002**

Interviews of 1,500 people in Burnham North showed breast cancer incidence double that expected and leukaemia three times that expected.

- **SW Cancer Intelligence Service, 2003**

Showed breast cancer registrations 24% extra from Berrow to Highbridge including Burnham with 33% excess in Burnham South over ten years to 2000. Leukaemia was 57% extra in the four wards. A follow-up showed Burnham South had 22% extra breast cancer incidence over 13 years. Author, Dr Julia Verne, claimed it was a random occurrence and, despite this being her first such paper, was promptly elected to the Government radiation risk committee, COMARE.

- **COMARE 2006**

Studied UK childhood cancers. Found excesses near nuclear weapons factories but not near nuclear power stations. *Stop Hinkley* criticised the paper for 'averaging' figures to a distance of 25 kilometers, including large unpolluted populations.

Against The Grain: It's hard to see why nuclear is the favoured route'

The Independent

Interview by Nick Jackson
Thursday, 14 February 2008

Dr Paul Dorfman is Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust Research Fellow and Senior Research Fellow at Warwick University. He argues that government policy on nuclear power is wrong.

The two core arguments made by the nuclear industry are security of supply and global warming. Let's take global warming first. If we were to rebuild our entire nuclear stock we would mitigate only 4 per cent of our CO2 emissions, so how can it be about global warming? If you're serious about CO2, then get serious about transport, or other forms of energy.

In terms of supply, the fear is that Russia will turn off the gas. Unfortunately, half our gas is directed to domestic heating and is far from readily replaceable by electricity from nuclear supply. Another percentage goes into industry, again not readily amenable to replacement. So maybe one-quarter of our gas is potentially replaceable.

On top of this, we're already getting a large gas pipeline from Norway, a friendly country. And soon we could be asking: where do we get our uranium from? If there's a large demand, we will run out in a matter of decades.

Once we go down the nuclear route we might not be able to get out of it, so you have to look at the risks. Old nuclear

facilities and new-builds are by the coast because they need large cooling facilities, and we're seeing waste stores alongside plants. With global warming, these nuclear facilities will be subject to floods and storms, and will need to be defended or replaced.

And the design that we're probably looking at is a very large piece of kit, with 5.5 times the radiological inventory of Chernobyl. If there's a mishap, there is the potential for great problems. And it is unproven; one is being built in Finland and one in France, but they have yet to pass European regulatory approval.

In terms of health, our fundamental understanding about radiation biology and radiation epidemiology is subject to large elements of uncertainty. And a very rigorous study by the German government last year, reported in the BMJ (British Medical Journal), shows a significant enhancement of leukaemia in children near to 16 West German nuclear reactors. And nobody wants to talk about these reactors' vulnerability to attack, but it can't be ignored.

The "no alternative to nuclear" argument is poor thinking. There is a lot we can do instead of nuclear power, with wind, wave and barrage sources and demand-side management.

So it's difficult to see why the Government made the decision to favour nuclear power. It's intriguing: one wonders what advice was taken to go down this route.

Ed: Paul Dorfman was the editor of a recent report by the Nuclear Consultation Group which criticised the Government's third Energy Review for being biased.

£73Bn - The true cost of closing down nuclear power stations

Western Daily Press, 30 January 08

Anti-nuclear energy campaigners and MPs have hit out after a report published today shows the cost of decommissioning Britain's ageing nuclear power sites, including three in the West, has risen to a staggering £73 billion.

The National Audit Office report said the cost of decommissioning 19 sites, including Hinkley Point A in Somerset, and Oldbury and Berkeley in Gloucestershire, had rocketed by £12 billion in the past four years.

It said the Government's Nuclear Decommissioning Authority needed to tackle "significant challenges" if a step change in decommissioning of facilities is to be achieved. Costs are rising rapidly, even for the most imminent work which was expected to have stabilised by now, said the report.

The authority estimated last year that the cost of decommissioning the sites over a 100-year period was £61 billion, with a further £12 billion to run operating sites to the end of their commercial life.

The new £73 billion total is 18 per cent higher than an estimate given in 2003, although this partly reflects a more complete assessment of the range of work needed, the report said. Jim Duffy, spokesman for the Stop Hinkley group, said yesterday he was not surprised to hear the official figure had risen sharply, and he believed the true cost was far higher.

Mr Duffy said: "You can add to that the cost to the taxpayer towards winding down AGR (advanced gas-cooled reactor) power stations like Hinkley B of about £5.2 million - and that's going to go up further in the future. Also the cost of disposing of or managing nuclear waste is not included in these figures - that

could be up to £20 billion to build shafts underground to store it, so overall, we're actually looking at a figure closer to £100 billion. The maths just don't seem to add up. It's an ongoing horizon of escalating costs."

Liberal Democrat Shadow Environment Secretary, and Northavon MP, Steve Webb said: "The price of dealing with existing nuclear waste has leapt by a staggering £17 billion in the last four years alone. Suggestions that costs may soar even further in the future are very disturbing.

"Since no one seems to know what the final cost for decommissioning will be, how can the Government promise that taxpayers will not end up bailing out the private sector? How much is it going to cost our children to clean up the mess left by the new generation of nuclear power stations being planned by this Government?"

Edward Leigh MP, Conservative chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, said: "Decommissioning relies, in part, on income from increasingly unreliable plants, and unforeseen expenses continually pop up. These factors combine and disrupt plans, slowing down the decommissioning process. The resulting start-and-stop' nature of work at some sites adds to the bill for the taxpayer."

Events

Stop Hinkley meeting

- Ring to check the date in March -

Contacts

Jim Duffy, Coordinator, newsletter editor:
117, Park Lane, Carshalton, SM5 3DX,
0208 395 6191, stophinkley@aol.com

Val Davey, Membership, treasurer,
website manager:

val@stophinkley.fsnet.co.uk

Website: www.stophinkley.org