



Newsletter May 2008

EDF buys Hinkley land for reactor

French Government-owned utility EDF has quietly bought up land next to Hinkley Point in a move which furthers the likelihood of two giant nuclear reactors being built there.

Bids are currently being made by EDF and possibly other mostly foreign electricity companies for British Energy, mainly so that new reactors can be built on favoured existing sites. At a British Energy 'community meeting' at Cannington recently British Energy and a BERR spokesman suggested that two reactors could be built at Hinkley.

But the problem is that there is only enough spare land owned by British Energy for less than one reactor. So EDF seems to be stealthily buying up a parcel of land that, together with British Energy's land, would accommodate two reactors and give them some leverage to reduce their bid for the company. The best land would be to the west of Hinkley on a site earmarked for a nine-turbine wind-farm whose developers are still in dispute with British Energy over 'land-use' issues. Land to the east is low lying and even more prone to flooding due to rising sea-levels.

EDF would like to build two 1600 megawatt reactors known as the European Pressurised Reactor at Hinkley, giving a total output of 3,200 megawatts, nearly three times that of Hinkley B (1250MW). The EPR is the biggest nuclear reactor in the world. It is undergoing problems where it is being built in Olkiluoto in Finland and Flamanville in northern France.

The Finnish project is £1 billion overspent with a two and a half year delay only two and a half years into its build. The wrong mix of concrete was put into the difficult foundations resulting in cracks and too much porosity. A steel containment vessel was produced by a sub-contracted Polish shipyard with wrongly placed holes and a wavy line at the bottom not a straight line, while welding was found to be inadequate.

Nuclear Consultants Large and Associates have produced a report saying that the reactor's defences are not adequate to withstand a deliberate heavy airliner crash, while the designers suggested in a memo to the French regulators it may not withstand acts of war which the state should protect it against.

At the restricted Cannington meeting members of the public aired their concern that highly radioactive spent fuel from the reactor would be stored on site for sixty years.

Jim Duffy from Stop Hinkley said: "Europe's largest power company is stealthily lining itself up to build the two biggest nuclear reactors in the world at Hinkley. I'm concerned about the hugeness of this project with its associated factors of safety and terrorism. The radiation just in the spent fuel stores would add up to forty times that released by Chernobyl."

"If the Government believes its own line that terrorism is an active threat we shouldn't go ahead with this ghastly plan."

Fears over new reactor for nuclear plant

Western Daily Press, 29 April 2008

Campaigners are furious to learn of plans for an unproven nuclear reactor.

If given the go-ahead, the proposals would mean a Westinghouse AP1000 model is used at the Oldbury site, South Gloucestershire, which is home to a corroded reactor.

The deal follows the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) decision to sell its nuclear sites to potential investors in nuclear new build. The NDA asked the Government for £400 million earlier this year to support its decommissioning of old sites such as Hinkley in Somerset.

Jim Duffy spokesman for Shut Oldbury and the Stop Hinkley campaign, said: "It's a great matter of concern that bids are going in to build this untested reactor with its odd money-saving design.

"It is doubtful regulators will have the resources to fully test and license these reactor designs in such a short period."

Ed: The Westinghouse website boasts cost cutting features on the "innovative" but untested AP1000:

50% fewer safety-related valves,

80% less safety-related piping,

85% less control cable,

35% fewer pumps,

45% less seismic building volume

Stop Hinkley believes nuclear reactors fare better with more, not fewer, safety systems. Large & Associates suggest the double-dome construction adds risks.

Hinkley faces closure over missing safety system

Hinkley Point B has been warned by the nuclear regulator that it faces being shut down this year if it does not fit a 'last resort' safety system at a cost of many millions.

Campaigners are astonished that the 'boron beads' system was never fitted as this leaves the ageing, cracked and corroded reactor vulnerable with only two lines of defence. A European Commission dossier on nuclear safety misleadingly confirms the existence of the shut-down system with information supplied by British Energy.

Advance Gas-cooled reactors (AGRs) are designed with three safety systems: the **control rods** and articulated control rods descend into the reactor core when it is 'tripped' and shut down the nuclear reaction. If that fails, now more likely as corrosion and cracks may obstruct the channels, then **nitrogen gas** is injected into the reactor. This temporary response depends on the reactor pressure for success. Water could also be used but both would fail if the reactor was leaking. The final line of defence is the '**boron beads**' system with boron beads or dust poured into the reactor core, soaking up the neutrons and, while probably meaning the end of the reactor, at least stops a runaway scenario.

Jim Duffy spokesman for Stop Hinkley said: "British Energy's mantra is safety is their priority but it's astonishing and criminal that a reactor can be built with this final line of defence missing, especially when it's part of the design. Even worse when the worst parts of the reactor core have now corroded by 25 percent compounding the surprise discovery of badly corroded boiler tubes within the reactor vessel last year.

"Who can trust a deceptive industry like this? Hinkley should shut down now and heads should roll."

The news emerged the day after Hinkley 'tripped' mysteriously on 8th May. British Energy offered no explanation to local journalists despite the obvious public interest, claiming the incident was 'commercially sensitive'.

Jim Duffy said: "No doubt British Energy wants to preserve its best price while the company is being sold off to Elictricite De France or other bidders. But they cannot use this as an excuse to hide from the public what's going wrong with this cracked and corroded reactor especially as the designed safety systems are not in place."

Response to Burnham infant mortality denial

Green Audit, whose study showed a three-fold excess of infant mortality in estuary populations near Hinkley Point, has responded to a short briefing paper by the South West Public Health Observatory which claimed no significant increases.

The Green Audit paper was supported by former Director of the SW Cancer Intelligence Service, Dr Derek Pheby and was the subject of a BBC 'Inside Out' documentary on February 29th. The Public Health Observatory's briefing declared it was being 'consistent' with Green Audit's research in response to concerns raised.

Dr Busby, author of the Green Audit study, questions how two organisations can reach such different conclusions based on the same figures from the Office of National Statistics.

The SWPHO paper declared it was "calculating infant and perinatal mortality rates in the group of estuary wards... and compared rates in these wards with the rest of Somerset ... in order to be consistent with the Green Audit definition."

Examining the briefing Dr Busby found that the Health Observatory had used different electoral wards to his research, had used wards which did not exist before the 1999 electoral ward changes and used a different time period.

The Health Observatory had also discussed cot death incidents which were irrelevant as they had not come under the hypothesis of radiation-induced cancers and mortality, most likely to be genetic defects and cancers.

Moreover Dr Busby had earlier reviewed a paper on infant mortality by the SW Health Observatory for a public health journal and recommended rejecting it due to similar 'sloppy work'.

Dr Busby said: "It is clear that rather than addressing the serious evidence of harm in those living close to a nuclear site and to investigate the specific findings of Green Audit, the SWPHO have devised a completely different study with the aim of fitting up the data in a way that will give them the ability to deny the evidence."

Jim Duffy, Stop Hinkley spokesman, said: "Rejigging Dr Busby's study while claiming to replicate it is the authorities' dishonest way of calming local concerns about Hinkley discharges. The public deserves much better investigation."

Ed: A new edition of 'Radioactive Times' has been published featuring the Burnham infant mortality research .

For a subscription send £10 payable to 'The Low-Level Radiation Campaign' to The Knoll, Montpellier Park, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5LW.

Tel 01597 824771.

Demand a consultation on costs of managing n-waste

Dear supporter, please write to the Government asking for a full public consultation on the industry costs of managing new nuclear waste.

Current proposals will cap these costs which are bound to spiral and will be underwritten by the tax-payer.

This process helps the Government aim of making nuclear new build more affordable to potential investors but the public will inevitably bear future costs.

Please write by May 16th to:

*Guidance Consultation, Nuclear Unit
Department for Business, Enterprise and
Regulatory Reform
Bay 125, 1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET*

Email: DecomGuidance@berr.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7215 3331

Warnings that British Energy is a risky proposition

The Herald 12th May 2008 (extracts)

Electricity companies would be mad to go ahead with their £7 billion takeover of British Energy, according to two leading industry authorities.

With the preliminary bidding deadline passed on Friday for the government's 35% stake in the East Kilbride nuclear power company, Professor Steve Thomas of Greenwich Business School in London said it was being made to look more attractive by high electricity prices. He believed that the bidders were in danger of buying at the top of the market.

He said: "The prices are insane. It's based on an assumption that fossil fuel prices will stay high forever, but there could be a collapse in prices in a surprisingly short time. "With oil prices at \$120 a barrel, a lot of producers are going to start finding a lot more oil and gas. You just need a hiccup in the world economy, say 5% more gas and 5% less demand, and you have got a collapse."

Stop Hinkley email news service

Supporters can keep up-to-speed and receive regular emailed news items and press releases related to Hinkley Point and Oldbury campaigning. Write to Jim at stophinkley@aol.com

Vacancy

Campaigner/Assistant Coordinator

Represent *Stop Hinkley* in TV and radio interviews, letters to newspapers and at local meetings.

12-22 hours per month, £6 per hour

Call or write to Jim, details below

Events

Stop Hinkley Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 3rd June, 7.30pm
West Bow House
Turn right after the Squib pub on
West Street, Bridgwater

Contacts

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

Val Davey, Membership, Treasurer,
website manager: 01460 240241,
val@stophinkley.fsnet

Website: www.stophinkley.org