



Newsletter December 2012

Reactor Extension Risks Another Fukushima

4 December 2012

The decision to extend the life of Hinkley B reactor in West Somerset by 7 years from 2016 has been condemned by local campaigners, who say it mirrors mistakes made at Fukushima, weeks before the accident there.

Press spokesperson from the Stop Hinkley campaign Theo Simon said, "This decision to prop up the aging and cracked reactor at Hinkley B well past its sell-by date is potentially very hazardous for all of us. The potential for a nuclear mishap at Hinkley B increases exponentially with age. We should remember that the oldest of the reactors at Fukushima Daiichi had been given a 10 year life-extension by government regulators just weeks before the tsunami caused cracked diesel generators to fail leading to a collapse of the cooling system."

"The recent flooding around Hinkley was a foretaste of the weather chaos we can expect in the next decades and makes the site, on the edge of the second highest tidal range in the world, increasingly vulnerable."

"EDF are obviously concerned about delays in their new Hinkley C project which mean that even if it gets the rubber stamp from government next year, there would be no new generation on site until the early 20s. It now looks increasingly likely that they may not raise the private investment they need to complete the project. This announcement about Hinkley B is designed to give a sense of moving forward, when in reality the nuclear project is stalling."

"It is only the complicity of government departments that is now keeping this project alive. We don't need old nuclear and we don't need new nuclear – we need a renewables revolution in the southwest."

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DAWN BLOCKADE LEAVES NUCLEAR WORKERS LOCKED OUT

23 November 2012

Ten protestors blockaded access to EDF energy's nuclear sites at Hinkley Point, preventing the morning shift from starting work. Four people in arm locks formed a barrier across the main access road at Wick Moor Drove in a bid to prevent further

ground clearance work at the planned Hinkley C site and to protest at EDF's plan to extend the life of aging reactors at the Hinkley B station. There were four arrests and the gates were blocked for four and a half hours with no workers getting in or out.

Sitting beneath a banner saying "Nuclear Power - not worth the risk" Bristol tree-surgeon Zoe Smith said, "We want the destruction of land at the proposed Hinkley C site to stop. EDF still don't have planning permission for the new nuclear plant, the governments energy policy is in tatters. With Centrica pulling out and the long awaited Electricity Reform Act delayed, there is not even enough investment to finish the project. If the Tories fix the electricity price for nuclear so that the project can go ahead it will leave high level radioactive waste stored here in ponds for hundreds of years. The serious flooding in this area just shows how dangerous this would be."

The early morning blockade caused long tailbacks for scores of workers contracted in to perform maintenance work on the existing reactors at Hinkley B, EDF have signalled their intention to relicence the reactor again in 2016.

Bridgwater mum Nikki Clark from South West Against Nuclear said, "Not only do we not need new nuclear, we certainly don't need to extend the life of the existing reactors even further. Just this year alone reactor no 4 in the B station has scrambled at least three times. EDF like to call these emergency shutdowns 'unplanned outages' but this deliberately conceals the fact that these ageing reactors are now in a dangerous condition. In 2008 the regulators threatened British Energy with closure of the site. The reactors do not have any fewer cracks in the graphite core now than they did then. "

Stop Hinkley spokesperson Theo Simon said, "We support this protest. New nuclear is dead in the water. We need public investment in a renewables revolution which could create a million climate jobs and cut energy bills through a programme of home insulation and energy-efficiency. With its massive marine energy resource, West Somerset is perfectly placed to lead the way in renewables."



Nuclear giant EDF postpones decision on new Hinkley Point reactor

UK energy policy cast into doubt after company breaks pledge to make investment decision by end of 2012

The Guardian 7 Dec 2012

EDF has postponed its decision on whether to build a new power station at Hinkley Point.

The delay puts the nuclear renaissance at the heart of the UK government's energy plans into further doubt after a difficult week in which EDF was hit by cost overruns and the exit of its partner from a key French project.

The new reactors at Hinkley were to be the first of a new generation of atomic plants in the UK and EDF had repeatedly pledged to make a final investment decision by the end of 2012.

But the decision to plough billions of pounds into the project is now unlikely to be taken before April 2013, according to sources close to the project, although EDF declined to comment.

"This is another broken promise from EDF on a policy that has always been failing," said Tom Burke, the founding director of the green think-tank E3G. To spend at least £14bn on a pair of reactors at Hinkley is very, very high risk."

The latest projections from the Department of Energy and Climate Change have reduced the amount of nuclear power expected in future, with only Hinkley expected to be up and running by 2025, he added.

The energy secretary, Ed Davey, fast-tracked negotiations over the guaranteed price EDF would be paid for electricity from Hinkley to help the end-of-year deadline to be met.

However, amid concerns that consumers would end up paying a high price, the energy minister John Hayes recently warned that the government could walk away from the talks.

It also comes in a week that EDF admitted that the cost of building its prototype European pressurised reactor (EPR) at Flamanville in Normandy had risen by €2bn (£1.6bn) to €3.5bn. The following day EDF's partner in the Flamanville 3 scheme, Enel of Italy, announced that it was pulling out.

EDF said in 2005 that it would construct the EPR, which is similar to the ones planned for Somerset, for €3.3bn. The cost overruns and delays have partly been blamed on changes required after the Fukushima accident but they have also been put down to engineers discovering the project was more difficult than they had foreseen.

Reports from Nikki Clark

Department of Energy and Climate Change NGO Forum

In the middle of October I attended the DECC NGO Forum on behalf of Stop Hinkley. The Forum is an ad-hoc group of NGOs with an interest in Nuclear power/waste/storage. Whilst the forum provides an opportunity for us to engage with the government directly at a fairly high level (the energy minister usually graces us with his presence at some point), I'm fairly suspicious of the governments motivation in holding this forum.

My concern is that the forum is the government's attempt to co-opt the opposition. However despite this many think that it is too important an opportunity to turn down and so we go.

The subject of the main forum meeting on this occasion was the political, technical and legal questions around the storage of radioactive waste and where this is at in terms of both new build and legacy waste. The papers submitted by the NGO's and the DECC's pitiful responses haven't gone up on their website yet (the head of the OND, Hergen Hayes who co-chairs the forum, apologised for the shoddy reply and promised us another reply in due course). The papers are therefore available on request in the meantime.

Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE)

The second meeting the next day was a panelled discussion with some of the members of COMARE responsible for their 14th Annual report. Dr Ian Fairlie and Alfren Korbelin, independent consultants, were attending on behalf of the NGOs. Fairlie and Korbelin have produced a joint paper critiquing the COMARE 14th report, itself a response on behalf of the government to the KIKK study that came out of Germany in recent years. The KIKK study revealed a correlation between infant leukaemia in the under fives and proximity to nuclear power stations.

The meeting outlined the issues raised by critics of the COMARE report and the responses of COMARE to them. A draft outline of the meeting is available on the DECC NGO forum website http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting_energy/nuclear/forums/non_gov_org/non_gov_org.aspx

2013 Subscription Renewals: Renewal reminders are enclosed with this newsletter. Those of you who pay by standing order have the luxury of not having to worry about it. If you haven't set up an SO please consider doing so, as it saves us both time and trouble.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support, which has enabled Stop Hinkley to keep up the fight against nuclear power in Somerset. Hinkley C is intended as one of the first of the new round of nuclear power stations in the UK, so our campaign is important on a national as well as local level.

Two-in-a-row

Strike 1

There hasn't been a quiet moment since the end of the Stop New Nuclear Camp and trespass back in October. With the flood waters rising and the government's Energy Bill looming, campaigners from groups across the south of England decided to turn up the heat on the Government, EDF and potential investors.

On the 23rd November activists from Southwest Against Nuclear blockaded Hinkley at dawn catching EDF and Group 4 Security off-guard. They prevented the shift change from happening,

causing a great deal of chaos and costing EDF a great deal of money.

The B station was still in the last few days of its statutory outage and there were large numbers of workers and equipment waiting to get on site. Some workers were annoyed as they couldn't get in to work, while still others went home with a full day's pay having done no work, whilst others got turned away with no pay – this highlights the lack of equality in terms of pay and benefits for the workers.

The police eventually resorted to bringing in their specialist cutting teams to remove the blockaders from the road. After over an hour the blockaders were finally removed and arrested. They were subsequently charged with obstruction of the highway and are due in front of magistrates in Taunton on December 19th.

Strike 2

No sooner had they got out of the road at Hinkley on the Friday than an all female group of Sizewell Blockaders turned up at EDF's Sizewell facility on Monday 26th November.

Despite the blockade of the previous working day we were still able to turn up and catch EDF's security with their trousers down! They had one patrol vehicle at the gates when we arrived as they were obviously nervous. Despite this we jumped out of our vehicles in the pouring rain and 'locked on' across the main road instead of the station entrance.

Our support team quickly pulled a vehicle onto the pavement to prevent traffic from using the pavement to bypass us. Despite the awful weather we remained on the ground for a staggering seven hours and again were cut out by specialist cutting teams. The equipment they used had British Energy labels all over it, so clearly they are paying for the equipment for policing our protests.



This blockade was to highlight the amount of waste already piling up at Sizewell were EDF have just been granted permission for dry storage on-site, despite the severe flood risk the area faces over the coming century. We were all arrested then taken for a nice warm rest and a nap at her majesty's pleasure in nearby Ipswich. After all of the taking of fingerprints and 'processing' we were all mysteriously released with a caution (except for one person who decided that they wanted to go to court).

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Street Stalls and other events

Jo Smoldon and her team have been running street stalls in Wellington, Bridgwater, Minehead and other towns. They pass out leaflets and talk to the public and press about the issues. If you think you could run or help run a street stall contact Jo on 01278 459 099 or josephine.smoldon@virgin.net

At the end of September we went to the Under One Sun Festival and Fete at the EMN Hall at Monksilver, West Somerset. Stop Hinkley took over a corner of the green to update people about Hinkley. Theo Simon led a discussion in the afternoon which illuminated the problems with nuclear power.

On 16th October we took the Stop Hinkley message across the water to Cardiff Bay where Nikki Clark was one in a long line up of speakers over the day of events. Welsh choirs were a memorable sound alongside street theatre of red Welsh dragons pushing away trident submarines forever. Despite a chilling wind from the estuary they were able to pass out many leaflets to people walking along the waterfront on their lunch break, curious to see what was happening on the Senedd Steps.

On 20th October we took part in the 'For a Future that Works' march in London. Carrying the banner 'RENEWABLES NOT NUCLEAR' the radio-active waste barrel costumes came into their own as we marched through the streets of London to the click of many cameras as the yellow glow cylinders caught the eye of fellow marchers and onlookers alike.

We started the march by joining with the climate change crowd on the steps of St. Pauls and joined the main throng (estimated in excess of half a million people) which wound its way along the embankment, Parliament, passing Downing Street, through main shopping streets to Hyde Park, distributing Stop

Hinkley leaflets and newspapers on the way. We stopped at the Japanese embassy for group members to do a colourful photo shoot on the steps, making particular connection to our friends overseas in Japan who are still battling with the aftermath of Fukushima.

On 31st October we were at Taunton Magistrates Court: in support of people arrested during the blockade. Despite being a dead-end residential road we waved the banners and flags and to our amazement a van driver turned up and voiced his encouragement to us and gave £20 to the cause. It helped us in the cold and wet to know we represent many in our protests.

The radio-active barrel costumes were worn again at the Bridgwater carnival. Prior to the start of carnival, as the crowds started to gather, we distributed the leaflet Alternatives to Nuclear Power: The lights won't go out! Many interesting conversations were had at the street stalls adjacent to Angel Place and in the precinct with visitors and locals alike. Despite being among vast crowds our presence was felt.

For the Weston-super-Mare carnival an even bigger barrel costume team joined up with WSM Green Party to mass leaflet the crowds outside the Italian Gardens. The Western Mercury came out to record our presence and the crowds were suitably informed of their position downwind of the proposed Hinkley C radio-active waste storage dump.



Now in the habit of pulling on the yellow barrels we took them to London on 14th November to stand across the door of DECC. Then on to the Treasury for more photos and to deliver letters of complaint. More 'fun' was had in a rush hour packed underground as we distributed leaflets and explained about our costumes, waving our hastily made 'No Subsidies for Nuclear' placards. Londoners were not slow to ask us what we were doing as we made our way along the streets paved with gold!



New Stop Hinkley Press Team

The new press contacts and spokespersons for Stop Hinkley are Theo Simon and Nikki Clark.

Theo has been a great supporter of our campaign, is a very eloquent speaker and an excellent writer. His article 'Why I continue to fight the Hinkley nuclear plant next door' can be read at <http://www.chinadialogue.net/books/5309/en> He may be better known to some of you as the lead vocalist of local band Seize the Day.

Nikki is mother to two children and over the years has been active with various community projects in Bridgwater as well as spending time as a school governor and a local organic food co-op organiser. She studied for a degree in Environmental Studies with the Open University. Upon completion she became actively involved with Stop Hinkley and has been campaigning against nuclear power for the last three years. She had an article published in the Ecologist earlier this year which can be seen here

http://www.theecologist.org/blogs_and_comments/commentators/other_comments/1240155/campaigners_say_no_to_nuclear_new_build_at_hinkley_point.html

Events

Stop Hinkley business meetings Mondays
14th January & 11th February at 7.30pm
West Bow House, Milton Place
(behind the Squibb pub)
West Street, Bridgwater

Witch Watch 27th December
last lay-by before the gates of Hinkley Point

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