



Newsletter

December 2007

Third reactor plan is met with anger

**Bridgwater Times, front page
1st December 2007**

The prospect of a third nuclear power station at Hinkley Point has been met with anger by anti-nuclear campaigners.

In readiness for a Government decision on the future of nuclear power early next year, British Energy this week named four possible sites for reactors: Hinkley Point; Sizewell in Suffolk; Dungeness in Kent; and Bradwell in Essex.

But campaigners against nuclear power reacted angrily to the likelihood of Hinkley C becoming a reality. Stop Hinkley spokesman Jim Duffy said: "We don't need a Hinkley C, which will cost us dearly in terms of subsidies, a lost opportunity to combat climate change and, not least, in people's worries over safety. The Government has been wooed into accepting this plan, throwing away the chance to promote renewables, local-scale generation and energy efficiency. We should follow the Scottish Parliament's progressive lead in this direction."

British Energy announced on Tuesday that the National Grid had agreed to create extra capacity on the electricity network for up to 10GW of power generated by new reactors at the favoured four sites from 2016. The company has also commissioned engineering consultants Halcrow to look into the effects climate change and possible flooding could have on the four sites. Halcrow says a flood protection wall at Hinkley could be extended and, if a new plant is set back from the cliff line, there would be no flood risks predicted for the elevated site.

British Energy has also commissioned geological, environmental and marine studies to assess the impact of building new stations and will be involved in talks with community groups based near each of the sites.

British Energy head of strategy and business development Paul Spence said: "These activities are part of our on-going preparations to ensure that our sites are well placed for consideration as candidates for replacement nuclear power stations, if Government allow private sector generators that option. Assessing and protecting against the potential effects of climate change on our sites, which are all on the coast, is important for today's fleet and for any possible replacement nuclear build programme.

"The connection agreements give us the flexibility we need to accommodate a variety of plans for the future. They also give National Grid as much time as possible to plan and implement any infrastructure works that may be needed to allow for future stations."

Mr Duffy also voiced fears about the security of nuclear installations, saying: "The industry's jitters about terrorism were shown to me recently when I was stopped no less than four times outside the power station by police or security while filming with a regional TV company. This technology requires stringent security but one day it might fail, with unthinkable consequences."

Editor: A recent Greenpeace-commissioned study says that sea-levels could achieve a six-metre rise by the end of the century if the polar ice-caps melt, in

contrast to the British Energy study predicting a mere 0.9 metre rise.

It is not clear who will pay the £2 billion cost of upgrading the national grid to accept power from new 1650 Megawatt reactors. But nuclear operators are sure to trim costs wherever the taxpayer can pick them up.



Mixed feelings as Hinkley gets five more years

Western Daily Press, 12th Dec 2007

Nuclear firm British Energy has sparked jubilation and outrage by extending the life of Somerset's Hinkley B power station for at least five years.

Unions yesterday joined the company in celebrating the news as being good for jobs at the plant, which is one of the county's biggest employers.

But anti-nuclear campaigners said they still had concerns about the Bristol Channel site, which had been due to close in 2011 but would now continue until at least 2016.

It has been a turbulent time for Hinkley B. It was off-line for nine months until May while cracks in boiler tubes and graphite problems were fixed at a cost of millions of pounds. In the summer the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) said it would not carry out its next major safety review until 2017, effectively giving the power station a clean bill of health for another decade.

British Energy will now keep the plant open for at least five years, and said it may extend that further in the future. Station director Nigel Cann said: "This is great news for all of us at Hinkley Point B and for everyone in the Somerset community. The decision means we can continue to provide highly skilled jobs and bring major investment to the area. It also shows that British Energy recognises the professionalism and commitment of our

staff in safely supplying low carbon electricity for more than 30 years."

Hinkley B employs about 535 full-time staff as well as 150 contracted workers and brings in an estimated £30 million a year to the local economy. It has produced 215 Terawatt hours (TWh) of electricity since first linking to the National Grid in 1976. British Energy claims it has so far saved about 140 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere, the equivalent of the entire population of Bristol reducing its carbon emissions to zero.

But Jim Duffy, of campaign group Stop Hinkley, said a five-year extension indicated British Energy had the jitters over long-term safety at the plant, which he believed was very fragile.

He said: "They've been saying all the while they wanted to get a 10-year extension to Hinkley Point and to actually say they're going ahead with a five-year extension, in a sense, means they are jittery and nervous about this reactor.

"When the NII gave them the 10-year licence there were a lot of caveats about what British Energy would have to do. We do not think they will have been able to do all of that work and from their point of view they seem to be going for the middle ground with an extra five years. We still think there are a lot of things to be concerned about. We believe they could do more to make it safer."

But station director Nigel Cann said: "If there were any jitters whatsoever about safety the plant would not be running at all. Because of the issues we've had in the past year we wanted to extend the life of the plant in two stages. We felt five years was an appropriate step given the information we've got in terms of both the plant and the market. There is still a capacity to extend its operation further."

Last month, British Energy said the plant, near Bridgwater, was one of its favoured sites for a new nuclear reactor to be built in the next decade, likely to be called Hinkley C. The National Grid has agreed

to create extra capacity on the electricity network for up to 10GW of power generated by new reactors from 2016.

Hinkley B was due to be decommissioned in 2011 and it is costing the energy giant millions to extend its lifespan. Hinkley A, which opened in 1965, stopped generating power in 2000 and is still being decommissioned.

Tom Armstrong, a representative of trade union Prospect, said Hinkley staff were delighted with yesterday's news. "This life extension is a major bonus for the station," he said. "It's the result of a tremendous amount of hard work by everyone involved, both on and off site, to secure a further five years of safe, reliable generation - an achievement of which we are all very proud."

But Stop Hinkley's Mr Duffy disputed the job-saving argument. He said: "There will be as many jobs retained if it is decommissioned, there are still as many people working at Hinkley A as there were when it was in operation seven years ago."

Editor: Members may recall the regulator's comments on Hinkley's cracked graphite core reported in the Guardian in July 2006: "There is an increased likelihood of increased risk should we agree to continued operation." Recently inspectors said weakened reactor support struts could undermine the graphite safety case.



Expert outlines risk of n-waste burial scheme

A former Government nuclear advisor told a packed meeting in Watchet of the risks and misunderstandings surrounding the Government's plan to find a site to bury the UK's most toxic nuclear waste.

Over sixty people heard Pete Wilkinson, former member of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, express

his concern over the committee's recommendations to bury High Level Waste in a Deep Geological Repository. Even if geological conditions were not ideal at a site such as Hinkley Point, he said, the Government would still be keen to explore any offer from a community willing to host the repository.

Mr Wilkinson, founder member of Greenpeace UK and Friends of the Earth, highlighted important shortcomings which had not been addressed by the Government in its haste to make progress on the waste issue before launching a new generation of nuclear power stations. These included:

- Despite the one million year activity of the n-waste, its packaging and the repository's concrete backfill is forecast to corrode and leak within 150 years
- CoRWM had recommended more research in this area which the Government has skipped
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority is so cash-strapped it may omit lining material to help secure the vaults
- The cost of a deep repository is estimated at £12 to £20 billion
- Spent fuel from new reactors would add to the existing 500,000 cubic metre stockpile leading to a second deep repository
- 10,000 spent fuel elements, each four metres long, from a future Boiling Water Reactor would need to be cased in three inch thick copper then bound in stainless steel, vastly adding to the nuclear industry's total carbon footprint
- The health risks to nearby communities are calculated on a cost/benefit analysis and have not been fully researched

Mr Wilkinson felt that CoRWM had misunderstood the findings of a survey put to stakeholders. A high number had

prioritised 'Phased Deep Disposal' as a method compared with 'Permanent Disposal'.

He felt the public had listed this preference in order to favour the ability to retrieve the waste packages compared with an irreversible disposal process but this had not been clarified by the committee who misinterpreted the poll as an endorsement of the Deep Disposal plan now being pushed by the Government. He felt a key issue to the waste management is the ability to retrieve any waste if necessary.

Jim Duffy, spokesman for Stop Hinkley, spoke of his concern over the time and resources put into key nuclear industry committees by local councils. He said two Sedgemoor chiefs, together with their supporting council officers, currently sit on one particular group which discusses options for nuclear waste.

Apart from 'Hinkley' councillors the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum just has representatives from Sellafield and Dounray where the High Level Waste is stored. The suspicion is they may be positioning Hinkley for the proposed Deep Repository. He referred to a West Somerset Council Cabinet document which promoted a plan for the two neighbouring councils to apply for cash incentives for a low level waste site. The same paper suggested incentives could be available for commissioning as well as nuclear waste activities, so council chiefs may also be lobbying for Hinkley C to be built, hoping for a direct cash return.

But he fed back to the meeting that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority had since denied any mechanism existed to pay cash to councils for accepting a Low Level Waste site.

Jim Duffy said: "If a council wanted to get short-term cash in return for the long term risks from a deep nuclear waste repository, then Sedgemoor and West Somerset are doing exactly what's needed. We will be writing to the Government in its nuclear waste

consultation to say these bribes are wrong and deep disposal is the wrong answer to this serious problem."

Lorna Scott, from Forum 21 who co-hosted the meeting said: "We're pleased that such a wide range of people from as far as Bath and the Mendips came to discuss this issue. Forum 21 will be keeping an eye on local developments in the industry."

Since the meeting we've heard Defra will not announce on nuclear waste till mid 2008, months after the expected January announcement on nuclear new build.

Campaigner

Following our advert, two keen people have expressed an interest in sharing the Stop Hinkley Assistant Coordinator post.

Events

Stop Hinkley meeting
Ring or check www.stophinkley.org for the date in January -



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.co.uk

Website: www.stophinkley.org

