



Newsletter June 2014

UK will have to gamble with nuclear safety to provide power, analyst warns

The Guardian, 4 June 2014

Britain may have to stretch safety limits on nuclear power stations to keep the lights on, warned a leading energy analyst on Wednesday.

Dorian Lucas, a nuclear specialist at energy consultancy, Inenco, made his comments after it was revealed that power group, EDF, had won permission to change the rules for its Dungeness B station.

"Britain has no choice but to gamble with extending the safety limits of the country's ageing fleet of nuclear power plants to avoid the looming spectre of 1970s-style blackouts," said Lucas.

The atomic power station in Kent has come to an agreement with the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) that it can have the margin increased on the shrinkage of the graphite bricks inside the reactor from 6.2% to 8%.

The bricks are losing weight due to decades of radiation but a spokeswoman for EDF said the new limit was only a "teeny little step" that was well within the most conservative safety case.

In a statement, the nuclear regulator said: "ONR would not allow continued operation of any nuclear reactor unless it was safe to do so. We recognise the challenges presented by ageing of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR) fleet in the UK, and we continue to pay close attention to the problems associated with the graphite core of the reactors. We are satisfied that the reactors are safe to operate."

But Steve Thomas, professor of energy policy at the University of Greenwich, told the BBC: "It doesn't feel good when we come up against limits and the first thing they [the ONR] do is to move the goalposts."

UK nuclear pathways

On 6th May Neil Crumpton gave a presentation to Stop Hinkley supporters regarding the government's long term plans of escalating new nuclear. Neil is an ex-Friends of the Earth anti-nuclear campaigner who currently represents a community group on the DECC-NGO nuclear Forum and the Office of Nuclear Regulation-NGO Forum.

All the major UK political parties (except the Green Party) support the construction of new nuclear power stations claiming it will address climate change, generate cost-competitive electricity and provide energy security. Last year the Coalition's nuclear 'Pathways' report and statements from ministers and chief advisers made it clear the planned 16 GW by 2025 new-build 'replacement' programme was now to be seen as just a 'first tranche'. The Pathways report detailed programmes of over 55 GW or more of light water reactors by 2040 and up to 75 GW by 2050, including possibly 20 GW of fast breeder reactors. This major escalation of the UK's nuclear ambitions, in its self-proclaimed quest to be a leader in a global nuclear renaissance, was the subject of the Stop Hinkley meeting.

The presentation outlined what, where and how such nuclear scenarios might be deployed and the implications for radio-active waste, proliferation and non-nuclear technologies. It proposed that such 'pathways' should be subject to a major re-consultation of the public and a legal 're-justification' in the light of emerging technologies, health detriments and world events.

His 40 minute presentation was followed by a full and powerful debate over all the issues, and more, and kept us all captivated with the subject till we succumbed to late night tea and cake!

Hear Neil's presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRwbppL9ix8>

See his slides <http://www.stophinkley.org/NeilCrumptonBridgwater%20.pdf>

Stop Hinkley's Response to the DECC Consultation on the management of overseas origin nuclear fuels held in the UK

We commissioned Dr Rachel E J Western, BA (Oxon) PhD MRSC to respond to the DECC consultation. Rachel worked for fifteen years as a Nuclear Researcher for Friends of the Earth, and for five years as a Consultant to 'Nirex', the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive. She was also a member of Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates

Her response takes an historical perspective set in the context of the proposal to build two additional nuclear reactors at Hinkley in Somerset. The fact that 'virtual reprocessing' – or 'not reprocessing' is proposed is to be welcomed. Unfortunately the decision to not reprocess should have been taken much earlier. At the Planning Stage it was quite clear that THORP was not needed. The same is true for the proposed Hinkley C Power Station.

You can find the document on the Stop Hinkley website:

<http://www.stophinkley.org/WManDecom/DECC-Cons-Overseas-Fuel27May2014.pdf>

Security fears at nuclear plants

Sunday Post, 11 May 2014

Security at Britain's nuclear power stations is being breached eight times every month, sparking safety fears.

An investigation by The Sunday Post has discovered lapses such as broken CCTV cameras or door alarms, which may have left incredibly sensitive plants open to trespassers.

But the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) which released the data, has been accused of a cover-up after it refused to release details of the breaches.

Figures obtained under freedom of information (FOI) laws revealed there have been 398 security breaches since 2010.

Experts fear the number could be even higher because the ONR has changed its definition of what poses a security risk to the UK's nuclear power stations. Last night independent nuclear expert John Large said: "It is deeply worrying that the ONR admits there are existing weaknesses and vulnerabilities in the nuclear plants.

But on matters of nuclear safety and more so in security of nuclear facilities the ONR is compulsively secretive — so much so that it will not engage in any public debate.

"It is holding back all of the information that could provide the public at large with independent analysis."

One lapse happened when a coach driver found a computer memory stick containing sensitive business information about Sellafield, Cumbria, in a hotel in 2010. Craig Bevan discovered the device on the floor of his room at the Ennerdale Country House.

Other breaches in the last four years have included trespassers climbing barbed wire-topped fences or restricted documents being sent via email by mistake.

The FOI disclosures reveal there were 42 security breaches recorded last year. In 2012, there were 121, with 116 in 2011 and 145 in 2010.

But the regulator has kept secret the circumstances in hundreds of cases. It believes revealing specific details — even disclosing the locations of where they happened — could lead to attacks from saboteurs or terrorists.

Dr David Lowry, a research consultant, obtained a report by auditors KPMG pointing out security breaches at Sellafield.

The report revealed that, between April 2012 and November last year, there were 11.5 "security events" every month.

Last night, Dr Lowry said: "There should be no repeats of same or similar security failures or vulnerability.

"If they could not put right a security problem, they should have closed the plant until they can."

In a response to our information request, an ONR spokesman said it encourages reporting lapses even those which have "little or no impact" on security.

A new civilian guard force has been created at Dounreay in Caithness. It will be supporting officers from the Civil Nuclear Constabulary who will concentrate on armed protection duties guarding nuclear materials in transit. The remainder of nuclear fuel at Dounreay is set to be transferred 400 miles to Sellafield in Cumbria. Campaigners claim transfers run the risk of terrorist attack.

THE nuclear industry is facing a shortage of inspectors as it starts the most ambitious civil nuclear programme in British history.

Reactors worth at least £60bn will be built across the country and tens of billions will be spent clearing up nuclear waste from Sellafield and Dounreay.

Les Philpott, deputy chief executive of the ONR said there has been a "massive" recruitment drive for technical staff. But he admitted the organisation was "running just to stand still."

10 April 2014 at Hinkley Point



The sun shone on our special visitors to the Hinkley gates in April.

Dr Molly Scott Cato, lead Green Party European candidate in the South West, and Caroline Lucas, Green Party MP, had lead story in the media that day.

They were both there in response to the EU consultation advising that UK Government support for Hinkley C does not conform to EU state aid rules. Dr Scott Cato has accused the government of providing a 'back door' subsidy to EDF.

Over eighty supporters turned up, which is impressive bearing in mind that there was one week's notice for the event! Many thanks to all the helpers.

Euro elections: Stroud's Molly Scott Cato is first Green MEP for south west

www.gloucestercitizen.co.uk May 26

Her victory came at the expense of long-standing Liberal Democrat Sir Graham Watson who lost his seat in the European Parliament.

Olympic gold medal winning rower James Cracknell also failed to pick up a seat for the Conservatives, who saw their number of places reduces from three to two – Ashley Fox and Julie Girling were re-elected.

Labour's Clare Moody took a seat for Labour, who had won no seats at the previous election

Dr Cato, who picked up 11.2 per cent for the Green Party, said: "I knew it would be very close and possible for the Greens to win. With the electoral system it wasn't certain and it was quite a tense evening.

"It is fantastic that the south west now has a Green voice in Europe."

Promising news from Economics Conference

Report by Theo Simon

In April I got a promising glimpse of the bigger anti-nuclear picture in Europe, when I went to a conference in Prague called "Economic limits of the nuclear power industry". Arriving in Prague by overnight bus, I quickly discovered how alive, intelligent and united our colleagues in the European resistance are. And I was impressed how our struggle against Hinkley C was at the front of their minds, whether they came from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Germany or Austria.

The conference was called by "Bohemian Mothers Against Atomic Danger" and the Czech Friends of the Earth, but the attendees were not just activists, but also euro-officials, energy planners and European media. The key session for me was when Austrian Franz Leidenmühler, from the Institute of European Law, Linz University, analysed the EU Competition Commission's damning report on the Hinkley C deal in detail, and I was much encouraged to hear that their findings left very little wriggle-room for the UK government if any.

I had a discussion afterwards with the speaker, who had good inside knowledge of EU procedures. He told me he was pretty sure that the current EU legal opinion - that Hinkley C was receiving an illegal and unnecessary state subsidy - would have to be upheld because the case the Commission had made was so watertight. He explained that this would leave our government with only two options: Either go back to the negotiating table and hope that EDF will take less, or ignore the ruling and be heavily punished financially by EU sanctions.

This is particularly promising news because, as other presenters showed, globally the nuclear industry is very much on the wane and is being outstripped by renewables for price and efficiency across the world - obviously in Germany and Austria, but also in China. New Nuclear cannot raise the huge investment it needs or guarantee the returns it promises without fixing the energy market in it's favour and putting the costs on the public purse - exactly what is being proposed in Britain! It may be that EDF just cannot raise the investment for Hinkley C without the subsidy they have wrung from the Tory/LibDem government. They certainly are in no fit shape to pay for it themselves.

It will be ironic that, if Hinkley C stalls permanently, it may not be for rational reasons of public safety or common sense, but simply economics. I guess right now that as long as it collapses, I won't care why.

Update on the German situation

We pass on this message we received from Jan Haverkamp, Greenpeace campaigner on nuclear energy and expert on energy issues in Central Europe.

For those of you who have not followed the developments in Germany over the last three months: The big utilities RWE, E.ON, Vattenfall and EnBW have proposed to the German government that all remaining nuclear power stations be put into a "bad bank" in public hands, and that this company then runs them until they are to be phased out and is then responsible for decommissioning and waste.

The proposal falls rather bad in the German population, but there are a few elements which are interesting. The big four now first of all make clear that the nuclear phase-out is standing strong. Secondly, that they have to admit that their continued focus on nuclear was a bad business model. Thirdly, they admit that there are large risks on the horizon concerning decommissioning and waste costs. What would be indeed good is if the capital that is gathered for decommissioning and waste - which is now still fully in the hands of the big four - would partly be brought under public control. Who knows when one or more of the big four go bankrupt and then nothing is remaining of those funds. Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility for decommissioning and waste, incl. costs, is something that should remain fully in the hands of those that have profited from nuclear operation: the utilities.

Parallel to this debate runs the debate about waste management and disposal.

As outsider, I remain positively surprised about the liveliness of the German debate and that citizens do not take any bullshit (well - maybe... for instance FoE Germany - BUND - has taken the controversial decision to break the NGO boycott of the radwaste commission and is now entering that commission). I wish our wonderful colleagues in the GPDE office and all our friends a lot of strength and success to bring the German Energiewende to a successful and inspiring conclusion

Events

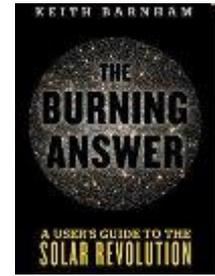
**Stop Hinkley social meetings at 7.30pm
Mondays July 7th & August 4th
West Bow House, Milton Place
off West Street, Bridgwater TA6 3RT**

**See Events page on Website for more
information**

THE BURNING ANSWER

**A User's Guide to the Solar Revolution
by Keith Barnham**

Keith is a Stop Hinkley member and Emeritus Professor of Physics at Imperial College London. He answers the burning question of our age: how to supply the power our society demands while avoiding environmental catastrophe. The threat of global warming, oil depletion and nuclear disaster is ever-present. There is a growing risk of environmental damage from fracking and shale-oil extraction, deforestation and drilling for fossil fuels in sensitive environments.



Allan Jeffery commented on the book: This is a very readable book, though it is a long book with a lot of detailed information. Having just started reading I am very Impressed with the way he explains everything. Einstein introduced us to two very important equations, one led to nuclear fission and the probable nuclear destruction of our civilisation, the other equation led to the semiconductor revolution giving us laptops, mobile phones and electricity from sunlight, and the future solar revolution.

I particularly like the first chapter where he takes the words from Joni Mitchell's Woodstock, explaining why "We are stardust!" This book looks like a bible of information for me to read!

As Jeremy Leggett says " A tour de force by a renowned solar physicist...Buy it, read it and help us save the planet."

Contacts

Press & Spokespersons:

Theo Simon: theo@stophinkley.org
01749 860767 or 07455 325961

Nikki Clark: nikki@stophinkley.org 07736 930069

Local Information: Allan Jeffery

ajjeffery@talktalk.net 01278 425451

Street Stalls: Jo Smoldon:

josephine.smoldon@virgin.net 01278 459 099

Membership/Treasurer/Website:

Val Davey: val@stophinkley.org
8 The Bartons, Yeabridge. S Petherton TA13 5LW

www.stophinkley.org