



Newsletter April 2012

IPC Starts Hinkley C Decision Process

Over 300 people packed the Sedgemoor Auction Centre near Bridgwater on Wednesday 21 March for the preliminary meeting on EDF's application to construct the Hinkley C nuclear reactors. Many expressed their opposition to the plan because of its dangers, risks and long term legacy of radioactive waste, even though these subjects are expressly excluded from consideration by the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) in charge of the process.

The IPC, a new body created by the government to "fast track" large infrastructure projects, will take six months to complete its "examination". The government has already decided its policy on nuclear power, however, calling for the construction of up to ten power stations around the country, and therefore banned the IPC from considering any issues related to nuclear safety. The final say will rest with the Secretary of State for Energy.

The vast majority of the IPC process will be by written submission, with only a limited number of "open floor" hearings for the public to have its say. These will be held in Stogursey, Combwich, Cannington and Bridgwater, although requests were made for other venues, including Bristol. There will also be some "issue specific" oral hearings on subjects such as the effect on local communities and traffic.

The meeting heard many supporters of Stop Hinkley say that they considered the proposal to be dangerous and unnecessary because of the risks of a serious accident if French EPR reactors were installed. One speaker said that the panel of Commissioners due to consider EDF's case should take on board "the utter and complete opposition to nuclear power from the public". Stop Hinkley member Charlie Graham said that "people need to be convinced that their involvement will have an effect and be taken into account".

Stop Hinkley presented a list of issues which should be considered by the IPC, including the

risk of flooding, radioactive waste storage and emergency planning.

The two local Councils – Sedgemoor and West Somerset – argued that they had inadequate resources to deal with EDF's 30,000-page application and asked for more money or more time to consider it properly. Neither request was granted, although the IPC has still to reach a final decision on the timetable.

Outside the venue, Stop Hinkley supporters held flags and banners and handed out leaflets pointing out the subjects which the IPC would not allow to be discussed.

There was strong criticism of the way in which the meeting was conducted, with chairman Andrew Phillipson taking a heavy-handed approach to everybody who tried to speak. Many people were cut off before they had even got going. The venue, designed as a market hall, was totally inappropriate, with poor acoustics and cramped seating. Stop Hinkley issued a press release about the way the meeting was run (see <http://www.stophinkley.org/PressReleases/pr120322.pdf>).

IPC Deadline

The deadline for submitting your full representation to the IPC (if you are registered as an "interested party") is **3 May**. Stop Hinkley's suggestion is that you include any subject you consider relevant, including nuclear safety.

For further information on the Hinkley C application:

<http://infrastructure.independent.gov.uk/projects/south-west/hinkley-point-c-new-nuclear-power-station/>

or visit EDF's offices in King Square, Bridgwater to read hard copies of the documents.

Hinkley Surrounded by 1,000 on Fukushima Anniversary

Over 1,000 people surrounded the Hinkley Point site on 10 March to remember the first anniversary of the Fukushima disaster in Japan. This was the largest protest against construction of a nuclear power station in four decades.

At one stage people with banners and flags carrying the messages Nuclear Power No Thanks and Remember Fukushima stretched right round the 2½ mile perimeter fence of both the closed Hinkley A power station, Hinkley B, due to close in a few years, and the fields where EDF plans to build Hinkley C. Protesters came from all over the UK as well as Ireland, France and Taiwan.



Among those who addressed the crowd were Green MP Caroline Lucas, environmental campaigner Jonathon Porritt, Kate Hudson from CND and Makoto and Akiko Ishiyama, a Japanese couple who were evacuated from the area around Fukushima. “The government says it is now safe and they want local people to come back, but it’s a total lie,” said Makoto Ishiyama. “There is still a risk, it’s not safe and the accident isn’t over.”

Jonathon Porritt said that new nuclear power stations like Hinkley C could never operate without massive public subsidies towards their costs, including insurance and radioactive waste management.

There was also music from Seize the Day and a marching brass band, food and information stalls, bicycle-powered smoothies and a specially installed compost toilet.

The “Surround” protest was followed by the first ever 24-hour blockade of a UK nuclear power station. Over 100 people remained outside the main gate at Hinkley overnight - camping on the tarmac in makeshift tents. The blockade formally ended at 2pm on Sunday when Japanese Buddhist monks performed a prayer for the victims of the tsunami that precipitated

the Fukushima disaster and to urge the UK government to take a more enlightened view on energy provision.

The weekend’s events were organised by the Stop New Nuclear Alliance, which includes Stop Hinkley. Nancy Birch, spokesperson for the alliance, said: “This is a major victory for the anti-nuclear movement and a sign that the tide is turning against the government’s nuclear renaissance.”

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Barn occupiers evicted but EDF loses action against Stop Hinkley

The determined group of protesters who had occupied a deserted farmhouse in the middle of the Hinkley C construction site for over two weeks were finally evicted by High Court bailiffs on 29 March. The protest drew both regional and national media attention to the fact that EDF is planning to destroy 400 acres of countryside even before it has permission to build a new power station.

The eviction followed a court case at the High Court in London two days before in which EDF successfully applied for possession of the barn but failed in an attempt to ban a number of organisations, including Stop Hinkley, from entering the construction site – or encouraging anybody else to do so.

The injunction was rejected by the Judge on the basis that there was no evidence that the campaign and other organisations intended to encourage illegal activity.



Barn protesters Theo Simon and Nikki Clark outside the High Court in London with Stop Hinkley banner in background.

“This is a victory for free speech,” said Stop Hinkley spokesman Crispin Aubrey afterwards, “and our right to publicise events in opposition to the Hinkley C development on our website.”

During the eviction itself, two of the occupiers – Theo Simon and David Jesse – were arrested for obstructing the bailiffs and held in Bridgwater police station overnight.

At a court case the following day in Taunton, the magistrates quite rightly recognised that Theo and Dave were involved in a peaceful protest against nuclear power and handed out conditional discharges and no fines. The two were immediately released, to be met outside by one of the largest crowds of supporters the court had seen for some time.

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Nuclear giants RWE and E.ON drop plans to build new UK reactors

From The Guardian 29 March

The government's nuclear energy policy is in disarray after German utilities RWE and E.ON scrapped plans to build two reactors in the UK, prompting warnings of serious knock-on effects for jobs and economic growth.

Nuclear power is a cornerstone of the government's low-carbon agenda and the Horizon joint venture, co-owned by RWE and E.ON, was a key contributor due to its plans to construct new stations at Wylfa in Wales and Oldbury in Gloucestershire.

Progress on those projects was shelved on Thursday when Horizon's owners put the business on the market, citing doubts over financing the projects and costs associated with the German government's decision to abandon nuclear power in the wake of the Fukushima disaster.

"A combination of these strategic factors, together with the significant ongoing costs of running the Horizon joint venture, has led to a situation where capital investment plans have been reviewed," the companies said in a joint statement.

The decision sent shockwaves through the sector. A senior nuclear industry figure told the Guardian: "It's a total train wreck – you can't imagine the importance of this to the economy of north Wales. This programme is bigger than the whole Olympics. The government now has to try to find another buyer."

Horizon's owners had made the economic benefits of their plans a key part of their pitch, pledging to invest at least £15bn, creating a total of 800 permanent jobs at each site and employing 10,000 people during construction of Wylfa and Oldbury with construction due to begin on the first site in 2015.

Horizon had planned up to 6GW of new nuclear plants in Britain by 2025, encouraged by a government that has been more pro-nuclear than other countries with eight sites earmarked for development. The three companies

planning new nuclear power plants in the UK – EDF, Horizon and NuGen – were preparing to generate 16GW of electricity capacity from their new sites, enough to replace Britain's current nuclear output. Without new sites there will be only one operational nuclear plant left in the UK by 2023: Sizewell B in Suffolk.

France's EDF, the biggest player in nuclear power in the UK with four reactors under development and eight in operation, has been mooted as a potential buyer of Horizon. However, a bid is not thought to be likely although government sources said they were confident that the Wylfa and Oldbury sites would attract interest from other bidders.

EDF stood by plans to build two new plants at Hinkley Point in Somerset, with hopes to open the first in 2019, but a final investment decision is contingent on the government underwriting long-term electricity prices. EDF and other nuclear power companies are wary of investing multibillion pound sums in facilities without a guarantee on how quickly their investments will be paid off.

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Skylarks Under Threat

Stop Hinkley members have been closely monitoring plans by EDF contractors to remove hedgerows and other vegetation as part of preparation work for a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point.

Details of planning conditions agreed with West Somerset Council for "preparatory works" in relation to Hinkley C show that nests and eggs of breeding birds can be destroyed up to a distance of 250 metres from the coast. This is despite the fact that the peak breeding seasons falls between March and August. Birds potentially affected include a large population of skylarks.

Katy Attwater of Stop Hinkley said in a press statement: "EDF have manipulated UK planning law to allow them to begin major work without full planning permission. Skylarks are the sacrificial victims."

Over the rest of the site any active nests must be protected, but it is up to EDF's ecologist to ensure that this happens. Stop Hinkley has lobbied both Natural England and the RSPB about this and is pushing the Council to check that EDF sticks to the rules.

Meanwhile, the company has applied to close all public footpaths across the construction site, probably by 8 May. For more details, check www.stophinkley.org

Street Stalls Expand



In March a new Stop Hinkley group in Frome started a street stall in the town centre. The Mayor stopped to chat (see photo) and collect information. If you want to start a stall in your area – or can offer to help out in the existing locations (Bridgwater, Taunton, Glastonbury, Bristol) - give Jo a call on 01278 459099. Street stalls are a good way to meet like minded people, catch up on the latest news and feel you are doing your bit to Stop Hinkley!

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Nuclear's Risky Economics

Two initiatives have underlined the poor economics of nuclear power and the numerous ways it is propped up by government subsidies. Four former directors of Friends of the Earth have sent a detailed letter to David Cameron pointing out the risks involved in nuclear investment. See <http://tomburke.co.uk>

A new report from the Energy Fair group also warns that anyone considering investing in new nuclear plants faces five major areas of risk: market, cost, subsidy, political and construction. By the time any new nuclear plant could be built in the UK (2020 or later), the market for its electricity will be disappearing (as renewables get cheaper), regardless of any possible increase in the overall demand for power. See www.mng.org.uk

Events

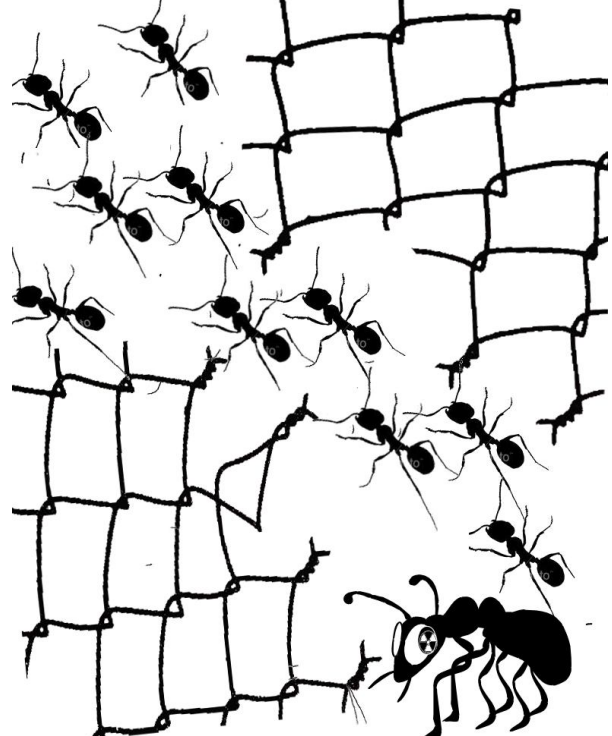
Stop Hinkley AGM
Monday 14th May, 7.30pm
West Bow House in Milton Place
behind the Squib pub on West Street in
Bridgwater

Membership

Thank you to all members who have renewed your subscription for 2012. If you have not yet renewed for this year, a reminder is enclosed. Perhaps you would like to consider setting up a standing order to save the trouble of having to send a payment each year. It also saves us the costs involved in sending out reminders, so we both win!

Hope to see you at the AGM on 14th May (details below).

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PICNIC AT HINKLEY POINT

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