

# Your Letters

Write to: The Editor, West Somerset Free Press, 5 Long Street,  
Williton, Taunton TA4 4QN

E-mail to: [fp.news@tindlenews.co.uk](mailto:fp.news@tindlenews.co.uk)

## The solution is to crack on with renewables

SIR — The dire financial state of our various local authorities is not only caused by the severe reduction of central government support but also, in the case of West Somerset Council, the fact that EDF is demanding huge business rate rebates for Hinkley Point B which dwarf the savings that the council has managed to make through its recent austerity measures.

This year the council has had to pay EDF £300,000 in rebates for the periods in the past when they were not generating electricity (as happens frequently) and negotiated with the government a further £1.3 million by getting the rate they paid retrospectively reduced.

None of these payments were expected or planned for within current budgets. Also this money was never paid to the council in the first place as, at the time, all business rates were passed on to central government.

In theory, district councils now keep half the business rates, but due to a tortuous system of levies the figure is nearer ten per cent, yet they are liable to pay all rebates.

This unfair financial burden is being placed on a council whose annual budget is only £4.8 million and which has the oldest population, largest geographical area in England and a shrinking commercial base.

This raises the question as to whether either Hinkley B or the planned Hinkley C are actually the financial bonanza they are claimed to be, or a means by which EDF and the government brazenly take large sums of local residents' money when we have one of the lowest levels of household income

in the country.

We are told that EDF will shortly make their Final Investment Decision on Hinkley C.

If the decision to go ahead is taken it will still be many years before any business rates are payable, as this is triggered by electricity generation at Hinkley C, and the record on the current EDF construction sites is one of long overdue completion dates and soaring costs.

If the decision was made today it would take a miracle for them to be producing electricity by 2025 when the UK is predicted by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers to have a shortfall of 55 per cent.

There is also the prospect of serious dissent between West Somerset Council and Sedgemoor District Council, which considers itself entitled to a share of the revenues despite the fact that Hinkley C is situated in West Somerset.

If the real information were known, the residents of the district would object to this process by which they will suffer financial damage as well as huge disruption to the community and the storage of high level nuclear waste locally for hundreds of years.

The electricity produced by Hinkley C will be long gone by then, along with any revenues from business rates.

Surely the solution is to crack on with renewables in the form of tidal, wind and solar, which is what the South West is good at and will provide clean jobs for life for our young people and generations to come.

**Katy Attwater and Cllr Maureen Smith,  
Minehead.**