



Protesters hold rally at planned nuclear plant site

Western Daily Press 13th Sep 2010

Protesters gathered at the proposed site of a new nuclear power station close to a nature reserve in Somerset yesterday.

A group opposed to EDF Energy's two planned reactors at Hinkley Point held a series of events over the weekend. They claim the project – which is currently under consultation until October 4 – will destroy acres of open countryside and lay waste to natural habitats. Speakers from Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth addressed the Stop Hinkley campaign on Saturday with members demonstrating outside the plant gates yesterday.

Jim Duffy said: "We are highlighting the fact this plan to prepare for two giant reactors will be devastating for wildlife and is completely premature. EDF are a long way from getting their major consents for the project and should back off from nuclear and concentrate on saner energy forms like renewables."

West Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council have both criticised a lack of detail in EDF Energy's proposals. They have highlighted the "poor" worker transport and accommodation plans. EDF Energy claim the criticism was "quite unfair" but accepted there was work to do.

West Somerset leader Tim Taylor has said he was "unhappy" about the way the company had consulted local communities

and responded to government guidelines. He said more research needed to be done on the effect the power station would have on tourism and the housing market.

The headland on the Bristol Channel coast is already home to two nuclear power stations, Hinkley Point A and B, with the former closing in 2000. The coastline bordering the Hinkley C site is part of the Bridgwater Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Bridgwater Bay's shallow waters are a sanctuary for thousands of waders, ducks and other sea birds.

Stop Hinkley has been campaigning against nuclear power for more than 20 years and claims to have been instrumental in the closure of Hinkley A. The Action Weekend saw protesters putting on a guided tour of the green areas which will be "bulldozed, dynamited and concreted over". They were led by a mock "boffin" pointing out the habitats which they claim will be lost. Campaigners also allege the plans pose a health threat, pointing to evidence of increased cancers and higher infant mortality near Hinkley which have been observed in studies by Professor Chris Busby of Belfast University.

[Photo: Paul Glendell / www.glendell.co.uk]

Doubts over Hinkley C economics

Doubts over debt-ridden EdF's plan to export the ailing French EPR reactor to Somerset have been raised by the French Government and a UK energy professor.

Energy expert, Professor Stephen Thomas has written hard-hitting statements on the risks surrounding EdF's plight, suggesting Hinkley C may never be built, or worse still just half-built and dependent on a Government rescue. On the risks of importing the French nuclear project he says:

"The French nuclear power industry is in crisis on three counts: its new reactor technology, the Evolutionary Power Reactor (EPR), is proving expensive and difficult to build and gaining safety approval is proving slow and problematic; the existing 58 reactors are far less reliable than its European and US peers; and its flagship

nuclear companies, the utility Electricite de France (EDF) and the reactor vendor, Areva are struggling to control their levels of debt ... This experience suggests that, far from being a model to emulate, the French experience is a cautionary tale of overdependence on nuclear power and on the state becoming too embroiled in commercial decisions.")

Professor Thomas was even more forthright in his recent briefing to Parliament where he says, "The issue the British government needs to face up to, is whether the EPR design is salvageable." and continues, "Unless things start to go right for the EPR soon, the UK is in danger of backing a design that could prove unlicensable, unaffordable and unbuildable."*

French Government report slams the EPR

The French Government is so worried by delays to two new nuclear projects in Finland and France that it commissioned a report by a former CEO of EdF. The Roussey report published in July was damning. It said experience with Olkiluoto and Flamanville had '**seriously shaken ... the credibility of the EPR model and of the capacity of the French nuclear industry to succeed in new nuclear plant construction.**'

It slammed the EPR as too complicated, highlighted earlier this year by the Dubai government turning down the so-called Generation 3 reactor design in favour of a previous generation design on offer by a Korean company. Indeed the Control and Instrumentation system in the EPR has been criticised in an unusual joint communiqué by UK, French and Finish nuclear safety regulators. The US regulator has also recently added their weight to the concern that a malfunction in the normal control system could result in the shut-down system failing.

The UK Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has said this may be part of a list of 'exceptions' or conditions to any licence they provide to operate the reactors. So EdF would have to resolve this entrenched problem before the eventual start-up. There are considerable uncertainties here as the only other available 'hard-wire' alternative is from the forty year old N4 design.

Unfortunately Roussey could offer no effective answer to the EPR's potentially financially fatal complexity other than to try

and learn from the errors at Olkiluoto and Flamanville.

EdF's spiraling debt and reduced credit rating

EdF's annual report last month showed a spiraling debt of 56 billion Euros compared to last year's debt of 36 billion and against a profit of just 1.7 billion this year. It is a highly 'levered' company and their credit rating has consequently been reduced from AAA to A. The loans to pay this 'mortgage' are not available cheaply from the French Government, as widely believed, as this would foul EU competition law. They must be found on the open market. The current sale of their energy distribution arm will settle just 5 bn euros of their debt but may jeopardise their credit rating further as the relatively 'safe' distribution section of their enterprise vanishes, leaving more financially risky nuclear production as a greater proportion of its business.

Moreover EdF must also set aside funds to pay for repairs and maintenance to its ageing fleet of French reactors. 37 reactors are due for ten-year reviews by 2015 for which each must be shut down for three months when they will be thirty years old. Upgrading them after that to run for 50 or 60 years will cost EdF an estimated 500,000 million Euros for each reactor.

Adding to EdF's financial worries is its expensive £12 billion investment in the ageing fleet of British Energy reactors of which more than a quarter are currently off-line including their flagship and newest reactor Sizewell B, expected to be under repair for six months from its breakdown in March.

European Pressurised Reactor in crisis

The risks are compounded by difficulties experienced with the current building of two single EPR reactors in Olkiluoto, Finland and Flamanville in France. The Olkiluoto project, run jointly by Areva and the Finnish utility TVO, has run into scandalous numbers of construction mistakes, about 3,000 in a count taken last year and recorded by Greenpeace Sweden. It is three years overdue and a vicious legal fight is ongoing between the two major constructors over whose fault this is. If TVO lose the battle they are likely to go bankrupt. The Flamanville project is two years over-run. The cost of building a single

EPR is now estimated by EdF at 5 billion euros, up from 3 billion originally. But Energy Minister Charles Hendry puts the figure at an alarming and potentially crippling, Euros8 billion or £6 billion.(7)

Comment

The sums don't seem to add up for Hinkley C. EdF is struggling to cope with its spiraling debt, no doubt hampered by a reduced credit rating. Their favoured reactor looks too complicated to be commercially viable. Hinkley C could run out of finance half way through and either be reluctantly bailed out at considerable expense by the taxpayer or left as a folly to nuclear arrogance. For local families and companies banking on it for jobs and prosperity there is also an obvious risk.

Stephen Thomas is professor of energy studies, University of Greenwich, London, and a member of the editorial boards of Energy Policy, Utility Policy, Energy & Environment, and International Journal of Regulation and Governance,

*<http://www.parliamentarybrief.com/2010/09/really-mr-huhne-you-should-brush-up-on-your-french>

E.ON 'livid' over Huhne dismissal of nuclear levy

The Times 21 Sep

German energy company E.ON who want to build nuclear plants at Oldbury, Wylfa and Cumbria have complained to Energy Secretary Chris Huhne over his rejection of a consumer-funded levy to support investment in nuclear power stations. He said the industry had 'converged' on the idea that a carbon price floor would be enough, supported by EdF. But Citigroup said: "It's extremely unlikely that any company could invest in new nuclear plants based solely on a carbon floor price." [E.ON's prospects for nuclear expansion in the UK have also been hit by the German government's new €30bn or £25bn tax on nuclear power stations. Jim]

EdF second-round consultation

The 10,000 page consultation documents can be found at: <http://www.edfconsultation.info> and a CD of this or a seventy page paper summary of the consultation can be ordered on 0800 169 6507. EdF said they can only supply paper versions of all the documents at 10p per page. That's an astonishing £1,000 for the full document! The consultation ends on 4th October.

Action Weekend

Forty campaigners attended our weekend events well coordinated by Crispin Aubrey: A Saturday workshop followed by a disco evening and a demo the next day which blocked the Hinkley gates for an hour.

Greenpeace: Ben Ayliffe, nuclear campaigner for Greenpeace said: "In particular we see two major problems - waste disposal and economics – both could sink the proposal for Hinkley C." The Greenpeace strategy is to challenge the process of approving new nuclear power stations all the way. This includes exposing the risky economics, promoting the alternatives and legal challenges.

Health: Professor Chris Busby talked about studies that he, and Somerset Health authority in the eighties, had shown there was a higher incidence of cancers round Hinkley Point and other nuclear power stations. He said the international model used by regulators to estimate the effects of radiation on human health is being widely challenged.

Alternatives: Neil Crumpton, former Friends of the Earth energy campaigner, presented an alternative vision of the UK's electricity supply in which nuclear power was marginalised and new sources of renewable energy, such as concentrated solar power imported from North Africa, were developed on a large scale. He also dismissed the suggestion that the lights would go out without nuclear, listing the many other options, including gas-fired plants, which were queueing up to fill any gap in supply.

Hugh Richards

Hugh Richards, Coordinator of Wales Anti-Nuclear Association, died on 13th August, aged 65. His funeral was well attended by campaigners. Hugh had spoken at several Stop Hinkley public meetings on nuclear safety. MP Paul Flynn paid this tribute: "Hugh has kept the anti-nuclear movement inspired and informed for 30 years. He was a resourceful and brilliant researcher. WANA was incredibly successful. A tiny group of bright people measurably changed public opinion in Wales on nuclear power."

Petition

Following EdF's delayed planning application, now expected in December, the Stop Hinkley petition deadline has been held back till 31st October. We now have almost 4,000 names including paper versions. <http://www.stophinkley.org/PETITION.htm>

Personal

As some supporters know, I have a long-term condition which has deteriorated while campaigning demands have increased. So while I step aside to concentrate on my well-being, others in the now thriving group will take over.
Jim, Coordinator

Events

**DECC meeting with campaigners
London 28th September**

**Stop Hinkley meeting
Monday 4th October, 7.30pm
West Bow House, Milton Place
Off West Street,**

Contacts

Jim Duffy, Coordinator, Newsletter Editor
68 Birchwood Ave, Wallington, SM6 7EN
0208 395 6191, stophinkley@aol.com

Val Davey, Membership, Treasurer,
Website Manager: val@stophinkley.org

www.stophinkley.org