Press Release **6 July 2011**

Environment Agency meeting on Hinkley Point contamination

Officials from the Environment Agency met with local Councillors and officers, representatives of Green Audit and Stop Hinkley at Rivers House, Bridgwater on 1st July to discuss the allegations of radioactive contamination at the site earmarked at Hinkley Point for the proposed new nuclear power reactors by the French company EdF Energy.

Presentations were made by Bridgwater resident and independent researcher Cecily Collingridge and by Professor Chris Busby of Green Audit and the University of Ulster. There was discussion of the evidence to be found in the EdF application to carry out "preliminary works" at the site that enriched uranium was present in the soil.

Environment Agency (EA) officials drew attention to new measurements that had been made of fresh soil samples collected from the site since the original EdF assessment. These data, they argued, showed only natural uranium. It was pointed out, however, that the EA had not consulted with local stakeholders before collecting these few samples and there was an issue of trust over their selection and origin. Furthermore, at least one of the samples clearly contained depleted uranium, providing further evidence that the higher than expected quantities of uranium on the site are from historic releases from the Hinkley Point reactors.

In a surprising development, Dr Busby revealed that he had visited the site in January with a video camera and geiger counters and had measured significantly high levels of gamma radiation on the site - between 120 and 210 nanoSieverts per hour (nSv/hr). Dr Busby asked why it was that the EA had not noticed that the gamma monitoring results for the site presented in the AMEC documents supporting the EdF application were questionable and in some cases clearly nonsensical. Ms Collingridge, who had obtained historic gamma background levels back to the 1960s from the Hinkley Point operators, revealed that gamma background up to 1 mile from the site was 90 nanoGrays/hour (nGy/hr) in 1991 and that both historical records back to the 1970s and also 2010 reports showed a consistent trend in gamma background falling with distance from the site.

Taken together with the evidence that uranium levels on the site were about twice as great as predicted by the EA's own data for England, and also on the basis of the new measurements presented by the EA for local offsite locations, it would seem, said Prof Busby, *that there was a case for further investigation.* Prof Busby offered to involve his group Green Audit in a joint study of the area to try and find what was causing the high levels of external radiation. *It will have to be funded,* he continued. *What has been done so far by Ms Collingridge and my group has been entirely pro bono.*

However, although the EA have signed up to the SAFEGROUNDS protocols for joint investigation of radioactively contaminated land with stakeholders, the EA stated at

the meeting that they had no intention of carrying out any such joint studies, although they would follow up the question of external gamma background.

Katy Attwater, for Stop Hinkley, said that since all at the meeting had been shown a video clip of Prof Busby standing on the proposed site with a GPS unit and geiger counter showing a gamma radiation level of 180nSv/h, when the background reported by AMEC (EdF's consultants) was less than 50nSv/h, there should be some attempt to find out why the EA had accepted and rubber stamped the application document. It should be noted that if the historic gamma background is about 80nGy/h, and on the site at present is 180nGy/h, this translates into an external annual dose of 0.44mSv for 50% occupancy, which is currently illegal under UK and European EURATOM radiation legislation.

For further information: Prof Chris Busby 0798 942 8833

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References

1. Paper by IMG Thomson in Radiation Protection Dosimetry (2000) Vol 92 Nos 1-3 pp71-76 entitled: Technical recommendations on measurements of external environmental radiation doses. A report of EURADOS working group 12 "Environmental Radiation Monitoring"

2. British Energy (part of EDF Energy)/Magnox South - Hinkley Point Site Stakeholder Group - Report on Radioactive Discharges and Environmental Monitoring at Hinkley Point A Site and Hinkley Point B Power Station During 2009 presented to SSG June 2010

And supplementary information given to Hinkley Point Site Stakeholders Group, October 2008