



**For Immediate Release  
10<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

## **Coastal Nuclear Sites Unviable Given Increased Risk of Flooding and Storm Surges**

**Remember Fukushima 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

A meeting between representatives of groups opposing new nuclear development, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) the independent nuclear safety regulator, and the Environment Agency discussed how the ONR regulates against external hazards. However, fears about the impact of sea level rise on proposed new nuclear power stations at Hinkley in Somerset, Sizewell in Suffolk and Bradwell in Essex remain. The meeting was organised by the ONR in response to questions and a Freedom of Information (FOI) request submitted by the Stop Hinkley Campaign to the ONR in September 2018.

According to minutes of meetings held by ONR's group of climate change experts, projections of sea level rise for the year 2100 contain "*considerable uncertainty*" and "*small changes to UK storm systems can alter the height of storm surges significantly*". (1) Crucially, sea level has a huge effect on the severity of storm surges. An increase in sea level of one metre could mean that a storm of a severity currently expected only once every thousand years is likely to occur once every decade. (2)

The meeting took place in Bridgwater on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Stop Hinkley was joined by Together Against Sizewell C (TASC) and Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG). The groups are questioning the viability of the three coastal sites which are all vulnerable to the impacts of flooding, storm surges and coastal processes which will inevitably intensify in coming years.

Flooding can be catastrophic to a nuclear power plant because it can knock out its electrical systems, disabling its cooling mechanisms and leading to overheating and possible meltdown and a dangerous release of radioactivity. Flooding at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in Japan as a result of the March 2011 tsunami caused severe damage to several of the plant's reactors and only narrowly avoided a catastrophic release of radioactivity that could have forced the evacuation of 50 million people. (3)

Given the latest research on the impact of storm surges the groups are also questioning whether the current policy of '*managed adaptation*' to sea level rise remains justifiable. For

instance, at Hinkley Point C EDF is providing space for a flood defence barrier in addition to the sea wall. This “set-back wall”, once built, would provide an additional 2 metres height flood defence above the platform level. But the question that needs to be addressed is whether these further flood protection measures can be put in place fast enough to deal with unexpected and unpredicted storm surges in future - bearing in mind the likely need to protect high level nuclear waste on site until 2150 and beyond.

Stop Hinkley spokesperson Katy Attwater says:

*“The Hinkley Point C (HPC) sea wall (pictured) is all that stands between the unknown ravages of climate change and two of the most advanced untested reactors built in the world so far. The wall looks only slightly higher than the one for Hinkley Point A which is frequently overtopped by waves and was built half a century ago. Consumers could save around £50bn if construction of HPC stopped now, but if construction continues the back-stop wall should be built now not later. Storm surges don’t come to order.”*

Chris Wilson, on behalf of TASC said *“TASC are expecting EDF to submit its Development Consent Order (DCO) for Sizewell C imminently but consider this will be premature in the absence of a viable National Policy Statement (NPS) for the siting of new nuclear power stations. The government consulted on a revised NPS two years ago and TASC’s response was that, in view of the uncertainties relating to the impact of climate change, the proposed policy is not fit for purpose and the new policy should automatically rule out sites that are already in areas at highest flood risk-those in flood zones 2 and 3, such as Sizewell and Bradwell. This common-sense approach would have ruled out Hinkley Point as well.”*

Andy Blowers, Chair of BANNG, commented:

*“Of the three sites, Bradwell is at a very early stage. Its low-lying situation poses risks to marine life, and concerns for safety and security of the surrounding region such that it would seem misguided to pursue the project further. The regulators have made it clear that there are major obstacles to be overcome and issues to be resolved. In the light of recent climate change forecasts continuing to proceed with nuclear development at this – or at either of the other two sites - would seem both foolish and irresponsible.”*

- (1) Notes of progress meeting 4: ONR expert panel on natural hazards – Meteorological and Coastal Flood Hazards Sub-Panel 20th May 2019
- (2) Antarctica melting: Climate change and the journey to the 'doomsday glacier'. Justin Rowlett, BBC 28th Jan 2020 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-51097309>
- (3) Ensie 8<sup>th</sup> Aug 2018 <https://ensia.com/features/coastal-nuclear/>

For more information see:

nuClear News No.122 February 2020: Special issue on Nuclear Power and Sea Level Rise: <http://www.no2nuclearpower.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/NuClearNewsNo122.pdf>

and Climate News Network 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020 *Speeding sea level rise threatens nuclear plants.* <https://climatenewsnetwork.net/speeding-sea-level-rise-threatens-nuclear-plants/>

**Contacts:**

**Stop Hinkley Campaign**

Katy Attwater

Tel: 07980731896

[kattwater@hotmail.com](mailto:kattwater@hotmail.com)

**Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG)**

Varrie Blowers, Press Officer

Tel: 07932.644482

[varrieblowers@yahoo.com](mailto:varrieblowers@yahoo.com)

**Together Against Sizewell C (TASC)**

Chris Wilson, Press Officer

Tel: 07976 820524

[info@tasizewellc.org.uk](mailto:info@tasizewellc.org.uk)