



BANNG
Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group



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‘The Unhappy Three’ - Report on Nuclear-Free Local Authorities (NFLA) Conference in Colchester on ‘New Nuclear Plants in England’.

A packed conference, run by the NFLA, took place at Firstsite in Colchester on Saturday, 26 October to discuss the risks of building new nuclear power stations on coastal sites in an era of climate change.

Welcoming delegates, Cllr. Mark Cory, Leader of Colchester Borough Council, said ‘the conference is significant at a time when the climate emergency is focusing attention on future survival. New nuclear power stations bring danger and destruction to vulnerable coastal sites. At a local level, a power station at Bradwell could threaten precious environments and marine life, notably the Colchester Native Oyster.’

Speakers represented the three sites in southern England where the partnership of state-owned companies, EDF (France) and CGN (China) were actively developing or intending to develop new nuclear power stations.

Sue Aubrey, Katy Atwater and Allan Jeffery from Stop Hinkley, who had travelled up from Somerset, spoke of the devastation that was being wrought at Hinkley Point. The area suffered extreme congestion, housing pressures, social problems including brothels, construction noise, light pollution and lorry movements over twenty-four hours. Precariously situated on an estuary with the second highest tidal range in the world, the site was subject to compound flooding from sea and land. The huge cooling pipes would devastate the marine ecology killing hundreds of thousands of fish.

Pete Wilkinson of Together Against Sizewell (TASC) demonstrated the impact of a new nuclear power station on the eroding Suffolk coastal site. A site that was too small for the monstrosity being proposed and that was hemmed in by precious areas of outstanding natural beauty in a remote, inaccessible and tranquil area. It would bequeath future generations an inequitable and intolerable radioactive waste legacy.

Professor Andy Blowers, Chair of the Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG), presented the case against Bradwell B, the last of what he dubbed, ‘The Unhappy Three’. The site was utterly unsuitable, low-lying and increasingly liable to sea-level rise, flooding, storm surges and coastal processes on a scale greater than the Great Tide of 1953, which killed around 300 people in Essex. Dangerous wastes would remain on the site until at least the end of the next century when conditions would be unknowable. Despite this the Government considered the site ‘potentially suitable’.

Building Bradwell would literally be a 'leap in the dark' as the site sank into the abyss. In the words of Hilda Grieve, author of *The Great Tide*, 'the sea will not be tamed. From time to time, urged on by its only master, the wind, to break the order of its course, it will rise again to strike the land'.

Precious environments would be threatened, important species, such as Brent Geese and Native Oysters, might disappear as a raucous, jarring, polluting, ugly and unnecessary new power station was developed on a tranquil, precious and beautiful landscape.

Referring to security issues, Andy Blowers indicated that, in the unlikely event of a major emergency, an evacuation zone on the lines of Chernobyl of 30 kilometres radius would involve at least half a million people and would clearly be impossible. And there were also the security concerns provoked by a development under the control of China, a potentially hostile power.

In short, Bradwell was unacceptable and to build a new nuclear power station on the site would be immoral, threatening present and future generations.

Stephen Thomas, Professor Energy Policy at Greenwich University, told the audience that EDF was in a deep financial crisis. It was unclear how it would be able to finance Hinkley Point C, much less Sizewell C and the Government must resist pressures to throw more public money at these ill-conceived projects. He also cast some doubt on the ability or willingness of CGN to see the Bradwell project to conclusion.

The final speaker, Sean Morris, Secretary of the NFLA, put forward an altogether brighter and more optimistic picture of a wholly renewable, non-nuclear future in which local councils would play a key role in innovative and constructive projects that would do much to bring about a net zero carbon future in Britain.

In a lively discussion a number of points were raised including: whether the sites would continue to be designated; would taxpayers and consumers be asked to foot part of the bill to encourage developers to provide the power stations?; and what might be done by local councils to stop these projects?

Among the large audience of more than 60 was an impressive number of Councillors from Colchester Borough, Maldon District, East Suffolk District as well as West Mersea Town Council and some Parish Councillors. There were campaigners from the three sites and members of the public, who, with the speakers contributed to a lively, intelligent and serious debate.

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