



Newsletter
July 2000

Hooray!

On Tuesday May 23rd BNFL announced the closure of Hinkley Point 'A'! At the end of a six month campaign common sense has prevailed and the regulators made it impossible for the ancient polluting Magnox station to reopen.

BNFL to their shame were prepared to restart the suspect reactors after a year's closure for repairs to faulty welds in the Heat Exchangers and had submitted their Safety Case to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate declaring their intention to start operating in the early summer. However many of our supporters had sent well informed letters to the NII questioning the safety of the Reactor Pressure Vessels, the seventy foot diameter steel tanks inside which the nuclear reactions take place. John Large, Britain's top independent nuclear engineer had outlined three runaway scenarios at our public meeting in Taunton implicating the age and design of the pressure vessels as a possible source of disaster.

Up to the last days before the announcement the regulators, who have the real power in terms of licencing nuclear plants, were cautious and defensive of the safety systems at

Hinkley 'A' and said nothing that would indicate such a radical shift in their position. But they gave BNFL so many hoops to jump through to prove the safety of the pressure vessels that it was impossible for BNFL to proceed. They would have needed to set up tests that would have cost millions and taken a year to perform with still no guarantee of a licence in the end. So our strategy of appealing to the regulators whilst in the spotlight of the media seems to have paid off!

Thankyou...

Many people are owed a debt of thanks for their part in the closure of Hinkley 'A': To begin with all our subscribers have given us the physical means to operate, allowing us to organise public events, pay for quality speakers, publicity and constant contact with the media. Many of you have also picked up a pen and written to key people like the NII.

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The campaign would have been blind and directionless if it were not for the detailed inside information that **John Large** provided us with as summarised above.

Our strategy which included writing to the regulators was suggested by **Richard Bramhall** of the Low Level Radiation Campaign.

Hugh Richards of Wales Anti Nuclear Alliance provided a lot of information for leaflets and spoke convincingly at several of our key public meetings. **Patrick Van Den Bulck** from National CND has provided an enormous amount of support in terms of advice and inside information and has steered us towards our next step of direct talks with BNFL over Decommissioning using the mediators who helped at Cricklewood.

Chris Busby also from the Low Level Radiation Campaign has worked heroically to produce the Hinkley Cancer Studies which were published just weeks before the closure announcement. The last straw for the regulators?

Humphrey Temperley, Chair of Somerset Council and **Baroness Sue Miller** gave their time and influence to our campaign, chairing meetings, tabling letters in the House of Lords and supporting us in the media.

Greenpeace workers **Bridget Woodman**, coordinating a successful anti-Magnox campaign (all but two of the remaining Magnoxes will close in the next few years) and **Pete Roche** gave us up to the minute background information and transmitted details of our campaign across the world to the friendly Japanese and American media. **Dr Richard Lawson**, local GP and Green Party activist chaired meetings and came up with creative campaign ideas which he also underwrote.

Committee Members **Val Davey**, **Hester Watson**, **Paul Dorfman**, **Alan Debenham** and **Pete Margerum** have helped with effective decision making and other specific roles ensuring a strong structure at the centre of the campaign.

There are many more helpers deserving of praise but which limited space precludes but my wife **Karalina Matskevich** definitely deserves a mention for her forbearance during my many campaigning hours and more importantly for spurring me on after her experience of Chernobyl.

Hinkley Cancer Studies

Dr Chris Busby addressed an audience of 140 in Burnham on Sea on 13th June to outline his findings after three months of research into cancer deaths near Hinkley Point.

As discussed in the last newsletter he had already found high levels of Breast cancer deaths in Burnham, Minehead and downwind of the tidal River Parrett on the Somerset levels.

In his talk he announced that the same pattern had shown up with Prostate, Lung and All Cancer deaths in the area. Burnham was particularly affected with a fifty per cent increased risk in Prostate cancer deaths over a four year period in both electoral wards. Lung Cancer risk was 23% higher in Burnham South with a similar 22% higher risk of death from All Cancers in the same ward. Lung Cancer was 34% *lower* than average in the remainder of Somerset, making this figure more significant.

Chris explained how the action of the sea could give up the radioactive particles into the air by electrostatic processes and showed graphs of distances Plutonium particles could travel inland from sea spray. His

studies on Sellafield radiation in Ireland had shown individuals living within 100 meters of the sea were most affected.

Many members of this large audience were members of a newly formed group, *Parents Concerned About Hinkley* who had picked up on our newspaper reports of Chris's work and leafleted Burnham with details of the public meeting.

Chris called on supporters to write to Somerset Health Authority to open up the information on *incidence* of cancer and leukemia over a longer period in order to get a fuller picture of the risks involved in living near a nuclear plant. He also recommended writing to COMARE, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment to persuade them to set up similar studies. It was underlined that even though Hinkley 'A' had closed it will still produce waste for many years and Hinkley 'B' is of course still operating .

Addresses to write to:

Dr Virginia Pearson, Director of Public Health, Somerset Health Authority, Wellsprings Rd, TAUNTON, TA2 7PQ

Mr Roy Hamlet, Secretary, COMARE, National Radiological Protection Board, Chilton Didcot, OXFORD, OX11 0RF

Decommissioning

At the Burnham meeting Hugh Richards spoke about the plans for Decommissioning Hinkley 'A' in the light of mistakes made at Trawsfynydd and Berkley power stations. He gave an account of local people potentially exposed to radiation after the sawing of a coolant duct at Traws, opening the insides of the reactor. This was against a local agreement to isolate such forms of

contamination. He spoke of the Boilers (heat exchangers) being left on the grass next to the defunct Berkley reactor. He emphasised the absolute need to immobilise all radioactive material so that it could not get into the environment. Practices such as exploding radioactive areas at Trawsfynydd Lake causing the waste to recirculate were horrifying and spoke volumes on BNFL's approach to cleaning up nuclear plants.

He heavily criticised BNFL's so called "safe-store" policy. This involves removing the fuel (100 tonnes in each of Hinkley's two reactors), taking off the boilers and other external components and then entombing the reactor core and pressure vessels for over one hundred years. He felt this was unnecessarily leaving the problem for future generations to solve, when probably the structures would have collapsed making work very much more difficult.

He showed that 85 per cent of the dangerous Gamma radiation will have gone from the core after only thirty years when remote cutting devices could start the dismantling process. There was nothing to be gained in terms of worker safety by waiting another 70 years.

As an example of a completely different attitude to decommissioning he pointed to Tokai Mura nuclear power station in Japan. This was the site of the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl contaminating 300,000 people and now the focus of much concern. The plant is a British designed Magnox reactor built in 1965 the same year as Hinkley 'A'. It has recently been closed down and is currently being defuelled. The Japanese plan to completely dismantle the station in only eight years.

Hugh called on the audience to get involved with the Environment Agency consultation exercise and press for low emissions from the station during its decommissioning. (Tel 0845 601 2428)

Talks with BNFL

As indicated earlier we are planning to have direct talks with BNFL over the Decommissioning process. We have enlisted the help of a national mediating group, the Environment Council who will facilitate the meetings where we intend to press for a new attitude to cleaning up Hinkley 'A'.

Hinkley 'B' date

We've received an unconfirmed report that British Energy plan to close Hinkley 'B' in eleven years despite a fifteen year licence to operate. Other anticipated closure dates of BE stations include: Dungeness 'B' 2008, Hartlepool 2009, Heysham 2011. BE, who want to withdraw their spent fuel from BNFL's reprocessing in favour of storage, seem to be getting the message that nuclear power has had its day. Germany has announced the closure of its nuclear plants by the early 2020's. John Large favours a campaign by us to shut Hinkley 'B' which has myriad problems. We hope to launch such a campaign later in the year.

Oldbury

Another Magnox power station near Bristol has come to our attention. Whilst BNFL's fleet of reactors comes to an overdue end together with the Magnox reprocessing plant (B205) at Sellafield in 2012, the operators hope to keep Oldbury going by replacing the natural uranium fuel with MAGROX.

This fuel is similar to the AGR fuel used at Hinkley 'B' and produces twice the temperature with twice the coolant gas pressure requirement and four times the power of natural uranium. It can be reprocessed at Thorp which is the attraction for BNFL who hope to keep Thorp going when they close B205. However Oldbury's reactor core has lost a considerable amount of its graphite moderator over the years (at least 17 per cent) which raises a safety question over running it at all, never mind with rocket fuel!

The graphite problem also seems to be leading to increased arial emissions of radioactive Tritium which is implicated in Leukemia and stillbirths. We also understand there is a subsidence problem at the station, built on the banks of the River Severn.

We plan to launch a Shut Oldbury campaign by helping to form a local group and feeding in any expertise and information we can.

There will be a public meeting in Stroud on Wednesday 26th July with speakers Hugh Richards, Patrick Van Den Bulck and Paul Dorfman at the Old Town Hall, 7.30pm.

Other events

Wed 12th July Paul Dorfman and Jim Duffy address North Avon FoE on Oldbury. Tel Jane on 01761 419 416

14-16th July Low Level Radiation Conference, Reading. Tel 0118 970148
Stop Hinkley Committee Meeting, Thursday 20th July, 8pm The Old Library, Taunton.

Contacts

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