



Newsletter

January/February 1992

HINKLEY "A" GETS REPRIEVE - AND THEN HITS TROUBLE PATCH

The threatened Hinkley Point "A" Magnox power station was granted a reprieve just before the end of year deadline set by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

Permission for the ageing station to continue operation into 1992 was given despite vigorous protests by Stop Hinkley Expansion. The "No Accident" coalition of anti-nuclear groups had also called for the closure of four other Magnox stations around the country. One of these, the Trawsfynydd station in North Wales, has been shut for over a year because of safety problems.

Nuclear inspectors had warned that Hinkley A would have to close at the end of 1991 if Nuclear Electric could not satisfy them about its continued safe operation. However, they eventually accepted a revised safety case submitted by the operators over the issue of reactor welds which have been made brittle by radiation bombardment.

Nuclear Electric says it has raised the temperature at which

the twin reactors operate in order to stop the welds becoming so brittle that they would crack and cause a serious accident.

Nuclear Electric also claims that the NII's decision means it has permission to carry on operating the A station up to its 30th birthday in 1995. This is not accurate, since there are not only further deadlines for work to be carried out under the station's Long Term Safety Review, but the plant is anyway subject to NII approval to keep running.

A programme of safety improvement work costing £20 million is now under way at Hinkley A. This includes building new fire protection barriers round electrical cables, improving the emergency cooling system and various other measures.

The fundamental motivation for keeping Hinkley A running, however, is economic. Nuclear Electric wants to get as much power out of its old reactors as possible in order to impress the government in the run-up to the 1994 nuclear review that it is making the most economic use of its existing plant.

All SHE members and supporters are very welcome at the

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7.45 PM MARCH 17

"PEN & QUILL", SHUTTERN*, TAUNTON

This is a social evening in a comfortable Taunton bar, a chance to meet other SHE members once the AGM business is finished.

* The Pen & Quill is opposite the Shire Hall (County Court building, parking available), and a few yards from Taunton police station.



SERIES OF INCIDENTS AT HINKLEY A

Hinkley A's reprieve was followed by a series of incidents during January and February, nearly all in Reactor 1, which had just returned to power after its two yearly maintenance period.

The most dramatic involved the contamination of the carbon dioxide gas cooling system with an unexplained influx of air. This created higher levels of radioactivity in the coolant - a potential danger to people working inside the power station.

To cope with the increased radioactivity in the cooling circuit, fresh CO₂ had to be pumped in at the rate of 100 tonnes a day. This measure alone was said to cost a daily £12,000. The radioactive gas was then vented into the atmosphere through the station's chimney.

N-PLANT FEAR AS GAS IS RELEASED

A NEW call was made today for an ageing nuclear power station at Hinkley Point.

POST REPORTER

Nuclear Electric say the gas was filtered and vented.

Electric spokesman Brian Gornall. The gas was vented off following the completion of the overhaul on the reactor.

Nuclear Electric claimed that this "venting" created only a minute increase in the normal radiation levels. "Tiny amounts of radioactive Argon 41 were given off," a spokesman told the Western Daily Press. The Pollution Inspectorate, which sets the permitted levels for discharges from Hinkley Point, said that the levels of Sulphur 35 and Carbon 14 reported to be in the gas were 2% and less than 1% respectively of the weekly limits.

But it is unclear why the incident was kept secret and not mentioned in the regular newsletter sent to members of the station's liaison committee. It reportedly took 10 days during late January and early February to discover the cause of the air leak - a faulty seal.

This incident provides further evidence that the 26-year-old

station is showing its age, and should be shut down.

Other events at Hinkley A since Christmas have been:

Jan. 1 Fire started in a plank left next to a reactor "bellows unit". When firemen tried to use a specially installed pipe to take water to the top of the reactor, they found it was leaking.

Jan. 22 An outside contractor was badly burned when a flashover occurred in high voltage electrical cables on which he was working. He was taken to the special burns unit at Frenchay Hospital in Bristol, and is still said to be in a critical condition.

Ironically, the man was engaged in fitting new fire barriers underneath the A station's turbine hall, part of the work which Nuclear Electric has to carry out to keep the station operating. The flashover immediately caused the associated alternator in the turbine hall to shut down, and excess steam had to be vented into the air.

The sight of large clouds of steam coming out of the reactor (particularly visible on a clear, cold winter's day) caused inevitable concern for people living in the area.

Jan. 22 Two of the back up diesel generators on the A station failed to start because of the cold weather. There are five generators in total, which are needed to provide power for cooling the reactors if outside electricity supplies should fail.

Jan. 23 During start-up of Reactor 1, its operating temperatures were found to be outside the required levels "for a short period".

Jan. 29 Reactor 1 shut down after "routine operations" on a gas valve caused it to trip automatically. The cause is being investigated.

SHE NEWS

2,000 CALL FOR HINKLEY "A" CLOSURE

Almost 2,000 people had signed the Stop Hinkley Expansion petition calling for the closure of Hinkley A before it was submitted to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate at the end of December. This was the date set by the NII for closing the power station if it wasn't satisfied about its safety.

Many thanks to all those who collected signatures, especially Greenpeace supporters from South Somerset and Exeter. A very good response given the tight deadline.

ANNUAL MEETING - MARCH 17 IN TAUNTON

The Annual General Meeting of SHE will be held at the "Pen & Quill" bar in Shuttern, Taunton on Tuesday March 17 (business starts 7.45pm). See front page for directions.

Reports will be presented by the main officers (Coordinator, Membership Secretary, Treasurer, Press Officer, Fund-raiser) and elections held for these posts. Please let us know if you have any business or nominations you wish to be considered.

NUCLEAR POWER IS THE ISSUE

GENERAL ELECTION QUIZ

SHE is sending a questionnaire to all candidates for the forthcoming general election in constituencies within easy radiation striking distance of Hinkley Point. The questionnaire asks for their views on Hinkley C and other energy issues. We will report the responses in the next newsletter. Please make sure you lobby your own candidates on the nuclear issue - and report back any interesting results.

UKRAINIANS TO VISIT HINKLEY

Visitors from the Ukraine attending a Bristol conference about the lessons for the UK of the Chernobyl disaster (see Campaign News) will be among a party scheduled to go round Hinkley Point on the afternoon of March 10th. Afterwards they will meet members of SHE informally in Cannington. Anyone interested in meeting the group and talking about their concerns over Hinkley Point should contact Danielle Grunberg (0278 422632).



From "When Humans Roamed The Earth" by cartoonist Chris Madden (Earthscan, £6.99)

CHERNOBYL CHILDREN

£3,000 was finally raised from the West Country tour of the Chernobyl Children's art exhibition last year. Although it was hoped that medical supplies would be sent to Kiev before Christmas, organising and getting the supplies has taken longer than anticipated. Hopefully a first shipment will be going out by truck at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, the exhibition disappeared completely just before Christmas on its way from Norway to Cardiff. Despite repeated appeals from the Norwegian and Welsh organisers and much activity from SHE, nobody was able to provide any information about its whereabouts. Two weeks ago, however, a standard form appeared from British Customs stating the exhibition had been impounded, and asking £47 for its release. We are now demanding that Customs/the Post Office pay a large sum in compensation. Watch this space!

CAMPAIGNS

BRISTOL CONFERENCE ON CHERNOBYL LEGACY

A conference on "The Legacy of Chernobyl - Lessons for the UK" will be held at the Council House, Bristol on March 11. It has been organised by the Nuclear Free Local Authorities' organisation to mark the 6th anniversary of the accident in April.

Speakers include environmental and health experts from the Chernobyl region, Zhores Medvedev, the former Soviet scientist who has written extensively about the disaster, Don Arnott, former IAEA consultant, and Somerset County Council's emergency planning officer. The Chernobyl Children's Art Exhibition will also be on display.

Full details from Dave Bamber/Jane Sweet at Nuclear Policy Unit, Manchester Town Hall, Manchester M60 2LA (061 234 3379). Registration costs £60 for non-profit environmental groups.

NUCLEAR NEWS

MAJOR REPORT ON HEALTH OF NUCLEAR POWER WORKERS

First results of the largest ever study of cancer deaths among UK nuclear workers were published in January. The records of over 95,000 people who have worked in the industry since 1945 were included in the survey by the National Radiological Protection Board.

One of the study's overall conclusions, as reported in some newspapers, that nuclear workers were less likely to contract cancer, gave a false impression of the findings. In fact, once the generally healthier background of nuclear workers was taken into account, the study concluded that there was a "positive association" between death from cancer and

radiation dose. This could mean that the risks from radiation are twice as great as previously thought.

There was a particularly strong link found between the level of radiation dose and leukaemia (cancer of the blood).

Friends of the Earth believes the study confirms its view that the internationally recommended levels for radiation doses to nuclear workers are much too high.

FORMER HINKLEY POINT WORKER SUES OVER FATAL CANCER

David Moseley, a former worker at Hinkley Point, is suing Nuclear Electric for compensation over the fatal cancer he blames on his exposure to radiation. His case, the only one currently being pursued against the company, came to light in the wake of the NRPB report reviewed above.

Moseley, who worked mainly in Hinkley A power station from 1962 to 1974, first became ill after a sledging accident in 1983. He was diagnosed with cancer of the bladder. Although this appeared to respond to treatment, in 1990 he was found to have contracted prostate cancer and associated bone cancer. He has been given only a few years to live.

Moseley blames his cancer on the period when he worked in the Hinkley A cooling ponds during the early 1970s, when they were badly contaminated with radioactivity. A test taken in 1972, but not shown to him until he became ill, revealed there were traces of plutonium in his urine. Nuclear Electric is arguing that the quantities (and his general dose level whilst working) are too small to have caused his cancer.

David Moseley's claim is one of many being pursued through the courts by solicitor Martyn Day, who has received much publicity for his championing of the cases of children round Sellafield suffering from leukaemia.

**TURN IT DOWN.
SWITCH IT OFF.
DON'T WASTE IT.**
Thank you.

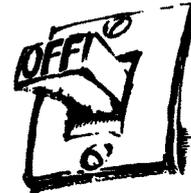
TAKE THE HEAT OFF...

Last issue we promised a guide to energy efficient appliances. There is a great need for this: some fridges have been shown to use twice as much electricity as a similar model. So the annual saving on a worktop height fridge could be as much as £12. That's £120 over a ten year life.

That £12 saving also represents around 180 units of electricity annually. If produced in a coal-fired power station each unit would add 1 kilogram of CO₂ to the atmosphere. Think about it. Multiply this by the number of fridges in your street, area, county. The amounts of money and pollution we could save are almost unimaginable.

Why are there such differences in product efficiency? Manufacturers claim that customers are more interested in the price and style than running costs. But hopefully they would be if they knew how much those running costs vary. It is, after all, something we think hard about when buying a car.

Efficiency doesn't necessarily mean a higher purchase price. There is no fixed relationship



This is an energy-friendly office!

Issued by
Energy Efficiency Office
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

between the two. Even the more expensive appliances will pay for it soon in increased efficiency. So suppose you were installing a new kitchen and wanted to buy a fridge, dishwasher, washing machine and tumble dryer. You might spend in total £30 for more efficient models. But you would recover this in the first year in reduced running costs, and add half a tonne less CO₂ to the atmosphere.

The Consumers Association magazine Which? surveyed appliances for energy efficiency in March 1991. These were their recommendations for fridges - very important since they operate 24 hours a day.

Lynn Collins

FRIDGES

BEST

WORST

Tall Larder

Asko Polar KS3501
Proline R111-2
Bosch KSR2512
Liebherr KS3220

Lec L7625

Worktop Larder

Zanussi ZR60L
Snowcap 150LA
Frigidaire Elite RE1590
Philips ARG716

Lec L4025
Indesit R1402WG
Lec L5025
Indesit R1458WG

Worktop Fridge
with frozen food
section

Bosch KTL1740
Frigidaire Elite RE1516
Bauknecht KDC1533WS
Hotpoint 8214W
Hotpoint 8221W
Snowcap 150DL

Zanussi DR50/2
Tricity Bendix RF500W
Lec R4025
Tricity R4008
Lec R5025
Electrolux RF573

*We continue to hear nothing but the best about a shop called Green Light in Shepton Mallet - good prices, excellent advice and help. The address is 11b High Street, Shepton Mallet (0749 346135)

Unfortunately, a nuclear powered radio is exactly the same as any other.



NUCLEAR ELECTRIC ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

Nuclear Electric has been spending more of its (our) money on trying to persuade the public that nuclear power is safe and cuddly.

Full page adverts have been appearing in local newspapers around the country (including in Somerset) as well as spots on regional radio and TV. Their general message is that nuclear power produces electricity no different from any other type of power - for instance, you don't get radiation from a radio. This seems pretty naff, especially when it's linked to a disc jockey (Tony Blackburn) who must be scarcely recognisable to anybody under 30.

SHE fired off a protest letter to the Somerset County Gazette pointing out the real facts about the dangers and costs of nuclear power, which featured with several others. When the advert appeared in the Bridgwater Mercury its effect may have been somewhat deadened by the front page headline of the same edition, which read: "Hinkley Row After Leak".

If you see these adverts why not write your own letter of protest to the newspaper or phone the radio/TV station?

SAFE ENERGY NEWS

SOUTH WEST RENEWABLE ENERGY STUDY

South West Electricity and the Department of Energy's Energy Technology Support Unit have embarked on a study to assess the potential for generating electricity from renewables in the South West. The study will look at wind, biofuels, landfill gas, waste incineration, solar, tidal and hydro and will identify preferred technologies, commercial feasibility and the most economic locations within the SWEB area. The study will also examine environmental and planning constraints and is expected to take six months.

WIND FIRST IN CORNWALL

The blades of Britain's first commercial wind farm started turning last month at Delabole, North Cornwall. On a windy ridge 800 feet above sea level the ten turbines reach full power at 29 mph, generating enough electricity for 3,000 homes. Peter Edwards, ex-dairy farmer and owner, now sees himself first and foremost as a windfarmer, and estimates the turbines will be able to generate power for three hours in four.

SHE, Hockpitt Farm, Nether Stowey, Bridgwater, Somerset TA5 1EX.
0278 422632 (Danielle Grunberg)
0278 732921 (Crispin Aubrey)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

March 10 Chernobyl conference visitors tour Hinkley area (see SHE News).

March 11 "The Legacy Of Chernobyl" conference, Council House, Bristol.

March 17 SHE Annual Meeting, Pen & Quill, Shuttern, Taunton, 7.45pm.

