



# News letter

October 1993

## LAST CHANCE TO STOP THORP - WRITE A PROTEST LETTER TODAY!

The government has now announced details of the second public consultation process over THORP, the still unopened £2.8 billion reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

This is likely to be the last formal chance for people to have their say over the white elephant development. It is therefore vital that every SHE member puts pen to paper. The deadline for letters to arrive is October 4th.

You don't have to write an essay. A few sentences will do. Some ideas are given below and in the enclosed leaflet.

THORP has already been delayed from opening for almost a year because of public protest, and the second consultation process is only being held because of outside pressure on the government. This shows that protest *can* have an effect.

It's clear that THORP will only go ahead now because of inertia - it has got so far that the government doesn't want to turn back. Even people inside the nuclear industry now see the plant as a product of a period of optimistic nuclear expansion that has faded. Stopping THORP would still deal a body blow to the pro-nuclear lobby.

Details of what to write and where to write are given in the enclosed red Greenpeace leaflet. But these are further ideas on points you could make in your letter.

\* The THORP development will add to the amount of radioactive material discharged into the sea and air from Sellafield. This is harmful to people's health.

\* THORP will produce about 60 tonnes of plutonium in its first 10 years. This is a dangerous substance which could be turned into nuclear bombs and for which there is no clear peaceful use.

\* THORP will produce mountains of nuclear waste for which there is no long-term storage or disposal method.

\* THORP is likely to lose money for the British taxpayer. As soon as it opens it will have to be decommissioned at a cost of about £900 million.

\* There is a safer way to deal with spent nuclear fuel - by storing it rather than reprocessing. This is being

### ACTION PLAN

#### 1. STOP THORP!

Write a protest letter to: The Department of the Environment, Sellafield Consultation, PO Box 5, Manchester M60 4DA. See enclosed Greenpeace leaflet for details.

**Deadline:** Must arrive by October 4th.

#### 2. WRITE OFF NUCLEAR POWER!

Fill up the enclosed Friends of the Earth petition with as many signatures as you can.

**Deadline:** Return to FoE address by October 31st.

#### 3. PROTEST AT SIZEWELL DISCHARGES!

Write a letter to: Sizewell B Public Consultation, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, PO Box 143, Bedford MK42 0PN.

**Deadline:** Must arrive by October 8th.

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followed by more and more countries. Britain is pursuing an outdated option.

\* Because so much has changed since the original decision to build THORP in 1978, and many vital details are still secret, there should be a new full public inquiry.

### WRITE OFF NUCLEAR POWER

Friends of the Earth have launched a national petition against nuclear power under the slogan "Write Off Nuclear Power". A copy is enclosed with this newsletter.

This is the first salvo to be fired by the anti-nuclear movement in the run-up to the long-awaited government Nuclear Review. The review will be vital in deciding whether more nuclear power stations are built in Britain, including at Hinkley Point.

Details of the review are still awaited, and may not now be announced until November, or even later. According to a report in the *Financial Times* (Sept 14), there are disagreements between the Treasury, the Department of the Environment and the Trade and Industry Department about how the review is conducted. The DTI wants a narrow investigation based just on whether private finance could be raised for new nuclear stations.

Meanwhile, anti-nuclear and other groups are getting ready to lob in their criticisms. This includes Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Nuclear Free Local Authorities grouping and COLA, the Consortium of Opposing Local Authorities which was the major objector at the 1988/9 Hinkley C Public Inquiry.

At its last meeting, the SHE committee agreed to start preparation of a submission from the campaign which would concentrate on, among other things, the strength of opposition locally to Hinkley C. Any suggestions from members welcome.

### OBJECT TO SIZEWELL B DISCHARGES!

The Pollution Inspectorate has launched a public consultation process over the new discharges of radioactivity which will result from the start-up of Sizewell B, scheduled for next year.

Local campaigners have called for as many people as possible to write in objecting to the authorisation for these discharges. You should point out that even low levels of radiation are harmful to health and that there will be no benefit from the power station to balance out the risk.

The application from Nuclear Electric to HMIP is available for inspection at their offices in London, Bedford, Bristol and Leeds. See the panel on page 1 for the address to write to. The deadline is October 8th. Make clear that you are writing about the discharges application for the new Sizewell B power station under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

### CAMPAIGNS

#### TRAWSFYNYDD CLOSED

Just as the last newsletter went out, Nuclear Electric announced that it would not be reopening the troubled Magnox power station at Trawsfynydd in North Wales.

The Welsh station had been closed since 1991, mainly because of concern about cracks in vital welds in the reactor pressure vessels. It will now be shut down for good.

Welsh campaigners are calling for the power station to be decommissioned as quickly as possible, rather than left for the long period of over 100 years which Nuclear Electric now envisage. They also want the nearby lake, which supplied Trawsfynydd with cooling water and is now contaminated with radioactivity, to be cleaned up.

This is the third civil Magnox power station to be closed. Berkeley in Gloucestershire was shut in 1988, and Hunterston in Scotland in 1990. There are six others still working.

Closure of Trawsfynydd clearly has implications for the Hinkley A Magnox, which has suffered from the same pressure vessel problem, although not so severe. Anybody who wants to get involved in action over Hinkley A, please get in touch with the SHE office.

### MAG-NET LAUNCHED

This is a new network launched in the aftermath of the Trawsfynydd closure to link campaigners at the three Magnox sites in the South East - Sizewell, Bradwell and Dungeness. They will be publishing a regular bulletin. Details from East Anglian Safe Energy Alliance, 43 High Street, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1AJ (0728 604849).

### SHE NEWS

#### SHE WIND FARM TRIP

The SHE visit to Delabole on Saturday Sept. 18 was a great success. We were blessed with favourable weather and all 27 of us (plus a baby) had an uneventful coach journey into Cornwall.

The visitors centre at Delabole has a range of well displayed information about wind power in general and their Danish turbines in particular. The landowner, Peter Edwards, gave our group an interesting talk about the history of the wind farm and also took us into one of the turbine towers to show us the computer control system.

No farm land has been taken up by the turbines as they are all fitted into hedge lines. The only farmland used is for the visitors centre, which was a necessary addition because of curious tourists causing traffic chaos on the road!

It is interesting to note that the wind farm was born out of an anti-nuclear campaign. In the early 1980s there was talk of building a nuclear power station in Cornwall, and Peter and his wife were campaigning against this. He felt that he had to offer an alternative, so the idea of a wind farm was born. At the time it was not a viable proposition, but by the end of the decade things had changed considerably, both in terms of technology and the financial situation. So at last the dream became a reality.



The station has been running for 18 months now and with just ten turbines generates enough power for 3000 homes. Local reaction has been very favourable and Peter and his team are now able to offer advice and assistance to any group wishing to embark on a similar project.

On the way home we were able to stop at another wind farm, which has recently started operating with 22 British built turbines. So it proves there is a growing trend towards the use of renewable energy.

#### **Val Davey**

\* The SHE trip was such a success that the committee thought we ought to try it again. Any suggestions for suitable energy-related places to visit would be welcome, ideally not too far from the home base of most members in the Somerset/Avon area.

#### BANKSIDE GAS STATION AGREED

The government has given the go-ahead for a 1200 MW gas-fired power station at Bankside, in Avonmouth on the edge of Bristol.

Although this may seem a bad idea in the overall energy context - a waste of fossil fuel in the "dash for gas" - it may have benefits for the battle against Hinkley C. Any argument that a new large power station is needed in the South West must be affected by the presence of a station just as large as Hinkley C only 30 miles to the north.

### TALES FROM THE REACTOR CORE

Within days of British Nuclear Fuels being allowed to test the still unopened THORP plant with "slightly radioactive" uranium in early September, the first accident happened.

Nitrogen oxide gas was released by mistake into the building, and 280 workers had to be evacuated.

Fifteen people were treated for throat irritation, according to BNFL.

A Greenpeace spokesperson said: "If they cannot deal with the non-radioactive materials safely then we have no confidence that they can deal with the highly radioactive spent fuel."

*Fourteen years after the near-meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania in 1979, the clean-up has only just been completed. It cost over \$1 billion. Even then, there is still a pile of radioactive debris left inside the reactor core. It will now be left in "monitored storage" for at least twenty years before final dismantling is considered. Although the company claims there were no health effects from the accident, it has already paid out \$14 million in damages to local residents.*

### CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

Any thoughts on the issues raised in this newsletter? Let us know in writing...

### MORE RENEWABLES

Further government subsidies have been promised for renewable energy projects up to the end of the century. Full details of a third allocation of funding under the Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO) are due later this year, with subsequent allocations in 1996 and 1998. The government has set a target of 1500 Megawatts of renewable power by the end of the century.

This year's allocation will be for 300-400 MW of power, covering all the technologies from wind through to waste, compared with a total of 559 MW in 1990 and 1991.

## THORP: The Whitehall Nightmare

*A new book by Crispin Aubrey*

A clear, non-technical account of all the issues surrounding the controversial THORP nuclear reprocessing plant at Sellafield, and the first comprehensive analysis of the debate.



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Illustrations, charts, figures.

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