



Newsletter

March 2011

Campaigners step up demand for action over contaminated Hinkley land after Japan disaster

Campaigners have sent an open letter to West Somerset Council (WSC) asking them to coordinate action over land found to be contaminated on the proposed Hinkley C site.

Local campaign group Stop Hinkley is asking for works to be halted on the affected land, that an early meeting of interested parties, including the public, be held and for affirmation that suitable sophisticated tests are being performed on the land as a matter of urgency in response to the recent Green Audit report. Following the Japan disaster campaigners are seeking faster action from the Council.

EdF, the company applying to build Hinkley C, should have been instructed by WSC to submit an appropriate contamination assessment with their application (to carry out preliminary works) as they had answered 'yes' to a question as to whether the land was contaminated.

In preparing objections to this application a number of Stop Hinkley campaigners looked for this contamination assessment by EdF.

In the absence of any clearly indexed document Stop Hinkley assumed that the Radiological Site Characterisation commissioned by EdF from consultants AMEC was intended to be the 'appropriate contamination assessment'. The finding of AMEC's report was that the uranium they found present on the site was not dangerous.

Stop Hinkley campaigners then looked at the AMEC report in the following ways:

- o Did the methodology of the report comply with best practice of Safeguards, the agreed industry standard?
- o Was the data in the report accurate and relevant to proving that the uranium on this site is safe?

In both cases it was found that the AMEC report fell way short of what one would expect in dealing with such a critical subject. Analysing AMEC's findings, the Green Audit report concluded that the land is contaminated with radioactive enriched uranium.

The responses these campaigners have received from the Department of Energy (DECC), EdF, WSC and the Environment Agency have included such tactics as character assassination, passing the buck, disputing the law and simply not responding to emails. When presenting the findings of the Green Audit report to Hergen Hays, the government's Head of New Nuclear, at the DECC consultation in Bridgwater on 12 January, he said:

"It is in no one's interest, including the government, to grant consent to something that would be obviously harmful to human beings. Why would anyone want to do that?"

Katy Attwater, spokesperson for Stop Hinkley, said: "Surely our fellow human beings at EdF would be wanting to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that disturbing the land at Hinkley Point will not be a health hazard to workers, local people and the wider community in the South West."

She added: "We're pressing the Council to take the necessary action to ensure the land is checked again and set up a meeting of interested parties. Meanwhile they should stop all works on the land which might disturb the radiation in the soil."

(Based on Stop Hinkley press release, 17 March 2011)

For more details:

- Open letter to West Somerset Council: www.stophinkley.org/PressReleases/pr110317.pdf
- Link to Green Audit report on Hinkley C land contamination: <http://www.stophinkley.org/Health/HinkCohtamJan2010.pdf>
- Hergen Hays speaking at DECC Consultation in Bridgwater 12/01/2011: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwxpigVES71>
- Safeguards website: www.safeguards.com

Japanese Disaster Shakes Global Confidence in Nuclear

The disastrous events at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in northern Japan following the recent earthquake and subsequent tsunami have sent shock waves around the world, re-igniting fears that another accident on the scale of Chernobyl may be about to happen.

Ever since the back-up power supply to the six reactors at Fukushima was knocked out by a tidal wave on 11 March, its operators have been battling to stop the reactors and their associated spent fuel storage ponds from overheating. At least two of the reactors have seen explosions, wrecking their outer shields, fuel inside has melted and radioactive iodine and caesium have spewed into the atmosphere. About 77,000 people have been evacuated from a 20 kilometre radius, many more have fled and food growing many miles away has been contaminated. Many countries have already suspended their nuclear programmes. Germany has shut down all its pre-1980 reactors.

Whether or not an earthquake on this scale could happen in the UK, the crucial underlying lesson is that the company operating Fukushima had said that its reactors could withstand any expected tremor. They didn't. EdF has made similar claims about the proposed Hinkley C reactors, for example in relation to an aircraft crash. As importantly, a tsunami *did* hit the Somerset coast in 1607. Just as at Fukushima, Hinkley C will have a storage building for spent nuclear fuel expected to stay secure against flooding, or other natural disaster, for at least 100 years.

Stop Hinkley issued an immediate press release saying that "the events in Japan provide yet more evidence that nuclear power is unsafe. We should immediately shelve plans for any new reactors in this country, including the Hinkley C proposal." A demonstration was held by South West Against Nuclear outside EdF's offices in Kings Square, Bridgwater. Energy Minister Chris Huhne has delayed announcing further government plans until an inquiry about the events in Japan has reported in May and told *The Observer* newspaper: "Globally, this undoubtedly casts a shadow over the renaissance of the nuclear industry."

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Tree Preservation Order on Preliminary Works Site

Stop Hinkley member Nikki Clark has successfully prompted West Somerset District Council to grant an **Emergency Tree Preservation Order** for all the trees in the copse that EdF was planning to remove during their preliminary works for the new nuclear power station.

There are at least a dozen notable/veteran Oaks in this copse as well as numerous other trees. The aim of the order is to stop EdF from decimating the site before they get planning permission.

These trees have been afforded at least some legal protection for now...

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The letter below, signed by a number of prominent people, was submitted to The Guardian by Stop Hinkley.

The Guardian | Saturday 5 February 2011

Letters and emails

Disturbing news from Hinkley Point

We are disturbed to discover that the energy company Electricité de France (EDF) is already proposing to start major preparation work at Hinkley Point in Somerset even before it has permission to build a new nuclear power station.

The work, covering more than 400 acres, will involve the removal of most hedges and trees, rerouting underground streams, closure of all rights of way, and the excavation of more than 2.3m cubic metres of soil and rocks. This would be enough to fill Wembley stadium twice over. It will effectively mean preparing the foundations for the proposed twin reactors.

Nuclear power has many downsides, not least the fact that radioactive waste will be stored at Hinkley Point for up to 100 years after these new reactors have stopped operating. But EDF should not be allowed to justify this precipitate action by saying that "national need for nuclear" demands it move forward with its plans as fast as possible.

There is no reason why we cannot keep the lights on in Britain by a stronger commitment to energy saving, by a continuing (but decreasing) use of cleaner fossil fuels, and through a major expansion of renewable energy sources. If Spain can already meet 35% of its electricity demand from renewables (Spain helps out France in green power surge, 29 December), then Britain, with abundant wind and water resources, could do even better. Nuclear power, with all its attendant risks, should not be part of the mix.

Billy Bragg
Julie Christie
Emily Eavis
Professor David Elliott
Caroline Lucas MP
Michael Meacher MP
Professor Stephen Thomas

Stop Hinkley News

Stop Hinkley Street Stall

Report from Peter J. Kirkham: Carol, Peter and myself, with help from many others, have taken the Stop Hinkley street stall into Bridgwater town centre several times now. Although working together is fun, I won't pretend that it's not sometimes hard work. When we first took to the streets we were all a little nervous, but the more you do it the easier it becomes. We all feel that if Stop Hinkley is to succeed we need to appeal to people's hearts as well as their minds. To do this one has to meet face to face.

As the nuclear disaster unfolds in Japan more people will be open to our view on nuclear reactors, so it's even more important that we maintain our presence in the centre of town. There were lots of new visitors to the Stop Hinkley website in February and this may well be due to the leaflets handed out at the street stall.

We thank all those who have helped with the stall. We look forward to seeing you again and hope to see some new faces as well. When you come to support us, just your presence empowers the others; you can do as little or as much as you like.

We meet up each Friday by Blake's statue in Fore Street, opposite the Cornhill in Bridgwater from 10:30 till noon. If you would like to help, please phone 01278 453843 or email peterwaldschmidt@btinternet.com to confirm two or three days before, as occasionally we hold the stall on a different day of the week or may go to a different town, or the weather is too inclement.

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Social Evenings

Stop Hinkley social evenings are being held at Unity House, Dampiet St, Bridgwater at 7.30pm every Monday, except when there is a Stop Hinkley business meeting on the second Monday of the month and Bank Holidays.

Anyone is welcome to come as they are an informal opportunity for people to meet and share ideas. March 28th will be an opportunity to make art work for the Memory of Chernobyl day on Tuesday April 26th.

One member commented that they have been a good bonding exercise as well as raising much needed funds for Stop Hinkley with a raffle, so please bring raffle prizes. This could be an offer of a service, a bottle of wine, a packet of biscuits or anything else. See you there.



Stop Hinkley supporters have been busy making videos and several are now up on YouTube and the Stop Hinkley website.

You can see Stop Hinkley member Cecily Collingridge presenting the Green Audit report to the local council and attempting to deliver it to EdF. In another film she confronts Hergen Haye, the government's Head of New Nuclear, with the fact that the land at Hinkley C is contaminated with 10 tonnes of enriched uranium.

In a short video Chris Huhne tells us about nuclear power, perfectly illustrating the two-faced nature of politicians!

Another video, 'Stop EDF Jumping the Gun', is about their application to carry out "Preliminary Works" for Hinkley C - in advance of receiving consent to build the power station itself.

All these can be seen on the Videos page at www.stophinkley.org.

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Chernobyl Day Tuesday 26th April

Stop Hinkley is co-ordinating activity to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident on Tuesday 26th April together with Sedgemoor Peace Group and the Green Party. The current plan is for a procession through Bridgwater and a candlelit vigil. People are being encouraged to bring anything they would like to share, such as a story, poem, song or lament. If you would like to take part please contact Chinks Grylls on 01278 732218 or chinks@chinks.fsnet.co.uk Watch www.stophinkley.org for further details.

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Consultation Responses

Stop Hinkley has made official responses and objections to a number of local and national consultations.

Locally, we objected to the application by EdF (to West Somerset Council) to carry out Preliminary Works on the Hinkley C site, even before they have obtained permission to build the nuclear power station itself. We also objected to EdF's proposal for a new jetty off the coast to bring in aggregate and other materials. The Marine Maritime Organisation, which is handling this application, has now announced there will be a public inquiry.

EdF has also recently published details of its "Stage 3" consultation into plans for the construction period of Hinkley C, including proposals for such things as traffic management and workforce accommodation.

Nationally, Stop Hinkley has objected to the government's plans for Electricity Market Reform on the basis that they are designed to provide an unfair subsidy for new nuclear power stations.

Details of all these submissions can be found at www.stophinkley.org on the Nuclear New Build page, including an Ecological Assessment of the site preparation works.

- **Don't forget that the deadline for commenting on EdF's Stage 3 consultation is 28 March.**

Nuclear News

Oldbury 2 Reactor Shut After Electrical Problem

The 220 Megawatt Oldbury 2 nuclear reactor in Britain shut down on Thursday (17 March) after an electrical problem in the site's turbine hall, a spokeswoman for operator Magnox said.

"At 1040 GMT this morning, reactor 2 at Oldbury power station was automatically and safely shut down," she said.

The system to keep the reactor cool started and investigations are ongoing to find out what caused the problem, Magnox said.

The site's second nuclear reactor was not affected and continues to operate as normal. (*Reuters*)

Hinkley Company Admits Faults at 60% of French Nuclear Reactors

Electricite de France has admitted safety weaknesses affecting 34 of the nuclear reactors it operates in France.

The "anomaly", highlighted by the French state regulatory body Autorité de Sureté Nucleaire (ASN), means that if cooling water is lost from the reactor's primary pressure circuit, the back-up water injection safety system may not be able to prevent a meltdown of the core.

"In an accident situation, for breach of certain sizes of primary pressure, the injection from the high pressure safety system may not be sufficient enough to cool the reactor core", ASN warns in its report.

The water injection system, which is designed to inject massive quantities of "borated" water into the reactor core, halting the nuclear reaction, is the main method of delaying a meltdown if there is a major leakage of the primary circuit water.

The French anti-nuclear watchdog group Sortir du Nucleaire has called for the closure of all 34 reactors (out of a total of 58 across France) until the issue has been adequately addressed.

Events

The next Stop Hinkley 'business' meetings are at on **Mondays 11 April & 9 May** at West Bow House in Milton Place, behind the Squib pub on West Street in Bridgwater at 7.30pm
Meetings are held regularly on the 2nd Monday of the month.

Stop Hinkley Social evenings
Unity House, Dampiet Street, Bridgwater
Mondays 7.30pm March 28, April 4 & 18.

26 April – Chernobyl Day

Invited by South West Against Nuclear and Child Victims of War

Dr Helen Caldicott

co-founder of Physicians for Social Responsibility, renowned author and speaker, and passionate advocate of citizen action.



Talk and Discussion

The Medical and Environmental Hazards of the Nuclear Age

and implications and action for the South -West

Thursday 14th April 2011
6.45 till 9 pm

Easton Community Centre
Kilburn Street, Easton, Bristol, BS5 6AW
Contact: swanactive@gmail.com

Admission free - Donations welcome

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