



Newsletter
March 2000

Beleagured Hinkley 'A'

While our Shut Hinkley 'A' Campaign has been stepping up, BNFL/Magnox who operate the old reactors have been embroiled in problems of their own making! At a national level they lost their Chief Executive John Taylor last month in the fiasco surrounding forged safety documents for MOX fuel sent to Japan. Germany has now announced it will take no more of the reprocessed fuel after the discovery of pieces of metal in their consignment and a batch of AGR fuel was impounded by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate who discovered faulty, potentially dangerous welds on the fuel cladding! Locally Hinkley 'A' was found by the Environment Agency to have changed the data relating to Carbon-14 emissions into the air over a three year period without permission, leading extraordinarily to two Enforcement Orders. BNFL's management and safety procedures are the subject of much criticism from every quarter, including Stop Hinkley, through our many press releases.

In this edition:

- Top Engineer outlines meltdown scenarios at Taunton public meeting
 - Chief Nuclear Inspector voices concern on HTV documentary
 - Environment Agency dismay at plant management
 - Hinkley Cancer Study commissioned
- also:
- BNFL abandon Cricklewood N-fuel depot
 - Long Term Waste storage at Hinkley
 - Chernobyl Day events
 - AGM feedback

John Large on Hinkley 'A' Risks

Speaking to an audience of about sixty, Consultant Nuclear Engineer John Large gave details of three possible worse case scenarios at Hinkley 'A'. Using computerised images he

outlined how the reactors work moving on to how they could fail catastrophically:

1. A build up of Wigner Energy in the normally inert graphite core could be released and create a fuel fire as happened at Windscale through soot blockages in the cooling channels;
2. An embrittled Top Cooling Duct could fracture creating a pressure difference which distorts the reactor core and allowing air to be pumped to the hot fuel. The control rods could not be inserted and the air would ignite the fuel;
3. A fracture in the Heat Exchanger could allow steam to be pumped to the reactor core which would in turn break up preventing insertion of the control rods. The steam would ignite the fuel.

John stressed that because no Secondary Containment exists, the Primary circuit must be beyond doubt of failure, which because of its age is no longer true of Hinkley 'A'.

Speaking about Emergency responses he pointed out that following safety initiatives by the Fire Brigades Union, firefighters are taken out of radioactive fires when they receive a dose of 50 milisieverts with the option to continue upto 100mSv in the event of direct threat to life. But the public are evacuated at the much higher dose of 250 mSv. He felt there was a huge question of resources and logistics in this area.

On Decommissioning John expressed his concerns at the plans to abandon the plant under a concrete sarcophagus for 150 years. He said the internal structures would collapse in that time and it would be many times more difficult to dismantle safely.

The meeting, chaired by Baroness Miller lasted two hours and many people stayed on to chat and offer help to the campaign. A video of the talk was made by Bristol group I-Contact, copies of which are available on request to us at a nominal charge.

Chief Nuclear Inspector concerned

The Head of The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate aired his concern about the state of Hinkley 'A' on the HTV documentary 'West Eye View' shown in February. Laurence Williams, who ultimately has the say over the future of the plant said that originally assumed properties of the Reactor Pressure Vessels had been shown to be wrong and BNFL were evaluating new information. (According to the Guardian on February 21st checks through old papers showed that some parts of the Pressure Vessels were not tested properly when the station was first built.) Mr Williams acknowledged that Trawsfynydd was closed in 1991 because of concern about vulnerable zones in its Pressure Vessels. The

statement was made in response to questions of safety about the station following discoveries of faulty welds in the Heat Exchangers and the subsequent closure of the plant in April last year. The whole documentary highlighted concerns about the integrity of Hinkley 'A' particularly in the run up to privatisation of BNFL and opened a floodgate of interest from local and national media in our campaign to shut Hinkley 'A'.

Environment Agency on Carbon-14 Fiasco

The South-West Nuclear Inspector for the Environment Agency, based in Bridgwater, has slapped two Enforcement Notices on Hinkley 'A' following the discovery of an unauthorised method of evaluating carbon-14 releases into the atmosphere going back three years. A worker, deciding the levels seemed too high, changed from the agreed method of measuring the pollution without referring to his bosses at the station or the Environment Agency who publish these figures for public information. It now appears that the already generous permitted levels were breached over this period and so a question hangs over Hinkley A's future unless it can show that it can keep the discharges below the agreed limits. Mr Pagington was particularly concerned about the plant's management when I telephoned him, which he said had gone downhill since the break up of the two stations four years ago. Remarkably BNFL refused to put anyone in front of the BBC Points West cameras on Friday 3rd March when the second Notice was issued, allowing themselves to be completely humiliated by interviews with Mr Pagington, John Large and myself in the main news item of the evening. West Country TV also

covered the news in a two minute interview with me and most local papers ran with the story with headlines such as **Hinkley A 'must close'** in the *Somerset County Gazette*.

Cancer study commissioned

Following Dr Cameron Bowie's studies in the eighties which showed a sixty per cent increase in Leukemia near Hinkley Point we decided to pay for another study looking at local cancer levels. Dr Chris Busby, from Green Audit in Wales has agreed to examine deaths from all malignancies, breast, lung and stomach cancer in each ward in a 15 mile radius of Hinkley Point between 1993 and 1998 and calculate the relative risk based on distance from the station and from the sea. Chris found increases of 400 per cent in Leukemias in a one kilometer strip along the Welsh coast which he attributes to discharges from Sellafield. The isotopes attach to particles of mud which dry up in estuary areas and are inhaled by people living nearby. As highlighted in the HTV documentary, there are indications of a cancer cluster around Hinkley and the local muddy beaches might be conveying the deadly isotopes into our bodies. However the government will not release information on diagnoses of cancer which would give much more relevant data on the sources of those cancers.

Chris hopes to reveal his findings at our Chernobyl Day public meeting on April 26th at Bridgwater Town Hall.

BNFL abandon Cricklewood

Following a lengthy campaign with much media coverage it was announced today (22nd March) that BNFL have decided to finish their operations at Cricklewood Sidings in North London. The sidings, similar in

function to Eastover sidings in Bridgwater, were the site for transferring nuclear fuel flasks by rail for reprocessing at Sellafield. The recent HTV documentary showed film of a truck loaded with the fuel barging past houses where a crane then lifts the flasks onto railway trailers only yards from Eastover Primary School attended by 400 infants. Concern was expressed about this process at our last public meeting in Bridgwater in January. John Large answering a question about the flasks in Taunton explained that in certain crash conditions the flasks could split open releasing fission materials which the emergency services at any point along its route would be unable to deal with. He pointed out the inadequacy of the nuclear industry's tests, some of which were set up originally to investigate the integrity of bank safes. At the point that the money inside the safes was considered to have burnt, half an hour at 800 degrees, the test was halted. But this model was applied to fuel flasks which, if caught in a tunnel fire would be exposed to much greater extremes.

Waste stockpile at Hinkley 'A'

A report published last year by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate highlighted a growing problem at Hinkley 'A' in the form of Intermediate Level Waste. The waste is mainly formed by shearings from the Magnesium alloy fuel cladding but includes other types of waste. Originally this was destined to be buried in a Deep Repository in Cumbria but NIREX never received a licence to go ahead with this appalling plan which has now been abandoned. So the waste has been building up in vaults at the station and remains there permanently by default. The NII claim in their report that contact with water

could ignite the waste which could also contaminate the ground. There are no plans for further public consultation over the potentially hazardous stockpile which Magnoxes produce at between four and ten times the rate of other nuclear power stations until the station moves to the decommissioning stage.

Chernobyl Day Events

April 26th is the 14th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster that brought misery to millions. We plan to mark the occasion with some appropriate events in Bridgwater, the nearest town to Hinkley Point. In the afternoon we hope to stage some street theatre on the theme of a spoof twinning ceremony between the dignitaries of Bridgwater and Chernobyl. Driving into Bridgwater you may notice something different relating to this on the approach roads. Friends of the Earth in Bristol hope to stage an event on the train on their way to Bridgwater.

In the evening we will hold a public meeting at the Town Hall in High Street where Chris Busby will speak about Hinkley's fallout and how it affects our local health, discussing his Cancer Study findings. Pete Roche from Greenpeace UK will also address the links between Hinkley and Chernobyl

AGM Feedback

Income and Expenditure Jan-Dec '99:

Income:

Standing Orders	2,698
Other	1,346
Total	4,044

Expenditure:

Admin	1,201
Other	1,099
Total	2,300
Support to Groups	650
Net Income:	£1,094

Balances:

Bank Account	15,000
Baywind Shares	5,000

Four new Committee Members were officially adopted : Cllr Alan Debenham, Paul Dorfman, UWE lecturer and designer Peter Margerum. I was also adopted as Coordinator.

Future Events

Wednesday 29th March 7.30 pm: Bristol Public Meeting hosted by Severnside Green Party at the Friends Meeting House, Hampton Road, Redland, Bristol. Speakers: Hugh Richards, Trawsfynydd campaigner, Patrick Van Den Bulck, CND campaigner, Jim Duffy, Stop Hinkley Coordinator.

Tuesday 4th April 7.30 pm HTV Follow Up documentary. Find out what's been happening at Hinkley 'A' since the West Eye View programme shown in February.

Tuesday 4th April 8.00pm Stop Hinkley Committee Meeting. Town Hall meeting room, High Street, Bridgwater. All members are very welcome to come and contribute ideas.

Wednesday 26th April: Afternoon-street theatre in Bridgwater pedestrian area - to be finalised;

7.30pm Public Meeting with Dr Chris Busby of Green Audit revealing findings from his Cancer Study on Hinkley Point; Speaker from Greenpeace UK on Chernobyl legacy. The Charter Room, Town Hall, High St., Bridgwater.

Contacts

Jim Duffy, Coordinator. Rydon Lodge, West Quantoxhead, Taunton TA4 4DW. Tel 01984 632109, Fax 639383.

Val Davey, Membership, Treasurer. Tel 01460 240241.

Collection Loka foundation

www.loka.org
Digitized 2019