



**BANNNG**  
Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group



## **BANNNG UP-TO-DATE**

**Spring, 2014**

*An occasional Newsletter for supporters of the  
Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNNG)*

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**(please note subscriptions are now due – see p. 8)**

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#### ***Fed Up with FED (p. 3)***

Concerns about the discharges of radioactivity into the estuary and atmosphere. BANNNG has been fighting to stop the proposal and has called on the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to hold a public meeting before it proceeds any further with the project.

#### ***Bradwell - a regional dumping ground? (p. 4)***

Plans to bring wastes from Dungeness to Bradwell break the principle that wastes should be managed where they arise. BANNNG is opposing this proposal and asks – Is this the thin end of the wedge towards Bradwell becoming a regional nuclear waste store?

#### ***Bradwell – a national nuclear dump? (p. 4)***

With the refusal by Cumbria to proceed further with the process of finding a site for the nation's high level radioactive wastes the Government is rethinking its approach.

While still apparently committed to a policy of voluntarism and partnership the search for a suitable site is about to begin again. Bradwell has been fingered before and might be again. BANNNG says it would be unbelievable folly to even consider building new reactors, spent fuel stores or a national waste repository in such a vulnerable and unsatisfactory location.

#### **News From Here and There (p. 6)**

Here we give you all the latest news involving BANNNG both locally and further afield. Consultations, local liaison and lobbying, national events, issues and meetings, and news from far away.

#### **Finally.....(p. 8)**

How to contact us and keep in touch. Remember our website is now BANNNG.info

**If you have an e-mail address, please let us know (see p. 8). It makes it easier - and cheaper - to keep in touch.**

## **EDITORIAL – What Is Going On?**

### **Fantasies for the Future**

It is becoming almost impossible to understand what is going on with the UK's nuclear energy policy. But, whatever way you look at it the implications for nuclear sites such as Bradwell are profound.

On the one hand, a golden future for nuclear energy seems to beckon. And it's golden in the sense that it could make lots of money for the nuclear industry, much of it going to big overseas suppliers in France and possibly China and Russia. Much of the money will be coming from British taxpayers shelling out ludicrous but lucrative subsidies, underwriting costs for nuclear waste management and taking on the liabilities that might arise from major nuclear accidents. The deal struck with EDF for the Hinkley Point power station guarantees a price for its electricity way above current levels for a period of 35 years – so much for the Coalition's policy of no subsidies to nuclear.

The nuclear ambitions do not rest with Hinkley Point and the plans for reactors at Sizewell, Wylfa, Oldbury and Sellafield. If all these came off they would build up to a programme of the 16GW of capacity that we are told would be nuclear's contribution to keeping the lights on and helping to save the planet in an age of climate change. There is even a gleam in the Government's eye of a programme as big as 75GW of nuclear by 2050, half the total electricity forecast to be needed by then. Such a vision is built on the fantasy of a new generation of unproven fast reactors, the use of the plutonium stockpile in mixed oxide (MOX) fuel and the availability of

unlimited supplies of investment and subsidies.

### **Catastrophic Consequences**

Even if this scenario is only partially fulfilled, think of the implications. Here are just a few. Several sites such as Bradwell, on floodable coasts, will be annexed for multiple reactors. Investment will be needed in spades, including from China, which is already looking at Bradwell. There will be greater dependence on uranium supplies from unreliable regimes. Renewables will be displaced to make way for nuclear. And risks from discharges into rivers, the sea and the air will be massively increased to say nothing of the possibility of a catastrophic accident.

And what about the untold volumes and radioactivity of the wastes left behind? It will be scattered around the country on vulnerable sites such as Bradwell. There will be an urgent search for not only one, but several deep repositories to bury the wastes. Where will they be found, if anywhere? Well, guess what? Bradwell and another site in Essex have been fingered before – and could be looked at again.

### **Fading Dreams**

On the other hand, there are many signs that the nuclear dream is fading. Hinkley Point is already two years behind schedule and is now held up as the EU ponders whether the subsidy breaks the competition rules. EDF has already got into bed with the Chinese in a bid to secure the investment but the resources are not yet fully committed. Progress at other new nuclear sites is slow. The search for a possible site for a deep repository has stalled since Cumbria County Council

refused to commit to the search over a year ago. And the plans for new reactors, reprocessing facilities and a MOX plant require a leap of faith and unlimited resources and guarantees to which even the most gung-ho Government would be loathe to make a commitment.

So, there's a battle to be fought and won which affects us here and now in the Blackwater estuary. Over the years BANNG has waged a campaign through protests, petitions, publicity, public meetings and pressure on decision makers. For example, we have written 23 detailed responses to Government consultations. We believe we have made a difference and raised awareness about what could happen if new nuclear reactors were built at Bradwell.

When nothing seems to be going on it is tempting to relax. BANNG has kept its eye on the ball so when the moment comes we will not be found wanting.

*Andy Blowers*

## **MAIN ISSUES AFFECTING THE BLACKWATER**

*Latest on the big issues.....Here is a round up of what's been happening. These stories were featured in our previous newsletter and seem set to run and run.*

### **Fed up with FED**

The Nuclear Decommissioning Agency's plans to discharge radioactivity into the Blackwater have been strenuously challenged. A brand new experimental plant has been constructed at Bradwell to dissolve the contaminated metallic casings removed from the spent nuclear fuel in the reactors. This is known as Fuel Element Debris, or FED for short. About 15% of the radioactivity together with heavy metals and nitrates will be discharged into the air or into the Blackwater estuary.

The benefit to the NDA of this plant using nitric acid as the dissolving agent is that the process is ten times faster and results in twenty times lower volume than the existing carbonic acid dissolution plant at Dungeness. But the reduction in financial cost is made at the expense of a radioactive insult to the estuary, imperilling marine life and posing unknown risks to those using the estuary for sailing, bathing and other recreation.

'They have no idea what they are doing and what the consequences for the marine environment, fishing and human health might be', said Barry Turner, Vice-Chair of BANNG.

BANNG has twice responded to consultations condemning the proposal. It has followed up with letters to the NDA, Environment Agency, the Marine Management

Organisation, MPs, MEPs, Secretaries of State for Energy and Environment and local councils asking for the proposal to be withdrawn. All, so far, to no avail. The response, where there is one, repeats the well-worn familiar mantra that the permits have been granted and the process poses no risk to human health or the environment.

Unless there is a last minute reprieve it seems the process will go ahead. BANNG has raised public concerns all around the estuary. Others – councils, individuals - have also become involved and there has been a great all round effort to nip it in the bud. In the latest move BANNG has written to Dr. Adrian Simper, Strategy and Technology Director at the NDA, pressing for an urgent public meeting to be held before they commence the dissolution.

We still hope to stop the process but, whatever the outcome, we've served notice that if they try anything like it again we'll be ready and determined to stop them before irreversibly pouring radioactivity into a precious but fragile estuary.

(For more on FED dissolution visit our website [Banng.info](http://Banng.info) and look at consultation papers 21 and 24)

### **Bradwell – a regional dumping ground?**

BANNG has led the opposition to plans to bring radioactive wastes to Bradwell from Dungeness in Kent. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority revealed the possibility in a very low-key consultation last year. Later it confirmed the plan as its Preferred Option in a document with the unlovely title, 'Optimising the number and location of: Interim Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) storage facilities

on Magnox Limited and EDF Energy sites'.

'Optimising' is NDA-speak for cutting costs. In a touch of serendipity the brand new store built to house the intermediate level waste (ILW, including contaminated items, sludges, resins, filters and effluents) from Bradwell just happens to have some spare capacity, enough at least to take packages of ILW from Dungeness.

As Varrie Blowers, BANNG's Secretary, observes, 'Bringing waste from elsewhere is a clear breach of past agreements and of trust and could set a precedent for Bradwell to become a regional nuclear waste store'.

BANNG is urging the NDA not to proceed with this plan and is asking Essex County Council to refuse the planning permission that will be required. Maldon District Council and West Mersea Town Council are also opposing the plan.

Transfer of wastes between nuclear sites breaks the principles of self-sufficiency and proximity which suggest wastes should be managed as near to where they are created as possible. Most worrying is the precedent that this transfer may set. 'This could be the thin end of the wedge and set a precedent for Bradwell to become a regional nuclear waste store', says Varrie Blowers.

(For more on the transfer of ILW to Bradwell, visit our website [BANNG.info](http://Banng.info) and look at consultation papers 20 and 24)

### **Bradwell – a national nuclear dump?**

In our last issue we argued that the chances of Bradwell becoming a

runner for the national Geological Disposal Facility (GDF), the deep underground store for all the country's most dangerous radioactive wastes, were remote because of opposition and the unsuitability of the site. We've not – yet – changed that view but the time to say 'No' is getting closer.

The severe storm surge and high tides that swept along the East Coast in December provided a clear demonstration of the overwhelming power of natural forces. All along the coast there was destruction and flooding. And, in an era of climate change, such events can no longer be dismissed as improbable. The Bradwell site is close to sea level and vulnerable to inundation and erosion. It makes absolutely no sense to bring the nation's nuclear waste to such an unsuitable site.

The effort to find a suitable site based on principles of voluntarism and partnership foundered last year when Cumbria County Council refused to participate further in the process. So, the Government has had to rethink and restart the process. BANNG made a thoughtful and constructive response to the consultation (see consultation paper 23 already circulated and on our website Banng.info). We argued that more time was needed, more emphasis should be put on the problem of safely storing existing wastes, that no new wastes should be created and that there should be continuing involvement and compensation for communities that agree to participate in a search for a site.

The Government is now mulling over the welter of responses it attracted and will publish its revised approach later this year. Shortly thereafter there will be a period of national awareness raising during which communities will

be invited to volunteer to participate without commitment..... And the Government intends to be proactive in seeking such volunteers.

Where are the most likely areas? At first blush, Cumbria, where the vast bulk of the wastes is stored looks a likely site yet again. But, back in 1997 a site for an underground laboratory was rejected mainly on geological grounds and Cumbria County Council's refusal last year was, likewise, based on the difficulties of finding a suitable site in such a geologically compromised region.

So, if Cumbria does not run, eastern England seems to offer the best geological conditions. There are large areas of deep thick clay which is becoming the preferred host environment, in France for example. And this includes Essex. Bradwell has been fingered before, by Nirex, the nuclear waste disposal body (now the NDA) and it survived to be one of 10 sites (from an initial 537) along with Potton Island, also in Essex, on the final shortlist. Some geologists have identified the clay belt of eastern England as a far more satisfactory site for the GDF than Cumbria.

BANNG will be pressing our local councils not to entertain the idea of the nation's nuclear dump in Essex. This would be a massive engineering project involving deep excavation on a massive scale and the provision of surface stores, conditioning plants, transportation and other facilities on the surface. Together with the possibility of new nuclear reactors, an environmentally important but fragile and floodable site would be transformed into a dangerous, industrialised landscape.

Andy Blowers says: ‘The recent storms and floods provide an intimation of how vulnerable the Blackwater estuary is likely to be to future storm surges and higher sea levels as climate change makes an ever increasing impact on our coastline. It would be unbelievable folly to even consider building new reactors, spent fuel stores or a national waste repository in such a vulnerable and unsatisfactory location’.

## **NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE**

Here’s a round up of recent events and issues involving BANNGers

### **Consultations**

BANNG has kept up its responses to Government consultations. The latest are:

- Review of the siting process for a geological disposal facility consultation. BANNG Paper 23
- Comment paper on the preferred option of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) for optimising the number and location of : interim intermediate level waste (ILW) storage facilities on Magnox Ltd. and EDF Energy sites; and FED treatment (dissolution) facilities in Magnox Ltd.

And there have also been individual submissions from BANNGers, too.

### **Local Liaison and Lobbying**

- *Andy and Varrie attended the meeting of the Bradwell Local Community Liaison Committee (LCLC) at Mundon on 11*

December. Among the items discussed were FED dissolution and transfer of ILW from Dungeness (see articles above).

- *Barry has been active on the monitoring group of West Mersea Town Council. After some earlier prompting by BANNG, WMTC have taken up the FED and ILW issues, challenging the Environment Agency and urging Essex County Council to refuse planning permission for the importation of ILW from Dungeness.*
- *Local councils.* Andy and Varrie met with the Leader of Tendring District Council and urged the council to be proactive with respect to Bradwell issues given the proximity of part of the District to the site. Together with Barry they also met the leadership of Colchester Borough who confirmed they remained committed to opposing new build at Bradwell.

### **National Events, Issues and Meetings**

- *Government/NGO Nuclear Forum.* Co-Chair is Andy Blowers and Barry Turner represents BANNG on this national body which meets three times a year to discuss nuclear issues with Government ministers. Recent concerns have been, inevitably, nuclear waste and plans for its burial, while nuclear security and nuclear energy and health have been other issues under discussion.
- *London workshop on nuclear waste.* Seven BANNGers

attended a workshop at Central Hall Westminster in November. The workshop was run by the Government as part of its consultation programme on deep geological disposal of waste. 'It was good to have the chance to tell Government what we think face-to-face', said BANNGer, Shirley Swann, after the meeting. 'We must hope they listen to good sense before embarking on another futile attempt to find a site.'

- **Chinese interest in Bradwell site.** The apparent interest of Chinese nuclear companies in Bradwell as a site for new nuclear power stations is worrying. BANNNG is trying to find out more and will make it clear to prospective investors that Bradwell is a no-go area for future nuclear development. 'We will make it clear that the site is totally unsuitable and that new nuclear there is opposed by the overwhelming majority of the Blackwater community', said BANNNG Membership Secretary, Norma Creighton.
- **Expansion of Nuclear Energy.** The Government has put forward its vision for up to 75GW of new nuclear capacity by 2050 (*The UK's Nuclear Future*). It is not so much a vision as a fantasy. It depends on a new generation of breeder reactors not yet developed, and on reprocessing facilities and the production of Mixed Oxide Fuel in plants yet to be built (having closed those that failed). The costs would be immense, development of renewables would be stifled and the risks from radioactive emissions and accidents would

be greatly increased. And where would the new stations be built? On crumbling coastlines all round England and Wales (Scotland will have none of it). And what would be done with the waste? It will need several repositories when we can't even find one. And so the waste will be left scattered in drowning sites for our successors to look after.

### ***Does this nuclear madness know no bounds?***

#### **News from Far Away**

**United States.** Andy and Varrie went to the west of the USA to look at the Hanford nuclear reservation to see how they are dealing with clean up in what, along with Sellafield, is the most contaminated landscape in the West. 'The problem is immense and vastly expensive but, at least, in the States they are focusing hard on clean-up. It's weird to find such desecration in such a big and beautiful country out there', said Varrie on her return.

**France.** They also visited France to look at the impacts of the deep disposal facility under construction at Bure in Eastern France and at the huge reprocessing complex on the Normandy coast near Cherbourg. 'The French always look as if they've sorted out their problems. But, while progress has been made there are big problems of how to deal with the wastes looming and questions for which there are no simple answers.'

## **BANNG Core and Community Co-ordination Groups**

At a recent meeting, it was agreed that the two groups should be merged and be called the Core Group.

### **Be in Touch**

**Website.** Visit our website for latest news, consultations, press releases, etc.:

### ***Banng.info***

### **Your Support**

Thank you for your continuing support. Please encourage your friends and family to support BANNG.

**Subscriptions** (we suggest £5 per supporter) are now due so, if you haven't done so yet, please send your contribution to BANNG's Treasurer, Lynn Hartley, Ray View, The Strood, Peldon, CO5 7QL

**Request for e-mail addresses.** If you are not receiving this newsletter by e-mail but have an e-mail address can you please make sure we have it? It makes keeping in touch much easier, less labour-intensive and cheaper! Please let Varrie know (see below)

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