

BANNG – Update (20 June, 2008)

(This is a note from Andy Blowers, the Chair of BANNG, to help keep you up-to-date with latest developments.)

At the National Level

Things appear to be moving rapidly and mainly in one direction. The government has become ever more bullish about nuclear's role as part of a future energy mix. The stated ambition is for more than a replacement programme drawing in greenfield as well as existing sites. The sale of British Energy and its sites proceeds and the NDA is interested in selling its sites, one of which is Bradwell.

A number of decision making processes are in train. One is the 'justification' process whereby the development of nuclear energy has to be justified in terms of benefit outweighing detriment. This is part quantitative and part subjective but it is in the hands of the BERR (Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform) which is the sponsoring department for nuclear energy.

Another process is the development of fast track planning for major infrastructures. The Planning Bill has been temporarily held up in the Commons and has yet to pass through the Lords. There may be some amendments but the principles of the bill (which some of us have urged our MPs to oppose) will probably remain intact thereby accelerating decisions on major infrastructures and weakening local democratic processes and the rights of local communities to participate in decision making.

A third process is the Generic Design Assessment (GDA) of the reactor designs for new nuclear power plants. The regulatory bodies (Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of HSE and the Environment Agency) are undertaking assessments. They have recently held a workshop on progress taking into account views of NGOs and local groups, which I attended. They are unlikely to reach conclusions on safety and security by 2011 and so may hold up progress towards new nuclear build. Although this is a generic assessment there will also be site specific assessments. Crucially, new plants in estuaries or on rivers require an Abstraction Licence. Given the size of the plants proposed, the amount of water abstracted from the Blackwater and the heating caused may well be important issues. Abstraction from the sea does not require licensing.

Fourth, there is the long term management of nuclear wastes. The government issued a White Paper on June 12th (see note below*) indicating that local communities are to be invited to participate in a process which may eventually lead to a deep geological repository being constructed to house the nation's existing long-lived high level and intermediate level wastes. Participation is voluntary and communities have a right to withdraw from the process. There will be packages providing economic and social benefits to encourage participation. BANNG has issued a Press Statement on this (attached). I was a member of the Government committee that recommended the voluntary process. My view is that a similar process should be applied to new build wastes so that communities around a site like Bradwell would have to declare their willingness to house such wastes in the long term.

A national group providing support to local communities has been launched to give advice on nuclear waste management policy. It is called Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates (NWAA) and their website is www.nuclearwasteadvisory.co.uk I am a member of NWAA.

At the Local Level

BANNG is developing its strategy on two fronts. An active Community Awareness Group is about to raise our profile through a poster campaign followed by a petition. A logo is being finalised. It is important that we have a strong presence in the local community and evidence of widespread support. This enables us to represent the views of the area to decision makers and the nuclear industry and to be represented at relevant meetings. We shall also be making contacts among the other Blackwater communities to develop a broader movement. An article in *Community News* (which is distributed around the estuary) is intended to spread the message more widely.

The Local Community Liaison Council meets on June 25th at the Minerva Centre, Mundon. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Rhianon Williams at Rhianon.Williams@magnoxsouthsites.com (Varrie and I will be attending as members of the public.)

Nolly Urquhart has arranged for representatives of BANNG to meet West Mersea Town Council and other councillors on July 22nd.

Further afield, a new group is being formed to oppose new nuclear development at Sizewell. It rejoices under the acronym CANE

(Communities Against Nuclear Expansion). So, with BANNG and CANE the East Coast is getting ready for the battles that lie ahead.

The second front for BANNG is Information and Strategy. A meeting of the Information and Strategy Group will be called in July so that we can start to plan ahead and be ready to challenge decisions and present our views as the various stages of decision making proceed.

Media Profile

We are trying to keep up a profile in the media. Articles have appeared in the *Evening Gazette* and the *East Anglian Daily Times* as well as the local community newspapers that circulate in the estuary. At national level, Paula Whitney and I have both appeared on Radio 5 Live and I did a TV piece for News24 on radioactive waste.

That's it for now. We'll shortly be in touch about future meetings and events. Meanwhile, if you have any news, please let Varrie or me know (varrieblowers@yahoo.com; a.t.blowers@open.ac.uk)

**Andy Blowers,
Chair of BANNG**

*Defra, BERR and the devolved administrations (2008) *Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: A Framework for Implementing Geological Disposal*, White Paper,

Attached: Press Release - Essex is not the place for a nuclear dump

PRESS RELEASE

BANNG says Essex is not the Place for a Nuclear Dump

Blackwater Against New Nuclear Build (BANNG) has warned against local councils taking up the Government's offer to host a deep geological repository to take all the country's most dangerous high level radioactive wastes. The Government is about to invite local communities across the country to express an interest in the possibility with a view to eventually entering into partnership with the nuclear industry and government to develop the project.

In the past Essex has been earmarked for nuclear dumps. During the 1980s local communities supported by the County Council prevented a shallow repository for low level wastes at the Bradwell site. Later, Nirex, the nuclear waste company identified sites in Essex for a possible deep disposal repository for high level wastes. Since its closure in 2002 Bradwell has been the focus of decommissioning and clean up of nuclear waste, a process that may last a hundred years.

Now there is the possibility of a new nuclear station which will create a further legacy of waste, in radioactivity six times as much as the old station. And, the highly radioactive waste will be left on site, waiting for the repository which may be fifty to a hundred years away.

Chair of BANNG, Prof. Andy Blowers said: 'BANNG is deeply concerned at the idea of a deep repository for high level wastes on top of the wastes already at Bradwell and the huge amounts that would come with a new power station. What we need is an early clean up of the Bradwell site and a commitment not to build a new station on a vulnerable estuary which should be protected. Essex is a county under great pressure with the expansion of Stansted, port development at Harwich, Thames Gateway and possible new nuclear development. A deep repository for nuclear waste would be a step too far in this county'.

