



BANNG UP-TO-DATE - FEBRUARY, 2009

Happy New Year to all BANNG supporters! Let's hope 2009 brings us success in our campaign.

Editorial

Secret leaks of radioactive materials

You will see from item 1 below that leaks from the old Bradwell power station occurred from 1990 until 2004 and that the Environment Agency has brought a case against Magnox Electric Ltd. which is currently being heard at Chelmsford Crown Court. The residents of Mersea Island should be extremely angry at having been kept in the dark about these leaks. Please do read the article from The Guardian which is at the end of the Newsletter. Please also do your best to attend the Magnox South meeting on 9 February – see item 1 – to air your concerns and anger.

BANNG membership

The bigger BANNG is, the more effective we can be. With this in mind, please make every effort to recruit more members. Ask your friends and relatives to join us. Membership forms are available on the website (see item 5 below). However, all that is required is a note of the name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if any) of prospective members. These details can be sent to Varrie Blowers, Secretary of BANNG, 8 Shears Court, West Mersea, CO5 8DB, telephoned to me on 07932.644482 or e-mailed to varrieblowers@yahoo.com There is a suggested donation of £5 to help with the running costs of BANNG.

Comments from you

If you wish to make a comment on anything you read in this Newsletter or to bring an issue to the attention of the BANNG Core or main Supporters' Groups, please contact me as above.

I hope you will find this Newsletter interesting and informative.

Varrie Blowers,
Editor

1. FUTURE PUBLIC MEETINGS

Magnox South Meeting on Decommissioning

A meeting will be held by Magnox South on **9 February** in the Church Hall of St. Peter and St. Paul, West Mersea - refreshments at 6.30 p.m. with start at 7 p.m. - to inform residents of 'progress' on decommissioning of the old power station.

This meeting will provide an opportunity for residents to probe the Bradwell site staff and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) on the progress with decommissioning, the status of land transactions (see item 3 below), the future of new nuclear build..... AND.....

Radioactive leaks from Bradwell power station from 1990 to 2004 were kept secret

Residents can also take the opportunity to find out more about the current court case against Magnox Electric Ltd. which has revealed that radioactive material not only leaked from the old Bradwell station on a number of occasions from 1990 until 2004 but that the leaks were kept secret. The text of an article in The Guardian of 2 February, 2009 ('We can't check everything, admits atomic safety chief after 14-year leak') is attached as Appendix 1 for your information and will also be available on the website.

As many people as possible should try to attend the meeting on 9 February. There are many questions that need to be answered.

Nuclear Debate at Maldon Library

Local community radio station Saint FM 94.7 is organizing a public debate on the future of Bradwell power station. It takes place in Maldon Library at 7 p.m. on Monday, **16 February**. The debate will cover both pro- and anti-nuclear views and the Chair of BANNG, Andy Blowers, will be one of the speakers.

The debate will be broadcast live and on the internet. It would be useful if supporters could turn up to join in the debate.

2. BRITISH ENERGY MEETINGS

At the end of 2008, British Energy held a series of meetings around the Blackwater estuary: at Mundon, Tollesbury, West Mersea, Bradwell, Cold Norton, Southminster and Steeple. BANNG supporters attended the Mundon, Tollesbury, West Mersea and Southminster meetings.

British Energy gave a similar presentation at each meeting. BANNG supporters acquitted themselves well, asking all relevant questions. As a result of the very vigorous questioning by BANNG supporters at the Tollesbury meeting, the British Energy representatives who came to West Mersea adopted a fairly aggressive attitude which was well matched by members of the audience.

Although British Energy has held these meetings, it is difficult to interpret them as ‘consultation’, with BE taking the stage and telling the audience what is to happen. But it seems the idea of real engagement with local communities is unlikely to take place.

For British Energy’s record of the meetings, have a look at its website.

3. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Article by Andy Blowers in *Town and Country Planning*

The respected journal, *Town and Country Planning*, has published an article by Andy Blowers entitled ‘Why Dump On Us?’, in its January issue. Andy argues that the government’s siting criteria are really a threadbare attempt to justify sites that have already been chosen. He poses the question: ‘If the country’s nuclear programme were starting from scratch, is it really likely that a fleet of nuclear power stations would be built on coastal locations liable to erosion or submergence from rising sea-levels, storm surges and coastal processes?’. This article will be followed by one exposing the charade of consultation and the exclusion of local communities from an effective voice in decision making. (‘Why dump on us?’ will be available on the website.)

Draft Strategic Siting Criteria

As you know, BANNG made a submission on the draft criteria (sent to all supporters). The government’s final criteria were published on 27 January. As expected, the government has taken little, if any, notice of any submissions made and the criteria remain essentially the same. It is now up to Credible (*sic*) Nuclear Power Operators to nominate sites for consideration. British Energy and the NDA have indicated they intend to nominate Bradwell. Bradwell, therefore, remains very much in the frame. But, the battle is far from over – in fact, it is only now beginning. There is a long way to go and time enough to expose the stupidity of building a mega nuclear power station and a spent fuel waste store on such a vulnerable site.

Release of land at Bradwell by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

In another development, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has announced the release of a substantial land holding (87 hectares), adjacent to both the site of the existing power station and the proposed British Energy site for a new nuclear power station. The NDA has stated that it will engage in a joint marketing process with Electricite de France (EDF) which now owns British Energy. In a further twist, EDF must sell the Bradwell site to enable other competitors into the new nuclear market. But, in order to protect its own position, it has been agreed that EDF will not sell until it has the go-ahead for two new reactors at Sizewell.

Confused? Well, yes...but these land deals and swaps do open up the possibility that more than one new power station might be proposed for the Dengie Peiinsula. So, new jobs would be bought at the expense of piles of highly dangerous wastes stockpiled on a sinking coast, threatening present and future generations.

Radioactive Waste

Radioactive waste is, of course, the big issue. It is quite conceivable that these dangerous materials (some of the most dangerous on the planet) will be stored on the site well into the 22nd century. The real problem is that there is no long-term solution agreed for the disposal of this waste. It is frankly irresponsible and immoral to contemplate a new power station when no-one knows what will happen to the waste. It is, of course, true that communities in Cumbria are considering volunteering to take the waste but that is still a long way away from a solution.

Health Effects

A major objection to nuclear is the potential effects of radiation on human health and the environment. Research undertaken for the German government, popularly known as the KiKK Study, found a much elevated risk of childhood leukaemias in areas close to German nuclear power stations. While it is impossible to determine the causes, the association of nuclear with forms of cancer is well attested. Given this, the Precautionary Principle should be applied, namely, when research and knowledge exist that show that there may be detrimental health effects, it is wise not to proceed with new nuclear power stations.

Local Authorities

BANNG continues to press the local councils, councillors and MPs on the folly of building new nuclear power stations. Discussions are being held with Colchester Borough, Maldon and Burnham District and Essex County Councils.

4. BANNG MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Core Group and Community Awareness Sub-Group

The Core Group and the Community Awareness Sub-Group have had regular meetings to organize future activities and campaigning.

BANNG Annual General Meeting

The date and venue of the AGM will be advised to you in the near future.

Visit to Sizewell

A visit to Sizewell to see the way radioactive wastes are managed is being arranged. It will also provide an opportunity to meet local citizens' action groups.

BANNG Late Spring Picnic

Arrangements are being made for a late Spring Picnic for all BANNG supporters, to take place on 31 May. More information will be forthcoming in due course. Meanwhile, put the date in your diary.

5. BANNG WEBSITE

You will have noticed references to 'the website' throughout this Newsletter. Thanks to Nolly Urquhart, the BANNG website is up and running. Please keep an eye on it. Articles, latest news, events, etc. will be posted on the website. These items will, of course, continue to be given in hard copy to those supporters who do not have computers.

You can access the website at: www.banng.org

'nuClear News':

This very interesting monthly digest of activities in the nuclear field will be posted on the website.

6. COMMUNITIES AGAINST NUCLEAR EXPANSION (CANE)

The inaugural meeting of this citizens' based organisation, which is located in the Sizewell area, was held in Leiston on 10 October, 2008. Andy Blowers was one of the experts who addressed the meeting.

Appendix 1: article from The Guardian of 2 February, 2009/

We can't check everything, admits atomic safety chief after 14-year leak

The most senior figure in nuclear safety has defended the regulation of an atomic power station barely 50 miles from the center of London that leaked radioactive material for 14 years.

Mike Weightman, chief inspector at the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, said it was not possible to inspect or check every feature of a complex plant. But as soon as the leak in the sump of one of the Magnox reactors at Bradwell-on-Sea was discovered the safety body did all it could to ensure that the cause of the problem was identified and dealt with, he added.

The leak became public when a little-publicised case started by the Environment Agency against the then owners of the plant, Magnox Electric Ltd. for 11 breaches of safety regulations came to court last month. The Environment Agency said it was not willing to talk further about the case because it was sub judice but would explain in detail what it was about when a judgement was finally given.

The lack of information about the leak, which was discovered in 2004, had infuriated environmentalists and risks undermining the government's drive for a new generation of atomic power stations.

Bradwell has been earmarked as a potential site for one of the new plants. It ceased producing electricity in 2002 and is being dismantled by a US company, EnergySolutions.

Weightman, who was confirmed as chief inspector only yesterday after being acting head for five years, told the Guardian the NII operated a sampling regulatory regime including inspection that targets those aspects of design and operation that have most significance for safety.

"It is not possible for the regulator to inspect or check every feature of a complex plant, he explained. "In this case the sump was effectively underground and the sump pump was not part of the strict maintenance schedule, and hence would have been most unlikely to have been part of any of our inspection programmes.

"Once we were informed of the leak, which was discovered by the licensee when washing down the sump to address a problem with the sump pump, we instructed the licensee not to use the pump again until the matter was investigated and resolved. We conducted a joint investigation with EA, and agreed afterwards with the licensee measures to determine the extent of the leakage, assess its significance and refurbish the sump to modern standards."

Friends of the Earth said it was wrong that the problems were not made public for five years. "It is extremely unfortunate that ministers have been selling the public a new generation of nuclear power plants since 2005 on the grounds that they are safe when incidents of this kind remain out of the public eye," argued Robin Webster, climate change and energy campaigner at Friends of the Earth.

The power stations is said by the Environment Agency to be responsible for allowing liquids to seep into the ground from 1990 to 2004. "It has taken a long time to get to court because it is a complicated case with a lot of detail," said a spokesman for the agency.

Lawyers working for the agency are alleging 11 breaches of the radioactive waste disposal laws by Magnox Electric Ltd., which was originally part of the old Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mark Harris, prosecuting on behalf of the agency, told a jury at Chelmsford crown court that leaks were caused by poor design and continued because of a lack of checks and maintenance.

“The case concerns the disposal of liquid radioactive waste which leaked to the ground from a sump at the site of which is now the former Bradwell nuclear power station,” said Harris. “These leaks occurred on a number of occasions between as long ago as 1990 until discovery of these leaks in February, 2004.

“In the period when this company was running it...there was no routine inspection or maintenance of the sump until after the leak was discovered.”

EnergySolutions said last night that it had no responsibility for the leak. “We are part of the solution not part of the problem,” said a spokesman.