



BANNING UP TO DATE

January, 2013

*An occasional newsletter for supporters of the
Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNING)*

And a Happy New Year to all BANNINGers!

In this Issue....

- **Our Editorial speculates on the future of nuclear energy in the UK and at Bradwell in particular**
- **We outline what is happening at Sizewell and how BANNING can help our Suffolk colleagues**
- **We summarise what we've been doing and what we plan to do**
- **A briefing indicates what the problem of radioactive waste means for Bradwell**

We hope you enjoy this issue. Please send any comments and suggestions to the Editor, Andy Blowers (andrew.blowers@open.ac.uk)

EDITORIAL – NEW NUCLEAR AT THE CROSSROADS

As we begin a New Year we may ask 'Will 2013 be a lucky year for new nuclear or will it herald its demise'? Much depends on where you look. At the global level the nuclear industry is still in a state of convalescence after the Fukushima disaster nearly two years ago. In some countries it will never regain its former strength. In Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Taiwan and elsewhere nuclear energy is on the way out though it will be many years before it disappears altogether. In other countries nuclear has suffered a severe setback, notably in nuclear dependent France. Elsewhere any revival is stuttering, as in the USA. Meanwhile, Japan where, for a moment all reactors were offline, is still recovering from shock and the future of nuclear there is highly uncertain.

In some parts of the world the nuclear beacon still seems to burn brightly. In the Far East, in India, in parts of the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Finland there are plans for nuclear expansion. And what of the UK, or rather England and Wales since Scotland has set its face against nuclear? On the face of it the Government's ambitious programme for up to 16GW of new nuclear capacity located on eight coastal sites near existing nuclear facilities remains on course. Increasingly, though, this ambition is more rhetoric than reality. Already it is clear that the programme has

been scaled down to a point where, it may be asked ‘Will there be any new nuclear plants built in the UK at all’?

If the programme fails it won't be for lack of effort on the Government's part. It has strained every nerve to privilege nuclear over all other forms of energy production. In recent weeks three key obstacles have been removed. One is the regulatory clearance signaled by the Office for Nuclear Regulation declaring that the new reactor designs are safe to operate. A second is the almost certain recommendation of planning consent for Hinkley Point forwarded by the Infrastructure Planning Commission for approval by the Secretary of State. And, the most important, is the electricity market reform being introduced through the Energy Bill which will provide for a fixed price ‘contract for difference’ for nuclear power. The idea is to set a ‘strike price’ high enough to attract in the investment from the private sector while maintaining the fiction of no subsidy to nuclear.

All this is designed to satisfy EDF, the only nuclear operator currently committed to building new nuclear power stations in the UK. But, it is still not certain that the French government-owned utility will bite the bullet. EDF is a troubled company, under review in France, over budget with its two nuclear projects in Finland and France and overstretched in commitments. No doubt EDF will try to use its leverage to gain a high strike price but this might prove too high even for a pro nuclear government. Even if EDF does decide to go ahead at Hinkley Point it is not certain it will follow up with Sizewell where it is currently consulting the local community on its plans (as we describe below). And, the industry's position is highly uncertain at the other likely sites, Wylfa, Oldbury and Sellafield with investors dithering or, as yet, uncommitted.

The Government's ambitions have already been diminished. By its own forecast the Government concedes that the 16GW of nuclear capacity by 2025 has now become a mere 3.3GW (Hinkley Point) with a rather hopeful forecast of a further 9.9GW by 2030. Already, the dash for gas has filled any vacuum and renewables are performing well, becoming cheaper and more competitive. Time is not on the side of nuclear.

All this leaves new nuclear at Bradwell, for the moment, a very distant prospect. It is still on the list but little recent interest has been shown in developing there. BANNG has made the running against Bradwell and any developer would face a determined, informed and professional opposition. For the moment, the local battleground has moved to Sizewell. If we want to make sure there is no Bradwell, we must first stop Sizewell.

1. All Eyes on Sizewell

W(h)ither Sizewell?

As the New Year opens the focal points of the nuclear debate are Hinkley Point in Somerset and Sizewell in Suffolk. The critical decision on the go-ahead for Hinkley will be taken some time this year. The regulatory and planning pathways are clear so it is now up to EDF to put up the money or walk away from a project to which it has been heavily committed. If it chooses not to go ahead at Hinkley then it seems pretty certain it will abandon Sizewell also.

No Sizewell would probably mean no Bradwell for they are umbilically tied by an agreement which forbids nuclear development at Bradwell unless there is a go-ahead at Sizewell. This was forged to prevent EDF taking a dominant position in the nuclear market. Since Bradwell is up for sale it seems EDF do not see it as a fall back position if Sizewell does not proceed.

A vapid consultation

As things stand Sizewell is still in the frame. EDF is undertaking a consultation on its proposals and options; this closes on 6th February. BANNG will make a response. It has to be said that the consultation documents, though voluminous, concentrate on local issues and benefits. There is much on possible by-passes, accommodation blocks for workers and efforts to minimise environmental impacts.

Very little is said about the really big issues, storage of yet more dangerous wastes until well into the next century (Sizewell is already storing highly radioactive spent fuel), the possibilities of coastal erosion and flooding and the proximity of a massive and dangerous industrial complex to some of the most beautiful and important coastal scenery and habitat in England. The desecration of this area of Suffolk is washed over in a sea of economic benefits and community titillations.

There is still time for you to make an individual response to the Sizewell consultation – deadline 6 February. For information on how to respond contact <http://sizewell.edfenergyconsultation.info> and you can email comments to sizewell@edfconsultation.info

BANNGers to the rescue

BANNG has already linked up with its sister organisations in Suffolk. Several BANNGers attended a meeting in Leiston last year to offer support and Pete Wilkinson of CANE (Communities Against Nuclear Expansion) came to speak at Mersea. This year Andy Blowers will be speaking at meetings in Suffolk. We are also hoping to take a team of experienced BANNGers to help door-to-door leafleting, petitioning and other activities. We have a great deal of experience, one might even say expertise, to put at the disposal of our colleagues who are now in the front line. After all the fight against Sizewell is also a fight against Bradwell.

2. BANNG – What we've been doing

Among the activities since our last newsletter have been.....

- A talk on Why We Don't Need Nuclear Power by Andy Blowers to the Colchester branch of the Fabian Society
- A response to the application for development consent at Hinkley Point (BANNG Paper No. 16 - already circulated)
- A paper on radioactive waste management policy presented to the DECC/NGO Forum (BANNG Paper No. 17 - already circulated)
- Attending an international meeting on European Stress Tests of nuclear reactors in Brussels (Andy and Varrie Blowers)
- Representing BANNG at national meetings with NGOs, government and regulatory bodies (Andy Blowers and Barry Turner)

- Visit to the Bradwell site to see the planned decommissioning activities (Andy Blowers and Barry Turner)
- Redevelopment of our website
- Issuing several Press Releases and articles

..oh, and enjoying a superb barbecue hosted by Coral and Ian Newton.

3. What we will be doing in the New Year

Early on this year we plan to.....

- Respond to EDF's consultation on Sizewell
- Support colleagues in Suffolk in their anti-Sizewell C campaign
- Organise a public meeting in Maldon
- Continue to press our concerns about Bradwell to the Government, the regulatory bodies, local councils, MPs and other bodies
- Continue to raise public awareness of the issues through the media and public meetings
- Represent BANNG at national meetings on nuclear issues

4. Radioactive Waste – the Key Issue that must not be neglected

No solution on site or in sight

BANNG has right from the start banged on about the insoluble problem of radioactive waste that will be the inevitable accompaniment of the new build programme. Every new build reactor will create spent fuel and other highly radioactive wastes which will be stored on site. This is a new departure for places like Bradwell. Spent fuel from the former nuclear station was transported to Sellafield where it remains in stores. This fact that new build means long-term storage of nuclear wastes has been a neglected issue. All the attention has been on producing electricity from nuclear power, not on the wastes that bring danger, anxiety and contamination to nuclear sites. What is quite monstrous is that these wastes are a problem without a solution.

Apart from vague statements about safe storage there is very little information on what stores will be built, what processing plants may be needed and what protection can be made against terrorism, sea-level rise or other threats to the integrity of the stores. All hope is stacked on the possibility of a deep geological repository being ready for disposing of the wastes. Yet, no such repository is on the horizon. There is no agreed method and no agreed site. The repository is likely to be long delayed, if it ever materializes at all.

Bradwell – already a nuclear dump

Bradwell is facing into serious long-term risks. It is already a nuclear dump though few people seem to recognise this. The massive twin reactor buildings, prominent leagacy of the former nuclear station, are being put in passive storage and will remain *in situ* at least until the end of this century. In addition intermediate level wastes arising from the cladding of spent fuel will be stored in containers on the site until the repository opens, if it ever does. At the earliest this will be the middle of the next

century but there is the prospect that the wastes will be stored at Bradwell indefinitely.

If new reactors are built the radioactive risk will be increased many times. With nowhere to go and in deteriorating and unknowable circumstances a disastrous burden will be inflicted on our successors for generations to come. Yet, they have no voice in the matter and we are not being allowed to speak on their behalf. At least communities are invited to volunteer for a deep repository. There is no such invitation to us – we simply have the waste dump dumped upon us.

Andy Blowers, who is co-Chair of a Forum which includes campaigning groups, Government officials and the Minister for Energy, is taking up these points within Government. At a recent meeting of the Forum, he presented BANNG's paper on 'Radioactive Waste and New Build – Problems and Policies' (BANNG Paper No. 17 - already circulated).

If for no other reason, the lack of any way of safely managing radioactive wastes into the far future is surely sufficient cause to abandon nuclear new build forthwith.

5. In the Press and Publications

BANNG continues to maintain a high profile in the press. We have issued press releases on a range of issues, including: 'New nuclear at the cross roads'; 'Bradwell – a nuclear dump for all time'; 'BANNG links with Sizewell in wider campaign to defeat nuclear plans'; and many more.

We have achieved extensive coverage especially in the local Blackwater press, the *Courier* and *Tribune*. Two articles by Andy Blowers on why we don't need nuclear power sparked a lively debate with contributions from BANNGers Barry Turner, Barry Jones and Charles Clark covering four issues of both papers over two months.

Our Media Relations Officer, Varrie Blowers, sends these releases as well as other BANNG documents to the local and regional press (and sometimes national), other campaign groups, Government, councils and MPs. In this way we keep in touch with the wider campaign against new build on old sites.

In the New Year Andy Blowers will be publishing two articles in *Town and Country Planning* as well as a book chapter entitled, 'The Future is not nuclear: ethical choices for energy after Fukushima'.

6. And finally.....

To contact BANNG

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Please keep in touch and encourage others to join in.