



BANNG
Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group



BANNG UP TO DATE

September, 2011

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

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FUKUSHIMA AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UK AND BRADWELL

Editorial by Andy Blowers, Chair of BANNG

Since our last newsletter the world has been transfixed by the tragedy of the earthquake and tsunami which wrought such terrible disruption, destruction and death over a large area in the north east of the Japanese mainland. One of the most alarming consequences was at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station which was overwhelmed by the tsunami causing a loss of coolant, partial meltdown in the reactors, heating of spent fuel stores and emissions of radioactive materials in the surrounding countryside. Six months later the situation is still not fully under control, some radiation is still leaking, the costs are incalculable and the consequences still unravelling. It will be many years, if ever, before it will be possible to grasp the full scale of this unparalleled disaster.

For Japan itself, the impacts have been truly devastating. One is the economic impact, notably the loss of energy. Fukushima with its six reactors has been shut down and, altogether, only 15 of 54 reactors in the rest of the country remain operating and reopening is being opposed in several cases. The costs of safety measures and insurance are major obstacles to nuclear energy and the phasing out of the industry is now in prospect. The social impact, especially on the lives of the 90,000 people moved from the 20km exclusion zone, has been traumatic. They have lost their livelihoods, abandoned their familiar surroundings for makeshift living arrangements and are now discovering that they may not be able to return for more than 20 years, if ever.

UK – Business As Usual

Fukushima, like Chernobyl a generation ago, provides the ultimate argument against nuclear power – the risk to power supplies, to people and to the planet is simply too great. Fukushima should, we might think, stop the so-called ‘nuclear renaissance’ dead in its tracks. Yet, the reactions world-wide have been mixed. In all countries there has been a pause, a review of safety, a softening of the strident fanfares proclaiming nuclear as the sustainable solution for our energy and environment. Some countries, most notably Germany but also Italy and Switzerland, have bowed to public alarm and abandoned new nuclear or any extension of existing nuclear programmes. Others, including the US and China, have paused and are reappraising their nuclear commitment. But, a handful of countries especially in Asia but also France, Finland and the UK in Europe are still pressing ahead, at least for the present.

In fact, the UK has the most ambitious programme of new build in western Europe. The Interim Report by the Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations, Dr. Mike Weightman, on the implications of Fukushima set out some safety considerations but did not consider there was a need to change policy. Almost without hesitation the Government confirmed its policy in the National Policy Statements on Energy which were nodded through Parliament with little debate and very little opposition (all local MPs voted in favour). To all intents and purposes the Government remains on course with its political imperative to deploy a number (depending on how many the nuclear industry can manage) of mega reactors (each up to 1.6GW of generating capacity) on some or all of the eight sites now confirmed as ‘potentially suitable’ for new nuclear development. These are to be constructed and start generating ‘as soon as possible and significantly earlier than 2025’. EDF, the French nuclear

operator, is pressing ahead with its plans for two reactors at Hinkley Point in Somerset along with preparations at Sizewell. Fukushima has apparently had no impact on the UK's embrace of the nuclear option.

Nuclear Plagued by Problems

One of the sites is, of course, Bradwell. As Fukushima, Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and other accidents have shown a catastrophic accident can – and will - happen some time, somewhere. Such accidents are what Charles Perrow calls in the title of his book *Normal Accidents*. By its very nature nuclear power is the product of complex and interacting technical and human systems opening up the possibility of multiple potential failures, impossible to foresee, difficult to comprehend, unpredictable but inevitable. Bradwell shares with Fukushima a coastal location; it is a low-lying site vulnerable to coastal change and inundation. As BANNG has repeatedly pointed out, placing up to three mega reactors together with spent fuel stores which will remain there for generations is irresponsible. The lack of any credible emergency plans for dealing with a major emergency is immoral. Yet, Fukushima underlines the folly of placing such dangerous activities in such vulnerable locations.

On closer examination, the Government's sense of urgency also betrays signs of recklessness and anxiety. Fukushima is adding to problems already facing the nuclear industry. Cost overruns and long delays have plagued the two nuclear stations currently under construction, in Finland and France. The German-based nuclear consortium RWE/E.ON appears to be relinquishing its interest in Oldbury and Wylfa. The nuclear operators are pressing for greater subsidies alongside the hidden subsidies they already enjoy while the Government disingenuously continues to proclaim a no-subsidy policy. The signs suggest the nuclear industry cannot possibly deliver, on time and within budget, the size of programme envisaged by the Government. On top of this, the regulators have not yet passed the designs for the new reactors and the final version of the Weightman Report is not yet published. Despite the claims there is as yet no long-term solution for the management of radioactive wastes which is a crucial element in the new nuclear jigsaw.

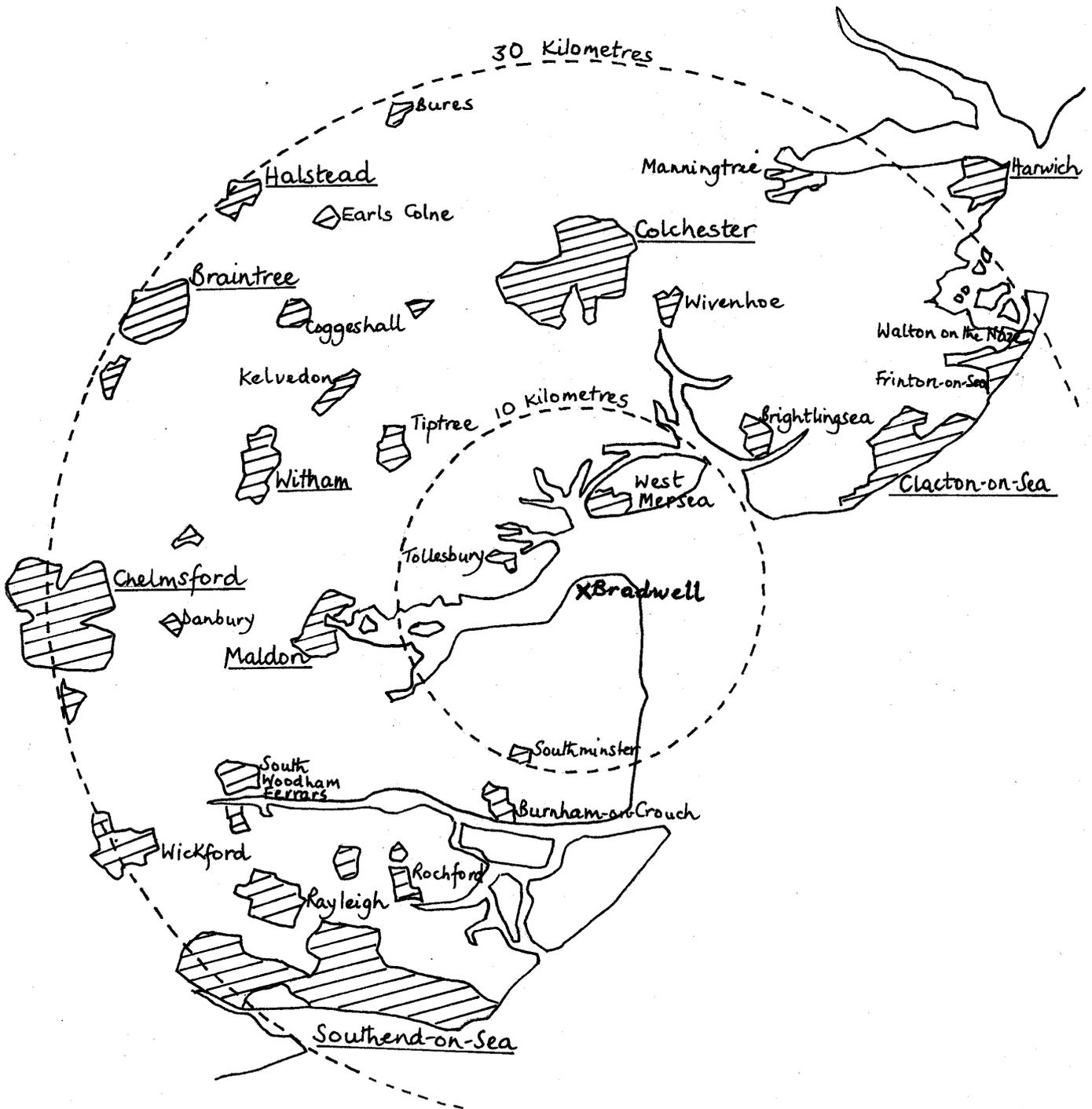
Prospects for Bradwell

All this suggests that Bradwell is receding as a nuclear option, at least for the present. EDF, the owner of the site, must sell it off but there seems no rush to purchase a site that cannot be developed until Sizewell gets the go-ahead. The case against Bradwell painstakingly put together over the past three years by BANNG and published in our twelve papers indicates the myriad reasons why Bradwell should be dismissed. It is low-lying on a coastline that is sinking as sea levels are rising; the impact of cooling water drawn from the estuary or through cooling towers would obliterate the peaceful environment transforming it into an industrial complex and damaging wildlife, fishing, the oyster industry and recreation. And, if an accident were to occur, many people could be trapped not knowing what to do or where to go to evade the radiation.

Fukushima has given a glimpse of the worst that might happen. It is improbable but that is not the point. Present and future generations will live in fear of the possibility. Even before Fukushima, BANNG gathered 10,000 signatures face-to-face for a petition that stated people do not want new nuclear power at Bradwell. As long as Bradwell remains a possibility, BANNG will continue to press its campaign to protect the people and the environment for the present and future generations.

Figure 1 Bradwell and the Fukushima Disaster

This map demonstrates the ranges of potential fall-out danger around the Bradwell nuclear power station site at ranges of 10 and 30kms the radius for compulsory evacuation of all property surrounding Fukushima. It is noticeable that towns with well over 100,000 population might be threatened and a substantial part of Essex could be affected.



1. Government adopts National Policy Statement for Nuclear Energy - Bradwell still on list.

Despite Fukushima and all the critical comments, including those from BANNG, the Government has pressed blindly on with its flawed programme for new nuclear virtually unamended. Just before the Summer recess the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Nuclear Energy was passed, almost unnoticed, by the House of Commons by an overwhelming majority of 269 to 16. Needless to say, our local MPs were among those in favour.

Although it comes as no surprise it is still a massive disappointment that all the detailed and expert arguments we have put in successive consultation responses have made so little impression (all the local MPs have received these). In adopting the NPS the Government has confirmed its view that ‘there is an urgent need for new electricity generation plant, including new nuclear power’. This contradicts the growing evidence that nuclear power is not necessary in a future energy mix that will draw on a range of renewables and develop greater energy efficiency and conservation. Nuclear is being increasingly exposed as a dangerous, expensive and outdated technology. The nuclear industry consistently demonstrates a pathological failure to meet costs and deadlines and requires state support and subsidies to keep it going.

A key element of the Government policy is the selection of eight sites potentially suitable for new nuclear development which are supposedly capable of deployment by 2025. All are either on coasts or estuaries, low-lying, vulnerable to flooding and erosion. Once they have been commissioned these stations will run for around 60 years and produce highly radioactive wastes which could lie on the sites for a further long but indeterminate period. The Government simply has no idea of what may happen to these sites over such long time scales or how they will be managed.

BANNG believes it is utterly irresponsible for the Government to press ahead in the absence of a credible policy for the long-term management of nuclear waste. The notion of a repository deep underground is a concept, not yet a fully thought out, detailed engineering project with a robust safety case. Although there is a process for finding a possible site there is no specific site yet in prospect. In the absence of a scientifically credible project and a socially acceptable site we should not be adding to the burden of wastes imposed on future generations living near the new nuclear sites.

2. Local sites – the new battleground. Latest developments at each of the chosen sites.

With the adoption of the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Nuclear Energy the focus of attention shifts from the generic to the specific, from the national to the local. Although the Government has confirmed new nuclear as part of the energy mix, the policy has to be implemented on the ground. That ground is the eight identified sites - the new nuclear battleground.

The first test is at *Hinkley Point* where the French state operator, EDF, is in pole position to develop two mega reactors alongside the two existing nuclear stations, one

of which is now closed. EDF is well under way with consultations, regulatory applications and preliminary site works in advance of its application for development. Although local councils are generally supportive there is controversy over the routing of transmission lines, the destruction of habitats, the need for new roads, the housing of construction workers and the possible health impacts. Stiff resistance is being mounted by the long established Stop Hinkley campaign through public meetings, petitions and demonstrations. On 3 October there will be a blockade of the site coordinated by the Stop New Nuclear campaign.

Next up will be *Sizewell C* just up the coast from Bradwell where the developer is also EDF. Again some preliminary work, consultation and application for permits and some site clearance has been undertaken in advance of an application to develop which will be made next year at the earliest. With local councils and the MP along with the substantial workforce in favour of the new development, opposition is being mobilised by the long established Shut Down Sizewell campaign and by the younger Communities Against Nuclear Expansion (CANE). To an extent Bradwell's fate hangs on what happens at Sizewell. EDF owns the Bradwell site but, under competition rules, is barred from developing it. Any new owner will only be permitted to develop if Sizewell gets the go-ahead.

The next two stations in line at present appear to be *Wylfa* on Anglesey in Wales and *Oldbury* in Gloucestershire. For these stations, Horizon, the British arm of the German energy utilities, RWE and E.ON, is the prospective developer though there are presently doubts about the companies' level of commitment. *Wylfa*, where the last of the old magnox stations is about to be retired, is supported by local people who see a new station providing economic development in this remote area. Opposition here comes mainly from People Against *Wylfa B* (PAWB). At *Oldbury* there is opposition from the local council and MP as well as from the vigorous Shepperdine Against Nuclear Expansion (SANE). *Oldbury*, like *Bradwell*, is on an estuary with similar problems of environment and cooling water.

The *Sellafield* site has strong local support from councils, MPs, the nuclear industry and its substantial workforce in the area. They are promoting the concept of a West Cumbria Energy Coast with a range of nuclear facilities including reprocessing, mixed oxide fuel manufacturing, a possible national nuclear waste repository and clean up and decommissioning the substantial legacy of wastes along with new nuclear reactors. There are logistical and environmental problems and the proposals are confronted by resilient opponents, Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment (CORE) and Radiation Free Lakeland.

Of the other potential sites, there appears to be little present activity at either *Heysham* (Lancs.) or *Hartlepool* in the North East. As for *Bradwell*, there is as yet no buyer for the site. It is, of course, possible that prospective developers are deterred by BANNG's effective and visible campaign to expose the many problems with the site. In any event, if a developer comes forward BANNG is ready and eager to engage.

For the present all eyes must focus on Hinkley Point. The whole future of new nuclear in Britain will turn in the next few months on what happens on this lonely stretch of west country coast.

3. News from here and there

Here are some things that have been happening.

.....Government in the dock.....

Greenpeace takes out legal challenge against Government nuclear policy

Greenpeace has launched an application for judicial review on the grounds that ministers failed to take into account the implications of the Fukushima disaster. They argue that the National Policy Statement was adopted prematurely on the basis of an interim report by the Chief Nuclear Inspector which nonetheless identified a series of issues requiring investigation. There was no reconsideration of policy and the Government ploughed on regardless. One of the issues raised by Greenpeace is that five of the eight sites are wholly or partly in areas subject to high flood risk. This is one of the issues which BANNG has continued to emphasise in all our communications with Government.

Legal Challenge on Justification

There has also been a legal challenge, coming from Rory Walker of the Heysham Anti-Nuclear Alliance, against the Secretary of State's decision to justify the building of new reactors. BANNG wrote two detailed responses to Government on the Justification issue (see BANNG papers numbers 3 and 7, previously circulated). We claimed that the health detriments arising from new nuclear power stations would outweigh any benefits. Indeed, we argued that there were also serious social, economic and environmental detriments which must be taken into account. In support of the legal action, Dr. Ian Fairlie who spoke at BANNG's AGM in March, has produced a scientific report claiming increases of incidences of cancer around nuclear power stations and considers the UK Government has understated the evidence. Although the challenge has not succeeded in reversing the decision to justify new nuclear power stations, it has raised issues which continue to bedevil the Government as it tries to implement its policy.

Plutonium as fuel: more risk; more waste

BANNG has responded to a Government consultation on the management of the UK's plutonium stocks (see BANNG Paper No. 11, previously circulated). The UK has substantial stocks of plutonium and the Government's preferred solution appears to be to reuse much of it in mixed oxide fuel (MOX). In BANNG's view this would mean reviving the moribund reprocessing industry with all its attendant risks and dangers. Producing MOX would create more wastes to deal with, would require subsidy and underpin new build with radioactive wastes left on sites like Bradwell for the indefinite future. It seems especially perverse to be proposing to create such risky materials in the wake of Fukushima. Andy Blowers, Chair of BANNG, believes the plans are 'premature, unclear, undeveloped and riddled with risks and uncertainties'. On the basis of performance so far the plans are hopelessly optimistic. Rather than reusing plutonium, it should be declared a waste and dealt with accordingly.

Fukushima - could it happen here?

Andy Blowers attended a meeting in London at which Dr. Mike Weightman, Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations, presented his interim report on *The Japanese earthquake and tsunami: implications for the UK nuclear industry*. The report raises

a number of issues of concern to BANNG and our response in BANNG Paper No, 12 (previously circulated) underlines the problems in continuing with current UK policy. Despite all the safety issues raised by Fukushima, Weightman still feels able to conclude that there is no need to change the coastal siting policies.

BANNG believes that it is 'perverse and unethical even to contemplate building new nuclear facilities on sites which could be imperiled as a result of natural processes placing future generations at risk'. BANNG's response also criticises the wholly inadequate emergency planning arrangements and the need to be open and honest with the population about the risks of living near nuclear facilities.

Chair of BANNG appointed co-Chair of nuclear forum

Andy Blowers has been put forward by colleagues representing all the local anti-nuclear groups and the national organisations as their nomination for co-Chair of the DECC/NGO Forum. This Forum brings together government officials, regulators, advisory bodies and the local and national environmental and nuclear organisations to deliberate on issues of common concern. Hergen Haye, the Head of the Government's Office for Nuclear Development, is the other co-Chair. A Minister, usually the Minister for Energy, attends the meetings. Having a co-Chair enables the NGO side to influence the agenda and gives them equal standing and participation in the Forum. Andy Blowers says, 'I am greatly honoured to have been appointed co-Chair of the Forum. I think this presents the NGOs with access to Government and recognises their status and influence in the nuclear debate. I regard it as my job to make sure that the voice of local communities is heard and heeded'.

4. BANNG in touch

BANNG in touch with Tollesbury (report from Lesley Mullins, Community Awareness Group Co-ordinator)

BANNG's Community Awareness Group organised a meeting on 18 July at the Kings Head, Tollesbury so that views could be exchanged with local people concerned about the possibility of a new nuclear power station at Bradwell. The meeting was well attended and quite a few new supporters and contacts were made. It is intended to capitalise on this success by organising similar events around the estuary. This push to raise public awareness and attract new supporters will conclude with a Public Meeting at Maldon. You will be informed of details.

BANNG in touch with Maldon District Council

On 15 August, Andy Blowers, Barry Turner (Vice-Chair) and Varrie Blowers (Secretary) met with the Chief Executive and a member of the Planning Department of Maldon District Council. Information and ideas were exchanged and the meeting was felt to have been mutually beneficial. There will be a follow-up meeting with the Leader of the Council.

BANNG in touch with local politicians

BANNG has kept local councils and MPs informed through letters, consultation responses, newsletters, etc. A series of meetings is planned with local MPs. Colchester Borough Council and West Mersea Town Council are opposing the Bradwell project and we keep closely in touch with them.

**5. Bradwell A – clean up 100 years away.
Report on Bradwell decommissioning proposals.**

The former Bradwell nuclear power station will remain a visible and potentially dangerous radioactive hulk until nearly the end of this century. This was the unwelcome news conveyed by Paul Wilkinson, Deputy Site Manager, to a meeting in the MICA on 11 July. The reality is that Bradwell is now a long-term nuclear waste store.

On the more positive side there is progress with some of the clean up. The spent fuel rods have already been removed and clean up of the debris from the fuel elements will begin in October and should be completed by 2013. Dissolution will begin in 2012. Some of the sludge will be discharged into the estuary and the rest will be encapsulated in 200 strong containers. But it will remain on site until a national deep geological repository is opened. Mr. Wilkinson candidly admitted there had been little real progress on a repository.

What remains are the graphite cores which constitute the bulk of the reactors. The graphite will remain in situ in its present solid form in a state of so-called 'passive safety' until some means of dealing with it has been devised. This could be for a very long time indeed.

More reassuringly it was noted that no biocides had been used at Bradwell since the station ceased operating and there were no readings of radioactivity in the estuary above agreed limits. By 2015 the care and maintenance role will finish and employees will move elsewhere.

If new stations are built at Bradwell, dangerous spent fuel will be stored on site along with other wastes. This will bring far greater risks to the estuary than exist from the former station. Even so, it is clear that the legacy of the former Bradwell is an unsightly hulk and a nuclear waste store that will have to be managed at least until the end of the century - and possibly beyond.

SUPPORT AND CONTACTS

BANNG Website

The new BANNG website is still under development and we hope it will prove user-friendly, informative and effective. You can have a look at progress so far at: www.banng.co.uk

Support BANNG

BANNG always needs any support you can give. Your time and financial support are greatly appreciated. You will have noted that it is planned to hold meetings around the estuary. Details will be circulated soon. If you can offer any support, please contact: varrieblowers@yahoo.com

Annual collection of subscriptions

In order to put the BANNG finances on a steady footing, donations (suggested as £5 per supporter) will be requested on an annual basis starting in January, 2012.

Thanks to those supporters who responded to the request in the March newsletter and sent in donations.

**Join BANNG – please complete the form below or contact
varrieblowers@yahoo.com**

New Supporter Form

I should like to support the Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG) and attach a donation of £ (suggested donation £5). (Please write clearly.)

Name.....*Email.....

Address.....

.....Tel. No.....

*Please supply your e-mail address as it makes it easier to keep in touch with newsletters, BANNG responses, etc.

(Please return this form to: Varrie Blowers, Secretary of BANNG, 8 Shears Court, West Mersea, CO5 8DB or e-mail: varrieblowers@yahoo.com)