



Friends of
the Earth

GREENPEACE

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1. BE waste subsidy rises by more than NHS deficit total

The government's decision to bailout the private nuclear power generator, British Energy, in 2002 has left the taxpayer facing "a large and uncertain liability", according to the National Audit Office (NAO).[1] BE's liabilities, all taxpayer subsidised, have risen to £5.1bn, an increase of more than 30% since 2003 when the figure was put at £3.4bn. The increase is more than the whole NHS deficit. The NAO was also scathing about the "weakness" in the way the Department of Trade and Industry appointed financial advisers during the restructuring of the company. [2]

As part of the bailout, the Department of Trade and Industry took over responsibility for meeting some of British Energy's nuclear liabilities - now estimated to be £5.3 bn. British Energy contributes about two-thirds of its cash flow each year towards liabilities. The amount the taxpayer has to pay will depend on the company's future financial performance. Such uncertainty "places a significant risk in the hands of the taxpayer," it said. [3]

Meanwhile, Chancellor Gordon Brown announced plans to sell-off part of its £6.5bn stake in British Energy. Under the terms of the rescue deal, the taxpayer took a 65 per cent majority stake in British Energy - in return for it agreeing to pay more towards future liabilities and those it was meant to have covered as a private sector company when the Conservative government privatised the industry a decade ago. [4]

[1] Guardian 17th March 2006
<http://business.guardian.co.uk/story/0,,1732769,00.html>

[2] Telegraph, 17th March 2006

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?xml=/money/2006/03/17/cndti17.xml&menuId=242&Sheet=/money/2006/03/17/ixcity.html>

[3] The National Audit Office report is available at:-

http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/05-06/0506943.pdf

[4] Telegraph, 23rd March 2006

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?xml=/money/2006/03/23/cnbbiz23.xml>

2. Nuclear train terror threat

A terrorist attack on a train carrying waste nuclear materials across Britain could spread lethal radioactivity across an area of 100 sq kilometres, and result in the deaths of up to 8,000 people, according to a new report released by Greenpeace. Spent nuclear fuel is routinely transported by train from nine nuclear power stations around the country to Sellafield in Cumbria for reprocessing or storage. Typically, these journeys take place once a week from each reactor - at the same time and on the same lines as regular passenger and freight trains. The report, by John Large and Associates, does not make comfortable reading – it concludes that the technology and resources needed to mount a successful attack are well within the capabilities of determined terrorists. [1]

London Mayor Ken Livingstone has ordered a risk assessment into the safety of trains carrying spent nuclear waste fuel across London to ascertain if they represent a viable terrorist target. [2]

[1] Report into the risks of nuclear transportation in the UK, Large Associates, March 2006.

www.greenpeace.org.uk/transporthazards.

[2] Bromley Times, , 8th March 2006

<http://www.bromleytimes.co.uk/content/bromley/times/newnews/story.aspx?brand=BMLYTOOnline&category=news&tBrand=bmlytonline&tCategory=znews&itemid=WeED08%20Mar%202006%2016%3A58%3A30%3A720>

Hamstead & Highgate Express 10th March 2006

<http://www.hamhigh.co.uk/content/camden/hamhigh/news/story.aspx?brand=NorthLondon24&category=Newshamhigh&tBrand=northlondon24&tCategory=newshamhigh&itemid=WeED09%20Mar%202006%2012%3A50%3A07%3A077>

3. New research shows a bright energy future is possible

New research shows that the UK can meet its electricity needs, reduce the need for imported natural gas, and tackle climate change without a new nuclear power programme. The research, 'A Bright Energy Future,' [1] forms part of Friends of the Earth's submission to the government's Energy Review.

Report authors used data from industry and academic research to model how Britain's energy sector could develop over the next 25 years if the Government is serious about tackling climate change. The model, which was reviewed by academics and industry representatives, showed that:

- The UK can reduce carbon dioxide emissions from generating electricity by between 48 and 71 percent by 2020 without resorting to nuclear
- Natural gas use for the power sector can be at least stabilised and in many cases reduced - meaning less of a reliance on imports

The report says the Government should therefore take action to combat carbon dioxide emissions from the power sector by:

- Ensuring fossil fuels are used in the most efficient way possible through the promotion of combined heat and power schemes, decentralised energy systems and technologies to clean up coal fired power stations.
- Doing more to promote renewable sources of electricity: the Government has set a target for 15 percent of the UK's energy to be generated from renewable sources by 2015. However without more ambitious policies which promote a wider range of renewable electricity sources the Government is unlikely to achieve this target, or even begin to tap the enormous potential of renewable energy sources.
- Reducing demand for electricity through new energy efficiency measures: there is the potential to reduce electricity consumption by at least 10% percent in the UK by 2020. The government must do far more to promote energy-efficiency policy for industry, the commercial and retail sector and households. If nothing is done, demand will continue to grow.

[1] www.foe.co.uk/resource/evidence/bright_future.pdf

4. Nuclear clean-up firm to be privatised as waste costs climb to £160bn

Robot submarines have uncovered vast deposits of radioactive sludge that was left in underground storage tanks at Sellafield, in Cumbria, decades ago and forgotten. It has pushed up the bill now facing taxpayers to around £70bn - but that could rise higher if more forgotten deposits are uncovered. The previous estimate for cleaning up after the civil nuclear industry was £56bn. [1] However, this figure excludes decommissioning British Energy's seven nuclear power stations, and dealing with the Ministry of Defence's nuclear sites and the long-term storage of the waste. Adding those all in would bring the total cost to around £160bn. [2]

The higher cost, while unfortunate for the taxpayer, will be good news for private sector contractors and may also boost the value of British Nuclear Group, British Nuclear Fuels' nuclear clean-up arm, which the government wants to sell-off. [3]

On 30 March 2006, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Scottish Ministers approved the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA's) Strategy, which sets out how the it will tackle the formidable nuclear clean-up challenge. [4]

[1] Independent 30th March 2006

<http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article354488.ece>

[2] Independent on Sunday, 2nd April 2006

<http://news.independent.co.uk/business/news/article355080.ece>

[3] Sunday Telegraph 26th March 2006

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?xml=/money/2006/03/26/cnnucl26.xml&menuId=242&sSheet=/portal/2006/03/26/ixportal.html>

epolitix 30th March 2006

<http://www.epolitix.com/EN/News/200603/88a1449c-0205-42df-99d0-b00ad8201657.htm>

FT 30th March 2006

<http://news.ft.com/cms/s/119540b2-bf89-11da-9de7-0000779e2340.html>

[4] www.nda.gov.uk

5. Ken rejects nuclear London

Ken Livingstone criticised proposals for building new nuclear power stations across the UK as he outlined his vision for a low carbon London at the Greenpeace Business Lecture on 16 March.

The report, *Powering London in the 21st Century*, [1] by energy experts PB Power, for Greenpeace and the Mayor of London, details how decentralising London's energy would be far more efficient in cutting the city's CO₂ emissions and the demand for imported gas as opposed to pursuing a centralised nuclear power focused national energy policy. It provides a practical blueprint for shifting London's energy away from dependence on centralised production, which wastes two thirds of energy generated, towards a more independent, decentralised approach to energy production.

The report, produced by energy experts PB Power, for Greenpeace and the Mayor of London, lays out a vision for London that builds on approaches already successfully adopted in Denmark, where decentralised energy provides over 50 per cent of energy supplies and the Netherlands where it supplies over 40 per cent. Closer to home, Woking Council has cut its own CO₂ emissions by 77.4 per cent between 1991 and 2004 a result of decentralising its energy supplies.

The Mayor of London has already started working towards creating a decentralised energy network for London. In 2005 he launched the Climate Change Agency which will design, finance, build and operate low and zero carbon developments. The Agency is run by Allan Jones who spearheaded the development of decentralised energy in Woking, CO₂ emissions by 77.4 per cent between 1991 and 2004. Mr Livingstone has previously expressed his enthusiasm for both the Thames Gateway development and the Olympics being built to run on decentralised energy. Independent decentralised energy projects are already successfully up and running in London, including ones in Kings Cross and Tower Hamlets.

[1] www.greenpeace.org.uk/poweringlondon

6. Energy review becomes more crucial as climate policy review fails

The long awaited climate change programme review was published on March 28. As a result, the government reckons that, at best, the UK will manage 15 percent to 18 percent below 1990 carbon dioxide emissions levels by 2010. But the government also said that many crucial decisions would be made under the Energy Review as well, making this review particularly crucial.

All Labour manifestos published before the last three general elections contained the promise to deliver a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2010, compared with 1990 levels.

In the nine years from then until now, there have been a huge range of opportunities to cut the pollution causing climate change, but in many cases either they have not been taken or we have actually gone into reverse - as in the case of rapid aviation growth or in the return to coal burn for power generation. The review launched last month did not contain any major new policy that will give a major contribution to put us back on track.

Central to the failure to meet this target is the government's decision to set a weak limit on pollution from British industry under the next phase of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. The government's review of its Climate Change Programme suggests a reduction in emissions from power stations and heavy industry of between three and eight million tons of carbon under the next phase of the scheme, which runs between 2008 and 2012. At the bottom end of this range industry will be allowed to pollute more than in the current phase of the scheme.

The figures in the review suggest that industry will make between a 6 per cent reduction and a 2 per cent increase in emissions compared to the first phase of the carbon trading scheme. Assuming equal effort from business, transport and households, WWF says that industry needs to cut emissions by at least 11 per cent to meet the 20 per cent emissions reductions target.

The European Emissions Trading Scheme is the key initiative, through which the Government has said it will meet its climate change targets. A recent report for the Department of Trade and Industry [1] found that far from financially suffering under the Emissions Trading Scheme, the power generation sector is making over £800 million a year windfall profits during the first phase of the scheme. Other research for the Carbon Trust [2] suggests that concerns over the impact on manufacturing industry's competitiveness have been greatly overstated.

On the positive side, The CCPR said the government will start reporting annually to Parliament the progress that it has made on climate change. It also said that the Energy Review and the Stern Review on the economics of climate change will consider proposals made by the Stop Climate Chaos coalition for the introduction of "carbon budgeting".

But the government needs to do more. Friends of the Earth are demanding that the Government introduce a new climate law that would set a legally binding target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 3 percent every year, monitored through an annual carbon budget. [3]

[1] The DTI report: http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/sepn/ipa_euets_report.pdf

[2] The Carbon Trust report:

http://www.thecarbontrust.org.uk/carbontrust/about/publications/CTC518_CCPR2.pdf

[3] www.thebigask.com

7. Boost for microgeneration

Microgeneration received a boost with an additional £50 million allocated in the Budget and the launch of the microgeneration strategy on 28 March. Whilst the money was generally welcomed by industry groups and environmental groups, the strategy received a mixed response, with concerns expressed about lack of targets and lack of ambition.

8. Nuclear industry seeks changes to licensing – with no public input

Documents released under the Freedom Of Information Act reveal nuclear industry lobbying for reactor pre-licensing arrangements in which all major issues (environmental, security, safety and waste) are dealt with behind-closed doors. This would leave local authorities, the public and Parliament with little oversight at a public inquiry. [1]

As part of the Energy Review, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has been asked to report by the end of June on the potential role of pre-licensing assessments of candidate designs for new nuclear power stations. [2] HSE issued a discussion document on 27th March which reviews the pre-licensing process for potential new reactors. Comments are invited by 28th April. [3] The document says "*potential licensees may wish to reduce project and commercial risk, by seeking preliminary, or pre-licensing regulatory assessments of prospective reactor designs, before large-scale financial commitments are made*".

Taken together with guidance from the Office of Civil Nuclear Security under which objectors will be prevented from seeing detailed reactor plans at planning inquiries - the attorney general will select an "appointed representative" to argue their case instead [4] - and

the Draft Nuclear Industries Security (Amendment) Regulations [5] which would extend the obligations to protect sensitive nuclear information [6] to cover any person in the UK who has information about nuclear sites – this represents a worrying attack on public participation in nuclear decision-making. Under the proposed security regulations anyone who may have access to sensitive nuclear information – through legal actions or local authority work, emergency planning or general safety/security work, will have to be vetted (approved) by the Secretary of State as ‘being of suitable character and integrity’.

Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks, has clearly recognised the contradictions between what the industry is asking for and the need to promote open debate. In a speech to the British Nuclear Energy Society and European Nuclear Society Conference, he challenged the industry to show how greater certainty over licensing and a shorter planning processes might work in practice and how we can maintain the same high levels of scrutiny and safeguards we have now? [7]

[1] Guardian 21st January 2006

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,,1691750,00.html>

The full document ‘Activities to Underpin a Predictable timeline for Replacement Nuclear Build’ is not available on the internet, but can be obtained from Greenpeace:- (sarah.shoraka@uk.greenpeace.org)

[2] HSE Press Release 23rd January 2006

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/press/2006/e06005.htm>

[3] HSE review of the pre-licensing process for potential new build of nuclear power stations, 27th March 2006. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/consult/condocs/energyreview/discussion.htm>

[4] Terror fears draw veil over nuclear plants, by Richard Norton-Taylor, Guardian 6th May 2005.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1477455,00.html

[5] The Draft Nuclear Industries Security (Amendment) Regulations. DTI December 2005

http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/consultations/nisr_2005.pdf [Greenpeace submission available on request].

[6] See Nuclear Industries Security Regulations 2003 (NISR)

[7] Green Consumer Guide 23rd March 2006

<http://www.greenconsumerguide.com/index.php?news=3040>

9. Carbon dioxide emissions highest ever since Labour came to power

Government figures [1] released on March 30th reveal that UK carbon dioxide emissions rose again in 2005 and are now higher than they have ever been under Labour. The announcement follows the launch of the Governments Climate Review on March 28, which was widely slammed for failing to implement the measures needed to tackle climate change.

157.4 million tonnes of carbon was released into the atmosphere in 2005, 2.3 percent more than when Labour came to power in 1997 and only 4.8 per cent below emission levels 1990.

"While Tony Blair is appearing in the global spotlight raising the alarm about climate change, back home carbon emissions are going up. The solutions to climate change already exist and the majority of MPs and millions of people across country want action," said Tony Juniper, executive director of Friends of the Earth.

"Given the continuing failure of ministers to do what is necessary, it is clear that a climate change law is needed to deliver the cuts in pollution that the scientific evidence demands," he added.

[1]

10. Chernobyl legacy

After two decades, the legacy of the Chernobyl disaster is still casting its poisonous shadow over Britain's countryside. The Department of Health has admitted that more than 200,000 sheep are grazing on land contaminated by fallout from the explosion at the Ukrainian nuclear plant 1,500 miles away. Emergency orders still apply to 355 Welsh farms, 11 in Scotland and nine in England as a result of the catastrophe in April 1986. [1]

New research reveals that Chernobyl may have led to over 1,000 infant deaths. The study was carried out by epidemiologist, John Urquhart who worked as statistical advisor to the 1983 Yorkshire TV programme which identified a ten-fold excess of childhood leukaemia near Sellafield. The radioactive "black rain" that fell over certain parts of the UK after the nuclear accident could have caused a ten per cent rise in infant death rates between 1986 and 1989. [2]

Meanwhile a series of around 20 conferences and at least 4 new reports are expected to be published in the run-up to the nuclear disaster's 20th anniversary next month. Many of these can be expected to contain some significant revelations.

A new photography exhibition at the.gallery@oxo called Fallout: the human costs of nuclear catastrophe is showing from 18 April to 14 May 2006. Admission is free and it is open daily 11am-6pm. Fallout documents the human legacy of Chernobyl and other nuclear disaster zones in the Soviet Union.

[1] Independent 14th March 2006

<http://news.independent.co.uk/environment/article351153.ece>

[2] The Sun 23rd March 2006

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/article/0,,2-2006130570,00.html>

Independent 23rd March 2006

http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/health_medical/article353007.ece

11. Poor outlook for Sellafield plutonium and uranium fuel Plant

The mixed-oxide (MOX) nuclear fuel plant at Sellafield will only produce one-quarter of the plutonium-uranium fuel it was originally designed for, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has reported. The NDA blames "immature technology" and engineering problems. [1]

The production plan this financial year was to increase the number of fuel assemblies produced from 4 to 12. It is now thought it will only be possible to produce eight. The original design capacity throughput rate for the plant was 120 tonnes per year (te HM/yr). This is now not considered feasible. The NDA's target for the plant is now only 40 tonnes, but production for the next few years is expected to be around 32 tonnes. [2]

[1] New Scientist 25 February 2006,

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg18925404.000.html>

[2] NDA SMP Update 16th February 2006

[http://www.nda.gov.uk/News--SMP_Update_\(1403\).aspx?pg=1403](http://www.nda.gov.uk/News--SMP_Update_(1403).aspx?pg=1403)

12. THORP – to re-start or not re-start; that is the question

The NDA has issued an assessment of options for restarting or not restarting the Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP) at Sellafield, in the run-up to the first anniversary of the discovery of a major leak of highly radioactive liquid which closed the plant on 21st April 2005. [1] Options considered include 'virtual reprocessing', which would involve sending UK plutonium and waste to overseas customers rather than reprocessing the actual overseas spent

nuclear waste fuel. Another option is to send the overseas spent nuclear fuel elsewhere – probably France - for reprocessing. But the report concludes that a restart, subject to approval by the safety inspectors of the NII, is the strongly-favoured option. The NDA is refusing to release the costs of the THORP accident and prolonged closure.

During April the NDA will begin looking at all the options for UK spent fuel including reprocessing, ongoing wet storage, dry storage in new purpose built stores and dry cask storage. The future role of THORP in managing spent fuel will be considered as part of this review.

The Independent on Sunday reported on 19th March that British Nuclear Group may still face prosecution and unlimited fines over the leak.

[1] Assessment of issues associated with THORP non-restart and restart options, NDA, March 2006
http://www.the-nda.org.uk/documents/assessment_of_issues_associated_with_thorp_non-restart_and_restart_options_published_2_march_2006.pdf

13. Nuclear power is not the answer to tackling climate change

Claims that more nuclear plants are needed to protect the Earth's climate don't withstand analysis, according to renowned international energy expert, Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute. Nuclear is a dying industry, and efforts to 'revive' this moribund technology will divert investment from cheaper market winners – cogeneration, renewables, and efficiency. The idea that 'we need every energy technology' suggests that we have infinite amounts of money. In fact, it is essential that we buy the fastest and most effective climate solutions. Investment in nuclear power worsens climate change by buying less solution per dollar.

Green Future Magazine, Mar/Apr 2006
<http://www.greenfutures.org.uk/features/default.asp?id=2479>

14. Nuclear waste dump filling up

With the current low level waste dump - at Drigg in Cumbria, - filling up, new options for the long term management of those lower-level wastes which cannot go to Drigg are needed. DEFRA has published a consultation document on proposals for dealing with solid low level radioactive waste. The consultation period runs until 31 May 2006. [1]

[1] A Public Consultation on Policy for the Long Term Management of Solid Low Level Radioactive Waste in the United Kingdom, DEFRA, 28th February 2006
<http://www.peoplescienceandpolicy.com/llw/index.html>
Sunday Herald 19th March 2006
<http://www.sundayherald.com/54715>

15. New reactors at Sellafield?

Tim Heslop, Cumbria County Council's spokesman on nuclear issues, does not believe the county should automatically embrace the prospect of a new nuclear power station. "The West Cumbrian economy needs to be diverse. A nuclear power station, once built, would employ 600 people, maximum. In the next few years we're faced with losing 8,000 jobs. Sellafield would need a new connection to the National Grid. We've never produced a lot of nuclear power at Sellafield and the existing connection isn't big enough for a modern nuclear power station." [1] The Council's response to the government's Energy Review says new nuclear power station should not be built until the question of how to dispose of nuclear waste is resolved. [2]

- [1] Carlisle News and Star 14th March 2006
<http://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/viewarticle.aspx?id=341892>
- [2] BBC 23rd March 2006
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/cumbria/4838704.stm>