

Dear Sir/Madam

DECC: Advanced Boiling Water Reactor justification at the Wylfa B site, North Wales

1 Reactors and fuel

a) I understand that technically and economically speaking, the operation of ABWRs in Japan has been problematic and inefficient, so this seems an imprudent choice. The use of high burn-up fuel will necessitate the on-site storage of spent fuel for well over a century, and of course this material will be far more radioactive than current legacy waste.

b) It seems to me that by the time the ABWR could be built at this site, technology will have moved on hugely in terms of grid, conservation and the capability of renewables such as photovoltaics and marine options. In this world the ABWR will be an expensive, old-fashioned and dangerous white elephant.

2 Safety issues

a) My concern is that while concentrating on technical issues in the present, nuclear engineers are not trained to take historical, geopolitical, psychological or social overviews which would surely raise questions regarding continued safety at this site for future generations, eg issues of governance, war, human error, political expedience, cyberterrorism, social, economic or infrastructure breakdown. Would Victorian scientists have been able to predict the world we live in today? Of course not, yet here we have a comparable time frame proposed.

b) The criteria by which radiation levels are deemed safe by the ONR is itself open to question, and several reports have now raised matters of concern following Germany's KIKK report on childhood leukaemia in close proximity to nuclear installations.

c) The question of seismology raises itself, regarding the Dinorwig and related faults. Of course we are not talking about Pacific rim extremes here, but even small tremors can have unexpected knock-ons and consequences.

d) Wylfa Head may not be liable to flooding, but the sheer fury of storms in recent times would raise questions about erosion and inland damage, if climate change brings about more extreme weather events, as the very name DECC suggests it will.

e) Ynys Môn is an island. It is currently served by 2 narrow bridges. Even if there were a third, the area could not be evacuated as quickly and efficiently as a mainland site in the event of a major disaster.

3 Economics

a) The government's pledge that nuclear new-build would have to be funded by private companies was of course very short-lived. The subsidies already being provided allow public money to be poured into the pockets of private companies. The Hinkley strike-price deal is an example, probably illegal. The consumer and tax-payer bear the cost and the risk, while cosseted private corporations cherry pick the profits. Furthermore the subsidising of nuclear inhibits the vital development of renewables.

b) The economy of Ynys Môn depends heavily on tourism and agriculture. The mere existence of a vast industrial building site in an area of outstanding natural beauty with SSSIs does little for the former, while a serious accident would quite possibly terminate both industries permanently.

c) Despite the existence of Wylfa A, the island's northern coast has remained in the economic doldrums for decades. Would it be any different this time around? There are serious alternatives to this economic programme: the island needs diversity and projects of an appropriate scale, not a monolithic dependent economy.

4 Cultural issues

The nature of the island's unique culture and history are probably not well understood at Westminster. The Welsh language is not some great crested newt deferment ploy for protestors: it is the living language of the island, the language of the supermarket and the garage, the school and the farm. The building of Wylfa A had a disastrous effect on the language in local schools and communities. The plans to bring in so many workers onto the island to build the ABWRs would be an even worse disaster. Despite the incentives (bribes, some would say) on offer, more and more people on Ynys Môn are simply not prepared to 'sell their birthright for a mess of pottage.'

Philip Steele