

## **Forum 21 position statement on the proposed “Hinkley C” nuclear power station**

Electricite de France (EdF) has announced plans to build a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point, the first such development in the UK for more than 20 years. Forum 21 believes that this proposal is in conflict with our aim to encourage a sustainable future for West Somerset for the following reasons:

### **Radioactive waste**

Nuclear is the only power generation option to leave such a long trail of hazardous material to be cared for over periods well beyond our lifetimes. We still have a major legacy of radioactive waste from the first two generations of UK nuclear power stations (Magnox and AGR). There is as yet no operating disposal site which could securely contain this material, let alone that from any new power stations, over the long time periods required to protect the environment and public health.

### **A viable alternative**

It is feasible for the UK electricity system to be transformed into a low carbon network without relying on nuclear power. This would require a major commitment to energy saving measures as well as a much stronger effort to increase the range of renewable energy sources available.

The Sustainable Development Commission has concluded that “there is a range of different ways for the UK to meet its CO<sub>2</sub> and energy security objectives without relying on a new generation of nuclear power plants”. A recent detailed analysis by the No Need for Nuclear campaign shows how it is feasible for the UK to “keep the lights on” with other generating options whilst phasing out nuclear completely by soon after 2030. The Liberal Democrat party is still committed to a non-nuclear energy policy which would see the UK generating 30% of its electricity from non-carbon emitting sources by 2020 and 100% by 2050.

### **The energy network**

Nuclear power does not work well with an energy supply model in which renewable energy sources will play an increasing role. Such large, inflexible centralised power stations are at odds with a distributed network of small to medium-sized generating options, some powered by variable renewable sources such as wind energy. There is also no intention to utilise the waste heat generated by the power station’s operation, as would happen in an efficient Combined Heat and Power plant.

### **Economics**

The economics of operating a new generation of nuclear power stations remain untested. Capital costs for nuclear are higher than other generating technologies, however, and on recent experience liable to unforeseen increases. In Finland, the first European Pressurised Reactor (the type proposed at Hinkley) is four years behind its construction schedule and the cost has increased from €3 to €5.7 billion.

Although the government has said it will not subsidise new nuclear power stations, there is a risk that, if EdF cannot make the economics of a new power station work, it will have to be bailed out by the British taxpayer.

For these reasons Forum 21 believes that there are better ways to address our local and national energy needs than with a Hinkley C nuclear power station. An accelerated programme of renewable energy and energy saving would not only help the UK to reduce carbon dioxide emissions but avoid the clear risks of the nuclear route, including a potentially catastrophic accident and a legacy of long-lived radioactive waste.