



# Forum 21 Newsletter

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***Working for a Fair and Sustainable Western Somerset***

## Join the People's Climate March

Forum 21 is urging members and supporters to attend the People's Climate March in London on 29 November. The March is timed to coincide with the start of the Paris climate change summit on 30 November to be attended by many world leaders. 'People pressure' on the streets would persuade politicians to do more than talk and to take bold action at the climate negotiations.

We are finding out if any local transport is being arranged for the March. If you would like to attend, contact Lorna Scott for information on 01984 634 242 or email [mail@forum21.org.uk](mailto:mail@forum21.org.uk)

## Government scraps subsidies to onshore wind farms



Amber Rudd, the energy and climate change secretary, has said she is halting new subsidies to onshore

wind farms on the grounds that the technology should stand on its own feet and save bill payers money.

A moratorium on more onshore wind was rejected by the Lib Dems but the Conservatives went into the election promising to "halt the spread of onshore wind farms".

Onshore wind has attracted a lot of investment and can be the most cost-efficient way of producing low carbon energy.

## Steam Coast Trail appoints Project Officer

The Steam Coast Trail, an initiative begun by Forum 21, has appointed Briony Turner to run the project.

Briony said: "I'm very excited to be appointed as Project Officer for the Steam Coast Trail. Having grown up in West Somerset I can fully appreciate the need for a safe, accessible route for cyclists. I'm looking forward to being part of a project that can deliver useful infrastructure for local people, as well as provide economic benefit by attracting more visitors to the area. Helping people to explore

West Somerset in new and sustainable ways can only be a good thing!"

Forum 21 director Bob Rivett who, with Judy Mapledoram, campaigned to get the Trail established, said: "We are delighted that Briony is joining the team. She will liaise with the partnership of Friends of the Steam Coast Trail, West Somerset Council and Sustains to drive the project forward and will plan for the future to maximise the benefits of the Steam Coast Trail to local people, visitors and the local economy."

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***Forum 21 is a not-for-profit company whose aims are to raise awareness about ecology, natural history, resource conservation, sustainable development and environmental studies as well as to conserve and protect the environment and natural resources.***

## Problems mount for Hinkley C

The Stop Hinkley Campaign has renewed its call to EDF Energy to cut its losses so that Somerset can plan a sustainable renewable energy future.

The *Daily Telegraph* reported in July that French reactor builder, Areva, has been aware since 2006 about problems in the steel reactor pressure vessel (RPV) of its Flamanville reactor being built in Normandy. Despite this being a critical safety issue, Areva did not alert anyone to the problem and continued construction.

### Weaknesses

In April it was revealed that anomalies had been found in the bottom and lid of the RPV of the Flamanville reactor - the same reactor type as the two proposed reactors at Hinkley. This means there are weaknesses in the vital metal structure protecting the outside world from the highly radioactive reactor core.

Pierre-Franck Chevet, head of France's nuclear safety inspectorate, said the same manufacturing technique was used in the steel for the identical safety casings destined for Hinkley Point.

In June another problem was revealed by a leaked report from France's nuclear safety watchdog

which highlighted faults in Flamanville's cooling system. According to the *Daily Telegraph* "multiple" malfunctioning valves found in the Flamanville EPR would expose the reactor to the risk of a meltdown. Meanwhile, Austria has filed its legal challenge to the UK's €108 billion support package for Hinkley Point C. A second such challenge at the European Court is due from green energy suppliers in Germany and Austria who fear unfair competition from subsidised nuclear power in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary if the Hinkley C precedent stands.

Based on previous similar cases, the legal objection made by Austria against the European Commission's decision on Hinkley could delay the progress of the facility for around three to four years according to a legal expert who has been advising the Austrian government. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) is reported to be discussing with EDF how to handle liability for costs incurred on the project should Austria's challenge be successful and the deal has to be cancelled.

### Incompetence

"There now appears to be deep concern in Government, especially the Treasury, about Hinkley C. It is difficult to believe they would still

want to go-ahead with Hinkley C after such indications of incompetence and secrecy on the part of Areva", said Stop Hinkley spokesperson, Roy Pumfrey. "It's time to call a halt now before anything else goes wrong."

## Former energy minister says Hinkley C should be abandoned

The former Conservative Secretary of State for Energy (1979-81), Lord Howell of Guildford, has described the proposed Hinkley Point C nuclear power station as "by far the biggest future burden on consumers and households".

Although he described himself as "very pro-nuclear" Lord Howell said he "would shed no tears at all if the elephantine Hinkley C Project was abandoned".

### Decision

Lord Howell's remarks came just one day after the current Secretary of State for Energy, Amber Rudd, said there is a "very good prospect" of a decision to build Britain's first new nuclear plant finally being taken later this year. Ms Rudd told MPs on the Energy and Climate Change Committee that: Hinkley "... is going to be the first new nuclear plant in over 20 years so it is essential to me that we succeed in it."

## Cost of building under fire from city analysts

The estimated cost of building Hinkley C at £24.5bn is under intensifying criticism from the energy industry and the City. In a recent report, the *Guardian* drew attention to continuing doubts about the project which have deepened after a detailed report by HSBC's energy analysts described several key challenges.

These include:

- declining demand for power in the UK, currently falling at 1% a year as energy-saving measures take effect;
- a three-fold jump in the UK's interconnection capacity with continental Europe by 2022, massively increasing the country's ability to import cheaper supplies; and
- "a litany of setbacks" in Finland, France and China for EDF's European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) model, the same type as planned for Hinkley C.



*An artist's impression of Hinkley C*

HSBC's analysts described the EPR model as too big, too costly and still unproven, saying its future was bleak. They also pointed out that wholesale power prices have fallen by 16% since November 2011 when the government agreed a "strike price" for Hinkley Point's output – effectively a guaranteed price of £92.50 per megawatt hour, inflation-linked for 35 years and funded through household bills.

### Paris – our last chance to avoid planetary disaster?

The United Nation's Climate Change conference in Paris starting on 30 November can't have escaped many people's notice. It's widely regarded as the last chance to achieve the 2 per cent maximum target for carbon emissions if we are to avoid planetary disaster.

The omens are good - or at least better than for previous summits. Pope Francis has spoken of the need for real climate action before it's too late. And earlier this month President Obama produced his Clean Power Plan to reduce carbon emissions from the US electricity supply by one third by 2030. If this is achieved, it will mean emissions will be reduced from 39 to 27 per cent, and power from renewables will go up from 13 to 28 per cent. China, a huge emitter, nevertheless leads the world in the production and use of wind power, solar photovoltaic power and smart grid technologies.

So what has been happening in the UK while all this has been going on? While the Conservative government still claims to be green, its actions belie its words. Since the election in May, it has announced policy changes that threaten movement towards carbon reduction.

#### **Threat to successful industries**

It has ended subsidies for wind and solar power, threatening the future of two increasingly successful industries in the UK which have helped to produce an increasing amount of electricity - as much as 15 per cent of our supply last month. At the same time it is still supporting - and subsidising - nuclear power from Hinkley C, which is vastly more expensive. And Hinkley will take years to build while wind and solar can be installed very rapidly.

It has axed the plans for new homes to be zero carbon by 2016, reducing the amount of power that would be saved

by building energy efficient homes. Also gone is the admittedly unloved Green Deal, the government's 'flagship' scheme to reduce emissions from homes. But with it has also gone the scheme that really helped many people: the obligation on fuel supply companies to spend money on making homes more energy efficient, cheaper to heat and warmer to live in. This ECO scheme helped many households to improve their heating systems and insulate their homes.

#### **'Woeful' record**

Leaders of ten national groups, including the National Trust, the RSPB and Greenpeace, said they were shocked by these proposals, rating the government's record on climate change as 'woeful'.

Yet the government claims to be a strong supporter of the Paris talks. Thousands will be going to the People's Climate March in London on 29 November to put pressure on the government to do more to make the Paris conference a real success. Organised by the Campaign against Climate Change it aims to tell the government to act on climate change and to support a global agreement to cut warming emissions of all kinds, speedily, with fairness and justice.

**This is a crucial year for the climate. If you would like to do your bit and join the 29 November let us know. Forum 21 is finding out if any local transport is being arranged.**

Contact Lorna Scott on 01984 634 242 or email [mail@forum21.org.uk](mailto:mail@forum21.org.uk)

*Lorna Scott, founder of Forum 21 and one of its directors*

## Forum 21 News

### **Volunteers wanted for Community Woodland Project**

A Big Lottery grant of £2,594 from Awards for All is providing a boost to the activities of the Community Woodland Project at Woodcombe.

Much of the grant will be used to purchase hand tools for the project. We are looking forward to putting people to work once ecologically sensitive season has passed. So please volunteer your services to the project.

The initial field botanical survey has been completed and at some stage the records will be collated and posted on the Forum 21 website. We are now looking for people who have some expertise in the identification of insects and other arthropods to add to the ecological survey.

The plan for the coming season is to continue felling and thinning the sycamore trees on the area designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). What we do with this part of the woodland in the longer term is very much down to discussions we are having with Natural England and the National Park.

The wood fuel we have felled to date will be stored and should be available for sale in about a years time. Our intention is to provide people in fuel poverty with wood fuel at a reduced price.

Anyone interested in volunteering or can offer relevant expertise please contact Graham Boswell.

Email: [togooutdoors@hotmail.com](mailto:togooutdoors@hotmail.com)

### Obama sets tough new carbon cutting rules for US



Barack Obama will use all of his powers – including his veto – to defend his plan to fight climate change according to the White House. He has introduced new rules cutting carbon pollution from power plants.

The rules set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will give states and electricity companies an extra two years – until 2022 – before they need to start cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The delay was seen as an attempt to defuse opposition from Republicans in Congress and industry to the rules. But the White House said it was still gearing up to do battle over the rules.

White House chief of staff Denis McDonough, said: “When it comes to the Clean Power Plan, let me say this: We will not back down. We will finalise a stronger rule. We will veto

ideological riders to stop this plan and undercut our bedrock environmental laws, and we will move forward on behalf of the American people with the vision set forward by the president.”

He said the time lag would not weaken the power plant rules or stop the US from meeting its global commitments to fight climate change.

Power plants are the single largest source of carbon pollution in the US. The EPA rules are critical to meeting Obama’s promise to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 per cent by 2025 and, by extension, shoring up Obama’s efforts to reach a global agreement to fight climate change in Paris at the end of the year.

### How rich countries help poorer ones adapt to climate change will be decisive issue in Paris talks

The question of rich countries most responsible for global warming financially helping poorer countries adapt to climate change is emerging as a major stumbling block to agreement on a negotiating text for the Paris summit.

France’s top climate ambassador Laurence Tubiana has said she is very concerned at the slow rate of progress on the text that will form the basis of a new international deal on global warming. But she added that negotiators from nearly 200 countries were making headway on the document, and made clear that the French government wanted to see serious progress on the text by October.

#### Urgent need

The UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon said in June that the negotiations were proceeding at “a snail’s pace” after a fortnight of talks in Bonn cut the 90-page text by just four pages. A new streamlined version was published this month, with the two officials overseeing it warning the “pace was slow” and there was an “urgent need, owing to serious time constraints, to accelerate the work”.

The final document that governments hope to agree in Paris will have to

be far shorter - with points of disagreement ironed out and swathes of potential text currently in brackets removed.

“We are all very concerned, but it’s progressing,” Tubiana said shortly before the latest version was published. “What we do as a normal presidency [of the talks] anxious to have a result in Paris not at the last minute, is to say we need something [a better, shorter text] to be cleared in October.”

She said that making the deal legally-binding was less challenging, as only certain elements of any accord would need to be binding.

“I would say the most difficult [part of an agreement] is finance,” she said. “It has to be clear that money is flowing from developed to developing countries. It should be a significant share of public money as well.”

#### “Conceptually difficult”

What form such finance took after 2020, when \$100bn of private and public money is meant to be delivered to poorer countries each year, was “less clear” and “conceptually difficult”, she said.

The French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, said in May that financing would be “decisive” in reaching a deal in Paris.

**Forum 21’s newsletter is published quarterly in July/August, October, January and April.**

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