

one of the main BRADWELL FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY
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to give food for thought on the future.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENERGY REVIEW

Bradwell for Renewable Energy has a membership which extends from Southminster, Bradwell and Chelmsford, through to North Essex and Colchester. The focus for this campaigning organisation is the electricity-generating future of the site at Bradwell, as well as the on-going decommissioning of the now defunct Magnox reactors.

This presentation does not attempt to cover the ground of those of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth: this organisation heartily endorses their submissions, previewed to us in draft form.

We feel that the strength of our contribution lies in telling you exactly what we, as ordinary members of the public, think about our future, especially in East Anglia. As the spokeswoman for the above organisation, I have been talking to great numbers of the general public in streets and in meetings during the last few months.

In the Spring, with the demise of the Magnox station, we garnered the signatures of local politicians (including one member of Parliament) from Colchester to Chelmsford, to submit a letter to the Crown Estates and the Department of Energy, to ask for the empty grid connection and sub-station to be used for offshore wind development.

As you are well aware, East Anglia has become the focus of interest by offshore wind developers: conditions here are ideally suited to this form of electricity generation. Members of our organisation attended presentations given by GEC Winds, explaining their project off Gunfleet, in Clacton, Frinton and Walton-on-the-Naze. Visitors to this exhibition expressed interest and excitement, in particular with the knowledge that the Company was committed to using local workforces. (this is an area of high unemployment). Above all was the relief that here was a method of "going with nature" rather than against it, stipulated by many in their concerns about nuclear power generation. A number of visitors commented that their prime concern was not leaving poisonous wastes to their descendents. Offshore wind generation satisfied this requirement to a large degree.

Out and about on the streets of Chelmsford, Clacton and Colchester, a number of people expressed puzzlement that wind generation seemed to be such a hot political issue, when it seemed eminently sensible. They commented time and again that whilst on holiday in Spain, Greece, and the Canary Islands, as well as in Europe, there were plenty of installations, mainly on land, which caused no concern or debate amongst the population. A nine year-old girl, born in Tenerife, visiting relations in Colchester, asked why we were making such a fuss about wind power. When asked why this was so, many people attributed the tension to the powerful political lobby of nuclear power generators and their influence on successive governments.

One of the most interesting encounters during this period was with a director of a general civil engineering practice. His firm is very excited indeed about the prospect of wind generation in East Anglia. It is already engaged in such an enterprise. But he gave food for thought in the following areas.

Firstly, Germany and Denmark, who make the blades for wind turbines, are producing to full capacity because of the popularity of wind generation in Europe. Therefore plans for wind farms on stream in our region in the next two years may well be scuppered by lack of parts. (This could affect the Government's Renewable Energy target).

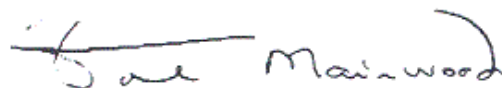
Secondly, this situation is, in his view, simple to remedy: the Government can encourage the manufacture of these parts in this country. This is a relatively easy matter, as all that is basically needed are hangers the length of jumbo jets to make the blades. These blades need to be renewed every 25 years. The technology used is relatively simple. In this region alone, with unemployment blackspots in Tendring and in North Norfolk such a scheme could make all the difference. Elsewhere there could be similar benefits, with redundant Sellafield workers, for example, changing skills. Unlike nuclear power stations, which are built elsewhere nowadays and installed ready-made on site, off-shore wind generation will create a host of spin-offs for local economies. Above all, it will have the consent of the people.

Conclusion

People in this area feel unreservedly that nuclear power is cumbersome, inflexible, overly expensive and not sustainable in the face of radioactive waste. They resent having to keep hauling it out with their own, tax-payer's money. (Especially given the current crisis with British Energy) Quite simply, it does not belong in this micro-technical age. The public would like to see diversity of supply, with emphasis on renewables. Many people talked of localised supplies being the best eventual solution, citing the wind generator at Swaffham in Norfolk. There is great enthusiasm for energy conservation, with many people buying energy-saving light bulbs.

The message has certainly got through to the public in this area that we are not free to use electricity as if there were no tomorrow. We are prepared to work hard to safeguard supplies and the planet. We demand that the Government builds in sustainability into all commercial contracts. For example, the grid at Bradwell cannot be reserved for wind generation as it has to be open to competition. We hope that "competition" will include a thorough investigation into the different environmental impacts and a subsequent weighting mechanism.

All we ask is: will you the Government, please listen and act accordingly?



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