Chester and Merseyside Greenpeace groups recently spent some time at Chester railway station talking to passengers about the transport of nuclear waste through Chester and the future of British energy supplies. Many passengers were unaware that nuclear waste travels by train through Chester on its way to be reprocessed. The aim of the day was to raise the profile of renewable energy sources and to carry out a poll to see if people would prefer future energy supplies from nuclear power or renewable energy supplies. It quickly became clear that most people would prefer the renewables option.

Dangers of nuclear power

The arguments against nuclear power are now widely understood:

- It is highly polluting. Every day nuclear power stations pump radiation pollution into the sea and air. The Irish Sea is now the most radioactively contaminated sea in the world because of discharges from Sellafield. This damage to the environment will last hundreds of thousands of years.
- It is bad for your health. Radioactive materials can cause cancers, genetic defects and other serious disorders. One particle of plutonium can cause fatal lung cancer.
- It is dangerous. Thousands of tonnes of nuclear materials are transported around the UK every year. An accident or deliberate attack could be devastating.
- It is expensive. The estimated cost of decommissioning for existing nuclear industry alone is £56-£70bn.
- It fuels the arms race. The nuclear industry creates plutonium which is the key ingredient of nuclear weapons. The British nuclear industry has created the third largest stockpile of plutonium in the world.
- It is wasteful. Centralised power stations such as nuclear reactors waste two thirds of the energy of their fuel by throwing it away as heat. More is wasted sending it down power lines and only 22% of the original energy ends up actually being used in the home.

What's the alternative?

One solution, already being used by some European countries, is to switch to 'renewable decentralised energies'. This means generating power close to where it is needed, allowing us to use the heat for central heating and hot water and electricity for other needs. Other countries in Europe, for example Sweden, already generate power locally and use renewable technologies.

Some of the advantages of this approach are:

- This system would deliver 30% more carbon dioxide savings than the proposed new nuclear power stations.
- It is more efficient. The heat currently lost in the UK's centralised power system is enough to provide hot water and heating for every building in the country.
- It is cheaper.
- It works. Decentralised energy systems account for half of Denmark's electricity production. Closer to home, Woking council has slashed its carbon emissions by 70% since 1990 by decentralising its energy production.

Greenpeace is calling on the government to:

- **End nuclear power.**
- **Massively expand renewable energy.**
- **Promote energy efficiency.**
- **Implement a clean, efficient, decentralised energy system.**

"NUCLEAR POWER?"

A Public Meeting

to explore the civil and military aspects of the nuclear debate.

Listen to the speakers.
Ask questions.
Have your say.

Speakers confirmed so far:

Jill Evans

(Chair, CND Cymru; Plaid Cymru MEP)

Richard Bramhall

(Low Level Radiation Campaign)

Hugh Richards

(Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance)

Monday 11th September
6.30pm

Room AO2, NEWI,
Mold Rd, Wrexham

WELSH CHALLENGE TO BLAIR'S NUCLEAR PLANS

The nuclear power debate is again showing the rotten state of UK governance. Tony Blair announced last autumn that he wanted a new generation of nuclear power stations. The government said we should have an open debate with public consultation. Blair sent off his Chief Scientist, Sir David King, to make pro-nuclear speeches to all and sundry – nuclear power is essential for meeting CO2 targets, he asserts.

Blair didn't wait for the results of the review, but declared in a speech to the CBI on 17 May that new nuclear power stations are *"back on the agenda with a vengeance".*

In 2002, the government's full energy review was based on publicly-issued documents which pointed out that nuclear power was inflexible, relatively costly and inferior to a policy of renewables and energy efficiency. When the results came out, Blair was outvoted in the Cabinet, nuclear power being put on the back-burner. This time, Blair is not risking being outvoted. The decision comes first; the review changes into a (dodgy) dossier to support the decision.

UK governance turned rotten, indeed! European law on planning and participation has outlawed this, and challenges may be possible based on Strategic Environmental Assessment and public participation in decision-making. Public pressure for proper governance based on European law needs to be kept up, to delay the decision and secure further information and consultation.

WANA, the Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance, has coordinated campaigning on nuclear waste and against nuclear power in Wales for over 20 years. We were part of the Nuclear-Free Wales movement that at one time was endorsed by all the old counties. Though the National Assembly (and the First Minister and several of his Cabinet) are supporters, several of the new counties did not subscribe to the nuclear-free local authority network and Anglesey County Council has even declared it wants a new nuclear station to replace Wylfa.

Wales has a nuclear waste legacy, despite the "nuclear–free" tag. Highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel canisters are stored at Wylfa, a defunct, twin-reactor plant remains at Trawsfynydd and process waste is accumulating in Cardiff at the Nycomed-Amersham factory. No solution exists for such nuclear wastes, despite the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management claiming this summer that dumping them deep underground is the "best available" solution. The nuclear industry case for waste was rejected in 1997 after the Nirex public inquiry: **www.jpb.co.uk/nirexinquiry/nirex.htm**, and recent technical assessments show a dump could expose people thousands of years in the future to radiation levels many times the current legal limit.

These days we recognise deliberate ("terrorist") attack on nuclear power plants or stores of used fuel as a substantial hazard. Internal sabotage is another possibility in a polarised world. Institutional control may break down – not only in some of the unstable countries to which the US/UK want to export nuclear reactors, but also in Britain. On the other hand, nuclear security is already used to exempt nuclear sites from public openness and used to give extra-ordinary powers to their armed guards. One can foresee nuclear state secrecy and special controls will increasingly over-ride civil liberties and create a repressive core. Is that a route we want to follow when there's an obvious alternative route?

The alternative is to go for renewable energy – mainly solar energy for most of the globe, but mainly biomass and marine (wind, wave and tidal current) energy for Britain. Decentralised energy is part of the concept, for local scale generators and consumers, down to the household level – being conscious of energy sources, people will also switch on to energy efficiency. Greenpeace leads on arguments for decentralised energy: www.greenpeace.org.uk/climate/solution/revolution.cfm; updates on anti-nuclear campaigning can also be found on this web site.

Before the last election, WANA was predicting that Blair would revive nuclear power. The Alliance issues well-informed briefings and a regular Newsletter (back issues at **www.kare-uk.org/wana-index.htm**) and can provide speakers at local meetings. So do organise a meeting or debate on energy sources including nuclear power and ask us along!
Email: **hughrichards@gn.apc.org.**