



Supporters of Nuclear Energy

Newsletter

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Some news items noted by Neville Chamberlain

What was once the National Nuclear Corporation (NNC), based in Knutsford and which might be regarded as the last UK specialist nuclear engineering organisation, is now in US ownership, having been bought by Jacobs Engineering for a reported £250million. NNC was taken on some years ago by AMEC who later were taken over by Wood Engineering in Aberdeen. The nuclear bit didn't really fit well with the marine engineer and so it was no surprise that they have sold. Jacobs Engineering is no stranger to the UK having been involved for some years at Sellafield and were once close partners with the now defunct BNFL in their US operations. SONE has several members associated with the Knutsford engineering group.

WNN reports that the Australian State of New South Wales is reconsidering its ban on nuclear developments. The state's Upper House has recommended that the State Government should pass legislation to repeal the ban which has been in place since 1987.

The Nuclear Industry Association is urging the Government to produce a new financing mechanism to support investment in new nuclear build projects. The NIA argues that a new financing approach is needed urgently to ensure that new low-carbon nuclear energy can play its part in achieving net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050.

Meanwhile, the US nuclear regulator continues to approve life extensions for "mature" nuclear power stations, the latest being Exelon's Peach Bottom units 2 and 3, which, after significant refurbishment and upgrade, are now licensed to 2053 and 2054 respectively.

On April 2 the decision to approve the Wylfa Newydd UK Nuclear Plant was put back to September. "The secretary of state [Alok Sharma] has decided to reset the statutory deadline for this application to 30 September 2020."

A new opportunity - Friends of Nuclear Energy

At the end of February – it seems a long time ago now – I was approached by some students in the nuclear field who want to set up a group, the Friends of Nuclear Energy (FoNE). I had an extremely positive meeting with Troy Fielder, a third year student at UEA, who is President of FoNE. I promised the SONE Committee when it met in March to follow this possibility up. A lecture or half-day conference in Oxford was in the making for May. But then the virus came.

Not only have these immediate plans had to be cancelled but so has the COP26 Meeting of the UN International Panel on Climate Change that was scheduled for November in Glasgow. This would have overlapped with the US Election anyway, but the postponement to 2021 may also improve the chance of a sensible outcome and gives SONE/FoNE a better chance to present a professional view of older and younger generations in support of nuclear power.

They post messages and news on Twitter @fonuclearenergy and may also be found on the professional site LinkedIn. They currently have about 65 names of followers, ranging from students and senior professionals in the nuclear industry to others academics and members of NHS. They are recruiting more but it is not clear exactly what defines their membership.

There are 10 members of the FoNE Committee: President, Secretary, Treasurer, Event Coordinator, Sponsorship Coordinator, Marketing and Communications Officers, Regional Ambassador and three student representatives. They are keen to work with SONE and write to us of their aims as follows:

“We are living in uncertain times. The climate is changing, biodiversity is dwindling, and diseases are spreading. It is therefore no surprise that people are concerned. With the spread of covid-19, we have once again found ourselves confronted with the fragile nature of our interconnected world. It is now, more than ever, that we need to find ways of building a sense of community and hope. We believe that nuclear power can offer an opportunity for just this.

Friends of Nuclear Energy (FoNE) are a group of young professionals and students that support nuclear power, and are keen to promote its benefits across industry and academia. We believe that nuclear power can be a solution to the ever growing climate crisis, and is something that can provide a whole host of benefits beyond just making clean electricity – something we believe needs to be spoken about more widely.

As a group, FoNE has three main objectives: to develop a better sense of community, to engender a narrative shift in the way that people speak about nuclear power, and to

engage the wider public in discussions about it.

A sense of community is important for two reasons: it enables the transfer of knowledge and information, and it inspires hope and positivity. It is for these reasons that we feel one of our main goals as a group is to grow our network and community beyond those in the nuclear industry– we are all friends here, but we also wish to be friends with others elsewhere (however contrived that may sound). Through this endeavour, we hope to not only extend our influence and ensure that the positive aspects of nuclear power are realised by the greatest number of people, but also to promote cross-industry learning and development.

Further, as a result of discussions with many students and colleagues, it has become clear that some are unsure about the future of nuclear energy: people are concerned that there will not be a place for them in the industry, or that they will limit their wider career prospects because of the controversial nature of working in nuclear power. By building a better sense of community and increasing the visibility of potential career prospects, we hope to at least allay the first of these concerns. We then believe that if we can change the language used to talk about nuclear power, we can put the second concern to rest as well.

For too long, the nuclear industry has shrouded itself in the language of hard engineering feats and technological prowess creating an insular wall that prevents public access and buries the benefits of nuclear power in adjunct proclamations of safety. Although safety is of course an important concern, it should not be the first thing someone thinks of when they hear the phrase ‘nuclear power’. We believe that we need to move away from our concrete rhetoric of safety and caution towards a narrative of hope and community: nuclear is, after all, one of the cleanest and most sustainable forms of energy production, and offers a broad suite of auxiliary services that can help meet our net zero emissions target whilst also providing services and jobs to local communities. A budding nuclear industry in the UK will not only provide jobs and services, but will also help to secure the UK’s place as a world leader in climate change mitigation and energy transitions. This should be our message.

However, the nuclear industry has often found itself faced with the severe gaze of the media and the public. Despite all the good work that the industry does, it is often critiqued harshly and unfairly. For this reason, it has built its walls high and kept the public firmly out of discussion. The industry has, for very long, believed this to be the best and only way of moving forward. However, as climate change has moved up the political agenda and to the forefront of peoples’ minds, and the need for a clean energy transition has been rightly emphasised again and again, the nuclear industry can no longer hide from public critique and question. It needs to extend its dialectic

reach, and engage those not normally engaged. This is an opportunity to grow and extend our community, and to promote *every* benefit of nuclear power beyond just its outstanding safety record.

We hope to continue working with Supporters of Nuclear Energy on all of these endeavours, and to look at ways that we can support each other fruitfully and meaningfully. If you would like to learn more about FoNE, please take a look at our LinkedIn or Twitter pages.”

We intend to continue talking to them. They appear to be the younger voice that SONE has been hoping to foster.

In the mean time as you sit at home, here is something to watch and read

An intermission - and a coincidence

In Warsaw, September 2019, at a conference on radiation with other scientists from Canada, Poland and Israel



Since I am prevented from talking to you in person, here is a video of the presentation I gave at Downe House School, Newbury, on 29 January. (By coincidence, the real story is about those seated in that picture from 1927 on the wall behind and indicated by the red arrow.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qymncyTbB-4>

If you would prefer to read at slightly greater length here is an article that is proving popular. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339629356_Nature_Energy_and_Society_A_scientific_study_of_the_options_facing_civilisation_today The basic science case is all here, I maintain.

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