Area, where manoeuvrability of emergency services and evacuation of personnel is hampered, must rank as the least ideal.

There are plans to empty all ASL's laboratories of their chemical and radioactive inventories. Under the Replacement Analytical Project, the materials and the laboratory work of ASL is to be transferred to the central laboratory of the newer National Nuclear Laboratory elsewhere in the Sellafield site and needs refitting to take on the work. The problem, as ONR's Assessment says, is that this transfer is not going to be completed overnight and ASL is going to have to soldier on gamely to at least 2025 – and possibly 2028. Given its age, contents and attraction to the bomb squad, a further decade of the use of a facility described by one of the managers involved in the replacement project as being "in terminal decline" is of significant concern and raises the question as to how, in this day of high technology and innovation (with Sellafield claiming to be at 'the cutting edge') alternative arrangements were not made as a priority for this site long before now.

Adapted from a Cumbrians Against a Radioactive Environment press release

WINDSCALE FIRE REMEMBERED

The most destructive fire so far at Sellafield (then called Windscale) took place 40 years ago, on 10th October 2017.

This year the anniversary of the fire was marked on the 10th with the laying of flowers by people from groups including Radiation Free Lakeland, Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment, Close Capenhurst and Japanese Against Nuclear on the commemorative plaque laid in 1987 on the 30th Anniversary of the Fire. At first Sellafield officials claimed to have lost the plaque but later claimed to have found it.

KICK NUCLEAR & NUCLEAR TRAINS

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Editor: David Polden, Mordechai Vanunu House, 162 Holloway Rd. N7 8DQ

www.kicknuclear.com ; www.nonucleartrains.org.uk ; 020-7700 2393

REGULAR FRIDAY SOLIDARITY VIGILS

Every Friday (since August 2012): leafletting outside the Japanese Embassy, 101-104 Piccadilly (Green Park tube) from 10am-12.30pm; and then outside Tokyo Electric Power Co. offices, 14-18 Holborn (Chancery Lane tube) from 1-1.30pm. Held in solidarity with the anti-nuclear movement in Japan. Organised by: *Kick Nuclear* and *Japanese Against Nuclear UK* (JAN UK)

NEXT JOINT KN/NTAG PLANNING MEETINGS

Monday December 11th, 7pm, At CND Office. (Address at top.)

TOP CIVIL SERVANT ADMITS NEW NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS LINKED TO TRIDENT

The Permanent Secretary at the Department of Energy and Climate Change **(**DECC**)** from 2013-2016, Stephen Lovegrove, has admitted that the government's decision to build a new generation of civil nuclear power stations, starting with Hinkley Point, is linked to the UK's nuclear weapons programme.

The disclosure came at a hearing of the Commons Public Accounts Committee on October 9th looking at the huge cost of building Hinkley Point power station which many critics have claimed is uneconomic and not properly costed.

It was raised in a paper submitted to the committee by Professor Andy Stirling, Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, and Dr Phil Johnstone, from the Science Policy Research Unit, Sussex University, which questioned whether the Ministry of Defence is being subsidised by the civil nuclear industry. Their paper pointed out this is never publicly discussed, but added: "If a UK

withdrawal from civil nuclear power on grounds of uncompetitive economics were to leave these shared costs borne entirely on the military side, then UK military nuclear infrastructures would be significantly more expensive.

"If civil nuclear commitments are being maintained (despite adverse economics) in order to help cover these shared costs, then this…amounts to a cross-subsidy."

Meg Hillier, chair of the PAC, questioned Stephen Lovegrove, on the issue, asking, "Mr Lovegrove, there has been an argument put forward by Sussex University that Hinkley is a great opportunity to maintain our nuclear skills base. With your hat on at the Ministry of Defence [since 2013 Lovegrove has been MOD Permanent Secretary], are you having discussions with the business Department about this?" Lovegrove replied: "We are, yes. In my last year at DECC, I was in regular discussion with Jon Thompson, former Permanent Secretary at the MOD, to say that as a nation we are going into a fairly intense period of nuclear activity … We are building the new SSBNs (nuclear armed nuclear submarines) and completing the Astutes…nuclear submarines which carry conventional weaponry. We have at some point to renew the warheads, so there is very definitely an opportunity here for the nation to grasp in terms of building up its nuclear skills.

"I do not think that that is going to happen by accident; it is going to require concerted Government action to make it happen. We are speaking to colleagues at Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy fairly repeatedly about it, and have a number of forums in which we are doing that."

The Sussex University paper pointed out that private industry was also making the link. They wrote: "Rolls Royce acknowledged for the first time in a major public statement that there also exists a deep interlinkage between British civil and military nuclear industrial capabilities … expansion of a nuclear-capable skilled workforce through a civil nuclear UK programme would relieve the MOD of the burden of developing and retaining skills and capability. This would free up valuable resources for other investments."

Edited version of article by David Hencke, published in *Tribune*, October 20th.

LATEST EMERGENCY AT SELLAFIELD

On the evening of Friday 21st October an army bomb disposal unit was called to Sellafield to deal with problems over canisters containing chemicals, including tetrahydrofuran. Workers were evacuated from the site's Analytical Services Laboratory and a 100-metre cordon thrown around the facility when the bomb squad was called. The chemicals were removed from the facility and placed in specially-dug trenches on site and blown up the following afternoon by the bomb squad. The detonations were audible outside the site. Even then the problem was not over. The bomb squad was almost immediately called back to Sellafield and was reported to have apparently taken up semi-permanent residence at Sellafield and continuing to blow up chemicals.

Why were these extreme steps suddenly necessary, involving canisters that had been stored apparently harmlessly in the lab. for the past 25 years?

Sellafield Ltd issued a statement confirming that the chemical, an industrial solvent no longer used on site, once crystalized, had the potential to become unstable and pose a significant fire hazard if exposed to air. It denied that any explosion had taken place and stated that bringing in the Army's Bomb Disposal squad reflected "leaving nothing to chance" when managing such chemicals in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, and was "in line with best practice and established procedures". All very interesting, but doesn't explain the sudden emergency.

Perhaps the canisters were corroding or leaking; perhaps the chemicals were suddenly found to be in an unstable condition posing a risk of explosion and fire when exposed to air – a commonplace outcome with tetrahydrofuran in labs worldwide.

Whilst the truth behind what lead to the bomb squad's urgent presence at Sellafield may not ever be disclosed, the status of the Analytical Services Laboratory (ASL) itself could have been reason enough for Sellafield to skate over the details of the facility, simply referring to it as "historical laboratories". The facts are somewhat more disturbing; the ASL facility is housed in one of the oldest buildings on site, a throwback to the Windscale nuclear weapons era. Built 1951, ASL is located in the site's highly controlled Separation Area which houses a cheek-by-jowl hotchpotch of old reprocessing plant and constructionally-suspect and high hazard storage ponds and silos.

Some 50 of ASL's original 150 individual laboratories are believed to be still in use, with those that have been closed over the years remaining under a care and maintenance regime.

All is not well however. An assessment by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) in June this year, describing ASL as a "relatively high risk" facility, confirmed that the laboratories hold a "considerable radiological inventory" that "has potentially high off-site consequences in the event of a major accident". So, clearly not the ideal place for a chemical explosion or fire. Whilst it can be argued there is no such thing on the Sellafield site as an ideal place for any incident, the claustrophobic confines of the Separation