

A Gas fired power station in Finistère - Why?

Over the last few years we have periodically been presented with the threat of a « blackout » during the Winter months: no more electricity, back to the candle age, as they say.

The Regional Council of Brittany in its « Pacte Electrique », in agreement with the state, intends constructing a combined-cycle gas fired electricity station in Finistère. Offers have been put out to tender, and the choice of operator will be made in the Spring of 2012 : GDF-Suez (Guipavas), ENEL (Briec), Direct Energie (Landivisiau), EDF (Brennilis), and another ? A similar project of a smaller power station has already been rejected by the population and the elected representatives in the Côtes d'Armor.

So, where is the problem?

The size of the power station

The electricity needs during peak periods in Brittany is of the order of 120 Mw. However, what is being proposed (imposed?) is a power station of 450 Mw. Why?

The principle underlying the operation of such a power station

Gas is burned to turn the turbines which produce the electricity. The combustion process produces a lot of CO₂ (given the number of hours of operation), nitrogen oxide, sulphur and microparticles.

The plant also needs to be cooled down, as much heat is produced during the process. Water can be used for this, but the water in Brennilis lake is already used for other purposes. The other alternative is air. However, the cooling towers release chlorinated products which are added to prevent the growth of legionella.

Energy efficiency

Gas is very useful for heating, including heating water (95% efficient). However, when used to produce electricity, nearly 50% goes up in smoke ! And that is even before mentioning losses in the distribution network. A total waste.

Source of the gas

Gas is a fossil fuel, which will one day be completely used up. In addition, the supply of gas is not guaranteed (it will come from Russia or Algeria) and the price of this fuel is continually increasing.

Who will profit from the power station?

The operator will pay for the costs of construction of the power station, but the huge cost of linking it to the distribution network (pipeline and various connections) will have to be paid by the taxpayer. Electricity production companies now operates in a free market: we are talking about big business here, it has nothing to do with Public Service or local needs.

Job creation

Jobs are promised: construction (200-300 employees over 2 to 3 years), and afterwards 20 to 30 jobs. The highly specialised work will hardly benefit local companies however. It would seem more probable that in the long term the power station will lead to job losses. Just close by the site of the proposed station in Brennilis, there is already:

- a brand new leisure centre; will it be able to continue operating?
- A campsite ; who would want to pitch tent at the foot of a power plant.
- Les Salaisons de l'Arée (food preparation), with 150 employees. How will they react?

Not to mention agriculture, animal breeding, the negative fallout for the tourist business or the value of local property. It does not take account either of the enormous amount of roadworks that will be necessary, and which will have to be financed by the taxpayer.

The best energy is the energy we don't use

The notorious consumption peaks are due to the overdependence on electric heating and to inadequate building insulation. Grants or other assistance in this direction could quickly solve the problem.

Instead of these senseless projects, why not establish on the site at Brennilis a « clean » industrial production unit (wood industry, insulation materials.....) ? There is no shortage of alternative solutions.

That which is proposed by EDF and its associates is an aberration.