



**BRITISH-IRISH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY**

**COMHLACHT IDIR-PHARLAIMINTEACH NA BREATAINE  
AGUS NA hÉIREANN**

**25<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY SESSION**

**MANCHESTER 24<sup>TH</sup> TO 26<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2002**

**RESPONSES TO DEBATE ON SELLAFIELD NOVEMBER 2001**

- 1 UK Government
- 2 Welsh National Executive
- 3 States of Guernsey
- 4 Government of Ireland

The Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP  
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry



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*Dear David,*

Thank you for your letter of 13 February enclosing a transcript of a debate about Sellafield that took place at the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body in Bournemouth on 4 December. I am grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to comment on the matters raised in the debate. I appreciate that issues relating to Sellafield have attracted an increased level of interest in recent months and it is important that the UK Government continues to work with the Government of Ireland and with the devolved administrations to respond as fully as we can to any questions raised.

A wide range of issues were covered during the debate, including the decision announced on 3 October on the justification of the manufacture of MOX fuel and operation of the Sellafield MOX Plant (SMP) and security issues associated with nuclear installations. I will try to respond to the range of issues covered.

A number of members commented that there was a deeply held public mistrust of activities in the nuclear power industry. In particular, there was real concern about the perceived or potential impact of these on health, safety and the environment. Members acknowledged the often emotional response to these matters and the fact that negative perceptions were not easy to remove irrespective of the amount of scientific evidence that might be presented to counter them. I know that increased concern about potential terrorist attacks has added to the public's sense of unease about the nuclear industry – appearing, for example, to increased concern about the decision on MOX manufacture and operation of SMP. I agree that a proper understanding of the facts would enable people to evaluate more evenly the often dramatic claims that are made about perceived risks or negative impacts associated with the nuclear industry. Both the industry and also the relevant regulators and responsible organisations within Government have a responsibility to be as transparent as possible about their activities and to ensure that information about the nuclear industry is effectively made available to the public. A better understanding of the industry and the way it is regulated would, I am sure, go a long way towards addressing public concerns.



Everyone involved in the UK civil nuclear industry takes very seriously their responsibilities towards ensuring safety and properly protecting the environment. The nuclear industry is subject to extremely stringent systems of control, monitoring and regulation. Rigorous systems are in place that ensure that nuclear activities are carried out safely; that waste is managed effectively, that necessary discharges are properly controlled and that the security of nuclear materials and installations is effectively provided for

In respect of nuclear safety, the UK's independent nuclear safety regulator, the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (HSE's NII) has wide powers to ensure that the industry effectively manages safety. This includes the power to require an installation to be shut down if not satisfied about safety. At all times, nuclear operators are required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the NII that activities at nuclear sites are safe and that they are complying with the strict conditions of their nuclear site licence. The HSE has made clear its view that activities at the Sellafield site are safe.

As regards protection of the environment, all radioactive discharges from the UK are tightly controlled by the Environment Agency (EA) so as to ensure that their impact on the environment is minimal and that resultant radiological exposure is kept well within internationally accepted safe limits. The impact of discharges on the environment is carefully monitored by the EA and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Discharges of the most significant radionuclides have been dramatically decreased over the past twenty years. It can be noted that Ireland's own competent body, the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII), itself carries out careful monitoring of radioactivity in the Irish Sea. While the RPII makes clear that it objects to discharges of man-made radioactivity from UK nuclear installations, at the same time, in all its published statements and reports, the RPII seeks to stress to people in Ireland that the amounts of radioactivity discharged from UK nuclear sites are very small and "do not pose a significant health risk to people living in Ireland". The RPII points out that the radioactivity in such discharges is dwarfed by the radiation that occurs naturally in seawater and elsewhere in the environment and that the dose of radioactivity that a person in Ireland might receive during a year as a result of discharges from UK nuclear installations is tiny in comparison to that which they receive from naturally occurring sources such as Radon gas

Regulators do, of course, continue to challenge the industry to find ways to further improve safety management and environmental protection. It is right that they do so. The UK also works within the relevant international bodies, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, to ensure that internationally agreed standards and recommendations relating to safety and environmental protection are properly maintained and updated.

I am very conscious of the concerns that have been expressed about the potential security issues associated with UK nuclear installations. The UK's civil nuclear sites apply stringent security measures regulated by the Office for Civil Nuclear Security (OCNS), the nuclear security regulator. The security regulator works closely with the HSE, which provides advice on the safety implications of events, including external hazards such as plane crashes, at nuclear installations. Security and safety precautions at nuclear sites are kept under regular review. Both regulators are reviewing all relevant precautions in the light of the recent terrorist attacks in the USA. It is not Government policy to disclose details of security measures taken at civil nuclear sites.



The Government is very much aware of concerns about possible health effects of radiation in the environment – whether naturally occurring or from low level radioactive discharges from nuclear facilities. Such concerns are understandable and need to be taken very seriously and properly investigated. Members expressed particular concerns that discharges of low level radioactive waste might somehow cause unforeseen health problems for future generations.

In 1985, the UK established a specialist independent committee to investigate these matters, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE), which has undertaken extensive research on the subject. COMARE has looked at several nuclear sites Great Britain, and most extensively at Sellafield. After completing a comprehensive review of the routine and accidental discharges the Committee concluded that the level of cancer in young people living in the vicinity of the Sellafield plant was not related to the radiation dose resulting from these discharges. The Committee also examined other routes of exposure such as preconception irradiation and unrecognised pathways via workers. Neither showed any relationship to known cancer levels. The Committee has continued its work and is about to report on preconception irradiation effects in the whole of the British Nuclear industry including effects other than cancer. The Committee is also studying all childhood cancer in the UK and its possible relationship to industrial practices including the nuclear industry. So it can be seen that the question of possible health effects have been and continue to be thoroughly investigated.

I will turn now to the points raised about the decision announced on 3 October on the justification of the manufacture of MOX fuel. It must be understood that this decision was taken properly by due process, following several rounds of public consultation to which, amongst others, the Irish Government submitted views. In making their decision, the Secretaries of State took into account all relevant views and information. This included a careful assessment of the economic case for operation of the plant, safety issues which were considered by the HSE, the environmental impact of the plant which was considered carefully by the EA and security issues associated with operation of SMP and the export of MOX, which were assessed very carefully by the OCNS. A copy of the decision letter can be found on the DEFRA website [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/radioactivity/mox/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/radioactivity/mox/index.htm).

It should be noted that operation of SMP has virtually no impact on radioactive discharges from Sellafield. The very low level of discharges is largely due to the fact that the manufacture of MOX is essentially a dry process and also to the fact that the plant has specific design features which minimise any discharges to the environment. The EA estimates the annual radiation dose that even a person most conceivably exposed to discharges from SMP might receive to be less than one millionth of the annual dose that the average person in the UK receives from naturally occurring background radiation. The European Commission supports this position stating very firmly that in both normal operation and in the event of an accident, operation of SMP "is not liable to result in radioactive contamination, significant from the point of view of health, of the water, soil or airspace of another member state".

We are very conscious that concerns have been expressed about security issues associated with MOX. I can assure you that these matters have been considered very carefully by the Government. As is made clear in the decision letter published on 3 October, the Government remains satisfied that the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation arising from the manufacture of MOX in the UK and the export of MOX to customers in Europe and Japan is negligible. The stringent security and physical protection arrangements in place for MOX transports have been



approved by all relevant Government regulators, are designed to cope with all credible threats and ensure that the security risks associated with MOX shipments are negligible. It can be noted that the US Government has also recently confirmed that it remains satisfied about the security arrangements in place for transports of MOX fuel containing Japanese owned plutonium for which the US retains certain rights and responsibilities in respect of security. For obvious security reasons, the Government does not make public details of the physical protection arrangements in place for such transports.

Nuclear power makes an important contribution to the UK's energy supplies and has an important role in limiting greenhouse gas emissions and helping the UK meet its Kyoto targets. Existing nuclear stations, which provide about a quarter of the UK's electricity supplies, will continue to contribute to our energy requirements provided they do so to the high safety and environmental standards currently observed. Equally, the important work carried out at Sellafield in handling responsibly and safely the wastes and redundant buildings associated with the UK's nuclear legacy cannot be avoided. That legacy would not simply go away if the Sellafield site were shut and the work was not done. The absolute priority for the UK, which underlies all our actions and decisions in respect of Sellafield, is to ensure that public sector civil nuclear activities are managed in a safe, secure and cost effective way that ensures protection of the environment.

I welcome properly informed and rational debate about these issues. I would hope that members of the BIPB would also wish to encourage people to approach to the issues in a reasonable and responsible manner. I am confident that the facts provide strong support for the UK Government's view that any risks associated with operation of the UK's civil nuclear industry are effectively controlled and managed to provide defence in depth against harm to health, safety and the environment. Clearly this is the only basis on which any responsible Government would allow the continued operation of the nuclear industry.

*Best wishes,  
Patricia Hewitt*

**PATRICIA HEWITT**

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*RM* March 2002

*Dear David*

**British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body**

I am writing in response to your letter of 13 February 2002 with which you enclosed a copy of the transcript of the proceedings at your meeting in Bournemouth on 3-4 December last year

Although we have no direct responsibility for Sellafield, we are interested in developments at the plant because of the potential health and environmental impact on the North Wales coast in particular

On 8 January Jane Hutt, the Health and Social Services Secretary, made a statement in the Assembly. The response of Assembly Members showed that they were concerned about the mixed oxide plant, especially in light of concerns expressed by the Irish Republic, Manx and Norwegian Governments. In view of its close proximity to North Wales, they were concerned that there should be monitoring of the environment and any health effects, about the potential for terrorist attack and the general safety of the site. These views have now been conveyed to the Secretaries of State for Health and for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

For your information I am enclosing a copy of the exchanges in the Assembly on 8 January

*Yours*

*Rhodri*



BUDDSODDWA MERN POBL  
TYNBU TU LLUN YSOPLE

importance of independence—particularly in relation to advocacy services—and also the important pioneering work that the voluntary sector can undertake, sparking off developments which local authorities can then embed in their policies

We have a voluntary sector scheme, a Voluntary Sector Partnership Council and a children and young people's network—on which both Jane Davidson and I serve as a part of our ministerial responsibilities—and thus a close working relationship with the voluntary sector. However, we must consider delivery, as well as policy-making, in relation to Children First and the programmes that we are developing, particularly with regard to access and young people having a voice in Wales

Crybwyllais bwysigrwydd annibyniaeth—yn enwedig mewn perthynas â gwasanaethau einolaeth—a hefyd y gwaith arloesol pwysig y gall y sector gwirfoddol ymgymryd ag ef, gan symbylu datblygiadau y gall awdurdodau lleol eu cynnwys wedyn yn eu polisiau

Mae gennym gynddun y sector gwirfoddol, Cyngor Partneriaeth y Sector Gwirfoddol a rhwydwaith plant a phobl ifanc—y mae Jane Davidson a minnau yn aelodau ohonynt fel rhan o'n cyinfolddebau gweiridogol—ac felly mae gennym berthynas worth agos â'r sector gwirfoddol. Fodd bynnag, rhaid mru ystyried y ffordd y caiff gwasanaethau eu darparu, yn ogystal â'r gwaith o lunio polisiau, mewn perthynas â Phlant yn Gyntaf a'r rhaglenm yr ydym yn eu datblygu, yn enwedig mewn perthynas â mynediad a rhoi llais i bobl ifanc yng Nghymru

### **Datganiad ar Effeithian Iechyd Sellafield Statement on the Health Effects of Sellafield**

**The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt):** In view of the concerns expressed by some Members about the health implications of Sellafield, I update the Assembly on recent developments. I am grateful for the opportunity to do so.

It is important to recognise that most radiation exposure—around 87 per cent—comes from natural sources. Artificial radioactivity currently contributes about 13 per cent of the annual average UK dose, a very large proportion of this comes from medical treatment. Discharges from nuclear installations contribute less than 0.02 per cent of the total average UK dose. Radioactive discharges in the UK are regulated under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 to ensure that discharges remain within internationally agreed levels, which are designed to protect both human health and the environment. Such regulation is carried out by the Environment Agency, which, together with the Food Standards Agency, conducts surveys of the UK terrestrial and marine environments. The Environment Agency's monitoring of radioactivity in the environment provides an independent assessment of the public's exposure from non-food pathways, including the occupation

**Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol (Jane Hutt):** O ran y pryderon a fynegwyd gan rai Aelodau am oblygiadau iechyd Sellafield, hysbysaf y Cynulliad o ddatblygiadau diweddar. Yr wyf yn ddiolchgar am y cyfle i wneud hynny.

Mae'n bwysig cydnabod y daw'r rhan fwyaf o ymbelydredd—tua 87 y cant—o ffynonellau naturol. Ar hyn o bryd, mae ymbelydredd artiffisial tua 13 y cant o ddogyn blynyddol y DU ar gyfartaledd, daw canran fawr isawn o hyn o driniaeth feddygol. Cyfranna gollyngiadau o westfeydd uwclear lai na 0.02 y cant o gyfanswm dogyn y DU ar gyfartaledd. Rheoleiddir gollyngiadau ymbelydrol yn y DU o dan Ddeddf Sylweddau Ymbelydrol 1993 i sicrhau bod gollyngiadau o fewn lefelau y cytunwyd arnynt yn rhyngwladol, sydd â'r nod o ddingelu iechyd dynol a'r amgylchedd. Cyflawnir y gwaith rheoleiddio hwn gan Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd sydd, ar y cyd â'r Asiantaeth Safonau Bwyd, yn cynnal arolygon o amgylcheddau tirol a morol y DU. Mae gwaith Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd ar fonitro ymbelydredd yn yr amgylchedd yn rhoi asesiad annibynnol o amlygiad y cyhoedd i ymbelydredd nad yw'n ymwneud â bwyd, yn cynnwys traethau, glannau afon ac

The committee is considering the geographical variations in childhood cancer, based on data held by the Oxford registry of childhood tumours. It was asked to advise on which—if any—nuclear installations in Great Britain have incidences of childhood cancer and leukaemia in their vicinity that are significantly outside the national distribution of these diseases. COMARE is therefore considering the geographical distribution of cancer to see how the pattern of cases around nuclear installations compares with the national pattern.

The UK Government has also asked COMARE to set up a new broad-based working group to review the risk associated with internal ingestion of radio-nuclides, and the need for further research. The working group will discuss whether current risk models are still valid in light of differing views. I shall continue to ensure that we keep in close touch with the work being undertaken in this area.

**David Lloyd:** Diolch, Jane, am y datganiad. Yr wyf yn datgan buddiant fel meddyg teulu. Mae'r mater hwn yn hollbwysig ac yn destun gofid, a phryder mawr a chynyddol—yn enwedig yng Ngweriniaeth Iwerddon. Mae pump o Aelodau'r Cynulliad hefyd yn aelodau o'r corff rhyng-seneddol Prydeinig Gwyddelch. Un o brif bwyntiau trafod cyfarfod o'r corff eyn y Nadolig oedd y datblygiad ocsidiau cymysg diweddaraf yn Sellafield. Ar ddiwedd y mis byddaf yn ymweld â Sellafield gydag aelodau'r corff rhyng-seneddol i ystyried y mater hwn.

Mae angen gwybodaeth fanwl a meddygol gywir o'r sefyllia. Mae'r pryder wedi cynyddu o ganlyniad i ddatblygiad ocsidiau cymysg yn Sellafield, fel y crybwyllais eisoes, yn enwedig yng Ngweriniaeth Iwerddon, lle y mae'n hwno flog ar hyn o bryd. Mae'n cael ei drafod ar y cyfryngau yn feunyddiol, yn enwedig gan fod cthohad cyffredinol yn agos. Hwn yw un o'r prif bwyntiau trafod yng Ngweriniaeth Iwerddon. Gan fod arfordir gogledd Cymru yn nes at Sellafield na Gweriniaeth Iwerddon, fe ddylai fod yn fater o bryder i minnau hefyd yma.

Mae'r pwyllgor yn ystyried yr amrywiadau daearyddol mewn cancer ymhlith plant, yn seiliedig ar ddata a godwir gan gofrestrfa Rhydycheu ar dyfiannau plant. Gofynnwyd i ddo nodi'r gweithfeydd nwelear yn Mhrydan Fawr—os oes rha o gwbl—lle mae achosion o ganser a leucaeia ymhlith plant yn eu hardal leol dipyn yn uwch na dosbarthiad cenedlaethol y clefydon hyn. Mae COMARE felly yn ystyried dosbarthiad daearyddol cancer er mwyn gweld sut mae'r patrwm o achosion o amgylch gweithfeydd nwelear yn cymharu â'r patrwm cenedlaethol.

Gofynnodd Llywodraeth y DU hefyd i COMARE sefydlu gweithgor cang eu gwmpas i adolygu'r risg sy'n gvsylltiedig â'r broses o amlyncu radio-nwclidau yn fewnol, a'r angen am ymchwil bellach. Bydd y gweithgor yn trafod a yw'r modelau risg cyfredol yn ddilys o hyd yn sgil gwahamaethau barn ynglŷn â hwy. Byddaf yn parhau i sicrhau ein bod yn cadw mewn cysylltiad agos â'r gwaith a wneir yn y maes hwn.

**David Lloyd:** Thank you, Jane, for your statement. I declare an interest as a general practitioner. This issue is crucial and a cause for concern, and great and increasing anxiety—especially in the Republic of Ireland. Five Assembly Members are also members of the British-Irish inter-parliamentary body. One of the main topics of discussion at a meeting of the body before Christmas was the latest mixed oxide development in Sellafield. At the end of the month, I will be visiting Sellafield with members of the inter-parliamentary body to consider this issue.

Detailed and medically accurate information about the situation is required. The anxiety has increased as a result of the MOX development in Sellafield, as I have already mentioned, especially in the Republic of Ireland, where it is currently a burning issue. It is discussed daily in the media, especially since a general election is imminent. This is one of the main discussion topics in the Republic of Ireland. Since the north Wales coast is closer to Sellafield than the Republic of Ireland, it should also be a matter of concern for us here.



express their concerns apply equally to Wales... indeed Wales is a damn sight nearer Sellafield than Norway or Ireland. Should we not be making similar representations of grave concern to Westminster, especially in the wake of 11 September, because we now know that there are individuals and organisations intent on giving the word 'kamikaze' a potentially cataclysmic dimension?

**Jane Hutt:** I have indicated the Westminster Government's responsibilities for this. The First Minister mentioned the fact that these issues were raised on the sidelines of the British-Irish Council meeting, which the First Minister, Jenny Randerson and I attended in December. It is an issue not just for Ireland, Wales and England, but also, as I think Rhodri Morgan mentioned, the Isle of Man, which is right in the middle of the Irish sea.

It is also important that we are considering other intergovernmental agreements such as the Sintra agreement, which is looking at discharges into the North sea and other waters, and seeks to reduce radioactive discharges to the sea to close to zero by 2020. We must recognise that that is not dependent on the UK's actions alone but also on those of other countries.

It is important that Members here have a role and representation, raise issues and meet colleagues of the British-Irish parliamentary body because that ensures Member involvement. However, we must address the issues I have raised, not just by seeking support, advice, guidance and research from COMARE, but also the information that has come through the Food Standards Agency, which, along with the Environment Agency, has a Wales body. We must look to those agencies to provide us with reassurance, and use our powers in our Committees to raise questions with them.

**David Melding:** On the health aspect of this question, I am pleased to hear your reassurance on the safety of the Sellafield processes. However, it is important that we continue the most effective monitoring of the environment and of the direct health effects,

llywodraethau hynny fynegi eu pryderon yr un mor berthnasol i Gynru—yn wir mae Cymru dipyn yn nes at Sellafield na Norway ac Iwerddon. Oni ddylem fod yn mynegi pryderon difrifol tebyg i San Steffan, yn enwedig ar ôl 11 Medi, oherwydd gwyddom bellach fod unigolion a sefydliadau sy'n benderfynol o roi dimensiwn trychinebus o bosibl i'r gar 'kamikaze'?

**Jane Hutt:** Nodars gyfifoldebau Llywodraeth San Steffan mewn perthynas â hyn. Crybwyllodd y Prif Weinidog y ffaith i'r materion hyn gael eu codi ar ymylon cyfarfod Cyngor Prydain-Iwerddon, a fynychwyd gan y Prif Weinidog, Jenny Randerson a miniau ym mis Rhagfyr. Nid yw'n fater i Iwerddon, Cymru a Lloegr yn unig, ond hefyd, fel y crybwyllodd Rhodri Morgan fe gredaf, i Ynys Manaw, sydd yng nghanol môr Iwerddon.

Mae hefyd yn bwysig ein bod yn ystyried cytundebau rhynglywodraethol eraill megis cytundeb Sintra, sy'n edrych ar allyngiadau ym môr y Gogledd ac ym moroedd eraill, ac sy'n ceisio llethau gollyngiadau ymbelydrol i'r môr a sicrhau bod braidd dim erbyn 2020. Rhaid inni gydnabod nad yw hynny'n dibynnu ar weithrediadau'r DU yn unig ond hefyd ar weithrediadau gwledydd eraill.

Mae'n bwysig bod gan yr Aelodau yma rôl a chynrychiolaeth, eu bod yn codi materion ac yn cwrdd â chyd-aelodau corff seneddol Prydain-Iwerddon am fod hynny'n sicrhau cyfranogiad yr Aelodau. Fodd bynnag, rhaid inni fynd i'r afael â'r materion a godwyd gennyf, nid drwy geisio cymorth, cyngor, canllawiau ac ymchwil gan COMARE yn unig, ond hefyd y wybodaeth a ddaeth i law drwy gyfrwng yr Asiantaeth Safonau Bwyd, sydd, ar y cyd ag Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd, â chorff yng Nghymru. Rhaid inni edrych at yr asiantaethau hynny i roi sicrwydd inni, a rhaid inni ddefnyddio ein pwerau yn ein Pwyllgorau i godi cwestiynau gyda hwy.

**David Melding:** O ran yr agwedd iechyd ar y cwestiwn hwn, yr wyf yn falch o glywed eich sicrwydd ar ddiogelwch prosesau Sellafield. Fodd bynnag, mae'n bwysig ein bod yn parhau â'r dull mwyaf effeithiol o fonitro'r amgylchedd a'r effeithiau iechyd.

terrorist attack on nuclear installations in the UK and beyond, that has been an issue for the UK Government and its partners in their response to 11 September. We are part of that, given that Sellafield is on our borders, in terms of the north Wales coast. The Assembly, within its powers, and in its relationship with the relevant bodies and our colleagues in Westminster, must ensure that it is clear on these issues, that I can give you the information that I have at my disposal on the impact of discharges in the North sea on the north Wales coast, and that our colleagues' issues are recognised.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You have referred generally to the situation at Sellafield, but all parties have raised issues with you today about the safety of Sellafield, the potential dangers of a terrorist attack and health implications. This is a simple question, Jane. Do you intend to make representations on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales, to the Westminster Government on those issues, which have been clearly raised by all parties here this afternoon?

**Jane Hutt:** In terms of my statement today, I have clearly responded to the COMARE research. We have representation in relation to that important committee on the medical aspects of radiation. The National Radiological Protection Board is an independent statutory body set up by the Radiological Protection Act 1991. It advances our knowledge about the protection of mankind from radiation hazards. I am advised that the information on health impacts demonstrates that far more radiation comes from medical and hospital treatment than from nuclear installations in the UK. That is the scientific evidence. I have given this statement today, although issues such as mixed oxide fuel are not within our powers and responsibilities. It is vital that our Westminster colleagues know that these issues have been raised and I will be happy to write to them to draw attention to my statement and the points made in the Assembly.

3:30 p.m.

materion hynny. O ran effarth unrhyw ymosodiad terfysgol ar weithfeydd niwclear yn y DU a thu hwnt, bu hynny'n fater i Lywodraeth y DU a'i phartneriaid yn eu hymateb i 11 Medi. Yr ydym ni yn rhan o hynny, o ystyried y ffarth bod Sellafield yn agos i'n ffiniau, o ran arfordir y Gogledd. Rhaid i'r Cynulliad, o fewn ei bwerau, ac yn ei berthynas gyda'r cyrff perthnasol a'n cyd-Aelodau yn San Steffan, sicrhau ei fod yn glir ynglŷn â'r materion hyn, y gallaf roi'r wybodaeth sydd gennyf ar eiliath gollyngiadau ym môr y Gogledd ar arfordir gogledd Cymru i chi, ac y cydnabyddir y materion a godir gan ein cyd-Aelodau.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Cyfeiriasoch yn gyffredinol at y sefyllfa yn Sellafield, ond cododd pob plaid faterion â chi heddiw ynglŷn â diogelwch Sellafield, peryglon posibl ymosodiad terfysgol a goblygiadau iechyd. Mae hwn yn gwestiwn syml, Jane. A ydych yn bwriadu gwneud sylwadau ar ran Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru, i Lywodraeth San Steffan ar y materion hynny, a godwyd gan yr holl bloriau sydd yma y prynhawn yma?

**Jane Hutt:** O ran fy natganiad heddiw, yr wyf yn amlwg wedi ymateb i ymchwiliad COMARE. Mae gennym gymrychiolaeth ar y pwyllgor pwysig hwnnw ar yr agweddau meddygol ar ymbelydredd. Mae'r Bwrdd Cenedlaethol Diogelu Radiolegol yn fwrdd statudol annibynnol a sefydlwyd gan Ddeddf Diogelu Radiolegol 1991. Mae'n gwella ein dealltwriaeth o ddiogelu dynol ryw rhag peryglon ymbelydredd. Fe'm cynghorwyd fod y wybodaeth ar effeithiau iechyd yn dangos y daw flawer mwy o ymbelydredd o driniaeth feddygol a thirnaeth ysbyty nag o weithfeydd niwclear yn y DU. Mae hynny'n dystiolaeth wyddonol. Gwneuthum y datganiad hwn heddiw, er nad yw materion fel tanwydd ocsid cynysg o fewn ein bwerau a'n cyfrifoldebau. Mae'n hanfodol bod ein cyd-Aelodau yn San Steffan yn gwybod bod y materion hyn wedi cael eu codi ac yr wyf yn fwy na pharod i ysgrifennu atynt i dynnu sylw at fy natganiad a'r pwyntiau a wnaed yn y Cynulliad.

**Eleanor Burnham:** We look to you Jane to reassure us that nuclear power will come to an end as soon as possible

**Jane Hutt:** I am not here to comment on political contradictions. I will respond to your points on concerns and studies, for example, Dr Chris Busby's green audit study. In 1998, the Welsh Office received a copy of that study, which claimed that the risk of childhood leukaemia increased with proximity to the Irish sea coast. However, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation on the Environment—COMARE, which I have mentioned on many occasions—fully considered his report and confirmed that it had found no evidence to support the contention that there was increased incidence of leukaemia or other childhood cancers among the Welsh population living close to the Irish sea.

It is important to restate that that was the result of COMARE's consideration of Dr Chris Busby's green audit. It is also important to state that I am waiting for a report by the Welsh cancer intelligence and surveillance unit on childhood leukaemia in Chepstow as a result of concerns raised by Dr Chris Busby about possible links between childhood and adult leukaemia and proximity to Oldbury nuclear power station. That demonstrates that when such issues and studies are brought to our attention, we ask COMARE to respond to them. The committee is made up of independent scientists and researchers. Clearly, it is vital that people can raise these issues and questions and scrutinise and ask for more information on the studies undertaken by COMARE. I am happy to provide more information, but considering the safety of all our nuclear installations in Wales and further afield is a major issue.

**Gareth Jones:** Mae'n glir o'r hyn a ddywedasoch fod rôl COMARE yn hollbwysig ac yn allweddol oherwydd dyma'r unig fodd y ceir unrhyw fath o fewn neu gyfraniad gan rywun sydd yn gwybod rhywbeth am yr elfen feddygol. Dagrau pethau yw fod hwn yn fater Prydainig oherwydd pan wnaethpwyd y penderfyniad i

**Eleanor Burnham:** Ddbynnwn amoch chi Jane i'n sicrhau y daw pŵer niwclear i ben cyn gynted â phosibl

**Jane Hutt:** Nid wyf yma i wneud sylwadau ar wrthddywediadau gwleidyddol. Ymatebaf i'ch pwyntiau ar bryderon ac astudiaethau, er enghraifft, astudiaeth archwiliad gwyrdd Dr Chris Busby. Yn 1998, derbyniodd y Swyddfa Gymreig gopi o'r astudiaeth honno, a oedd yn honni bod y risg o lewcaemia ymhlith plant yn codi yn agos at arfordir Môr Iwerddon. Fodd bynnag, ystyrondd y Pwyllgor ar Agweddau Meddygol ar Ymbelydredd yn yr Amgylchedd—COMARE—a grybwyllais ar sawl achlysur—ei adroddiad yn llawn a chadarnhaodd iddo beidio â chanfod unrhyw dystiolaeth i ategu'r honiad bod mwy o achosion o lewcaemia neu fathau craill o ganserau ymhlith y plant ym mhoblogaeth Cymru sy'n byw ger môr Iwerddon.

Mae'n bwysig pwysleisio mai dyna ganlyniad ystyriaeth COMARE o archwiliad gwyrdd Dr Chris Busby. Mae hefyd yn bwysig nodi fy mod yn aros am adroddiad gan uned gwybodaeth ac arolygu cancer Cymru ar lewcaemia ymhlith plant yng Nghas-gwent o ganlyniad i bryderon a godwyd gan Dr Chris Busby ynglŷn â chysylltuadau posibl rhwng lewcaemia ymhlith plant ac oedolion ac agoswydd at atomfa Oldbury Dengys hynny em bod yn gofyn i COMARE ymateb i unrhyw fateron ac astudiaethau a ddygwyd i'n sylw. Mae'r pwyllgor yn cynnwys gwyddonwyr ac ymchwiliwyr ambynnol. Yn amlwg, mae'n hanfodol y gall pobl godi'r materion a'r cwestiynau hyn a chraffu a gofyn am fwy o wybodaeth am yr astudiaethau a wneir gan COMARE. Yr wyf yn fwy na pharod i roi mwy o wybodaeth, ond mae ystyried diogelwch ein holl weithfeydd niwclear yng Nghymru ac y tu hwnt i Gymru yn fater hollbwysig.

**Gareth Jones:** It is clear from what you have said that COMARE's role is crucial because this is the only way that those who understand the medical effects can make any contribution. Unfortunately, this is a British issue because when the decision was made to build a new school on a polluted site in Llandudno, there was no input by anyone

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Our Ref GDP/2

20 February, 2002

David Winnick Esq., MP,  
British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body  
House of Commons  
LONDON SW1A 0AA  
England

Dear Mr Winnick,

Thank you very much indeed for sending me the transcript of the Plenary Session of B.I.P.B meeting held in Boumemouth on 3 and 4 December, 2001; it made interesting reading

In reply to the Body's request for my comments on the "Sellafield" debate, I am sure that you will appreciate that any observations I make, will be in relation to the nuclear fuel reprocessing plant operated by the Compagnie Générale des Matières Nucléaires (COGEMA) at Cap de la Hague, on the Cotentin Peninsula, Normandy, and not BNFL, Sellafield

The COGEMA Nuclear Reprocessing Plant first came on-line in 1966. In 1965, one year prior to operation of the plant, the Island began its Environmental Monitoring Programme. This initially concentrated on measuring radioactivity levels in the marine environment. Needless to say, almost everything detected in the sea, was and still is, of natural origin. Man-made artificial nuclides mostly originated from nuclear weapons testing. Over the years the levels of radioactivity attributable to weapons testing has gradually declined and thankfully since reprocessing began, the amount of radioactivity attributable to nuclear industry has also declined. Our monitoring programme continues to confirm that the levels of artificial radionuclides are of negligible biological consequence to the populations of the Channel Islands

Over the years, our monitoring programme has steadily widened, we were amongst the first authorities to install a 24 hour radiation surveillance system, and in addition to our own comprehensive monitoring systems, we now also accommodate gamma radiation monitoring systems for the UK and French Governments as well as a UK local authority. Guernsey enjoys excellent working relationships with radiological laboratories in Germany and France as well as the UK NRPB and DEFRA.

I am pleased to say that none of our monitoring systems have ever been activated due to nuclear operations on the neighbouring coast of France.

Unfortunately, nuclear issues tend to be very emotive and public concerns can be easily aroused, often without any understanding of the true facts - and not a mention of MMR vaccine. It is true that some of the less well informed members of the public are concerned to have a reprocessing plant and a nuclear power station (2x1300 megawatt PWR's) on our doorstep, but I believe the more enlightened members of

the community realise that globally, we simply can't continue to consume ever increasing amounts of fossil fuels. I concur with the views expressed by Lord Dubs, who drew a comparison between the level of exposure which could be received during air travel and that received from nuclear reprocessing. Residents of Guernsey receive a substantially lower level of exposure from the nuclear industry, than they do from a single holiday flight to Spain or the USA

At the Bournemouth meeting, the issue of terrorism was also raised. Although the security arrangements for the plants are subject to security restrictions, it is public knowledge that the French Authorities responded very rapidly after September 11<sup>th</sup>, setting up a network of mobile Crotal (Rattlesnake) ground to air missile batteries and fighter aircraft to defend the COGEMA and EDF sites. A flight exclusion zone has also been imposed around the area of the plants

Personally, I am of the opinion that if terrorists want to create maximum carnage and disruption, unprotected, soft targets such as Disneyland Paris on a busy Summer's day, are far more likely to be attacked, than any nuclear installation protected with guided missiles and fighter aircraft.

The Civil Defence Committee is regularly represented at the regional Special Permanent Information Commission (CSPI). The Commission is an official organisation comprising representatives from central government, regional government, local communities, regulatory authorities, research bodies, and opponents of the nuclear industry etc. I assume that a similar system operates in regard to Sellafield, whereby all sections of the community are kept fully informed about developments etc

The existence of COGEMA la Hague, is a fact of life, and something which we will have to live with for many years to come - even if reprocessing were to be stopped over-night. Fortunately, our French neighbours operate their nuclear installations to a very high standard, and their installations are modern and well maintained. However, we have a duty to remain vigilant and avoid any possibility of being lulled into complacency.

I was very sorry to read that Deputy Mike Torode made a rather inappropriate joke about "you being able to recognise us with the lights off because we will be the ones who glow in the dark". Please let me reassure you or, any potential visitors to Guernsey, that nothing could be further from the truth, the only glow which exists, is the warmth of our welcome.

Perhaps one day, I will be able to have the pleasure of welcoming you to the Island so that you may experience this glow for yourself

Yours sincerely,

(SIGNED R C Berry)

R C Berry, OBE  
Vice-President  
States Civil Defence Committee.

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Oifig an Aire  
Office of the Minister



November 2002

The Co-Chairmen,  
British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body

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Dear Sirs

I have received a copy of the transcripts of the debate on Sellafield which took place at the meeting of the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body on 4 December last.

The Irish Government shares the concerns expressed at the debate by the number of the speakers about Sellafield. As you know, the Irish Government is totally opposed to the continued operation and any expansion of the Sellafield plant. It sees Sellafield, with its multiplicity of operations, as representing a potentially serious threat to Ireland's public health and environment as well as our vital commercial interests such as fishing, agriculture and tourism. These concerns have become much more acute in the light of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

The Irish Government's concerns about Sellafield relate particularly to -

- the safety standards and safety management at the site,
- the storage on site in liquid form of high level radioactive waste,
- the continued reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at the site,
- the transportation of nuclear fuels to and from the plant,
- the continued operation of the old Magnox reactors,
- the discharge of radioactive materials into the Irish Sea,
- the risk of a catastrophic accident,
- the proposed commissioning of the Mixed Oxide or MOX fuel fabrication plant.

The Irish Government rejects the view that nuclear energy is sustainable because of the continuing and unresolved concerns that nuclear technology continues to present in terms of safety and accident risk, problems about the transport of nuclear materials, the issues surrounding waste management, the needless reprocessing of nuclear materials and increased proliferation risks. These concerns, allied to the high capital costs associated with nuclear energy, make it totally unsustainable.

I would like to comment on some of the views expressed at the debate. Reference was made to the effect that an accident similar to Chernobyl could not happen at a nuclear plant in Britain. While, obviously, I would like to believe that to be the case, the Irish authorities consider that the potential for a major accident at Sellafield is real. There have been numerous accidents

and incidents at Sellafield down the years since the major fire in 1957 at Windscale as Sellafield was then known. The increasing number of safety-related incidents during the 1990's including the falsification of safety related data for the MOX fuel pellets prompted the UK's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) to carry out, in 1999, a detailed examination of safety standards and safety management at the plant. The resulting NII reports, published in February 2000 was critical of safety at the plant and recommended no less than 65 recommendations for improving safety. Today over two years later, a significant number of these recommendations have yet to be implemented. It is the view of the Irish Government, that the NII's finding substantially undermine any assertions that the Sellafield operations are safe.

A comment was also made during the debate, in the context of a September 11<sup>th</sup> type attack, that Sellafield is not any more vulnerable than any other nuclear plant and that the consequences of an aircraft crashing into Sellafield would be small and localised. In this regard, I would like to point out that the Director of the UK Department of Trade and Industry's Office for Civil Nuclear Security, in his recent Report - 'The State of Security in the Civil Nuclear Industry and Effectiveness of Security Regulation' - states that "a successful sabotage attack on a nuclear facility could cause widespread radioactive contamination and loss of life" and that the "theft of nuclear material could also have serious consequences".

Reference was also made to the MOX plant and the point was made that additional radioactivity emissions arising from the plant would be low and that there would be no threat associated with shipments of MOX fuel. The Irish Government is totally opposed to the MOX plant. The MOX plant will effectively perpetuate nuclear reprocessing activities at Sellafield thus adding to the level of radioactive discharges to the marine environment. It will increase the volume of worldwide shipments of nuclear fuels with obvious additional volume of traffic through the Irish Sea and thus pose an unacceptable safety and security risk as well as the potential for a major accident or terrorist attack. The Irish Government sees no justification, economic or otherwise for this plant and, as you know, has taken legal action against the British Government in relation to the plant. These operations pose an unacceptable hazard and risk to public health and the environment and should cease.

Yours faithfully,



Martin Cullen, T.D.,  
Minister for the Environment and Local Government