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1. "Sussex County school to close due to unsafe power lines near playground" reads a headline 8 Sept 2009 from the USA. Median exposure to ELF magnetic fields was around 20 milligauss (2 microtesla). That is about 5 times the level where childhood leukaemia risk from residential exposure doubles, but still well below international exposure limits (100 microtesla). School closure may often be decided on many factors, but this report suggests the magnetic fields were decisive in this case.

http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2009/09/sussex_county_school_to_close.html

2. Following government policy for nuclear and renewable generation, many proposals are now being submitted to National Grid. The NG Seven Year Statement contains projections of future line proposals. Two significant line route submissions are from proposed nuclear stations at Hinkley, Somerset and Sizewell, Suffolk. The following NG link leads to the Quarterly Connections Update with information about new grid developments:

http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/Electricity/GettingConnected/gb_agreements/

3. National Grid, in association with Ofgem's "minded-to" acceptance of derogation, is working to an "Interim Connect and Manage" (ICM) process for accelerated connection of new generation. Some related documents are at

http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/Electricity/GettingConnected/gb_agreements/Policy+Guidance/

4. Under ICM, 450MW of renewable connection has already been advanced. A further 899MW of projects in Scotland and 10,000MW in England & Wales have requested advancement under ICM, with 5,500MW in the pipeline for connection after 2014. On the face of it, this may facilitate piecemeal development, on a very large scale, in derogation of and ahead of the need to complete "Wider Transmission" reinforcement.

5. The very large scale ICM derogation would appear to risk excessive and unnecessary piecemeal development, as well as prejudicial local development which presumes and depends on unapproved "Wider Development" reinforcement. Then major transmission development proposals, like the Beaulieu-Denny line and others across the UK in the future, may claim the derogated ICM developments as a fait accompli justifying their need. It all seems like part of a manic "rush for wind".

6. One of the new 400kV lines NG proposes is a 30km line from Bramford (Ipswich) to Twinstead (Sudbury) through idyllic Suffolk countryside and a designated AONB. Local journalist Elliot Furniss reported 3rd September that National Grid major

projects manager David Mercer (well known to objectors elsewhere) said: “This line will play a key role in helping to maintain reliable electricity supplies in East Anglia and Britain as a whole”. That makes it sound like the line is needed to maintain local supply to East Anglia. What spin! Much as we hear elsewhere. These developments are not about local supply, they are about accommodating remote generation, particularly wind power, on a national scale.

<http://www.eadt.co.uk/content/eadt/news/story.aspx?brand=EADOnline&category=News&tBrand=EADOnline&tCategory=xDefault&itemid=IPED02%20Sep%202009%2022%3A16%3A34%3A080>

7. “The government's new energy adviser says the UK could face blackouts by 2016 because green energy is not coming on stream fast enough” according to a BBC report <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/-/1/hi/sci/tech/8249540.stm>

The report gives a video clip of Cambridge physics prof David Mackay, recently appointed government adviser. I am delighted that Prof Mackay is advising government, as his book and web site keep things in a proper numerical perspective. He points out that renewable energy policy can depend on “industrialising the countryside” but there are alternatives if you don’t want to industrialise the countryside.

8. The BBC report claims Prof Mackay blames the public, who keep objecting to energy projects. In practice that means the numerous wind farm proposals. There are relatively few new nuclear or other renewable applications. Yet Prof Mackay clearly describes alternatives to industrialising the countryside, and furthermore suggests the lights won’t go out because the market will fix the problem with gas-fired plant. It is sad to see the BBC misreport and sensationalise the careful analysis which Prof Mackay offers. I do hope he will not become a tool for government spin.

9. Climate change rhetoric does two things: it empowers advocates as modern-day prophets and it depresses ordinary people. It both excludes and paralyses. So says Mike Hulme, climate change prof at UEA, in the September issue of *People and Science*, the free magazine of the British Science Association. My apologies for paraphrasing him. His article calls for a more mature approach, concentrating instead on community and human values on a smaller scale. Echoes of this year’s Reith lectures?

10. Jonathan Porritt also writes in *People and Science*, with a similar theme of tone, trust and transparency. He calls for trust-building, for example by government working more with NGOs. In my view there is a very long way to go, and people are right, according to the evidence, to distrust authority. The BSE-CJD affair, the Enron and Worldcom scandals, WMD and the Iraq war, and the global financial crisis are just a few examples which have affected people’s lives. People should not trust authority, be it government, scientific or financial. One enduring lesson of human behaviour is that where there is opportunity for breach of trust, sooner or later it will happen. The task is to reduce the opportunity, and to help people think for themselves.

11. Jonathan Porritt goes on to mention “Prosperity without growth?”, just issued by the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) which he chairs. He adds “the Treasury was particularly keen that there should be a question mark in there!”. He suggests that questioning the sustainability of consumption-driven economic growth,

indefinitely into the future, for a global population of 9 billion people, falls into “arch-taboo territory”. After some years using the SDC to spin climate change rhetoric, in the manner of Mike Hulme’s article, Jonathan has come round more recently to recognise population as a crucial factor. Well done! Taboo though it is, and difficult though it is, population management deserves thinking about.