

WALES: UP FOR AUCTION ?

Large formerly industrial sites are being sold off for nasty purposes to the highest bidder, over the heads of the irate inhabitants, as reported to GILL BARRON.

It's become increasingly apparent that the British, for which read English, government regards the adjacent country of Wales as a sort of convenient back-yard shed, to stuff with all the grubby projects they prefer to keep hidden from the general population. Selling or leasing bits off to all-comers, international corporations and manufacturers in search of inconspicuous sites for their activities, is also an easy and lucrative source of mega-bucks. But a lot of the Welsh aren't putting up with this blatantly colonial take-over any longer, and the rumblings of dissent grow louder daily.

Many places have seen extraordinary protests this year. Not that they've been in the national news, as fighting off environmental catastrophe is sadly of little interest to the media. There's so much to fight, and so many people doing that on so many fronts. But the media do report constantly on the nation's dire finances, and the government's erratic attempts to recoup past extravagance. In this vein, Keir Starmer, alongside Donald Trump, has announced the opening up of the UK to United States tech corporations in what many see as an exercise in vulture capitalism and asset stripping.

In the Llynfi Valley, near Llangynwyd, near Bridgend in South Wales, Climate Camp Cymru set up camp this summer on open land close to the proposed site (a decommissioned coal-fired power station) of four 20 MWe Small Modular Nuclear Reactors. These SMRs are a project of a venture capitalist microreactor developer from the USA, Last Energy, who have never built nuclear reactors before, which is rather concerning as there is practically no precedent for the technology, nor any evidence that they know what they're doing. Founded in 2019, they have still not produced anything, despite making megabucks deals with several governments, including Poland and Romania, and now the UK.

Last Energy estimates the project, condescendingly welshified as *Prosiect Egni Glan Llynfi*, represents a capital investment of £300 million, which they say will not require UK public funding as they have a tentative offer of a \$103.7 million loan from the US government, via the Export-Import Bank of the United States, for the first micro-reactor installation. In February 2025, Last Energy started the application process for a site licence from the UK's Office for Nuclear Regulation. PEDW (Planning and Environment Decisions Wales) has already admitted the company into the Development of National Significance (DNS) process.¹

Last Energy are also currently suing the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission in an attempt to gain exemption

from the commission's "over-burdensome regulations". They are also applying pressure within the UK to reduce oversight and speed up the development process. Their plan, still rather sketchy, is to store radioactive waste onsite, with no ongoing plan for when, or where it will be transferred to. This storage would be underground, below the water table in a Zone 3 flood risk area (the highest risk). And it's assumed that the site would need 24-hour armed security; what other risks this is intended to guard against isn't specified. They say they are committed to spending a minimum of 10 percent of the total £300 million project expenditure on locally sourced equipment, services, and other development-related activities, and expect to create at least 100 local full-time jobs over its 42 year life. As a bribe, this is a bit piddly.

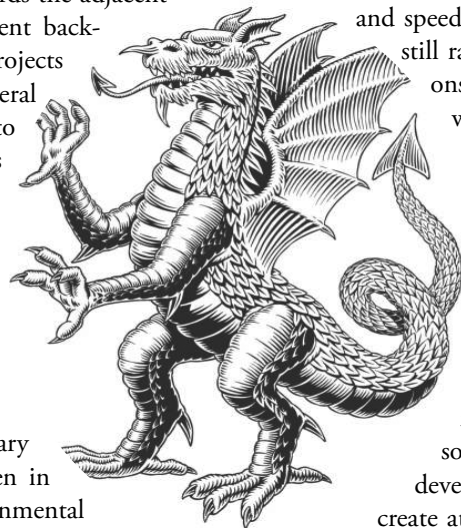
These four SMRs would be built in a mostly residential area, although the energy generated would be exported, and not for the local community's use. Who would benefit? A nearby paper mill, but most of the energy would go to data centres requiring massive amounts of power (and water) to fuel artificial intelligence machinery. Which no-one is asking for.

Last Energy's legal obligation to inform the local community has been ignored: when climate campers went door-to-door they found most people expressing shock at the news of the proposal, and observing that the plans fitted with the perceived rubbishing of their communities, which they say are being treated as post-industrial "sacrifice zones" or otherwise ignored by "decision-makers", in other words their elected representatives.

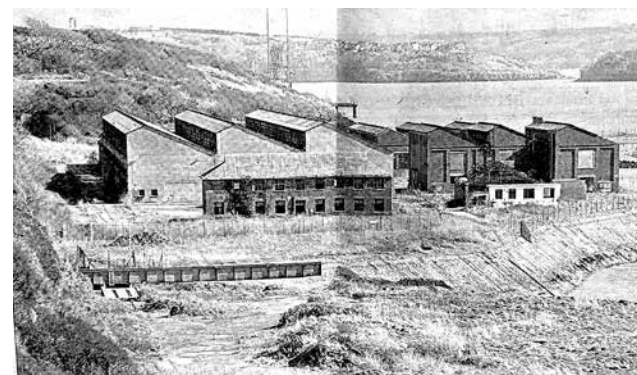
At Kilvey Hill in Swansea, resistance to an equally inappropriate if not quite as dangerous plan by New Zealand company Skyline, to turn the open-access wooded hill in the city into an "Adventure Theme Park", continues. Again, un-asked for. The Welsh are quite capable of arranging their own adventures, given enough open spaces to do it in, and have no intention of being re-purposed as guinea pigs and cash cows for a government oblivious to their rights. Meanwhile, members of the No Nuclear Llynfi campaign are doing some diligent investigative work and the controversy seems likely to grow as time goes on and more suspect practices and relationships come to light.

Worse to come?

Aberporth is a little seaside resort on the west coast of Ceredigion, which is also home to a number of UK and international arms companies. There is an MOD site there run by the major arms firm Quiniteq. It tests missiles and



The Dragon is getting a bit twitchy



The derelict Milford Haven mine depot has been listed as a possible site for a new "munitions and energetics" factory.

drones for the military of several countries. When missiles are being tested over the sea, there are warnings issued for people not to go out kayaking or sailing that day. The company has many open licences for export of arms to Israel. It is connected with the Israeli company Elbit. Another Aberporth MOD site has a private airport and hosts visits from military personnel from other countries including Israel for testing the latest equipment and training. This is now owned by the Portuguese arms company Tekever, which has a factory that assembles drones there. As an industrial site, providing some local employment, it is well subsidised by the county council. The main shareholder of Quiniteq donates large sums to Nigel Farage's Reform Party.

The present government has announced that it plans to support increasing arms production, to boost economic growth, and it looks like these sites and some others in the west Wales area are intended to be expanded even further. A euphemism to watch out for is the new term "energetics", being used to describe the propellants, explosives, pyrotechnics and so forth deemed essential to boosting the UK's warfighting readiness. This investment in the probability of a war in the near future, with some of its costs outsourced to unreliable foreign countries, makes such a war more likely. It's also an odd choice for a spending-spree, when on all other more sociable fronts the government is pleading poverty.

Not Here, Not Now, Not Ever.

WWAA (WestWalesAgainstArms) is just one of several anti-arms movements in west Wales, focused on different sites, and the whole area has a strong tradition of resistance to militarism. For example, after World War Two the Preseli farmers put up a great fight to stop the Preseli hills being closed off into an army practice range, and they succeeded.

Later the local CND carried on a long campaign of sabotage against the network of nuclear bunkers that had been built in the hills, as well as one famous occupation of an underground bunker in the middle of the county capital, Carmarthen, which became unusable. These were all abandoned.

As Parc Against Darc, another anti-arms group says in a recent interview about a proposed military armaments factory in Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire:²

At a time when political solutions to conflict are needed more than ever the UK Labour government always seems to have the money to find yet another excuse to paint a



Above: Llynfi power station, long since demolished. Below: the same site, as imagined by Last Energy in an AI simulation. Their emphasis on "clean" energy is very persuasive. Also — not a car park in sight. Will workers come by bus, or just be — non-existent?



military target on Wales' back, and add to the long litany of armament factories, military bases, and training grounds that already litter our rural communities."

and:

"It is no coincidence to us that they rarely seem to find a reason to put them in the nicer parts of the South of England, but they're happy to push for arms factories and massive radar farms in some of the most beautiful parts of our country. Defence Secretary John Healy's suggested 1,000 jobs across 13 sites is not a very significant number of jobs at all in return for the privilege of making Milford Haven — which sits on the UK's largest high-pressure gas pipeline and is known for a nearby major oil refinery — into even more of a target in wars that the UK government, and perhaps the US arms interests adjacent to it, seem to be only too excited to try and start."

WestWalesAgainstArms is focusing at the moment on the arms companies that are helping Israel's genocide, but their larger, long term aim is demilitarisation of Wales and of British society, and the development of sustainable, healthy industries. Continuing to publicise the complicity of British companies in the ongoing crimes in Palestine is a major part of this campaign, so as to persuade locals and councils to turn to industries that enhance life instead of destroying it.

This article draws on and quotes from contributions and first-hand accounts from a number of campaigners, to whom the writer and The Land extend their thanks and good wishes.

1. <https://www.cleanenergyllynfi.wales/>
2. Munitions Factory Plans Attacked by Campaigners. *Western Telegraph* 20 + 21.11.25