Questions re. statement by Mr. Huhne, the Energy Secretary, charging Dr. M. Weightman with checking safety of nuclear installations

1. In 2009, Dr. Weightman submitted a report to the government (copy obtained under FOI) laying out the difficulties he faced and will continue to face in the Nuclear Inspectorate, these included:
   i. most staff reaching retirement age and no-one to replace them as competent people are employed by private companies with higher salaries;
   ii. current levels of inspection one of the lowest in the world.
2. Will the checks to be performed following Mr. Huhne’s statement yesterday require more manpower than the inspectorate can provide?
3. Can we be assured that any additional inspectors will not come from the companies being inspected?
4. What will suffer as a result of the increased workload?
5. In another report in 2009, relating to proposed nuclear development, Dr. Weightman commented that the authorities should be more attentive to the public’s opinion. During the course of the two years’ consultation over the proposals, the public have repeatedly stated that the believed the consultation process to be a “tick box” exercise and their views were not important in comparison with the industry’s spokespeople.
6. In 2008, there were insufficient inspectors, according to Dr. Weightman, to fulfill the basic checks and inspections. Who then was involved in the assessment of designs submitted for Generic Design Approval and how thorough were those assessments?

Refs.
http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/jun/21/nuclear-power-stations-inspector-watchdog
www.bannng.co.uk
www.toxiccoast.com
Greenpeace, et al.

Further Questions
1. What happens to the radioactive material flushed out of the reactors by the use of seawater?
2. How long will the material remain in the environment before seafood and fish can safely be consumed?
3. Where will any radioactive material come ashore?
4. What level contamination can be expected?
5. Why is there such a discrepancy in the figures of deaths and ill-health reported following previous accidents? Reports direct from Russia state 60,000 and from Belarus/Ukraine, 140,000 have died, yet WHO accept only 56 deaths from Chernobyl. Greenpeace state that a third of a million people will die as direct consequence of the accident.
6. Why is no-body mentioning the nuclear waste? The proposed expansion of the nuclear industry involves storage of large quantities of high-level waste on every site round the U.K. for 160 years. This material cannot be reprocessed until it has cooled sufficiently. As none of the sites will have longer-term storage facilities this means that there will be a requirement for the dangerous wastes to be transported around the country to a long-term dump, probably at Sellafield.
7. In the event of another serious accident at Sellafield how would the population be evacuated? The scene at shift-changing time on the peripheral roads indicates that rapid transport would not be possible. In common with other nuclear facilities in rural areas, evacuation would be a long, slow process.
8. Why are the experts ignoring the fact that cooling water is required for the waste storage ponds - not just the reactors. They are saying the the new designs will not fail for lack of cooling water, but the waste in ponds will cause just as big a problem. The pumps at Sellafield have failed at least twice in the last 18 months.
9. Is CO\(_2\) the worst pollutant? The nuclear process may or may not be the answer to CO\(_2\). Perhaps it could be, but only if you ignore the ancillary production processes and back-up power generation. However, it produces pollutants more toxic than any other - including tritium, which is readily absorbed into the food chain.

10. How will the industry cope with the inevitable increase in insurance premiums following the events in Japan, especially now that the Labour-inspired 'gross abuse of parliamentary procedure' (Speaker Michael Martin), which resulted in a ludicrously low cap on liability in the event of a serious accident, has been overturned by the EU commission?

11. The current policy is to raise energy costs to a level where nuclear becomes viable, if the costs of nuclear energy increase how will the government maintain this fallacy? Subsidies were ruled out, but other measures - effectively subsidising the industry - have been put in place. Will the politicians now find other ways to implement subsidies in the same underhanded way?

12. Why is EdF/Areva allowed such influence? It was their CEO who stated that 30% of the UK's electricity should come from nuclear - why?

13. Have senior politicians been lobbying for a slow-down in development of renewables?

14. How can the government assess the cost of disposal of nuclear waste 160 years in advance of it occurring?

15. Why the concentration on national grid and large power stations whose transmission losses will equate to the output of an additional power station? Why not more localised grids of micro-generators feeding into a national framework?

16. Could other countries' governments cope with a disaster of a similar nature to the events in Japan? For example the infra-structure in India is so poor that it seems unlikely they would be able to cope.

17. Will Japan still be able to produce the high-grade steel required for reactors following the current turmoil?

18. How many nuclear accidents have there been in the U.K.?

19. Why has there been no apparent action over the criminal activities of the Sellafield staff, NHS staff, the coroner and his aides, the pathologists, etc., following the findings of the Redfern Inquiry? Requests for information from Cumbria Police have been ignored for over 3 months.

20. Why can no NHS/government body investigate cancer cases possibly arising from Sellafield's activities, current and past? An appeal in Scotland was refused on the grounds that to release the cancer data might lead to patients being identified. This would not be a problem if it were to be a state-inspired analysis using anonymised data.

21. Why do the NDA spend copious amounts of money in Cumbria on projects not remotely related to nuclear decommissioning?

22. Why were Cumbrians promised such things as hospitals, social buildings, better roads, etc., only if they accepted new-built nuclear in the area?

23. Why were Cumbrians only advised at the latest possible moment of the proposals to build nuclear developments on at least four sites, when the industry and local politicians had been involved for many years?

24. Where did the Energy Coast quango get its power and influence from?

25. Have Cumbrians been told of the true impact of the proposed developments, which will turn a large area of the coast and its immediate hinterland into a 40 mile long industrial estate?

26. Were they asked if this was what they wanted?

27. Should the NHS's Whitehaven Hospital have large signs announcing their involvement in what is essentially a political manoeuvre?

28. How does the long-term health and mortality rate of employees and those in the locality of the nuclear establishments compare with the other generating industries?

29. Why have there been so few interviews with truly neutral or anti-nuclear groups on BBC? (Shaun Bernie of Greenpeace, Caroline Lucas, M.P., both on Sky.) Hardly one expert interviewed has demonstrated impartiality, or raised the wider impact of the Japanese situation - all seeming to want to downplay the seriousness and its relevance to other countries' proposals.

30. What are the anti-nuclear senior politicians, such as Michael Meacher and Simon Hughes, doing to promote their views?