

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 3rd February 2015

No.129

Subject: Summary of NFLA Steering Committee, Manchester Town Hall, 30th January 2015

1. **Introduction**

The NFLA Chair welcomed all to the meeting, particularly given the inclement weather of the past few days.

2. **National NFLA Forum meetings and meetings with CNFE**

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of the work of the four National NFLA Forums and the Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe network.

Meeting with Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe Secretariat -

The NFLA Chair and the NFLA Secretary met with Ulli Sima, the Deputy Mayor of the Environment at Vienna City Council and senior officers of the Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe (CNFE) Secretariat on the 5th December. This allowed for discussion on future co-operation between the two organisations.

Vienna City Council / CNFE are in close contact with the Austrian Government over its imminent legal challenge of the European Commission state aid approval decision for Hinkley Point C.

The meeting also allowed for discussion around the major nuclear policy issues in Europe and it was agreed to research progress with post-Fukushima European nuclear safety. CNFE presented the NFLA a major report comparing financial support between renewable energies and nuclear power in Europe, focusing on 5 EU states. Both CNFE and NFLA believe the co-operation between each other is working very well. The aim in 2015 will be to encourage more cities to join the network, and deepen interest from members in its work. The Steering Committee warmly welcomed this co-operation.

NFLA All Ireland Forum –

The NFLA All Ireland Forum held its winter seminar in Dublin City Hall on 12th December. Presentations were given by Tim Deere-Jones on his detailed analysis of marine pollution impacts to the Irish Sea of a proposed UK new nuclear programme as considered by the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland; the NFLA Policy Advisor Pete Roche profiled the NFLA's submission to the Irish Government's green discussion paper on the future Irish energy mix; Donal Traynor of UC Investment Ltd outlined the potential of community energy across Ireland, and the NFLA Secretary compared the development of energy service companies in Britain, and considered if they could be replicated in Ireland. Attendance was encouraging with councillors from across Ireland present. A short business meeting was also held and it was agreed to hold the next meeting in Newry, provisionally on the 27th March.

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NFLA Scotland Forum –

The NFLA Scotland Forum will be holding a business meeting, AGM and short seminar in Glasgow City Chambers on the 6th February. This meeting will elect its Convener and Vice Convener for 2015. A presentation will also be given by energy policy consultant Alexander Wito, over the advice he is providing a number of Scottish Councils on the potential development of Energy Service Companies and more definitive energy policies.

NFLA Welsh Forum –

The NFLA are co-operating with Green Cross International and other groups to bring to Wales the former Prime Minister of Japan, Naoto Kan, on the 25th and 26th February. Mr Kan was Prime Minister during the Fukushima disaster and is a strong proponent of a nuclear power free Japan. Mr Kan will also be accompanied by Mr Tetsunari Iida, Executive Director, Japanese Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies; together with one of the evacuees from Fukushima.

Mr Kan will be speaking at a special event at the Pier Head Building, Cardiff Bay on the afternoon of the 25th, at a meeting chaired by the Presiding Officer of the Assembly. Assembly Members and NFLA Welsh Forum members have been invited to attend this invitation only meeting. A civic reception in the Mansion House hosted by Cardiff City Council is also being developed. The Japanese delegation will travel on to Anglesey to look at the proposed new nuclear site at Wylfa and speak at a second public meeting. NFLA Welsh Forum members were delighted these meetings had been organised and thanked the Secretariat for being involved with them.

NFLA English Forum –

The NFLA Secretary is researching a potential English Forum / Steering Committee joint seminar for the 20th March in Manchester that will consider local 'distributive' energy schemes – the likes of smart meters, LED street-lighting, anaerobic digestion, battery-backed solar PV and small farm-scale wind generation. Such measures could be very much part of a local community energy strategy.

The NFLA Secretary hopes to recruit 2 or 3 speakers to consider some of these areas and talk about them at the March seminar, which will follow the next NFLA Steering Committee. A flyer will be developed and sent out shortly.

Agreed: To note the report. Members encouraged to attend each relevant meeting.

3. Nuclear new build

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on a wide range of issues around the proposed development of new nuclear power stations.

Proposed new build at Hinkley Point and European Commission inquiry -

The developers of the proposed Hinkley Point C new nuclear plant have indicated that they hope to make a final investment decision on the project by the end of March 2015.

DECC have previously said that EDF is likely to take up 45% - 50% of the funding consortium, Chinese nuclear utilities 35% - 40%, Areva 10% and other potential funding partners 10% – the Saudi, Kuwaiti and Qatari Sovereign Wealth Funds have all been mentioned in media reports. Areva's 10% share remains vulnerable given the financial problems the company is having after major cost over-runs with the Olikuloto and Flamanville reactors in Finland and France. Energy media insider Nick Butler, writing in the Financial Times, suggests that all of the sovereign wealth funds and the UK based investment fund Hermes have been approached but there remains little obvious signs any of them will go into the project.

Whilst this is taking place, the Austrian Government's Environment Ministry confirmed in mid January that it is actively preparing a legal challenge to the European Commission's decision to approve Hinkley Point C as a legitimate form of state aid. It is thought Luxembourg may also support Austria's legal challenge, along with a number of renewable energy companies.

NFLA / CNFE to present energy report to the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee –

In mid December 2014, CNFE published a report comparing financial costs and capabilities of renewable and nuclear energy, using 5 European countries as case studies. The report concludes that, under the same budgetary conditions, it is almost always possible to generate more electricity from renewable sources than from nuclear power. It also concludes that generating electricity from a variety of renewable sources is more economical than using nuclear power right up to 2050 and beyond. Across the EU, end consumers can save up to 37% on their electricity costs, and some member states up to 74%. In order to achieve these goals, the report argues, it is vital that Governments act quickly, but with care, to create the infrastructure and regulatory framework this requires, or to adapt that which already exists.

The report was sent to the UK Parliamentary Environment Audit Select Committee (EAC). The EAC requested a meeting with the report authors, which was held on the 28th January. Report co-author Dr Gustav Resch and the CNFE Secretary David Reinberger presented the key findings of the report to the EAC, accompanied by the NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary. The report was well received and the Committee Chair has asked NFLA to keep them informed of similar reports and research.

Small nuclear reactor development in the UK, and the Irish energy mix debate -

The House of Commons Energy and Climate Change Committee published a report on Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMRs) on 17th December 2014. The Committee has asked the Government to work with the nuclear industry to better understand the economics of SMRs and set out a clear explanation of the conditions under which they might become cost competitive in the UK. The report also argues it will be important to understand the future cost comparison with large-scale nuclear reactors as well as the comparison with other small-scale energy generation or demand management.

In a separate development, the UK Government had commissioned the National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) to carry out a feasibility study with initial recommendations on the economic, technical and commercial case for SMRs. The feasibility study was published in December. It considered four designs in detail - ACP100+ (designed by CNNC); mPower (B&W and Bechtel); Westinghouse SMR (Westinghouse); and NuScale (Fluor), and concluded that the UK has the opportunity "to regain technology leadership" in SMRs.

The feasibility study argued there is a significant, potential market for SMRs in places where large reactors would be unsuitable. It calculates the size of the market to be approximately 65-85 GW of new capacity by 2035, valued at £250-£400 billion, with demand in the UK of around 7 GW by then. NNL claims that "first-of-a-kind" SMRs could be cost comparable with conventional nuclear build, with the potential to become more cost competitive as more are built. However, further evidence is required to make a policy decision or for business to make an investment.

Steering Committee members noted that it could be argued that the development of this debate is an implicit indication of concern that large-scale new nuclear build may be unlikely to develop in the manner the nuclear industry would like. As reported at the last Steering Committee meeting, SMRs have significant safety, cost and regulatory barriers to overcome before substantial development can take place.

SMRs have been included as an option in the Irish Government's Energy Green Paper over its potential future energy mix. The Irish Energy Minister Alex White confirmed that he believed nuclear power should be fully discussed in Ireland over the next year, even though there is a legal ban on the development of nuclear power in the country. A more detailed Government White Paper is expected in the summer. The NFLA Secretariat has previously submitted a detailed response to the Green Paper consultation. The Steering Committee noted that it is important to monitor these developments, and provide some focus on them at the next Irish Forum seminar.

Agreed: To note the report. To welcome the recent meeting with the EAC. To continue to monitor these developments and co-operate with CNFE in raising legitimate concerns over new nuclear build in England and Wales.

4. Radioactive waste management

The NFLA Secretary outlined the key issues NFLA is involved with in relation to UK / Scottish / Welsh Government policies on radioactive waste management.

UK radioactive waste policy progress -

The NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary will be attending a seminar by Radioactive Waste Management (RWM), an offshoot of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), on the 4th February in Manchester. This will cover RWM's plans to take forward a national geological screening exercise and invite views on it.

NDA Stakeholder Dialogue and media article on Sellafield fuel ponds -

As noted at the last Steering Committee meeting, the NFLA Secretary has written to the Chief Executive of the NDA around concern of the state of the Sellafield site. This following an article in 'The Ecologist' magazine publishing photos from an unnamed Sellafield employee of the fuel ponds B29 and B30 on the site.

The NDA has responded to a number of questions posed by the NFLA in its letter. The response by the NDA provides little additional information on the legacy ponds, with key information excluded for security reasons. The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Chair respond to this letter clarifying whether there is any historical, legacy contamination from the ponds, its extent and environmental impact. The follow-up letter will also press the NDA on why there should be so much secrecy around the amount of plutonium in the ponds, challenging how such information can be 'security confidential'. For the NFLA, there appears to be a clear public interest test to wanting to know how much plutonium is likely to become airborne in the event of a conflagration which could mobilise it.

UK Government strips NMP of Sellafield clean-up contract –

In early January, the Secretary of State Ed Davey informed the House of Commons that the Government, in full consultation and on the recommendation of the NDA, had decided to withdraw the contract to Nuclear Management Partners (NMP) for the clean-up and decommissioning of the Sellafield site. This process would occur over the next 15 months, with the contract likely to go back 'in-house' to the NDA, at least in the interim.

This is a major policy 'U-turn' by the Government and the NDA. As recently as August 2014 the NDA had decided to give NMP a five year renewal of the Sellafield contract despite highly critical reports by the National Audit Office, the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and internal auditors KPMG of the value for money, governance and operation of the Sellafield clean-up contract. In a mediarelease on the matter, NFLA welcomed the Government's decision but queried why it had taken so long and how much public money may have been wasted in prolonging the contract. The Secretariat will monitor further developments with this matter.

Welsh radioactive waste management policy -

In mid 2014 the NFLA had submitted its views to a 'call for evidence' by the Welsh Government to assist it in determining whether it needed to formulate a specific policy on the management of higher activity waste residing in Wales. Up to the call for evidence the Government has reserved its policy on this matter. The main reason for updating its policy was due to its support for new nuclear build at Wylfa and the need for dealing with legacy waste.

The Welsh Government has responded to the call for evidence and launched a more formal consultation on adopting a more definitive policy. In this consultation, the Government gives its provisional view that it supports the UK Government policy of developing a 'geological disposal facility' and it aligns much of its policy with UK Government policy. It rejects the Scottish Government's policy of 'near site, near surface'. The Welsh Government disagrees with the

NFLA that it does not need to determine such a policy at the present time and has challenged some of the NFLA's main submission points.

The Steering Committee welcomed a detailed consultation response to the Welsh Government, which had been approved by the NFLA Welsh Forum Co-Chairs. The NFLA submission responds in detail to comments made by the Government of its earlier response, and reiterates key principles and concerns around deep geological 'disposal'. The response can be found on the NFLA website.

Dalgety Bay and Dounreay matters -

Since the last Steering Committee meeting there had been no specific change from the ongoing planned remediation of the Dalgety Bay site. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is planning to spend an estimated £10 million for the clean-up of radiation from the beach at Dalgety Bay in Fife and is still developing an action-plan for the remediation of the site. The NFLA Secretary keeps in close liaison with Fife officers and Councillor Goodall in reference to this issue. The matter is on the agenda for the NFLA Scotland meeting of the 5th February.

In reference to Dounreay, the site has been issued with an improvement notice by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) in early December following a report of a serious fire incident on the site in October. The incident, which was located in the Prototype Fast Reactor (PFR) facility led to an unauthorised release of radioactivity (though the tritium release did not pose a public health risk as it was at low levels). The Dounreay site operator has been told to make appropriate improvements to preventative and protective measures for the decommissioning of the PFR's sodium tank farm by 30 June 2015.

The ONR Deputy Chief Inspector commented that "The incident revealed several concerns, notably a poor compliance culture and unacceptable behaviours of personnel on site. We are looking for evidence of improvements to effective planning; control and monitoring that will prevent future incidents occurring, and protect the public during the decommissioning of the plant." The Dounreay site owners have confirmed that the decision to strip NMP of its contract for Sellafield does not directly effect its operation.

Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS -

NuLEAF held a business meeting in Manchester Town Hall on the 29th January. The NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary will be attended this meeting, and provided a short verbal report to the Steering Committee meeting.

COSLA have now sent a letter out to all its members confirming that Edinburgh City Council have agreed to take on the Secretariat of SCCORS, and asking for any comments on this change. A meeting will be set up as soon as is practical in Edinburgh to restart the group.

MOD Submarine Decommissioning Project (SDP) / Rosyth site decommissioning -

The MOD has launched a consultation on its shortlist of five sites that could host intermediate level radioactive waste from dismantled submarines. The sites are Chapelcross, Sellafield, Capenhurst, Aldermaston and Burghfield.

The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor attended a national workshop on the consultation in Glasgow. A full NFLA response to the MOD is in preparation and will be sent to member authorities shortly. It will be discussed at the NFLA Scotland meeting and approved by delegated authority by the NFLA Chair.

Agreed: To note the report. To respond to the NDA letter on Sellafield and submit a response to the MOD submarine dismantling ILW consultation.

5. Mayors for Peace update

The NFLA Secretary outlined progress in NFLA's co-operation with the Mayors for Peace and its campaigns on the nuclear weapons issue.

International Mayors for Peace development and plans for 2014/15 -

As of January 1st 2015, 6,490 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace in 160 countries. 119 new members joined in November and December, again coming largely from Iran and Japan due to the work of a Mayors for Peace campaigner at the Tehran Peace Museum, and the ongoing work of the Hiroshima Secretariat in Japan. Other members came from Argentina, Austria, France, Germany, Netherlands, Paraguay, South Korea and Turkey.

The Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign met prior to the 3rd International Conference on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons on December 6th 2014. The NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary attended this meeting on behalf of Manchester City Council and UK and Ireland NFLA / Mayors for Peace members. The meeting included a discussion on the Campaign's delicate budget, which has been complicated by local government changes in a number of European countries, and the separate development of national chapters. The meeting also discussed some key projects the Campaign was developing in 2015 – a joint event 'I was her Age' tour with the Japanese 'Peace Boat' group will visit Mayors for Peace members in 19 countries, and its delegation will also attend the NPT Review Conference in New York. A 'World Cities Peace Calendar' is also being developed.

Mayors for Peace UK and Ireland development -

A follow-up meeting of the UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Working Group takes place directly after the NFLA Steering Committee on the 30th January. It will be chaired by the Lord Mayor of Manchester. This meeting will formally agree to a terms of reference / constitution, the instituting of voluntary membership fees and the Working Group be renamed as the 'UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter' to encourage its wider acceptance. The meeting will also include a guided tour of a major art exhibition in Manchester City Art Gallery which highlights how artists have covered the effects of war from 1914 to the present day.

Hiroshima gingko trees peace seeds and 70th anniversary of Hiroshima & Nagasaki atomic bombings -

As noted in previous reports, the city of Hiroshima has been developing a project of offering seeds from second generation A-bomb damaged trees, and peace flames from its eternal peace flame, to Mayors for Peace members. Manchester City Council has received 12 gingko tree seeds, which are being successfully grown at Hulme Community Garden Centre.

Manchester City Council is moving forward with a schools arts project to promote the trees project. The NFLA Secretary is working with Environmental Strategy Officers on what has been called 'Project G'. A meeting with Manchester University Museum was held on the 26th January to accept a kind offer they have made to host entries from Manchester schools in an arts competition that will be launched in the spring. The Museum has exhibits from Hiroshima and a link with Hiroshima University. The meeting also agreed that the Museum will host the Council's 70th anniversary commemoration event of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings in August.

NFLA members have been provided with details of how to receive gingko tree seeds from Hiroshima (on a first come, first served basis as budget allows). The NFLA Secretariat is happy to assist members as appropriate. Edinburgh City Council is in the process of receiving some gingko seeds from Hiroshima.

Ypres 100 / NPT Review Conferences and Mayors for Peace -

At the Vienna meeting explanation was provided by representatives from the City of Ypres about its major international conference on April 22nd – 25th. This will commemorate the centenary of the first use of chemical weapons in the First World War. The conference is titled 'A Century of Weapons of Mass Destruction – Enough is Enough!'

The proceedings are being organised into four parts:

- On April 22nd, three key ceremonies will take place at notable monuments in Ypres – the Cross of Resurrection, the Brooding Soldier statue and at the Menin Gate.

- On April 23rd, the conference will formally open with speakers reflecting on a century of using weapons of mass destruction. It will also highlight the challenges for developing a WMD free world.
- On April 24th, Mayors for Peace's 'Cities are not Targets!' campaign will be highlighted focusing on the legal ways on protecting cities from warfare can be improved.
- On April 25th, the City of Ypres will formally open the 'Making Peace' photographic exhibition across sites across the city.

The Steering Committee welcomed the decision that Manchester City Council has approved that the NFLA Chair and the NFLA Secretary to the Conference. It is also possible that there will be a Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision board meeting coinciding with the conference. If other Councils are interested in attending this they should contact the NFLA Secretary, who will provide them with registration details.

NPT Review Conference at the United Nations -

Mayors for Peace are sending a large delegation to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Conference at the United Nations in New York. This follows closely on from the Ypres Conference, with the NGO part of the conference on April 28th – May 2nd. The Mayors for Peace delegation will have a strong Japanese focus with a large delegation of 'hibakuska' survivors attending from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some school visits in New York have also been organised to emphasise the generational importance of progress at the Review Conference. A major peace march from Times Square to the UN buildings is also being planned by a coalition of NGOs.

Agreed: To note the report and welcome the development of UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter.

6. Nuclear Weapons and defence nuclear safety update

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of various issues relating to the nuclear weapons disarmament debate and defence nuclear safety matters.

International Conference on Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, December 2014 -

The NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary attended the ICAN Civil Society Forum in Vienna on the 6th and 7th November. Over 600 attendees were present at a high quality two day conference bringing together some of the major international experts on nuclear weapons proliferation issues. There were presentations from Hiroshima hibakuska survivors, from academic experts, senior figures from organisations like the International Red Cross, Green Cross International, PNND, international lawyers and video addresses from the President of Austria, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Deputy Mexican Foreign Minister.

The NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary also supported two Mayors for Peace stalls in the 'Information Market' zone, and the NFLA Chair spoke in a workshop session with a number of Japanese disarmament groups. A useful part of the Forum included a session with Parliamentarians from the UK, the Netherlands, Norway and New Zealand. Amongst the UK Parliamentarians present were Joan Ruddock MP, Julie Ward MEP, Angus Robertson MP and Bill Kidd MSP. A joint Parliamentary Early Day Motion on the Vienna Conference was submitted by Joan Ruddock MP and has attracted significant cross-party political support.

A large amount of delegates from ICAN, Mayors for Peace and other disarmament groups stayed on to lobby governments at the following International Conference on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons. The Austrian Government brought a greater sense of urgency to the conference and initiated the 'Austrian pledge' - to "identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons". The UK and US Governments attended this conference for the first time, reiterating their existing nuclear weapons policies. The 'Austrian pledge' received support from most of the states that attended the conference, and it is likely to be a part of the discussion at the May NPT Review Conference. The Steering Committee welcomed this development.

Rethink Trident statement and NFLA Policy Briefing on Trident replacement -

At the last NFLA Steering Committee meeting, members agreed to officially sign up to the joint 'Rethink Trident' statement. By signing the statement, NFLA joins with a wide range of like-minded groups on challenging the need for Trident replacement. Such groups include disarmament NGOs, trade unions, a cross-party collection of MPs and MEPs, a large range of leaders from faith based organisations, anti-austerity groups and prominent personalities from the arts, music and the media.

The NFLA Secretary is close to finishing a NFLA Policy Briefing considering the organisations engagement with the UK and global nuclear weapons issue over the past 12 months and considering how it will interact on the issue in the next 18 months. This will be issued to NFLA members shortly.

In a welcome parallel initiative, the disarmament research group NIS have put together a meeting bringing over 20 NGOs together to discuss wider strategy on opposing Trident replacement over the next 18 months. This is being held on February 5th in London. Unfortunately the NFLA Secretary has a conflicting engagement on the same day, but has been asked to be kept fully informed of the actions from this meeting. The NFLA Chair has provided the NFLA's full support to this welcome initiative.

Confusion over pledge to reduce number of missile tubes in new Trident submarines -

The Steering Committee welcomed a NFLA media release calling on clarification from the UK Government over accusations that it is misleading the public and the international community over the number of missiles which could be carried on the 'Successor' class Trident replacement submarines following the disclosure of details of a contract to build missile tubes for a new submarine.

The Ministry of Defence has struck a £37 million deal with the US Navy to build twelve new missile tubes for the first of the successor Trident submarines – despite announcing in 2010 that, as a disarmament measure, it would be reducing the number of missiles carried on board each Trident submarine from 12 on the submarines which are currently in service to eight on the replacement boats.

As the NFLA media release pointed out, not only has the Government gone back on its disarmament pledge, but a future government could use the additional tubes to expand the UK's nuclear firepower. In a response to the critical comments, the MOD has said new UK Trident submarines will still have only eight "operational" tubes, but has not said what will happen with the other four.

In addition, the Steering Committee, along with many disarmament groups, is concerned with the considerable level of expenditure which has already been committed to Trident replacement before an actual 'Main Gate' decision has been made. Already £4.2 billion has been committed to the 'early' parts of the project.

Main contractors appointed for Barrow shipyard upgrade project -

BAE Systems has appointed three construction contractors to upgrade the Barrow-in-Furness shipyard in preparation to build a replacement for the Royal Navy's Vanguard class Trident submarines. Costain, Morgan Sindall, and Shepherd Construction have each been awarded 'framework contracts', under which they will compete with each other to design and build individual projects which make up the overall £300 million programme to rebuild the shipyard.

The eight year programme will include a mixture of new build projects and refurbishment of existing facilities in the most significant redevelopment of the Barrow site since the 1980s, when the Devonshire Dock Hall was built to allow construction of Vanguard class submarines. The £300 million shipyard construction programme will be funded by the Ministry of Defence as part of the overall Trident replacement programme. A planning application has been submitted to design and construct the Central Yard Project. If approved, construction would start in September. Planning permission has already been granted for a £30 million logistics facility

which will provide 28,000 square metres of off-site storage space for submarine parts. Building work will begin in January and the facility is scheduled to be completed by April 2016.

Submarines move from Devonport to Faslane as part of Navy's future plans -

The Defence Minister Michael Fallon has announced that two of the Royal Navy's Trafalgar class submarines will move from their current base in Devonport to the Clyde as part of a long-term scheme to station all the Navy's submarines at a single base. HMS Talent and HMS Triumph will move to HM Naval Base Clyde by 2020, making the Scottish base the home port for all the UK's nuclear powered submarines.

New radioactive waste treatment plant planned for Faslane -

The MOD has submitted a planning application for construction of a new radioactive waste treatment plant at the Faslane nuclear submarine base to Argyll and Bute Council. This plant will replace existing facilities at the Clyde naval base and it will treat and dispose of solid and liquid radioactive wastes from submarine nuclear reactors. Some wastes from the plant will be discharged into the Gareloch and others will be held on-site for considerable periods of time before, during, and after processing.

Despite over 700 responses opposing this development, it is expected that the Council will approve it, making the point that local residents broadly support the plant, and that 93% of the objections are from outside the local area. SEPA have been calling for an upgrade of the facilities for some time, and the planning application seeks to respond to it. The new plant will increase the level of discharges into the Gareloch, a major reason for the large number of objections. MOD argues that discharges have been steadily reducing, and the plant will discharge well under the 'safe' limits of discharge.

Agreed: To note the report. To continue to publicly raise concerns over the amount of Trident replacement developments prior to a 'Main Gate' decision.

7. Fukushima and UK civil nuclear safety

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on progress with civil nuclear safety and the safe control and decommissioning of the damaged reactor site at Fukushima, Japan.

EDF reactors at Heysham and Hartlepool re-open with reduced capacity -

In mid-December 2014, four nuclear reactors – two at Heysham and two at Hartlepool – have been reopened after “structural problems” with one of the boiler spines at Heysham 1 nuclear reactor had caused them to be closed in May. EDF have indicated that the reactors will have to be run on 75 – 80% of previous capacity for the next year to monitor their efficiency and reliability.

In early December the NFLA also published a Policy Briefing on the reliability of aging nuclear power stations, in reference to information provided at the last NFLA Steering Committee. This report is on the NFLA website. It highlights the regular and large number of unplanned shutdowns at almost all UK nuclear power stations in the past year and shows a general trend of growing unreliability. The Steering Committee agreed that the report should be sent to the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) for comment.

ONR NGO Forum -

The NFLA have again agreed to host the next meeting of the ONR NGO Forum. This will be held on 16th April 2015 and the NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary will attend it.

Fukushima update -

Work is underway with the creation of a Remote Technology Development Centre at Nahara. The complex will house a mock-up of the lower part of a reactor containment vessel, representing the interior of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. The centre will also include an indoor demonstration test area for disaster response robots which will also be used to train operators and workers. The facility is within 20 kms of the Fukushima facility.

A paper published in December 2014 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) details the arrival and concentration of radioactive isotopes from the Fukushima reactor in the North Pacific Ocean. The paper is the first systematic study validating ocean circulation models tracking the eastward movement of radioactive isotopes.

A small level of Fukushima derived Caesium-134 had been located on the Canadian coast as early as June 2012. This new study calculates that future total levels of the longer-lived Caesium-137 off the North American coast will likely peak at 3-5 Bq/m³ by 2015-16, before declining to levels close to 1 Bq/m³ by 2021. The increase in the eastern North Pacific from the Fukushima reactor will probably return to background radiation levels that prevailed during the 1980s. All these levels are considerably under 'safe' discharge levels.

For the first time since the 2011 disaster, all of the rice harvested in the Fukushima disaster in 2014 has been passed as safe for consumption. The main reason for success in this area is that rice farmers have succeeded in changing the fertilizer so that radioactive caesium is not absorbed by the rice plant. Food exports from the Fukushima prefecture have begun to increase in the past year.

This welcome news does not alter the fact that there remain major decontamination problems at Fukushima, particularly in dealing with radioactive water on the site. The 'ice walls' being developed are still only sporadically successful and many other major waste management issues still exist. Clean-up on the site has now passed £11 billion, and continues to rise.

The current pro-nuclear Japanese Government called a snap general election, at a time when the political opposition was in disarray, and won a landslide victory. It is likely to push forward with attempts to restart closed reactors around Japan. A handful may reopen later in 2015, despite strong local opposition, but it is also clear a large number of the older reactors will never reopen.

Agreed: To note the report.

8. Alternatives to nuclear energy

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on developments in pursuing effective alternatives to nuclear power.

NFLA Policy Briefing on Local Energy Service Trusts / Companies -

The NFLA Secretariat's detailed Policy Briefing on how Councils can consider developing more comprehensive energy policies, including the creation of arms-length Energy Service Companies (ESCO) has been widely welcomed by council officers and councillors. The report has been profiled at NFLA Welsh, Scottish and Irish Forum meetings.

The NFLA Secretariat would be interested to receive progress from individual NFLA members taking such policies and ESCO models further forward in order to undertake regular updates in NFLA Policy Briefings. The NFLA Secretary has invited Alexander Wito, who has advised Edinburgh and Glasgow Councils in the development of its energy policies, to present to the NFLA Scotland Forum on the 6th February on how Scottish Councils could look at developing ESCOs and wider renewable energy / energy efficiency policies.

The Steering Committee welcomed the dissemination of the report and encouraged each member to use it actively at a local level.

Irish Government Green Energy Paper and Community Energy -

In late July 2014, the NFLA sent in a full submission to the Republic of Ireland Government's Green Paper considering the future development of energy policy and how it could reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor outlined the detail of this report to the NFLA All Ireland Forum seminar in Dublin in December. The presentation was very much welcomed by councillors who attended it, and it is providing a focus for the NFLA being involved in the Irish energy debate

The Dublin seminar also had an informative presentation from Donal Traynor of the company UC Investment Ltd on the potential for developing community energy and ESCO's in Ireland. Community energy could also be a type of energy project that the NFLA should support at the local level, and particularly in more rural areas. The upcoming March NFLA English Forum / Steering Committee seminar will consider a number of 'distributive' energy options and up-scaling energy efficiency programmes.

WWF Scotland report on renewable energy generation and the growth of wind power-

A report by WWF Scotland argues that Scotland's electricity system could be powered almost entirely by renewables by 2030 without the need for any gas, coal or nuclear power stations. The report was developed for WWF Scotland by the engineering and energy consultancy DNV GL. The 'Pathways to Power: Scotland's route to clean, renewable, secure electricity by 2030' considered the Scottish Government's current policy to decarbonise the country's electricity generation by 2030. This is separate from its target to provide the equivalent of 100% of electricity demand from renewables by 2020, which still allows for coal, gas and nuclear to remain on the grid. The DNV GL study found that an electricity system based on proven renewables and increased energy efficiency is a credible way of meeting Scotland's decarbonisation target.

December 2014 was a record month for wind power in Scotland. The most productive day for wind output was on December 10 when there was enough energy generated to supply 6.34 million homes for the whole day, according to additional analysis from WWF Scotland. WWF added that wind turbines generated enough power to supply over 100% of Scottish households on 25 out of the 31 days of December. Throughout the year wind provided enough power for the electrical needs of 98% of Scottish households.

The National Grid also announced that wind power generation across the UK rose 15% during 2014 from 24.5 terawatt hours to 28.1TWh - enough to supply the needs of more than 6.7 million UK households. Overall, grid-connected wind farms and standalone turbines met 9.3 per cent of UK electricity demand during 2014, up from 7.8 per cent in 2013.

Update on shale gas and the low cost of oil –

Despite the high profile backing from the UK Government, and moves to reduce the barriers to develop shale gas extraction across the UK, a report by the UK Energy Centre (UKEC) suggests the shale gas 'revolution' has barely got moving with just 11 new exploratory wells for shale gas and oil due to be drilled in 2015, even before the impact of plunging oil prices has fully begun to impact on the industry. Professor Jim Watson of the UKEC added that it was unlikely the UK would have a significant shale industry until the early 2020s, and even then the UK would still need to import the majority of its gas.

The historic low cost of oil could also have a major effect on the nascent development of shale gas. In the US, the share prices of all shale gas companies have tumbled markedly as a response to low oil prices. Only 7 shale gas wells have currently been drilled in the UK, and Ministers have argued that at least 30 wells have to be drilled to assess the potential of shale gas to UK gas supplies.

Lancashire County Council's Planning Committee will be assessing Cuadrilla's application imminently. This important decision will have a significant impact in determining the short-term progress with shale gas production. Both the Scottish and the Welsh Government have put moratoriums on shale gas production.

Agreed: To note the report. To disseminate the ESCO report widely.

9. Low level radiation and health issues

The NFLA Secretary provided a short report on progress with issues relating to low level radiation and health.

Sellafield derived low level radiation found in food across Scotland -

The Scottish 'Daily Record' published an article, using information garnered from the 2014 Radioactivity in Food and the Environment report by SEPA, the Environment Agency and the Food Standards Agency; highlighting that low levels of radiation from Sellafield-derived waste has been found in fish and shellfish caught off the Dumfriesshire coast. The RIFE report notes that radiation levels in Dumfriesshire are the highest in Scotland, despite Sellafield being over 80 miles away.

Traces of radiation were also found in fruit, potatoes and vegetables near to Dounreay, whilst close to Chapelcross, low levels of radiation have been found in milk produced in farms in the area. In a similar way, low levels of radiation have been found in Helensburgh close to Faslane.

The RIFE report shows that a person eating fish or shellfish in Dumfriesshire could have consumed as much as 0.44 millisieverts, around 4% of the EU safe limit. It notes that adults close to Dounreay who consume green vegetables would get the highest radiation dose. The report also suggests unborn children of pregnant women living within 550 yards of Hunterston B would receive the highest dose of any single Scottish nuclear site.

Independent marine pollution experts challenge figures like the RIFE report as not providing sufficient levels of monitoring to be able to say the doses are all truly 'safe'. It goes to the heart of the debate about what constitutes a 'safe' level of dose. The report also highlights radiation doses, however small, are continuing to be found in food.

Low Level Radiation Conference, March / April 2016 -

The NFLA Secretary is in discussion with Dr Jill Sutcliffe and Chernobyl Children's Project Co-ordinator Linda Walker about holding a Low Level Radiation and Health Conference in March / April 2016. This would coincide with the 5th anniversary of Fukushima and the 30th anniversary of Chernobyl. Early indications for low level radiation specialists to attend are positive. Other actions would also be organised for these two important anniversaries.

Agreed: To note the report.

10. Nuclear emergency planning and nuclear materials transportation

The NFLA Secretary provided a report of his work on nuclear emergency planning issues.

ONR increases size of nuclear emergency planning zone at Sellafield and Sizewell -

As part of the post Fukushima review of emergency planning zones around UK sites, and in reference to the changing nature of some sites as decommissioning takes place, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has amended a number of detailed emergency planning zones (DEPZ) around a number of nuclear sites – notably Sizewell, Sellafield and Aldermaston.

At Sizewell (as at other sites), a comprehensive review of emergency planning has been carried out and the ONR has decided to dispense with its circular 2.4 kilometre zone and replace it with one based largely on postcodes. This will mean that parts of the emergency plan zone will stretch up to around 3km from the nuclear power stations and both the small town of Leiston and the majority of the nearby village Aldringham will in future be included within it. The outcome of the changes is a smaller inner zone where counter-measures would be needed – there are around 20 residents and businesses within one km of Sizewell – and a larger outer zone where information would be provided to the public. The local anti-nuclear group 'Shut Down Sizewell' has been critical of the changes and is unhappy with the proposed public information leaflet being planned for issue to residents and businesses in the area.

At Sellafield, the ONR have revised the circular 2 km radius area to a wider area between 6 and 7 km from the centre of the site. The ONR argue this does not mean that risks at Sellafield have increased, but it takes into consideration ONR's revised principles for determinations, Sellafield Ltd's latest assessment of the hazards, and their increased understanding of certain elements contained within the previous assessment. The ONR also note that Cumbria County

Council and Sellafield Ltd have undertaken some aspects of emergency planning to the 6km distance for some years.

In Aldermaston, the new hazard assessments published by the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) for the Aldermaston and Burghfield nuclear sites suggest that the impacts of a radiation emergency at either site would extend over smaller areas than currently defined in emergency plans. This has raised fears for local group NIS that the emergency planning areas may be reduced in size. ONR is expected to publish its determination of the emergency planning zone imminently.

NFLA nuclear emergency planning / security policy briefing -

With the changes noted above, and with a potential review of the REPPIR legislation around emergency planning zones (due to the need for the Government to implement the detail of the 2014 European Basic Safety Standards Directive), the NFLA Secretary is in the process of developing a detailed update of issues and concerns in nuclear emergency planning, nuclear security and from the ongoing problems arising from the Fukushima disaster.

Nuclear transportation concerns -

A key and ongoing concern of the NFLA has been the safety and security of transporting nuclear materials by road, rail and sea. Particular recent interest has focused on sea shipments due to the ongoing discussion between the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and councils around the Highland and Islands over proposed movements of radioactive materials from Dounreay to Sellafield. The NDA argue such shipments would reduce the number of rail transports of Dounreay's 'exotic fuels' to Sellafield, and that the material transported by sea will have a lower radioactive content.

The NFLA Secretariat assisted the Western Isles Council and Shetland Island Council with background information in preparing for individual meetings with the NDA. This issue increased in its topicality after a fire on the vessel 'MV Parida' off the north east coast of Scotland on the 8th October. The fire meant the vessel's engines had to be turned off and it was adrift for some hours until assistance came from the Pacific Pintail. The vessel had been returning low-level radioactive materials from Dounreay to Belgium. An oil rig had to be evacuated as a precaution and the Emergency Towing Vehicle at Orkney was called out to assist. This incident also occurred in some of the worst autumnal storms of the season.

The NFLA Secretary has written letters of concern to the UK and the Scottish Governments over this incident and wider concern with nuclear transports. Questions have also been asked on the NFLA's behalf in the Westminster Parliament by Paul Flynn MP. The NFLA Chair has discussed this matter as well with Graham Stringer MP, who is on the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee.

Nuclear convoy through Glasgow and the west of Scotland during particularly severe weather -

The most recent nuclear weapons convoy from Aldermaston and Burghfield to Faslane and Coulport was publicly criticised for passing through Glasgow late at night during a period of particularly inclement weather of snow, ice and high winds. Steering Committee members were concerned that, given the high-sided nature of many of the vehicles in this convoy, why it was travelling at such a late time of the night – just prior to midnight – and at a time of freezing temperatures and high winds. There have been previous incidents of convoy vehicles crashing due to icy road conditions.

Agreed: To note the report. To issue a media release of concern around nuclear materials transportation.

11. Date of next NFLA Steering Committee meeting

The next Steering Committee meeting is planned for **Friday 20th March in Manchester Town Hall**. An afternoon joint NFLA English Forum / Steering Committee seminar will also take place.