



Subject: **Summary of the main points from the NFLA Steering Committee Meeting, Town Hall, Manchester, 3 November 2005**

1. **New Nuclear Build**

At the end of 2005 the DTI said its energy policy review "...will be launched with a statement of current evidence on the White Paper goals and the government's plans for engagement with the public and stakeholders." A public consultation is expected early in the New Year.

The NFLA Steering Committee has already sought an assurance about the scope of any public engagement and continues to press for a staged and inclusive energy review process. The case for new nuclear build must be compared with the case for other energy generation options and with the benefits of investment to reduce energy consumption. Once the Energy Review consultation paper is published the Steering Committee will prepare a full briefing paper for member authorities' use.

At the November Steering Committee the Legal Adviser reported that any planning application for a new nuclear station would come forward under the Electricity Act, not town and country planning legislation, and that this would impose higher costs on the local planning authorities. Any public inquiry into a new nuclear power station would also take place under the Electricity Act. Campaigners, including the Council for the Protection of Rural England, were now calling for a change in the law to ensure nuclear development is considered under the normal planning regime.

The Legal Adviser also explained how in Scotland, there is concern that the Executive's White Paper on *Modernising the Planning System* proposes reforms to planning law that would provide a new, streamlined procedure for dealing with applications for large-scale developments such as nuclear power stations and nuclear waste managements facilities. By endorsing such developments in a "national planning framework", ministers might restrict public consultations and confine public inquiries to local issues. This would seriously undermine accountability of major developments to the local communities most affected.

The Steering Committee asked the Legal Adviser to continue to investigate and report on relevant procedures that will attend on the development of policy, strategy, and project planning, at UK and devolved administration levels, in relation to new nuclear-build to ensure NFLAs are in a position to effectively engage in the future decision making process.



2. **New Irish NFLA Forum**

The November Steering Committee welcomed the launch of the new *All Ireland NFLA Forum* which took place in Dublin last September. Forum inaugural members include: Louth County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dublin Regional Authority, Down District Council and Newry and Mourne District Council. Several other Irish authorities have expressed interest in the Forum and in NFLA associate membership.

The Forum agreed its initial policy priorities as: Sellafield and the Irish Sea; promoting the use of green energy; nuclear emergency planning; European Union policies on nuclear issues; and implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It also agreed to: submit a response to the Environment Agency's consultation over the future of the Drigg radioactive waste disposal facility; commission a briefing note for all Irish local authorities on renewable energy; and establish what progress the Irish Government was making with recommendations from its review of nuclear emergency planning arrangements in Ireland.

3. **Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (NuLeAF)**

The Local Government Association's Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum continues to develop with the assistance from the NFLAs. At the NuLeAF AGM in October 2005 Cllr Bill Risby, NFLA Vice Chair (England), was elected to the vacant NuLeAF Vice Chair office.

The NFLA Secretary reported to the November meeting an invitation from NuLeAF for NFLAs to take 5 places on the NuLeAF steering group in recognition of NFLA's substantial contribution to NuLeAF work. The Steering Committee welcomed NuLeAF's proposal but considered any decision was a matter for the full NFLA AGM (see the 2005 AGM Briefing Paper No.51).

Separately NFLAs in Scotland, in consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Executive, are exploring the potential for a 'NuLeAF type' grouping. Good progress has been made and a new Scottish group is being formed.

4. **8th Joint Irish & UK Local Authorities Conference on Nuclear Hazards, London 23 March 2006**

The November meeting received a report on proposals for a conference to mark the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The Mayor of London had offered City Hall as a venue and interest in conference participation from Chernobyl charities and environmental groups was reported.

The meeting gave the go-ahead for the 8th joint Irish and UK Local Authorities Conference on Nuclear Hazards to take the Chernobyl 20th anniversary theme for its programme. The 2006 conference will:

- review the health and environmental impact of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster on 26 April 1986 and its continuing impact on the British Isles
- report on voluntary action to mitigate the health impacts
- report on key developments in UK nuclear energy policy and waste management policy processes and how to engage with them
- report on innovative strategies to meet future energy needs with lower environmental and health costs

Initial conference details and registration information were circulated to all authorities in the UK and Ireland in December. The current programme and registration information can be downloaded from the NFLA website (www.nuclearpolicy.info).

5. **Radioactive Waste Management Policy**

The Secretary reported to the November Steering Committee a response to a DEFRA consultation on extending Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to include radioactivity. The NFLA response raised concerns that permissible public exposures on contaminated land could be ten times higher than the current one milliseivert per year annual public dose limit from manmade radiation sources.

The outcome of the DEFRA and devolved administrations workshop on low level radioactive waste policy was reported. The NFLA Secretary, and NFLA (Scotland) Policy Adviser participated in DEFRA workshops in April and October 2005. These workshops have laid the ground for a public consultation in early 2006 on future policy for the management of low level radioactive wastes. Recommendations arising from this consultation are expected to go forward to government for consideration in tandem with recommendations from the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) about higher level wastes in July 2006.

The NFLA Steering Committee has been invited to meet with CoRWM to discuss progress on options for future management of radioactive wastes. The Steering Committee welcomed the invitation and a meeting date is being identified. CoRWM has also announced the publication of a discussion guide to aid respondents submitting views on radioactive waste management policy (see www.corwm.org.uk).

Progress with work by NFLA staff and advisers to alert local authorities to the implications of previous Nirex site investigations for a future radioactive waste facility was also reported.

6. **Radioactive Materials Transportation**

The November Steering Committee meeting endorsed a report prepared by the KIMO organization for submission to the Committee of North Sea Senior Officials (CONSSO) meeting on 9/10 November 2005. The report raised concerns about the safety and security of roll-on/roll-off ferries for nuclear materials transportation within Europe. The report recommended the use of purpose built vessels that already undertake trans-continental shipments.

7. **Nuclear Decommissioning Authority**

The November Steering Committee considered a draft response to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's consultation on its future strategy. The meeting agreed the response but was particularly concerned to emphasize its strong opposition to reopening of the THORP reprocessing plant that has been shutdown since mid 2005 following a substantial spillage of liquid radioactive wastes.

8. **Mayors for Peace**

The Secretary reported that, after the failure of the last Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NNPT) conference in May 2005, a group of UN member states drew up a resolution to put to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) that would have created a framework outside

the NNPT to take forward stalled multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. Mayors for Peace were keen to support this initiative and urged its members to lobby their Governments for support. The NFLA Secretariat was able to facilitate the submission of a letter requesting support to the Prime Minister jointly signed by the Mayor of London and Leaders of Manchester and Glasgow City Councils. Regrettably, under diplomatic pressure led by the United States, the resolution was withdrawn though the sponsor states may reintroduce it at the 2006 UNGA.

9. **UK Nuclear Weapons Policy**

The Legal Adviser reported that he had submitted a detailed request for information about how any decision to replace Trident would be taken. He also reported that the Parliamentary Labour Party had attempted to raise the issue of UK nuclear weapons policy in order to secure a debate about the replacement of the Trident system, but this effort had failed. The Legal Adviser informed the Steering Committee that recently agreed expenditure around £2 billion at the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston was proof enough that the UK government was committed to replacing its current nuclear weapons system and that this decision had been made without consulting Parliament. Cllr Brian Gregson, Shetland Islands Council, referred to a speech by Dr John Reid, the Defence Secretary, where he said that two thirds of the public favoured the retention of the UK's nuclear deterrent. The Legal Adviser pointed to a recent survey of public opinion by Greenpeace that found only a minority of people supported the renewal of Trident once aware of the cost.

The Secretary reported a reply from the Armed Forces Minister to the NFLA Chair stating the Government's commitment to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty but that 'no timetable for disarmament has yet been agreed'.

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