

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 29 January 2007

No. 59

Subject: **Summary of NFLA AGM, Civic Hall, Leeds, 7 December 2006**

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chairs

Cllr Mike Rumney, Fife Council, was elected to the NFLA Chair's position. Councillor Bill Risby, Manchester City Council, continues as NFLA Vice Chair (England). The NFLA Vice Chair (Wales) position was filled by Cllr Glyn Jarvis, Newport City Council. The vacant Vice Chair (Scotland) position will be filled after the May local elections in Scotland. A new Vice Chair position for Irish Councils was created and this will be filled at the All Ireland NFLA Forum AGM in April 2007.

2. Annual Report

The NFLA Secretary reported on the range of policy work undertaken by the Secretariat officers, NFLA advisers and consultants, in the year to December 2006 including:

New Nuclear Build

- lobbying the Minister for Energy to confirm that a) if the Energy Review recommended support for new nuclear stations that there would be a further round of public consultation on any such proposals in line with Government commitments; and b) that the procedures for consultation relating to the development of nuclear energy policy would match those applicable to the development of nuclear waste management policy and the previous Energy White Paper *Our Energy Future: Creating a Low Carbon Economy*.
- briefing environmental organisations on the Electricity Act, and public inquiries under it, and explaining how Government might seek to restrict public consultations and confine public inquiries to local issues.
- highlighting how DTI proposals to weaken the public inquiry system would exclude examination of evidence about: the *justification* for new nuclear power; the *need* for new nuclear power; the *suitability of the site(s)* chosen for new nuclear power; the *safety* of new nuclear power; the steps to be taken to *protect the environment and people* from radioactive waste; and the *security hazards* involved intrinsically and post '9/11' and '7/7' terrorism.



THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

Other work included:

- undertaking new research, part funded by Greenpeace, on decision-making processes that would be required to allow the Government to arrive at a policy favouring new nuclear build and how that would be implemented at any specific new site; the regulatory requirements that would need to be met if a developer wished to invest in one or more new nuclear stations; changes which the industry is seeking to facilitate a reduction in regulatory risk; and the period of time required to obtain all necessary consents. This research is now being published through the NFLA's new series of *Critical Reactions* briefings and covers such issues as: proposed changes to the regulatory and planning framework and their wider implications; opportunities for local authorities to challenge specific measures; and urging authorities to respond and reject Government's draft Nuclear Policy Framework.
- assisting in the preparation of submissions by the Forums in Scotland, Wales and Ireland to the Government Energy Review and attending DTI seminars about the Energy Review.
- linking NFLA campaign work with the local government climate change agenda to show that nuclear power is amongst the least effective means of tackling the biggest international environmental threat.
- meeting national officers from Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and UNISON to discuss the preparation of a research proposal to determine the job growth potential, by Parliamentary constituency and local authority, of a non nuclear energy policy, with the aim of demonstrating that a non nuclear energy policy would provide far greater local social and economic benefit spread more evenly across the UK as a whole.
- working with the Chair of the All-Ireland Nuclear Free Forum to establish from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that no nuclear power stations will be built there.
- responding to a consultation about Draft Security Regulations that could severely limit information on new nuclear development and undermine public scrutiny through the planning process.
- briefing member councils on the security risks associated with a new nuclear build programme.

Radioactive Waste Management

- contributing to consultative processes, workshops and stakeholder meetings convened by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management and maintaining a bilateral dialogue on policy for the future management of higher level radioactive wastes.
- responding to CoRWM's draft recommendations to Government.
- responding to CoRWM's final recommendations to Government in July 2006 on a national policy for the management of higher level radioactive wastes in the UK.
- engaging with the Dept of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), devolved administrations and the LGA's Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum in detailed dialogue about the practicalities of implementing CoRWM's recommendations and stressing the need for an open, transparent and justifiable process to be established to determine future institutional arrangements so that public confidence in long-term radioactive waste management policy is not eroded.
- contributing to workshops convened by DEFRA and devolved administrations to prepare a consultation paper reviewing low level radioactive waste policy. NFLA policy principles favouring waste concentration and containment and opposing dispersal to landfill or incineration were promoted.
- responding to the public consultation by DEFRA and the devolved administrations on low level radioactive waste management policy and warning against landfill and incineration.
- urging the Environment Agency for England and Wales not to permit further disposal of radioactive waste at the national LLW repository near Drigg because of the future risk of seawater inundation, possibly within 100 years if global warming gathers pace.

- contributing to the steering group of MoD's ISOLUS project and advancing NFLA radioactive waste management principles in decision making on future interim storage of laid up (decommissioned) submarines.
- alerting local authorities to the implications of previous Nirex site investigation work for a new radioactive waste facility siting process.

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

- engaging with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), participating in its workshops, and advising on the development of its strategy and annual plan.
- responding to the NDA consultation on its strategy and strongly opposing the reopening of the THORP reprocessing plant.
- responding to the Trade and Industry Committee inquiry into the NDA's draft strategy setting out concerns about the conflict of interest between its nuclear waste clean up responsibilities and continued waste generation by Magnox nuclear stations, the THORP reprocessing plant and Sellafield MOX plant.
- assisting work by the Wales Forum and All Ireland Forum to oppose the extended operation of the Wylfa nuclear station.
- responding to DEFRA's consultation on its draft Magnox discharge decision document. NFLAs argued that Magnox discharges could not be justified by Magnox operation as there is no net benefit to society.

Transportation

- supporting policy developed by the KIMO environmental organisation, calling for purpose built ships to replace 'roll on – roll off' ferries for sea transportation of highly radioactive materials.

Nuclear Weapons Policy

- submitting evidence to the Parliamentary Defence Committee inquiry into the Future of the Strategic Nuclear Deterrent (on behalf of NFLAs and the UK Mayors for Peace working group) questioning the rationale for the UK extending its commitment to a nuclear deterrent capability through to the mid 21st century.

Contaminated Land

- responding to a DEFRA consultation on extending Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to include radioactivity. The consultation related to intervention levels on radioactively contaminated land outside licensed nuclear sites and NFLAs made the case for a lower intervention threshold.
- continuing to engage in the Construction Industry's Research and Information Association's (CIRIA) led *SD:SPUR* and *Safegrounds* policy work about the management of very low level radioactively contaminated materials and land.

Freedom of Information

- seeking to use Freedom of Information legislation to establish how any decision to replace the Trident nuclear weapon system would be taken. These requests were stonewalled.
- seeking to use Freedom of Information legislation to obtain information about Government policy towards: new nuclear build; risk assessment for emergencies relating to radioactive materials; strategic environmental assessment; policy in Northern Ireland towards nuclear energy; arrangements by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate for pre-licensing nuclear power station designs; information about the causes of recent incidents affecting the safety of high level waste storage at Sellafield; planning policies in areas hosting nuclear power stations; and arrangements within the nuclear industry for dealing with pandemic 'flu (following a briefing on this latter matter to the NFLA Annual Meeting in November 2005).

3. **English Forum**

The Forum Secretary reported on the Forum's meetings in the twelve months to December 2006. Over the past year the Forum had: undertaken an organizational review and name change to *Nuclear Free Futures*. The Forum had arranged seminars in: Reading Civic Centre, February 2006 on local authority issues around the replacement of the UK nuclear deterrent; and, Nottinghamshire County Hall on Climate Change issues. The Forum had assisted in the delivery of an energy policy seminar in Rotherham Town Hall, October 2006.

4. **Scottish Steering Committee**

The Convener reported on the work of the Steering Committee in the year to September 2006. During the year the Committee engaged with the UK Atomic Energy Authority and NDA over clean up at Dounreay and monitoring of contamination outside the site; the commissioning, and submission to the UK Energy Review, of expert evidence on non nuclear energy policy options for Scotland; arranging a seminar to publicise non nuclear energy options; and responding to consultations on UK radioactive discharge strategy, radioactively contaminated land in Scotland, and low level radioactive waste management policy.

5. **Wales Forum**

The new Chair, Cllr Glyn Jarvis, reported on the work of the Wales Forum in the year to December 2006. Membership remained steady at 10 councils. Whilst Neath Port Talbot had withdrawn, Bridgend had rejoined. Policy work included the commissioning and submission of detailed evidence to the Energy Review on non nuclear generating opportunities in Wales; support to the Welsh Anti Nuclear Alliance and Keep Wales Nuclear Free campaign; and correspondence with the First Minister on energy policy.

6. **All Ireland Forum**

The NFLA Secretary highlighted the success of the Forum in its first 18 months having grown from 5 to 11 councils in the year to December 2006. During the year the Forum: lobbied against continued disposal of radioactive waste at the Drigg site in Cumbria; submitted detailed evidence to the Energy Review; considered the implications of a Chernobyl type accident upon Ireland; and organized a promotional seminar last September.

7. **Financial Report**

In Financial Year 2005/2006 the Secretary reported a deficit of £32,740 arising from a) the volume of work undertaken and b) income of £10,000 earned in 2005/06 not showing in accounts until the current financial year. An overspend was again expected in the current financial year but this will be substantially smaller and would be met from available reserves of £13,500.

On the advice of Manchester City Council Treasurer's Department the AGM agreed to increase NFLA affiliation rates by 3% in the coming financial year to take account of projected inflation. Member authorities are asked to note the revised rates below and make budgetary provision in FY 2007/2008:

<u>Population</u>	<u>Affiliation Rate</u>
over one million	£5,148
500k - one million	£3,679
200k - 500k	£2,198
100k - 200k	£1,349
up to 100k	£ 850

Rates for fire authorities and associate authorities in the RoI are 50% of the above.

8. **Status of NFLA support**

The AGM was informed about NFLA membership at November 2005 and at November 2006. In that period membership had risen from 72 to 76 local authorities.

9. **AGM Resolutions**

Three resolutions were voted on by the meeting:

9.1 Radioactive Waste Management Policy

This AGM:

- welcomes the recommendations in July 2006 from the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management.
- agrees with CoRWM that any new wastes generated by a new nuclear power programme will require a new and separate process to determine how waste arisings will be managed in the long term.
- whilst agreeing with CoRWM that an intensified research programme to investigate the outstanding issues with ultimate deep geological disposal of higher level radioactive wastes is essential, still has grave reservations that the principle of disposal is either acceptable or achievable. Therefore medium to long term management and storage solutions which enable monitoring and retrieval of these wastes must be developed urgently.
- shares the concerns of some CoRWM members that the appointment of the NDA (as the delivery authority for higher level radioactive waste management) would prove problematic given its already wide-ranging and short term efficiency agenda...
- shares CoRWMs concern that Government has significantly watered down its recommendations for an independent body to oversee the work of a delivery authority.

Therefore:

- demands that DEFRA and Devolved Administrations ensure that these above concerns are fully addressed in next years public consultation about radioactive waste management policy implementation, and that 24 weeks is allowed for such consultation to enable the preparation of informed responses.
- urges the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum in England and Wales, and its counterpart in Scotland, to raise the above concerns and recommendations with DEFRA and the Devolved Administrations.

Proposed: Shetland Islands Council

Seconded: Caerphilly County Borough Council

Carried unanimously

9.2 Trident Replacement

This AGM:

- calls for the abolition of UK nuclear weapons and the redirection of resources to support the development of public services and tackling climate change.

Proposed: Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

Seconded: Shetland Islands Council

Carried unanimously

9.3 Weapons of Mass Destruction

This AGM:

- Recalls that on 1 June 2006 the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC) Chairman, Dr. Hans Blix, presented the Commissions report "Weapons of Terror" to the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in New York.
- Notes the report contains sixty concrete proposals on how the world could be freed of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.
- Agrees with the findings of the WMDC that:

Nuclear, biological and chemical arms are the most inhumane of all weapons. Designed to terrify as well as destroy, they can, in the hands of either states or non-state actors, cause destruction on a vastly greater scale than any conventional weapons, and their impact is far more indiscriminate and long-lasting.

So long as any state has such weapons especially nuclear arms others will want them. So long as any such weapons remain in any states arsenal, there is a high risk that they will one day be used, by design or accident. Any such use would be catastrophic.

Notwithstanding the end of the Cold War balance of terror, stocks of such weapons remain extraordinarily and alarmingly high: some 27,000 in the case of nuclear weapons, of which around 12,000 are still actively deployed.

Weapons of mass destruction cannot be uninvented. But they can be outlawed, as biological and chemical weapons already have been, and their use made unthinkable. Compliance, verification and enforcement rules can, with the requisite will, be effectively applied. And with that will, even the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is not beyond the worlds reach.

Over the past decade, there has been a serious, and dangerous, loss of momentum and direction in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Treaty making and implementation have stalled and, as a new wave of proliferation has threatened, unilateral enforcement action has been increasingly advocated.

Therefore:

- agrees with the WMDC that "Governments and relevant intergovernmental organizations and non government actors should commence preparations for a World Summit on disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction to generate new momentum for concerted international action."
- calls on HM Government to a) give support to a World Summit b) signal its resolve to strengthen the international Nuclear Non Proliferation regime by terminating any further work on a replacement for Trident, and c) announce an early date to withdraw the Trident fleet from active service.
- supports all lawful campaign action in the UK to secure support for no Trident replacement.
- calls on all NFLAs to give support to the work of international Mayors for Peace and endorse their 2020 Vision campaign that calls for international agreement by 2010 on a Nuclear Weapons Convention to dismantle nuclear weapons by 2020.
- resolves to incorporate and develop these arguments in its response to the Governments White Paper on The Future of the United Kingdoms Nuclear Deterrent and other relevant inquiries.

Proposed: Preston City Council
Seconded: Dundee Council

Carried Unanimously

For more information on any of the above matters contact: **Stewart Kemp** 0161 234 3244 or email: office@nuclearpolicy.info