

# *Nuclear Free Local Authorities* **briefing**



Date: 5<sup>h</sup> July 2013

No.113

**Subject: Summary of NFLA Steering Committee, Manchester Town Hall, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

## **1. Introduction**

The NFLA Steering Committee was opened by the NFLA Chair, Councillor Hackett, who welcomed all to Manchester Town Hall. He welcomed Councillor Galsworthy of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to his first NFLA Steering Committee meeting since becoming the Council's NFLA representative.

The NFLA Steering Committee held a minute's silence in memory of its former Chair, Bailie George Regan of Dundee City Council, who sadly died in April after a long illness.

## **2. National NFLA Forum meetings**

The NFLA Secretary provided a report of the work of the NFLA Forums:

### **NFLA English Forum –**

The NFLA English Forum joint seminar with the NFLA Steering Committee on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March had been cancelled due to inclement weather. It had been rearranged for after this NFLA Steering Committee meeting. Confirmed speakers for it were NuLEAF Secretary Stewart Kemp on radioactive waste management policy, Tony Bosworth from Friends of the Earth on shale gas and planning policy and the NFLA Secretary on the transportation of nuclear materials and wider issues around contaminated scrap metal.

A more detailed seminar on contaminated scrap metal is being planned for Rotherham Town Hall in October / November 2013.

### **NFLA Scotland Forum –**

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a very well attended joint seminar and a business meeting in Edinburgh City Chambers on the 19<sup>th</sup> April. The seminar was held in co-operation with staff in Abolition 2000, CND Scotland, Mayors for Peace and Parliamentarians for Non-proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament (PNND) and it considered developments in international nuclear weapons policy. Speakers included the former Mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatashi Akiba; former New Zealand Deputy Foreign Minister Matt Robson, Bill Kidd MSP and the Chair of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Movement Laurie Ross. A note of the seminar is on the NFLA website.

The business meeting also elected Councillor Bill Butler as the Forum's new Convener. It approved for its Secretary and a member representative to attend the Mayors for Peace Conference using its own local budget. It was agreed that its next meeting would be held in Stornoway on 23<sup>rd</sup> August.

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### **NFLA Welsh Forum –**

The NFLA Welsh Forum held a well attended seminar in Torfaen Town Hall on the 12<sup>th</sup> April. The seminar had presentations from independent consultant Neil Crumpton on Welsh energy futures, from Tim Richards of the South Wales Anti-Nuclear Alliance on the risks of new build at Wylfa and Hinkley Point, from marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones on the possibility of a Dalgety Bay type incident in Wales and concerns over reductions to the monitoring regime for radioactivity levels in food, and from the NFLA Secretary on the NFLA / Mayors for Peace's role in the nuclear weapons debate.

The NFLA Secretary is in discussions with councillors in Newport City Council in order for them to host the next Forum meeting in September / October. A joint public meeting in Anglesey or Gwynedd is also in preparation for later in the year.

### **NFLA All Ireland Forum –**

The NFLA All Ireland Forum Co-Chairs and Secretary, and the NFLA Secretary held a follow-up meeting with officials from the Republic of Ireland Department of the Environment to discuss the Irish Government's recent report on Sellafield and other matters on 2<sup>nd</sup> May at the Customs House in Dublin. The meeting included a robust discussion on Sellafield issues and on the lack of notification received by the Irish Government on a reported leak incident with the nuclear powered submarine HMS Tireless. These matters are being followed up.

The Forum also held a well attended seminar in Fingal County Hall, north Dublin on 7<sup>th</sup> June. The meeting focused on the recently published report by the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland's assessment of the potential radiological risks of a proposed UK new nuclear programme. Dr Ciara McMahon from the RPII noted that the reports main findings suggested a low health risk but some socio-economic issues in a worst case radiation leak scenario from a new UK reactor. Independent health consultant Ian Fairlie gave an assessment of the report where, using the RPII's worse case scenario, it could be calculated that up to 9,000 people in the Greater Dublin area alone could have serious health issues from such an incident. The seminar also considered the potential for wind energy in Ireland with a very useful presentation by Grattan Healy of the Irish National Offshore Wind Association.

The next NFLA All Ireland Forum meeting will be held in Galway in October / November 2013.

***Agreed: To note the report. To encourage NFLA members to attend the relevant Forum seminar.***

### **3. Membership recruitment and administration issues**

The NFLA Secretary reported that a number of Councils had been contacted to consider joining the NFLA across all four national Forums. The NFLA Secretary also encouraged members to inform him promptly of budgetary issues for 2013/14 that may affect its NFLA membership.

The NFLA Secretariat noted that an increasing number of individual members have joined the organisation under the 'retired' and 'interested member' categories.

The NFLA Secretariat has transferred the bulk of the NFLA library for management by the Praxis Centre, Leeds Metropolitan University. The Steering Committee agreed that a future meeting in early 2014 be held in Leeds to give members an opportunity to visit it.

The NFLA Secretary has now relocated to work in Manchester Town Hall as part of the City Policy Team. Internal approval for a NFLA Facebook page is also nearing completion.

***Agreed: To note the report. To hold a future Steering Committee meeting in Leeds in order to visit the NFLA 'archive'.***

### **4. Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe**

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on progress with the development by Vienna City Council of a European-wide network of cities that shared similar concerns as the NFLA to new nuclear build whilst seeking the promotion of renewable energy alternatives.

In May the NFLA Secretary and NFLA Chair gave a presentation to Vienna's Environment Council (whilst they were in London) and the meeting had agreed upon continuing this close co-operation on nuclear policy issues. A logo, website and further research are being developed by Vienna and a conference later in the year is being considered.

Vienna City Council had also supported a major NGO Conference that brought groups together who are campaigning against new nuclear build.

The new Network is expanding with 6 new cities joining in recent months – Dortmund, Dusseldorf, Nuremburg, Stuttgart, Zagreb and Sarajevo. The Network has also agreed a strategic alliance with Climate Alliance International.

***Agreed: To welcome the development of the Network and to continue to co-operate with it on areas of mutual interest.***

## **5. Mayors for Peace and Nuclear Weapons update**

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of the NFLA's involvement in co-operating with the Hiroshima and Nagasaki-led Mayors for Peace, and wider issues in the nuclear weapons debate.

### ***a) Mayors for Peace matters - International development of Mayors for Peace -***

As of June 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, 5,645 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace in 157 countries.

A Mayors for Peace delegation took part in the UN Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Conference in Geneva on 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> April. Internal meetings of Mayors for Peace considered proposals for improving the structure and financial underpinning of Mayors for Peace which will be approved at the Mayors for Peace Conference in August 2013, and it also held a meeting of the 2020 Vision Campaign Association. The NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary took an active part in these meetings.

The Mayors for Peace four-yearly Executive and General Conferences takes place in Hiroshima from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> August. The NFLA Scotland Forum had agreed that its Secretary and Councillor O'Neill would represent it at the Conference. In discussion the Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Chair should attend the conference on its behalf. Manchester City Council has agreed to send the NFLA Secretary to the conference.

### ***UK and Ireland development of Mayors for Peace -***

There are now 88 members of Mayors for Peace in the UK and Ireland. The NFLA Secretary is working with the Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Secretariat in Ypres to develop a questionnaire of UK and Ireland members, and this will go out in early July.

### ***Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bomb exhibition-***

The NFLA's Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-bomb exhibition was hosted by Fife Council in April and May 2013. It is now available for hire. It will be exhibited at the Scouts Annual Jamboree in Warwickshire in November.

### ***b) Nuclear weapons matters - NPT PrepCom and future nuclear disarmament talks –***

A full and detailed NFLA Policy Briefing had been sent to members and published on the NFLA website outlining the key developments from a very disappointing Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Preparatory Conference. The NFLA is co-operating with Mayors for Peace and ICAN to consider strategies that can assist non nuclear weapon states in breaking the logjam that exists in these talks. Proposed cuts in nuclear weapon stockpiles by the United States and Russia announced after the Conference are to be welcomed.

### ***Radioactive leak of Royal Naval nuclear submarine HMS Tireless -***

In mid February 2013 a Parliamentary answer by the UK Defence Minister confirmed that the nuclear powered (though not nuclear armed) submarine HMS Tireless had been forced to return to the Faslane base due to a leak of radioactive coolant in its reactor compartment. The

submarine was then transported down to the Devonport site for repair. The NFLA Secretariat has been continuing to co-operate with other groups to investigate further the detail of this incident and the risks and dangers to the marine environment, to the staff and in transporting the submarine through the Irish Sea. A more detailed report will be published shortly.

#### ***AWE Aldermaston fined £200,000 for safety breaches***

In late May the owners of the Aldermaston nuclear weapon facility were fined £200,000 for significant breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act following a fire incident in an explosive handling facility on the site. In his judgement, the Judge commented that this incident could have been prevented and that the site owners were negligent for weak implementation of emergency training procedures. The inspector who had brought the case noted that the incident could have led to multiple casualties.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

## **6. Nuclear new build**

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

#### ***Developments relating to a new nuclear reactor at Hinkley Point –***

The prospects on whether EDF will develop new nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point are concentrating on protracted discussions between it and the UK Government over price guarantees and other forms of support to get a 'strike price' that will be attractive for future investment. A 'strike price' of £95TWh has been widely suggested in the media. Contracts will be for around 35 – 40 years and may be index-linked. The talks have now dragged on for over six months, and EDF has put off its final investment decision until the end of the year. It has laid off some staff on the development in recent months.

On the investment side, EDF is still seeking a financial partner to fund the construction. Media reports suggest interest from Chinese and Russian companies and Middle East sovereign wealth funds, but no public decision has been announced.

If a mutually agreed 'strike price' comes out of the Government–EDF talks the agreement would have to be considered by the European Commission to determine if it is a legal form of state aid or not. Independent commentators have suggested this could take as long as two years as the agreement would set an important precedent on state aid across the EU.

Two legal challenges to the Hinkley development have been lodged by the Irish National Trust / An Taisce and by Greenpeace UK. The Government wishes for these to be considered by the High Court in the summer.

#### ***Developments at Wylfa and Oldbury -***

The new owner of the proposed new build sites at Wylfa and Oldbury, Hitachi, is progressing plans for new reactors. Its Advanced Boiling Water Reactors design is now being formally considered by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the Environment Agency under the Generic Design Assessment (GDA) process. Design contracts have also been signed. A by-election in Anglesey is likely to be a focus for debate over new build at Wylfa – a former NFLA Welsh Forum Chair is one of the candidates in the by-election.

#### ***Generic Design Assessment (GDA) process -***

The NFLA published a media release promoting a detailed analysis by the nuclear engineering consultancy Large & Associates on the final part of the ONR's GDA process for EDF's nuclear reactor design. The report argued that a considerable number of safety critical issues had been 'parked' in the process for consideration later on in the final licensing process, which is of concern to the NFLA.

### ***UK Government draft energy bill -***

The UK Government's Energy Bill has now passed into the House of Lords for scrutiny and consideration. Proposed amendments to reduce the level of public financial support for new nuclear were heavily rejected. A closer vote was held on the Bill having a clearly defined 2030 decarbonisation target. This is a matter likely to be revisited in the House of Lords.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

### **7. Alternatives to nuclear energy**

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on a number of reports the Secretariat had produced around alternatives to nuclear power.

The Secretariat had published a Policy Briefing on the problems associated with fuel poverty across the UK and Ireland and the benefits of energy efficiency as part of the solution to this problem. The Policy Briefing, now on the NFLA website, had been warmly welcomed by members and officers. The Steering Committee agreed that this report should be promoted widely.

The Secretariat had also published a report considering the UK Government's 'Green Deal' package and the creation of the Green Investment Bank. Though welcoming these developments, the report argued that a much greater Government cash injection was required to bring down the interest rate on Green Deal loans and to boost the numbers of households taken out of fuel poverty. The report was also welcomed and it was encouraged to disseminate it widely.

The NFLA Secretary noted that the NFLA English Forum seminar following the Steering Committee would be considering the development of shale gas and fracking. This would be a major issue for Councils who will be receiving planning applications from companies over the next year. NFLA are concerned of the potential for natural radiation and radon gas to be brought to the service by fracking and await a public consultation on this matter from Public Health England in the summer.

***Agreed: To note the report and welcome the NFLA Policy Briefings. To continue to monitor the issue of shale gas and fracking.***

### **8. Fukushima and nuclear safety**

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on the state of the stricken Fukushima nuclear reactors and wider issues around nuclear safety standards.

#### ***ENSREG Conference on Post Fukushima Nuclear Safety and EU Directive -***

The European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) met in Brussels on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June to consider the state of nuclear safety in Europe over two years after the Fukushima disaster.

At the Conference, a new EU Nuclear Safety Directive was launched. The Directive would seek to align the EU's nuclear safety framework with the latest technical standards, lessons learned from the Fukushima 'stress tests' of nuclear reactors in the EU and accident investigations of the Fukushima incident. The Directive will enhance the role of national regulatory authorities and would cover all stages of the nuclear fuel lifecycle. The Directive would also encourage a greater level of openness and transparency. The NFLA Secretariat is discussing with the Vienna Secretariat and other groups over developing a new NFLA Policy Briefing on the Directive.

#### ***General Fukushima update -***

The owners of the stricken Fukushima site, Tepco, have confirmed that groundwater contaminated with highly radioactive substances has been detected from a monitoring well just 27 metres from the seashore close to the crippled No 1 reactor. Strontium-90 readings 33 times the legal limit have been recorded. Tepco is planning to build a bank protection along the shore that will be strengthened by waterproof liquid glass in an effort to prevent the contaminated ground water reach the sea.

Tepco have also admitted that its Advanced Liquid Processing System, which is designed to remove a variety of radioactive contaminants from water used to cool the reactors at Fukushima, has sprung a leak. The cause of the leak is being investigated, but it is believed areas near the welds on system may be malfunctioning. The NFLA Secretariat will undertake a further update of the Fukushima incident in conjunction with the Policy Briefing on nuclear safety noted above.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

## **9. Radioactive waste management**

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on developments in radioactive waste management policy.

### ***Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) process: DECC consultation -***

Following the decision by Cumbria County Council not to go ahead with the next stage of the MRWS process to find a potentially suitable site for a deep-underground radioactive waste repository, the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has published a consultation seeking views on 'lessons learned' from the process and the way forward. The NFLA Secretariat has responded to this consultation and its model response can be found on the NFLA website. A more detailed public consultation from DECC will follow in the autumn and its formal policy will be agreed upon in 2014.

### ***Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) radioactive waste consultation -***

The NFLA Secretariat provided model responses to members to respond to two NDA radioactive waste consultations. The submissions provided draft strategies for the optimisation of dealing with fuel element debris from Magnox nuclear power stations and for optimisation of sites in England and Wales for the interim storage of intermediate level radioactive waste. The NFLA model response can be found at its website. Its main point is that the proposed strategy contravenes the NFLA's environmental principles by encouraging diluting and dispersing waste rather than by dealing with it on-site.

### ***Developments at Sellafield -***

The Sellafield site owners were fined £700,000 for incorrectly sending several bags of low level radioactive waste to a local authority landfill site. This incident, and a number of damning reports on its activities by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, has seen specialist media reports that the NDA is considering terminating the contract of the current Sellafield management company as early as September 2013.

The NFLA Secretariat also publicised a CORE (Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment) media release over an incident where the wrong type of chemical was mistakenly placed in a storage tank at the Sellafield Thorp tank. The error was fortunately spotted later on and an accident averted.

The NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary will be visiting the Sellafield site on 10<sup>th</sup> July as part of a site visit organised by NuLEAF.

### ***Dalgety Bay and Dounreay matters -***

In early June 2013 the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) published its current risk assessment of the Dalgety Bay site. This concluded "that some areas of the foreshore at Dalgety Bay would meet the relevant criteria for designation as 'Radioactive Contaminated Land'. SEPA is developing its main report which will be published shortly and is looking for a voluntary solution acceptable to Fife Council and the MOD over decontaminating the area.

At Dounreay it has been reported that equipment used at the beaches near the site to find radioactive particles have had to be modified. This is to improve detection rates following the discovery of a particle containing Beta radiation rather than the usual gamma radiation particles found on the local beaches. The Dounreay site owners have said there will be no underwater sweeps for radioactive particles in 2013. In the period 2008 – 12 over 2200 particles have been recovered, of which 409 were considered as significant in terms of their impact on health.

### ***Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS -***

The LGA group on nuclear decommissioning and radioactive waste matters, NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum) is holding a site visit to Sellafield on the 10<sup>th</sup> July and a business meeting in Whitehaven on the 11<sup>th</sup> July to which the NFLA Secretary and NFLA Chair will be attending.

The Secretariat of SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) has transferred from Dundee City Council to North Ayrshire Council. Its next business meeting is planned for late August.

### ***MOD Submarine Decommissioning Project (SDP) -***

The NFLA Secretary attended the SDP Advisory Group meeting in Edinburgh on the 30<sup>th</sup> May. The meeting reviewed the MOD's recent decision to remove and store the reactor pressure vessel of redundant nuclear powered submarines, with a demonstrator built at the Rosyth. The meeting considered future stakeholder engagement. The NFLA Secretary also attended a sub-group meeting considering the options and potential sites for interim storage of intermediate level radioactive waste from the submarines. Local government will play a major role in this further consultation process.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

## **10. Low level radiation and health issues**

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on issues relating to the potential effects of low level radiation on human health.

### ***Radiation in Food monitoring procedures review -***

In early June 2013, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) announced their response to the public review of the way it monitors radioactivity in the food environment (RIFE). The NFLA had responded to this consultation and the report can be found on the NFLA website. The NFLA response concluded that the current programme for monitoring doses of marine derived radioactivity in food undertaken by the FSA is not fit for purpose, in that it can not provide sufficient data to justify the FSA claim that there is a "low risk from radioactivity in food".

The FSA has decided not to take on board the concerns of the NFLA and other groups by continuing with their 'preferred option' – maintaining consumer safety with a more proportionate surveillance programme in line with low risks from radioactivity in food. This would include continuing to monitor food around all licensed nuclear sites while reducing background monitoring away from nuclear sites. It would also involve no longer financially supporting monitoring programmes around the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. The NFLA Secretary is looking to publicise these cuts in a media release and discussing further action with the marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones, who developed the NFLA response.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

## **11. Nuclear emergency planning**

The NFLA Secretary was continuing to pursue with DECC and the ONR a wide-ranging meeting on post-Fukushima reforms to the nuclear emergency planning regime with other national NGOs. The NFLA Secretariat had been able to publicise a number of nuclear emergency planning concerns in the national media around nuclear weapons convoys planning, the size of emergency planning zones around nuclear sites and the amount of potassium iodate tablets in the wider area around reactors. The Steering Committee agreed that a special seminar on such matters should be held in Glasgow on the 21<sup>st</sup> September.

***Agreed: To note the report and support a special seminar on nuclear emergency planning.***

## **12. Date of next NFLA Steering Committee meeting**

The next meeting will be on ***Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October in Manchester Town Hall from 11am – 1pm.***