

# Nuclear Free Local Authorities

# briefing



Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

No.123

Subject: Summary of NFLA Steering Committee, Manchester Town Hall, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014

1. **Introduction**

The NFLA Steering Committee meeting was opened by the NFLA Chair, who welcomed all to Manchester Town Hall. The NFLA Chair encouraged members to stay on for the afternoon tour of Manchester Central Library and to view parts of the NFLA archive.

2. **National NFLA Forum meetings**

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of the work of the NFLA Forums:

**NFLA English Forum –**

A joint NFLA English Forum / Steering Committee seminar was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> March in Leeds Civic Hall. Dr Ian Fairlie provided an informative presentation on the radiation issues around the shale gas fracking process, and CND National Chair Dave Webb talked about progress with the Trident replacement issue in the UK. Stephen Cirrell, a former local government energy officer and now an independent consultant, provided an informative overview about the development of local authority energy service companies (see Agenda Item 8). The presentations are on the NFLA website.

The NFLA Secretary is approaching Oxford City Council to host a NFLA English Forum meeting in October / November. This will look at issues around Aldermaston and Burghfield and Trident replacement and will be jointly organised with other NGOs interested in the nuclear weapons issue.

**NFLA Scotland Forum –**

NFLA Scotland held a business meeting in Clydebank Town Hall on the 7<sup>th</sup> February. The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor gave a wide-ranging presentation on nuclear policy issues of interest to the Forum. There was considerable discussion by members around the NFLA's stance on the Dalgety Bay issue, submarine dismantling, alternatives to nuclear power, progress with SCCORS and CND Scotland's Walk for Peace initiative. The meeting agreed that the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor develop a model response on the Scottish Government's draft renewable heat policy, to update NFLA policy in this area (which is of interest to all four NFLA Forums).

The Clydebank meeting also agreed that the NFLA Secretariat should investigate the possibility of requesting Highland Council to host a business meeting and seminar in Inverness, possibly on the 15<sup>th</sup> August. The NFLA Secretary has been discussing this matter with the local community group, Highlands against Nuclear Transport (HANT).

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The NFLA Scotland Forum will host the 2014 NFLA UK & Ireland AGM on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, which Edinburgh City Council has kindly agreed to host. As this will be the first meeting after the Scottish independence referendum, the NFLA Secretary is planning to organise a seminar looking at nuclear weapons issues leading in to the 2015 UK General Election and the 2015 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

#### **NFLA All Ireland Forum –**

Newry & Mourne District Council hosted a business meeting and seminar for the NFLA All Ireland Forum on the 11<sup>th</sup> April in Newry Council Offices. The business meeting allowed for a useful discussion with NFLA Irish representatives on the implications of major local government re-organisation and the key issues which Forum members want the NFLA to pursue in Ireland.

A seminar was also held with Matt Kennedy of the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland spoke on developing renewable energy in Ireland, Declan Allison of Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland spoke on why Ireland should not embrace shale gas fracking, and the NFLA Secretary spoke on nuclear issues impacting on Ireland. The presentations have gone on the NFLA website.

#### **NFLA Welsh Forum –**

There has been no NFLA Welsh Forum meeting since the last Steering Committee meeting, due to the European elections. The NFLA Secretariat is liaising with Cardiff City Council to consider hosting a seminar in October after the summer recess.

The NFLA Secretariat has developed a detailed response to the Welsh Government's review of its higher activity radioactive waste policy (see Agenda Item 4). This has been submitted with a media release and will be profiled at the next NFLA Welsh Forum seminar.

***Agreed: To note the report and encourage NFLA members to attend Forum meetings.***

### **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 -***

As reported at the last Steering Committee meeting, a detailed joint submission, supported by the Stop Hinkley group and fully endorsed by the Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe (CNFE), was submitted to the European Commission in March. The Commission is considering it and a number of other detailed responses as part of its policy process in deciding whether the UK Government's proposed financing energy 'strike price' deal with EDF is a legal subsidy. The NFLA response is on the NFLA website.

The European Commission's decision on the proposed Hinkley deal is expected in the late summer or at the latest by the end of the year. The NFLA Secretary has also assisted the CNFE Secretariat write a letter of concern to the European Commission, after public comments made over the deal by Jan Koopman, the Commission's Deputy Director General for Competition and in charge of state aid control. A useful response was provided to the CNFE stating that the Commission was carefully considering all aspects of the proposed Hinkley deal.

EDF at Hinkley Point have announced that preparatory work on the new build site is due to step up in the summer, and would then move ahead should the Commission give approval of the strike price deal later in the year.

A joint report written by the Professor David Howarth and Dr Simon Deakin of the Centre of Business Research at Cambridge University agrees with the European Commission's earlier public concerns over the strike price deal being a 'valid' deal in law. The report highlights "a number of legal flaws" in the Government's contract with EDF, suggesting that the company could make "excessive returns". The cost of public subsidies for the project could also "vastly

exceed the cost of even the most extensive power outages that might happen” if the plant is not built.

#### ***Other new nuclear build site developments –***

The NFLA Secretariat has submitted a response in early May 2014 to DECC’s public consultation on legally ‘justifying’ the Nuclear Industry Association’s application for building the Advanced Boiling Water Reactor (ABWR) design at the sites Wylfa and Oldbury, owned now by Hitachi. The response is on the NFLA website. The NFLA response argued that the Minister should not justify the ABWR for public health, environmental, economic and technological issues. DECC’s initial decision on this matter is expected at the end of the year.

The other design for new nuclear build, Westinghouse’s AP-1000, was already ‘justified’ at the same time as EDF’s EPR design was approved. The AP-1000 also went through the first stage of the Office for Nuclear Regulation’s (ONR) Generic Design Assessment. It did not go further due to RWE and E-on pulling out of the Wylfa and Oldbury sites, which were then subsequently bought by Hitachi. With Westinghouse’s owner, Toshiba, taking a majority stake in the Sellafield Moorside site it is expected that it will seek to recommence this process with the ONR and Environment Agency shortly.

#### ***UN concerns on new nuclear / Irish National Trust judicial review of nuclear new build –***

The United Nations Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (ESPOO) has written to the UK Government accusing it of ‘*suspicious actions*’ over plans to develop Hinkley Point C. It expresses concern about a lack of consultation with neighbouring countries, including Ireland, over potential risks posed by Hinkley and a failure to notify countries which could potentially be affected by fallout or pollution from Hinkley, regardless of how unlikely an accident is. Under UN and European law, neighbouring countries must be contacted unless such risks can be ruled out.

The letter argues that “[t]he committee found that there was a profound suspicion of non-compliance”. The Committee has said UK Government representatives will be called before a hearing in December to explain their actions. The committee also said concerns have been raised over Hinkley Point C by the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Norway. It found that, bar “informal exchanges” with the Irish Government and contacts with Austria following an official approach, Britain did not effectively inform other neighbouring states of its plans.

The impact of this letter may have played a part in a decision of the High Court to grant the group An Taisce / Irish National Trust leave to appeal on its judicial review of the Government’s approval of the Hinkley Point planning application to the Court of Appeal. An Taisce argues that the UK government’s decision to approve Hinkley Point C nuclear plant (on England’s west coast), without first consulting the public in Ireland, is contrary to international, EU and English law. The case is likely to be heard before the end of the summer.

***Agreed: To note the report. To continue to monitor these developments and co-operate with CNFE in opposing 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 Government policies on radioactive waste management.

#### ***Welsh Government policy on higher activity radioactive waste management –***

In late March the Welsh Government announced a consultation seeking views on whether it should make a full review of its policy on the management of radioactive waste. Since 2008 – 2014 the Welsh Government has reserved its view on the benefits of develop a deep underground radioactive waste repository or alternative policies.

In its submission to the Welsh Government consultation the NFLA argued:

- With final site clearance of Welsh nuclear sites not due till the latter end of the century, there is plenty of time not to rush to decisions over development of a deep underground waste repository for Welsh higher activity waste.

- The Welsh Government should investigate why the UK Government's policy process in Cumbria failed. NFLA argue there remain too many uncertainties about how packaged nuclear waste will behave in a deep-underground facility.
- The Welsh Government should withdraw from the UK Government's Managing Radioactive Waste Safely process until it is made clear that the objective is to look for the best available geology for the job, rather than making use of mediocre geology and relying more heavily on engineered barriers.
- The Welsh Government should implement CoRWM's recommendation that a quite separate discussion should be held on the political and ethical issues raised by creating new wastes by building new reactors.
- The NFLA encourages the Welsh Government to adopt the Scottish Government's policy of 'near site, near surface' management over deep disposal.

As with the UK Government's policy process on developing a deep underground radioactive waste repository, a decision on the Welsh Government policy is expected in the autumn.

#### ***Sellafield Thorp plant and overseas origin waste contracts–***

The NFLA Secretariat has responded to a DECC consultation on proposals to allow the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) to manage by means of interim storage and disposal small quantities of overseas origin oxide fuels that are either not economic to reprocess or cannot be reprocessed in the THORP facility before it closes in 2018.

NFLA's conclusions to this consultation are:

- It is hard to understand why most of the 30 tonnes of spent fuel was imported to Sellafield from overseas in the first place.
- Since some of these contracts could involve returning bomb-grade uranium to the country of origin, NFLA hopes that paramount importance will be given to the proliferation implications of any final deal.
- NFLA believes that, by applying environmental principles to decision-making about overseas spent fuel remaining at Sellafield, THORP reprocessing should stop as soon as possible and transportation of nuclear materials, waste, plutonium and highly enriched uranium, should only be undertaken if it is impossible to come to agreement with the companies who signed reprocessing contracts BNFL.

#### ***Concern over coastal erosion at the Drigg LLWR site -***

A released Environment Agency report says that it is virtually certain the UK's Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) at Drigg (near Sellafield) in West Cumbria is susceptible to erosion due to rising sea levels and wider coastal erosion. The report says that the one million cubic metres of radioactive waste disposed of over the last 55 years will start leaking onto the shoreline in "a few hundred to a few thousand years from now". The erosion is part of the anticipated effects of climate change.

The document has come out as the Environment Agency considers a plan by the LLWR operator to store a further 800,000 cubic metres of low level radioactive waste over the next 100 years. A bald statement from the report is worth noting: "It is doubtful whether the location of the LLWR site would be chosen for a new facility for near-surface radioactive waste disposal if the choice were being made now."

LLWR Ltd noted that it had introduced new restrictions on the amounts of radioactivity that can be disposed of at the site in order to make sure that radiation doses to people will be "very small" if the wastes are exposed by coastal erosion. However, as Martin Forward, from CORE has pointed out, more than 1,200 radioactive particles from Sellafield have been found on nearby beaches in recent years. He said: "This should be warning enough of the insidious pollution that can be expected as coastal erosion gathers pace and inundates Drigg, spewing its toxic inventory far and wide. The potent threat of rising sea levels makes the future use of the site unsustainable, unethical and highly dangerous for future generations."

### ***Sellafield fails to meet its targets again -***

For the ninth successive year, the Sellafield Magnox reprocessing has missed its annual target – reprocessing 470 tonnes compared to a target of 660 tonnes for 2013/14. This failure was blamed on an extended outage in summer 2014 and a ‘blockage’ accident forcing its closure for 6 weeks between February and April.

Sellafield Ltd has placed a target of 529 tonnes for 2014/15 and, if achieved, it would still be on course to reprocess the remaining 2970 tonnes by the end of its scheduled 2020 closure date. It is acknowledged by the company that the frailty of the reprocessing plant meant that this target could not be guaranteed.

In the same 2013/14 period the Sellafield THORP reprocessing plant also failed to meet its target of 423 tonnes, reprocessing instead 346 tonnes. The 2014/15 target for it has been set at 439 tonnes in order to ensure it can be closed on schedule by the end of 2018. As NFLA Policy Advisor Pete Roche has pointed out: “For a plant designed to reprocess 1200 tonnes per year, this low projected annual throughput of around 400 tonnes reflects the catalogue of technical problems and accidents that have dogged THORP since it started operating in 1994 – the 2005 leakage accident (which closed the plant for over 2 years) resulting in irreparable damage which, in one stroke, reduced future throughput performance by some 50%.” If the THORP plant had to continue operating beyond 2018 the NDA may be forced to procure replacement highly active storage tanks, which would cost around £500 million.

### ***Dalgety Bay contamination –***

In May, after a delay of over six months, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) allowed publication of a report on the potential public health effects from radioactive contamination around the beach of Dalgety Bay in Fife. This was only due to the leaking of the COMARE (Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment) report to *The Guardian* newspaper.

COMARE found that there is a potential public health risk at Dalgety Bay and called on the MOD to clean up the site as soon as possible. It also raised concerns over other potentially contaminated sites around the UK. NFLA noted how some of the COMARE concerns were slightly diluted when the final report was eventually published, compared to the report leaked to *The Guardian*. An announcement from the MOD on its preferred strategy to remediate the site is expected shortly, and NFLA will continue to monitor the issue with Fife Council.

### ***RPII report on the impact of new nuclear build on Ireland –***

The NFLA Secretariat and the NFLA All Ireland Co Chairs have received a detailed 78 page analysis by independent nuclear consultant Tim Deere-Jones considering the marine pollution and waste issues from the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland’s (RPII) report on UK new nuclear build and its potential impact on Ireland. The NFLA Secretary is discussing with the NFLA All Ireland Forum Chairs the timing on publishing this report and sending it to the RPII, possibly in conjunction with other organisations. A meeting with the RPII and the Irish Government is also to be requested.

### ***Update on the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) –***

CoRWM held a very well attended public meeting in Workington, Cumbria to explain their role and listen to the views of the local community. A range of issues were raised by the audience, including how to engender trust in the siting process for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF), how to define a community, and how to enshrine the right of withdrawal to a community.

This is the first of three planned public meetings hosted by CoRWM in 2014 and will be followed by a meeting in Thurso, Caithness in July, and another in Anglesey in September.

### ***Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS–***

NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum) held an informative seminar on the 16<sup>th</sup> June about the roles of the nuclear regulators and how relevant waste reviews may impact on the operation of local authorities. The NFLA Chair attended this seminar. The next NuLEAF Steering Group meeting will be held in Lancashire County Hall on the 24<sup>th</sup> July.

The SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) Secretariat is still seeking another Council to take over from North Ayrshire. The NFLA Secretary is aware that Edinburgh City Council is in the process of considering hosting the Secretariat. Councillor Gardner from Edinburgh City Council confirmed that this process is still ongoing.

#### ***MOD Submarine Decommissioning Project (SDP)/ Rosyth site decommissioning –***

The NFLA Secretary and the NFLA Chair attended a stakeholder workshop on the shortlist of five sites being considered to host intermediate level radioactive waste from decommissioned submarines. A robust and engaging discussion took place. Councillors and Council officers from Cumbria, Copeland, Dumfries and Galloway and South Ayrshire Councils were also in attendance. The NFLA Secretary is a member of the SDP sub-group analysing the two workshops and providing advice to the MOD on the way forward. The next meeting of this group is on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July in Bristol.

The NFLA Secretariat has also produced a response for NFLA Scotland and Fife Council on the proposed decommissioning of the Rosyth site. This was approved by the Steering Committee and can be found on the NFLA website.

#### ***Deep underground waste repository closed in United States –***

The long-standing concerns that the NFLA has over deep underground repositories is exemplified by a fire incident and temporary closure of the world's only functioning deep waste repository in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), USA. Waste barrels at the New Mexico's Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) were packed with nitrate salts and organic cat litter different from the clay-based cat litter previously used. It is believed the combination of materials set off a heat-generating chemical reaction that caused at least one such barrel inside the WIPP repository to fail, releasing radiation into the environment on February 14<sup>th</sup> and subjecting 22 workers to radiation contamination. That was followed by a second, smaller radiation release on March 11<sup>th</sup>.

The number and location of vulnerable waste drums is unclear. More than 500 drums may be at risk. Up to 368 vulnerable drums are at WIPP; 57 at LANL; more than 100 at a temporary site in Andrews, west Texas used as a storage site since WIPP was closed in February; and some vulnerable drums may also be located at LANL's northern New Mexico campus.

A US Department of the Environment (DOE) appointed Accident Investigation Board released a report into the accidental radiation release on April 24<sup>th</sup>. The Accident Investigation Board identified the "root cause" of the accident to be the many failings of Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP), the contractor that operates the WIPP site, and the DOE's Carlsbad Field Office. The report criticises their "failure to fully understand, characterise, and control the radiological hazard. The cumulative effect of inadequacies in ventilation system design and operability compounded by degradation of key safety management programs and safety culture resulted in the release of radioactive material from the underground to the environment, and the delayed / ineffective recognition and response to the release."

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

#### **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.

#### ***Mayors for Peace International Development -***

As of June 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, 6,084 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace in 157 countries. The 6000 member milestone was celebrated in separate Mayors for Peace and NFLA media releases.

A Mayors for Peace international delegation, led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, attended the third NPT Preparatory Conference in New York in April 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> 2014. Mayors for Peace delegates met with the UN Disarmament Commissioner Angela Kane and the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki spoke at the NGO session within the Preparatory

Conference. A very successful side event was also held at which schoolchildren from Hiroshima and Nagasaki spoke about the experience of their grandparents in August 1945.

The Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign also held its Annual General Meeting in Sarajevo on June 8<sup>th</sup> in the City Hall around the 'Sarajevo Peace Event' conference and festival. The NFLA Chair, as Manchester's representative, was asked to Chair the meeting. The meeting discussed the Campaign's planned events programme leading up to the 2015 NPT Review Conference, its annual financial statement and the development of national chapters. Mayors for Peace also held 2 workshops – on its 'Cities are Not Targets!' campaign and on 'Elected officials and civil society – promoting peace together'. There was also a special meeting with some Bosnian Mayors at which the NFLA Chair provided contacts on other issues such as landmines and flood alleviation after major recent flooding in Bosnia. The Peace Weekend brought together over 200 NGOs from around the world, with over 150 workshops taking place over the weekend, as well as a film festival, arts festival and Youth Peace Camp.

The Secretary General of Mayors for Peace took part in a separate event to open the 'Making Peace' exhibition in Sarajevo on June 28<sup>th</sup>. This included a ceremony to plant seeds from Hiroshima A-bomb affected trees at a central site in Sarajevo and coinciding with the anniversary of the centenary commencement of the First World War.

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

The NFLA Secretary, in his quite separate role as UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Working Group Secretary, has developed a Discussion Paper on the development of a UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter. The paper considers the major logistical issues in developing a Chapter, what its membership and remit may be, and the level of a voluntary membership fee.

The NFLA Steering Committee welcomed the report as a way to develop the Mayors for Peace separate from the NFLA. It felt a short executive summary and shorter questionnaire would be useful, and a follow up with phone interviews of some Mayors for Peace members. The discussion paper will go out in mid July. A meeting of the Mayors for Peace Working Group would be established for afternoon of the 3<sup>rd</sup> October in Manchester Town Hall, where consideration of the development of a national chapter can be made.

#### ***Bike for Peace Scotland tour –***

Following the success of its March – May 2014 Global Tour, the Norwegian 'Bike for Peace' group is now co-operating with Mayors for Peace to organise country specific tours over the next 12 months. The first of these is planned for Scotland from July 16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>. The NFLA Secretary, in his role as UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Working Group Secretary, is liaising with the Provost Offices and / or NFLA representatives in Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth, Stirling, Paisley and Glasgow to organise local welcomes for the Norwegian Mayoral delegation.

***Agreed: To note the report and co-operate with a full dissemination of the Mayors for Peace Discussion Paper.***

## **6. Nuclear Weapons update**

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

#### ***Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Conference and follow-up -***

There were mixed outcomes from the third Preparatory Conference of the 2010 – 2014 review period and some signs of frustration and stalemate. A useful review of the Conference from ICAN's Rebecca Johnson was provided to the Steering Committee. In May, 2015 the five-yearly Review Conference which formally discusses implementation of the Treaty will take place, and Mayors for Peace are considering their lobbying strategy for it. In the meantime, NGOs and non-nuclear weapon states are concentrating their efforts on the continuing momentum arising from the International Conferences on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons. The third of these conferences will be hosted by the Austrian Government in Vienna on December 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 2014.

### ***Dounreay Vulcan test reactor radiological concerns -***

As noted at the last NFLA Steering Committee meeting, in early March the UK Defence Minister Philip Hammond informed Parliament that in January 2012 low levels of radioactivity had been detected in cooling water surrounding a prototype reactor core at the Naval Reactor Test Establishment (NRTE) at Dounreay. No radioactivity should have been in the cooling water and the reactor was shut down for much of 2012 while investigations were carried out. There was considerable public criticism of the MOD from the Scottish Government, the Labour Opposition at Parliament, local councils and NGOs. A joint letter of concern was sent to the nuclear regulatory agencies by NGOs and by NFLA member Shetland Island Council.

### ***Trident debate up to the 2015 UK general election –***

The run-up to the 2015 UK General Election provides a prime opportunity to raise concerns around the financial, political and moral costs of Trident replacement. As an example, CND's Vice President Bruce Kent has undertaken a national tour focused on faith communities called 'No Faith in Trident'. This culminated in a national lobby of the UK Parliament on 11<sup>th</sup> June. The lobby was supported by Christian CND, Pax Christi, Religions for Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Church of Scotland, the United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship, the Methodist Peace Fellowship and the Baptist Peace Fellowship. All these groups endeavoured to contact each of the 650 MPs.

The NFLA Secretary has been invited to a meeting of nuclear disarmament groups which will be held in the summer in London. This will focus on a more joined up campaign over the next year. The NFLA English Forum is planning to be a part of this process with a joint seminar in the autumn. The NFLA Annual Policy Seminar in Edinburgh in December will focus on nuclear weapons issues following the Scottish independence referendum.

### ***Defence nuclear safety – concern over lack of skilled staff***

In late May 2014, *The Sunday Herald* published figures released in a Parliamentary answer highlighting a severe and worsening shortage of skilled nuclear engineers at the Bases maintaining Trident submarines and other defence nuclear sites. The figures showed that over 10% of nuclear safety posts at the Bases were now vacant, a figure that has risen over the past two years. As noted in previous Steering Committee reports, the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator has warned the staffing crisis 'poses a significant threat to the safety of the defence nuclear programme'.

In the Parliamentary answer, the Ministry of Defence confirmed that they are short of 165 suitably qualified engineering personnel as of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014. 67 vacancies exist at the Defence Equipment and Support facility at Abbey Wood in Bristol, with a further 60 vacancies relating to nuclear submarine activities and 26 vacancies at Faslane and Coulport.

The independent nuclear engineering consultant John Large argued that, if these vacancies are not filled there could become an issue in some safety critical parts of the defence nuclear programme. The NFLA Secretary is including these concerns in a Policy Briefing on nuclear safety, nuclear security and nuclear emergency planning being developed at present, and to be completed over the summer.

***Agreed: To note the report. The NFLA Secretariat to develop policy briefings on nuclear safety and security, and on the Trident replacement debate.***

## **7. Fukushima and nuclear safety**

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

### ***EDF seeking approval to reduce safety limits at Dungeness –***

Following media stories originating with the BBC, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) confirmed that it is positively considering a request from EDF to increase the level of degradation in the graphite bricks surrounding the nuclear core of the Dungeness reactor in Kent from 6.2% to 8%. The ONR noted: "ONR would not allow continued operation of any nuclear reactor unless it was safe to do so. We recognise the challenges presented by ageing



of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR) fleet in the UK, and we continue to pay close attention to the problems associated with the graphite core of the reactors. We are satisfied that the reactors are safe to operate."

The bricks are losing weight due to decades of degradation from the radiation. The increase is within international safety limits, but the ONR are considering the request in more detail. Steve Thomas, Professor of Energy Policy at the University of Greenwich, told the BBC: "It doesn't feel good when we come up against limits and the first thing they (the ONR) do is to move the goalposts."

#### ***ONR becomes independent agency and update –***

At the beginning of April 2014, the ONR became a fully independent agency separate from the Health and Safety Executive with its own structure and charter. The new Chief Nuclear Inspector is Andy Hall, who the NFLA Secretary has engaged with at previous meetings of ONR NGO Forums. Andy Hall has also just been appointed as the new Chair of the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) – the body which liaises on nuclear safety with the European Commission.

For the past 3 years, the NFLA Secretary has attended meetings of the ONR NGO Forum, which seeks to allow NGOs the opportunity to discuss with senior ONR staff the remit of its nuclear regulation. The most recent meeting was held in early May and considered the ONR's Annual Safety Report, nuclear emergency planning issues and the role of the ONR in reference to radioactive waste matters. The meeting was robust and there was plenty of challenge as NGO members try to ascertain what the ONR's new legal independence meant in terms of its engagement strategy with NGOs and the wider public.

After the meeting, the CEO of the ONR, John Jenkins, raised concerns to NGOs that the Forum needed reform due to 'unreasonable' debate and challenge on some of his staff. The NFLA Secretary has responded in detail to this letter. In discussion, the Steering Committee felt the comments made by the NFLA Secretary were well reasoned and fair, and they expect the ONR to be able to accept reasonable, but robust, challenge.

#### ***Fukushima update –***

The Japanese nuclear regulator has given approval to TEPCO to construct an underground 'ice wall' around the four damaged nuclear reactors to prevent incoming groundwater from becoming contaminated. The Japanese Government has pledged \$313 million for the project, which will take around a year to construct. TEPCO have already implemented a groundwater bypass scheme as part of a more determined approach to reduce the amount of radioactive groundwater requiring storage and treatment in temporary tanks on the site.

More than 1,000 tanks containing contaminated water now exist on the site. No final decision has been made as to what to do with this water. It is hoped the 'ice wall' will reduce outside groundwater inflow to 130 tonnes a day. The ice wall technique has been used previously in tunnel construction near watercourse, but has never been done on such a large scale.

The testimony of the (recently deceased) Fukushima plant manager at the time of the disaster has been made public, noting that about 90% of the plant's workers left the premises despite being ordered to stay after the reactor meltdown. This included most of the nuclear safety inspectors employed by the Japanese Government's Nuclear Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), which was disbanded after the disaster due to it being seen as too close to the industry. This report had been leaked to the media and the Government's Chief Cabinet Secretary said it was never to have been made public. It bursts some of the myth of the brave 'Fukushima 50' valiantly trying to make safe the reactors. Without the safety inspectors, the information being given by the Plant Operators to the Japanese Government was erratic and chaotic, severely hindering the emergency response.

An analysis by Reuters suggests the Japanese Government's push for the re-opening of nuclear power stations is likely to see 14 reactors restarted over 8 sites. In such sites local public opposition is limited and the Japanese Nuclear Regulation Authority has fast-tracked the

reopening process. The position of a further 16 reactors is classed as 'uncertain' due to large levels of public and political opposition and surveys by the JNRA.. The other 18 reactors are unlikely to ever 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 Briefings on Local Authority Energy Service Companies / Trusts -***

Over the past two years the NFLA Secretariat has developed a whole suite of well researched documents for member authorities on various aspects of energy policy highlighting the benefits of renewable energy, microgeneration and energy efficiency. The NFLA Secretariat is developing a Policy Briefing encouraging Councils to consider developing 'Energy Service Companies' (ESCO's) and 'Energy Trusts'. Glasgow, Birmingham, Nottingham and Bristol City Councils in particular have been developing this type of initiative and the NFLA Secretary is liaising with officers from these Councils to develop further information.

A draft briefing was distributed to members for consideration and discussion. It should be fully completed by mid July and would then be disseminated to Councils. The report is an excellent opportunity for NFLA to promote a more definitive non nuclear local authority energy policy.

### ***NFLA Scotland renewable heat consultation submission –***

At the NFLA Scotland meeting in Clydebank it was agreed that the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor should provide a model response to the Scottish Government draft renewable heat generation policy. Whilst welcoming the policy, the model response encouraged the Scottish Government to be even more ambitious. The model response is on the NFLA website.

The consultation response allowed for a greater consideration of the potential benefits of geothermal energy and more expansive district heating schemes. Though developed for a Scottish Government response, the submission should be of interest across the UK & Ireland.

### ***Irish Government Green Energy Paper -***

In early May 2014 the Republic of Ireland's Energy Minister Pat Rabbitte announced an Irish Government Green Paper considering the future development of energy policy and how it could reduce its dependence on fossil fuels.

Though welcome in many areas, the Green Paper postulated on the potential development of a small modular nuclear reactor at a site in Moneypoint, County Clare, replacing an existing coal fired power station. In his public pronouncement the Minister argued that the Green Paper should consider if nuclear power has a role to play in Ireland's future energy use. The Steering Committee agreed that a submission should be made to the consultation emphasising the need for non nuclear options in future Irish energy generation.

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

## **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.

### ***Effects of Fukushima disaster on public health in North East Japan –***

A report in the Japan Times notes that published health figures from the Fukushima Prefecture highlight a significant increase in the amount of children developing thyroid cancer. This type of cancer was particularly prevalent in children affected in Belarus by the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. It is probably too early still to determine a causal link between the increase and the Fukushima disaster, but it still a disturbing statistic.

In early April UNSCEAR (the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation) published its first report on the likely public health effects of Fukushima. The report was considered by independent radiation consultant and former CERRIE (Committee Examining Radiation Risks of Internal Emitters) member Dr Ian Fairlie, in a report on his website. Using the figures from the report, Dr Fairlie surmises around 5,000 people may die of cancers from Fukushima radiation fall-out. Steering Committee members were also provided with a wider critique of the UNSCEAR report from the group IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War).

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

#### **10. Nuclear emergency planning and nuclear materials transportation**

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

##### ***ONR Safety Assessment Principles consultation -***

One of the NFLA's main concerns around nuclear emergency planning is the size of the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) around civil and defence nuclear sites. The DEPZ is the area which would be evacuated (if safe to do so) in the event of a serious incident at a site. In late May, the ONR confirmed that the DEPZ for Sizewell would be increased slightly to take into account the local town of Leiston, and ensure the zone was more practically drawn to take account of a more effective emergency response. An outer information zone has also been slightly increased.

The NFLA Secretariat has consistently argued that the DEPZ should be made significantly larger, given the learning points from the Fukushima incident. There is now opportunity to reiterate these concerns as the ONR are launching on the 16<sup>th</sup> June a consultation reviewing its 'Safety Assessment Principles' (SAP). The NFLA Secretariat plans to develop a full consultation response consistent with its 2012 nuclear emergency planning policy briefing.

##### ***Nuclear transportation concerns –***

At the last Steering Committee meeting, the NFLA Secretary noted its detailed Policy Briefing providing an overview of concerns with the transportation of nuclear materials by sea of a type of 'roll on, roll off' vessel. These do not seem to be covered by the same level of strict guidelines as, for example, MOX shipments from Sellafield. The report has now also been sent to the UK and Irish Governments, devolved governments, the UK Parliamentary Transport Select Committee, relevant trade unions and the International Maritime Organisation.

The Secretary General of the International Maritime Organisation has requested a meeting with the NFLA Chair, NFLA Secretary and report author Tim Deere-Jones. This has been set for the 7<sup>th</sup> July at IMO Headquarters in London. This very welcome development allows the NFLA to raise the concerns of the report at an international level.

***Agreed: To note the report and respond to the ONR SAP consultation.***

#### **11. Nuclear Test Veterans**

The NFLA Secretary provided a short report noting co-operation between the NFLA and the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association (BNTVA). The NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary had been invited to recently speak at the BNTVA Annual Conference. NFLA members were also encouraged to pass model resolutions supporting the BNTVA campaign for justice and compensation. Film screenings of a documentary on the veterans were being planned by the BNTVA and would be shown at venues around the UK.

***Agreed: To note the report and encourage NFLA members to pass Council resolutions supporting the BNTVA.***

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

The next Steering Committee meeting is planned for ***Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October in Manchester Town Hall from 11am – 1pm.***