

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: October 2005

All Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities Forum launched

This briefing note updates members and officers of local authorities in Ireland about recent developments in establishing a forum for Irish local authorities to work together to campaign and undertake policy research on nuclear issues that affect Ireland.

All Ireland Forum begins work: Representatives of each NFLA member authority in Ireland met in Dublin on 23 September to discuss arrangements for establishing a forum to allow Irish members to work together. At the meeting it was agreed that a new All Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities Forum would be formed to bring together member authorities from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

NFLA's current members in Northern Ireland are Down District Council and Newry and Mourne District Council and the Dublin Regional Authority, South Dublin County Council, and Louth County Council in the Republic of Ireland.

Councillor Michael O'Dowd from Louth County Council agreed to chair the forum on an interim basis, and it was agreed that the forum would meet twice yearly, with an email network to facilitate communication at other times.

NFLA member authorities are asked to nominate a minimum of one member and one officer as contact points to whom communications relating to the forum can be directed.

Terms of reference for the All Ireland Forum: To help guide and focus the new forum's work, the following terms of reference were adopted:

1. To consider and recommend action which can be taken by local authorities to reduce risks to the public from nuclear power and nuclear weapons.
2. To obtain and provide information and take action to help local authorities and the public develop an informed understanding of the risks from nuclear hazards.
3. To consider and recommend action which could be taken by local authorities to support:
 - The safe phase out of nuclear power in the shortest practicable time.
 - Methods which minimise risks to humans and the environment for the long term management of all types of radioactive waste and materials.
 - Efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and related technology.
 - Energy conservation and the use of renewable sources of energy.
 - Alternative employment and sustainable economic opportunities outside the nuclear sector.



4. To identify, plan, and organise campaigns on topics of concern relating to nuclear free issues in Ireland.
5. To allow members to obtain and share information on areas of interest.
6. To provide opportunities for co-operation between local authorities in similar geographical areas on nuclear-free issues and NFLA organisational development.

The terms of reference will be reviewed again in one year's time.

Campaign work: The new forum agreed to campaign on the following issues (listed in order of priority):

1. Sellafield and the Irish Sea.
2. Promoting the use of green energy.
3. Emergency planning relating to a nuclear incident.
4. European Union policies on nuclear issues.
5. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and military nuclear issues.

To commence campaign work in these areas, the following specific actions are to be taken:

- A submission on behalf of the All Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities Forum is to be submitted to the Environment Agency for England and Wales in response to consultation over the future of the Drigg radioactive waste disposal facility near Sellafield, with a press release to be prepared to publicise the Forum's view that the Drigg site is vulnerable to coastal erosion.
- A briefing note for Irish local authorities to be prepared on renewable energy, drawing on the experience of best practice from 'Beacon' councils in the UK and identifying methods of renewable power generation with potential for local authority use, including information on the UK Government's 'Clear Skies' scheme.
- More information is to be obtained on planning and preparations in the Republic of Ireland for responding to a nuclear emergency, and on the emergency planning framework in Northern Ireland.

In support of Irish campaign issues, NFLA representatives recently joined Greenpeace to brief members of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Environment and Local Government who visited Sellafield in September to enquire about the leak at the Thorp plant in January – April 2005.

Representatives of Irish local authorities are also invited to attend the forthcoming NFLA conference with the theme 'Chernobyl: 20 years on' - the 8th Joint Irish and UK Local Authorities Conference on Nuclear Hazards, which will be taking place at the City Hall in London on 23 March 2006.

Joining the All Ireland Forum

The All Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities Forum welcomes new member local authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. To become a member of the forum a local authority will need to pass a motion of affiliation and pay the appropriate subscription fee. It is recommended that the motion of affiliation is referred to the council by the Environment Strategic Policy Committee or other relevant committee with cross-party support.

For more information on any of the topics raised in this briefing please contact Peter Burt, NFLA Development Advisor.

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