



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

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Nuclear Free Local Authorities urges the Energy and Climate Change Committee to tell the Government that nuclear new build is an expensive and wasteful distraction

The UK and Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) have submitted today a wide-ranging submission to the Parliamentary Energy and Climate Change Committee for its inquiry into the UK Government's draft National Policy Statements (NPS) on Energy (1).

The UK Government announced in November 2009 their view that new nuclear power reactors should be a part of the UK's future energy mix to provide additional energy security, as a 'low carbon' source of electricity and to assist in the urgent campaign to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. It also nominated 10 sites in England and Wales to host new nuclear reactors. The consultation on the NPS and the Government's draft decision to 'justify' under European law the development of new nuclear reactors continues until 22nd February – the NFLA is preparing a detailed and robust response to both consultations.

In its submission to the Energy and Climate Change Committee's inquiry the NFLA notes that new nuclear power generation is only likely to have a **maximum 4% impact on the UK's carbon emissions (2)**. The huge financial costs and prominent support provided to nuclear power will be a heavy and unnecessary distraction in the vital battle to deal with the other 96% of carbon emissions.

The NPS on nuclear power reduces the possibility that renewable energy can fulfil its potential and be the main clean, sustainable carbon free answer to climate change mitigation in respect of energy use. It also prevents the development of a local energy revolution using micro-generation projects and a greater emphasis on energy efficiency, both of which can be led by forward-thinking local authorities.

The NFLA are also concerned that new nuclear will have little impact on the ongoing huge problem of fuel poverty. Some of the billions required on nuclear power could be spent on insulating the 25 million homes in the UK and have a much more positive cumulative effect on carbon emissions.

The NFLA believe as well that the intractable problem of radioactive waste has still not been adequately dealt with. The creation of yet more dangerous waste, the possible need for more than one underground waste repository and the fact that new build reactors will have to manage high burn-up new waste on site for upto 160 years, creates real and unnecessary dangers to many communities.

Finally, the NFLA is concerned about the lack of democratic accountability of the Infra-structure Planning Commission and the likelihood of a limited local say in the planning process for new nuclear reactors.

Summing up, the NFLA Chair, Bailie George Regan concludes:

"The NFLA sees the Government's National Policy Statement on Nuclear Power Generation as a missed opportunity and not fit for purpose in dealing with either energy security, climate change mitigation or a sustainable energy future. We urge the Select Committee to call for greater Parliamentary scrutiny of the NPS's and to conclude to the Government that it needs to reassess its policy on nuclear. Renewables, energy efficiency and micro-generation are the obvious alternative."

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES



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information

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Further information

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Notes to Editors:

(1) The NFLA submission to the Parliamentary Energy and Climate Change Select Committee and the North West Regional Select Committee can be downloaded from the NFLA website – <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info> or on request from NFLA Secretary, Sean Morris, email s.morris4@manchester.gov.uk.

(2) The figure of 4% impact on climate change emissions has been calculated by the NFLA from various sources. In the United Kingdom nuclear power provides around 20% of electricity, but only about 8% of total energy. If you allow for losses at the power station, nuclear power's current contribution to the UK's final energy consumption is only 3.6 % (80 TWh/y out of a final consumption of about 2,250 TWh/y).

Guardian 17th January 2006

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/story/0,,1688034,00.html> (See below)

The 3.6% figure is confirmed by an E-mail from Julian.Prime@dti.gsi.gov.uk to Neil Crumpton FoE, dated 28th November 2005.

See also Digest of UK Energy Statistics 2005.

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/statistics/source/electricity/page18527.html>

Also see this document from the Sustainable Development Commission:

<http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/IsNuclearTheAnswer.pdf>

On page 4 it says: "Assuming that we're talking primarily about gas-fired plants, then a replacement programme for our existing nuclear programme (at 10GW) would displace about 6.7 million tonnes of carbon (MtC) every year once all plants were up and running. That's equal to around a 4% cut in annual CO2 emissions from 1990 levels".

Extract from Guardian above:-

Kevin Anderson, a senior research fellow at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, said claims that nuclear power was the only way for Britain to meet demanding greenhouse gas targets were fundamentally wrong. He said: "That argument is way too simplistic. We can easily deal with climate change without nuclear power." Dr Anderson said the separate demands of the transport and heating sectors meant that nuclear power supplied only about 3.6% of total UK energy used. Replacing nuclear reactors with gas and coal power stations by 2020 would raise carbon emissions by 4%-8%, he said. "We could very easily compensate for that with moderate increases in energy efficiency. If you've got money to spend on tackling climate change then you don't spend it on supply. You spend it on reducing demand."

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