



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

# information

**NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

## **As Fukushima loses cooling power, NFLA is incredulous that UK Government gives new Hinkley Point reactor planning permission**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) is disappointed, but not surprised, with the decision of the Energy Secretary Ed Davey to give outline planning permission for the construction of new nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point in Somerset (1).

This comes just over 2 years after the Fukushima disaster and at a time when serious concerns exist about a second major emergency incident at the stricken Japanese facility. As reported widely today, four fuel storage ponds have been without cooling water for many hours due to a power outage at the site. The BBC's Japan correspondent, interviewed on this morning's 'Today' programme, commented on the precarious nature of the site and reiterated TEPCO's public comment that the pools will remain safe for only around four days without fresh water (2). This particular incident emphasises that some two years after the Fukushima disaster much remedial work still needs to be done.

The decision therefore to give planning permission for Hinkley Point by the Energy Minister flies in the face of significant improvements that are still required in nuclear safety and other areas of nuclear policy. For example, two years after Fukushima, significant reforms required in the national nuclear emergency planning regime have still to be implemented. Many important remedial issues that have come out of the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) post-Fukushima reports are still up to 3 – 4 years from full completion (3).

The NFLA found the planning inquiry for the proposed Hinkley Point limited in scale, disappointing in preventing genuine issues being effectively raised and discussed, and inadequate in not considering some very important matters, such as emergency planning and radioactive waste management. It is clear that the imperative has been to limit the scope of the inquiry to the suitability of an already agreed UK Government Nuclear National Policy Statement rather than verify the suitability of the site and wider critical safety issues.

The January 2013 decision of Cumbria County Council to not go ahead with the process to find a suitable site for an underground radioactive waste repository – which has come after the planning inquiry was concluded (4) – means that the Hinkley site has been given planning permission when no long-term solution exists for the radioactive waste these new nuclear reactors will generate. This alone should mean that the UK Government should have fully reconsidered the planning decision of the National Infrastructure Directorate (NID).

In a related matter, the NFLA has formally asked the Environment Agency for a meeting to consider its recent approval of environmental permits for new Hinkley reactors. The NFLA will seek clarification for Environment Agency comments on the NFLA's submission at the meeting. (5)

Finally, the NFLA notes that delicate negotiations are ongoing between the Government and EDF over the financing of the Hinkley reactors. The NFLA agrees with the assessment of four former Friends of the Earth Directors that a final deal could represent a £50 billion public subsidy gamble on an already overly expensive energy option (6). It should also be noted that in 2008 the UK Government was projecting new nuclear generating costs at £31 - £44 MWh. In 2013, EDF is seeking a fixed price contract for difference from the UK Government of £95 - £100 MWh – a doubling if not tripling of the price to the taxpayer without a shovel being used on the site. This comes at a time when costs for renewable energy technologies are steadily decreasing (7).



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NFLA Chair Councillor Mark Hackett said:

“I am disappointed, but not surprised that Energy Minister Ed Davey has given planning permission to build new reactors at Hinkley Point as the Government desperately tries to keep the new nuclear project alive. The NFLA opposes the development of new nuclear power stations as the wrong answer to the future energy needs of the UK. Given the recent decision on radioactive waste management in Cumbria this planning inquiry should have been reconstituted to consider such matters and it is remiss of the Minister to therefore give his approval. I am concerned by such decisions the Government are replaying the energy policy mistakes of the past. I urge them to reconsider, even at this very late stage.”

Ends

**Further information** - Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary - 0161 234 3244 or 07771 930186.

## **Notes to editors:**

- (1) BBC Online, 19<sup>th</sup> March <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21839684>
- (2) Guardian 19th March 2013  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/mar/19/fukushima-loses-cooling-power>
- (3) Office for Nuclear Regulation – UK ONR ENSREG Related ‘National Action Plan’, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/ensreg-report.pdf>
- (4) BBC Online, 30<sup>th</sup> January <http://bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-21253673>
- (5) NFLA submissions to Environment Agency consultation on Hinkley Point environmental permits –  
[http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/nuclearmonitor/NFLA\\_New\\_Nuclear\\_Monitor\\_No25.pdf](http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/nuclearmonitor/NFLA_New_Nuclear_Monitor_No25.pdf)  
[http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/nuclearmonitor/NFLA\\_New\\_Nuclear\\_Monitor\\_No26.pdf](http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/nuclearmonitor/NFLA_New_Nuclear_Monitor_No26.pdf)  
[http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/nuclearmonitor/NFLA\\_New\\_Nuclear\\_Monitor\\_29.pdf](http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/nuclearmonitor/NFLA_New_Nuclear_Monitor_29.pdf)
- (6) Joint press release by Jonathon Porritt, Tom Burke, Tony Juniper, Charles Secrett, ‘Prime Minister to make £50 billion bet’, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013  
[http://www.jonathonporritt.com/sites/default/files/users/PMNUKES2%20PRESS%20RELEASE\\_2013.3.13.pdf\\_1.pdf](http://www.jonathonporritt.com/sites/default/files/users/PMNUKES2%20PRESS%20RELEASE_2013.3.13.pdf_1.pdf)
- (7) Dr Bridget Woodman, IGOV / Exeter University Energy Blog, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013  
<http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/igov/guest-blog-time-to-learn-some-nuclear-lessons/>