



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 10th October 2012

NFLA All Ireland Forum seminar in Downpatrick considers the impact of a UK new nuclear build programme and whether shale gas is a realistic alternative to nuclear power or renewable energy

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) All Ireland Forum will be holding its autumn seminar this Friday 12th October in Down District Council's new offices in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland. The seminar will look at the potential radiological and environmental risks to Ireland of a proposed UK new nuclear build programme. It will also consider two alternatives to nuclear power being considered in both the UK and Ireland – renewable energy and shale gas extraction.

Speakers for the seminar include:

- Local South Down MP Margaret Ritchie, who has been one of the most active MPs concerned about the development of new nuclear build at the Westminster Parliament;
- Ciara McMahon of the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland, who will provide an overview of its analysis of the radiological impact of a UK new nuclear build programme on Ireland;
- NFLA Secretary Sean Morris, who will provide a NFLA view on the UK new nuclear build programme and outline its renewable energy, microgeneration and energy efficiency alternative strategy;
- Declan Allison of Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland, who will outline its concerns around the development of shale gas extraction in Ireland and across the Irish Sea.

The UK new nuclear build programme is at a critical juncture at present. A decision on the planning inquiry for building a new nuclear reactor at Hinkley Point is expected in December, whilst an exhaustive 'Generic Design Assessment' process of the reactor designs for new nuclear power stations is also nearing conclusion.

As the NFLA Media Release of the 5th October has already emphasised there remain key financing, environmental and safety issues to resolve before a new nuclear programme can be realised (2). The NFLA advocate an alternative energy strategy which focuses on the development of a wide range of renewable energy technologies, a concerted energy efficiency programme and community-led microgeneration schemes. It believes the UK and Irish Governments and devolved governments should be co-operating closely to develop such a policy, where each could benefit from the other.

The NFLA also remain concerned about the focus being given on both sides of the Irish Sea about the development of shale gas fracking extraction as a 'copious' new form of energy. The NFLA believe there are serious environmental concerns over shale gas extraction and is keen to hear the views of Friends of the Earth at the seminar.

NFLA All Ireland Forum Co Chair, Councillor Michael Carr said:

"I am pleased the NFLA is holding its autumn seminar in Downpatrick to allow councillors from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland the opportunity to hear more about the potential impact of new nuclear build on Ireland. I believe the seminar will be helpful in understanding why Irish Councils should be concerned about such developments and what the alternatives to nuclear power may be. Shale gas has been put forward as one of these alternatives and I am keen to find out more why Ireland should not pursue it as an answer to our future energy needs. I encourage councillors and council officers to attend and find out more about these important issues."

Ends

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES



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Further information - Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary - 00 44 161 234 3244 or 00 44 7771 930186.

Notes to editors:

- (1) NFLA All Ireland Forum seminar, 12th October, Downshire Civic Centre, Ardglass Road, Downpatrick, Northern Ireland. Seminar programme:
Key energy and nuclear policy issues affecting Ireland – should it be concerned about UK new nuclear build and shale gas extraction?
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| 10.30am | Registration. |
| 11.00am | Opening welcomes by Councillor Eamonn O'Neill, Down District Council and Councillor Michael Carr, Newry & Mourne District Council and Co-Chair of the NFLA All Ireland Forum. |
| 11.05am | Should Ireland be concerned about new nuclear developments across the Irish Sea? – Margaret Ritchie, MP for South Down |
| 11.30am | Analysis of the radiological impact on Ireland of the UK's new nuclear programme – Ciara McMahon, Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland |
| 11.55pm | Nuclear risks in the UK and across the open seas, the NFLA view – Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary |
| 12.20pm | Shale gas extraction – an answer to Ireland's energy needs or a dangerous environmental practice? Declan Allison, Local Campaigner, Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland |
| 12.35pm | Panel discussion chaired by the Co-Chair of the NFLA All Ireland Forum, Councillor Mark Dearey, Dundalk Town Council. |
| 1.00pm | Seminar conclusion. |
- (2) See NFLA Media Release, 5th October 2012
http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/news/NFLA_PR_nuclear_new_build_debate.pdf

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES