



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 18th June 2012

Trident replacement announcement could mean £4 billion of public money wasted on a project without full Parliamentary assent

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities Welsh Forum (NFLA) notes its utter disbelief with the announcement being made this week by the UK Defence Minister Phillip Hammond for a £1 billion contract to Rolls-Royce. This contract will be given to develop nuclear reactors for the new generation of Trident nuclear armed submarines and to rebuild the Rolls-Royce reactor construction plant at Raynesway in Derby (1).

The UK Coalition Government made a firm commitment when it was established that the 'main gate' decision on developing new Trident submarines would not be made by Parliament until 2016, after the next general election (2). A key part of that decision would be presenting to Parliament an alternatives study of other options to a like-for-like Trident replacement programme (3).

Justification for awarding a £1 billion contract to Rolls Royce is given due to the long lead-in time for developing new reactors. Even if that is so, the NFLA asserts that this policy inevitably means the final 'main gate' decision will be heavily influenced by the huge amount of preparation work that will have already been done by 2016. **Effectively, if Parliament was to say no, a total of £4 billion of public money will have been wasted on the abandoned project (4). This should not be the way key public decisions are made, particularly one as large as renewing our nuclear weapons.**

If the same amount of effort was put in to the global campaign to rid the world of nuclear weapons by the UK Government then this announcement would not be required. There is a desperate need to reinvigorate the positive moves towards nuclear non-proliferation and the development of a Nuclear Weapons Convention, supported by the vast majority of member states at the United Nations (5).

The NFLA strongly supports the campaign for a nuclear weapons free world led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the 5,276 member *Mayors for Peace* organisation, effectively representing around a billion people worldwide (6). With like-minded NGOs, leaders of all the major faith organisations, the International Trade Union Organisation, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Parliamentarians from across the world amongst others, it is clear that the great bulk of humanity wishes to see nuclear weapon states like the UK change course, not renew such weaponry.

The NFLA is also exasperated with this decision given the huge cuts in conventional forces announced last week, which will see over 4,000 military staff being made redundant and as many as five battalions abolished (7). In these austere times, the NFLA have to ask if the Government has its priorities right – spending money on a nuclear weapons system we don't ever wish to use whilst reducing the conventional forces with which we need to defend our country with.

The NFLA further finds this decision incongruous as this week the Ministry of Defence are meeting NGOs, Councils and other groups to discuss how to safely dismantle redundant nuclear powered submarines. It is now clear the Government plans to build several new nuclear submarines while key questions about how to dismantle and safely manage radioactive waste from old nuclear submarines remain unanswered, despite well over a decade of discussion.

NFLA Chair Councillor Brian Goodall said:

"I deplore the Government's decision to spend £1 billion on Trident renewal work four years before Parliament has the real opportunity to determine whether it is in our interests to retain nuclear

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weapons. We know conventional terrorism, cyber-attacks and natural disasters remain so much more of a pressing threat to our islands and we need to actually spend this money on protecting ourselves from them. I strongly encourage the Liberal Democrats in the coalition to urgently lobby to rethink this policy.”

Ends

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

Notes to editors:

- (1) Government agrees £1 billion contract for nuclear submarine reactors, The Guardian, June 17. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jun/17/coalition-split-trident-nuclear-submarines-replacement>
- (2) UK Government Coalition Agreement, Cabinet Office, May 2010. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/coalition-documents>
- (3) See note (1).
- (4) 'The United Kingdom's future nuclear deterrent: The Submarine Initial Gate Parliamentary Report'. Ministry of Defence, May 2011, para 4.3.
- (5) For a draft Nuclear Weapons Convention consult the website of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. <http://www.icanw.org/nuclear-weapons-convention>
- (6) See Mayors for Peace main website or Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign website for further information. <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org> and <http://www.2020visioncampaign.org>
- (7) MoD tells 4000 military staff of job losses, BBC, June 12. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-1840120>

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