



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

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NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 4th June 2014

NFLA Welsh Forum calls on Welsh Government to follow Scottish direction & not UK Government policy on radioactive waste management

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) Welsh Forum responds today to the Welsh Government's review of its policy on higher activity radioactive waste (HAW) management. (1) NFLA reiterates its call on the Welsh Government to reverse its position on supporting new nuclear build at Wylfa. It argues that the Welsh Government should choose a policy similar to the Scottish Government policy of 'near site, near surface' on radioactive waste management, rather than the 'deep disposal' policy of the UK Government.

From 2008 - 2014, the Welsh Government has reserved its view on deep 'geological disposal' of higher activity radioactive waste. It has now sought to review this policy as:

- The Welsh Government is now actively supporting the construction of new nuclear reactors at Wylfa on Anglesey. The NFLA Welsh Forum opposes this change in policy and is highly disappointed that the Welsh Government has changed this policy.
- The Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste (SF&RW) Directive (Directive 2011/70/Euratom), which came into force in 2011, requires Member States to establish and maintain a national policy for the safe and responsible management of radioactive waste to be implemented through a national programme, and to report on that programme by 23 August 2015.
- DECC is restarting the siting process in England following the closure of site selection discussions in Cumbria. NFLA is taking a full participative role in this policy process. (2)

In its response to the Welsh Government policy review, NFLA makes five key comments:

- A significant proportion of Welsh HAW will not arise until Final Site Clearance at the two Welsh reactor sites (Wylfa and Trawsfynydd) in 2073 and 2091 respectively. By this time (due to the 'care and maintenance phase' which begins at Trawsfynydd in 2016 and Wylfa in 2025), all the early arisings of HAW will have been placed in interim storage, so there is no need to rush decisions and, for instance, start emplacing waste in a deep geological repository with inadequate geological barriers.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should investigate why the UK Government's 'Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) process in Cumbria failed. NFLA believes the process failed partly because the UK Government ignored most of the main recommendations of the first Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM). There are currently too many uncertainties about how packaged nuclear waste will behave in a deep-underground facility.
- At the very least the Welsh Government should withdraw from the MRWS process until it is made clear that the objective is to look for the best available geology for the job, rather than making use of mediocre geology and relying more heavily on engineered barriers.
- The Welsh Government should implement CoRWM's recommendation that a quite separate discussion should be held on the political and ethical issues raised by creating new wastes by building new reactors. In any case spent fuel from the new reactors proposed for Wylfa will need to be stored for up to 100 years before it can be emplaced in a geological disposal facility (GDF).
- ***The NFLA Welsh Forum recommends that the Welsh Government adopts the Scottish Government policy on HAW: "...that the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste should be in near-surface facilities. Facilities should be located as near to the site where the waste is produced as possible. Developers will need to demonstrate how the facilities will be monitored and how waste packages, or waste, could be retrieved."***

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NFLA Welsh Forum Co-Chair, Councillor Ray Davies said:

“I welcome the policy review by the Welsh Government to consider its radioactive waste management policy, though I completely oppose its policy to support new nuclear reactors at Wylfa, which will only add to the radioactive waste burden in Wales. This policy review is an opportunity for the Welsh Government to analyse the different responses of the Scottish and UK Government to radioactive waste management. NFLA firmly believes the Scottish Government’s approach is the correct route of travel and I urge the Welsh Government to take a similar view.”

NFLA Welsh Forum Co-Chair, Councillor Ed Bridges added:

“The NFLA Welsh Forum response to the Welsh Government’s policy review of its radioactive waste legacy provides a detailed and well argued statement against deep geological disposal. NFLA has taken an active role in both the Scottish and the UK Government approaches to radioactive waste management, and found the Scottish approach to be the pragmatic and sensible way forward. I urge the Welsh Government to do likewise.”

Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 07771 930196 or NFLA Steering Committee Policy Advisor, Pete Roche on 07821 378210.

Notes for editors:

- (1) The NFLA Welsh Forum model response for its members is attached with this briefing.
- (2) Welsh Government policy review of its higher activity waste management strategy, March 2014. <http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/environmentandcountryside/disposing-of-higher-activity-radioactive-waste/?lang=en>

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