



# information

For immediate release

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## **New Nuclear Stations to Evade Full Public Scrutiny**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (1) today warned that Government intends to limit public inquiry remits for new nuclear stations. The Government appears intent on denying local communities and their local authorities the right to address safety and economic issues at any inquiry by limiting these to local environmental impacts.

In 'The Energy Challenge' published yesterday (2) Government states:

"Potential developers have made clear through the Energy Review consultation that without action to improve the planning process and to identify and address national issues in advance of public inquiries, they will not consider investments in new nuclear power stations." [para 7.35]

The Government says it recognises "...the need for full public discussion and consideration on key issues associated with civil nuclear power including health and safety issues, and the weighing of the economic and other benefits against potential detriments. [para 7.36]" but also states that "Government considers that these issues should be viewed in their appropriate context and should be addressed appropriately up front, *in advance* of any planning applications." [para 7.36] (emphasis added)

Government now seeks public comment by 31 October 2006 on the following proposal:

"A policy framework for new nuclear build should be developed. It would include a nuclear Statement of Need and set out that national strategic and regulatory issues are most appropriately discussed through processes other than the planning inquiry. The planning inquiry should focus on the relationship between the proposal and the local plans, and local environmental impacts. The inquiry should address these issues in the context of the national strategic or regulatory material considerations, which will already have been established. The inquiry should also examine the local benefits of the development and how specific local impacts of the construction and operation of the plant can be minimised." [Annex A Box A1]

However consultation on this proposal is virtually meaningless because it is so shorn of any detail, but the object is plain: to confine public inquiries to local impacts.

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**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES**

Responding to the Government's proposal, Nuclear Free Local Authorities Legal Adviser, Jamie Woolley, said:

"Nuclear Free Local Authorities will be very concerned that these proposals are explicitly intended to meet the demands of the nuclear industry without any further consideration of the needs and wishes of local people.

"What is clear is that the object of the proposal is to silence local objectors and their local authority at a public inquiry on the matters that really worry the majority of the population: the possibility of accidents, the impact of radiation, what is to be done with the radioactive waste that would be produced, what it will all cost, where it is to be placed for the huge periods of time during which it will remain radioactive, who will bear responsibility for decommissioning the plant, whether the huge sums of money involved will undermine the growth in renewables, combined heat and power and energy efficiency and so on.

"Nuclear Free Local Authorities will also be very concerned that this is the thin end of the wedge. A secretive industry is to be allowed to get away with the minimum of local scrutiny at the expense of local democracy and accountability. I urge all local authorities that value the public inquiry system to oppose this emasculation that will have wide repercussions beyond the nuclear field if allowed."

ENDS

Contact for further information: Jamie Woolley 0114 220 4452

#### Notes

(1) A full list of NFLA members is at: [www.nuclearpolicy.info](http://www.nuclearpolicy.info)

(2) The Energy Challenge can be downloaded at: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/review/>