

# *Nuclear Free Local Authorities* **briefing**



**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017

**No.154**

**Subject:** Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee meeting, Manchester, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017

**1. Introduction by NFLA Steering Committee (SC) Chairman**

The NFLA Steering Committee Chair, Councillor Ernie Galsworthy, welcomed members to the meeting in Manchester Town Hall. The Chairman encouraged members to stay on for the afternoon special seminar on radioactive waste management and the meeting of the UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter, which would be chaired by the Deputy Lord Mayor of Manchester.

**2. National NFLA Forum meetings**

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of the work of the four National NFLA Forums across the UK and Ireland.

***NFLA Scotland Forum –***

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a short business meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> November in Dublin. The meeting allowed for discussion of a detailed progress report by the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor. There was also discussion of a letter received on nuclear transportation from the Secretary of State for Scotland. The meeting agreed that the Policy Advisor should draft a report considering the implementation policy of the Scottish Government on higher activity radioactive waste management.

The Forum's next meeting is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February in Glasgow City Chambers. This will include its Annual General Meeting.

***NFLA English Forum –***

Professor Andy Blowers is speaking directly after the Steering Committee in a special joint seminar on his recently book 'The Legacy of Nuclear Power'. Professor Blowers is a former member of CORWM, a Bedfordshire County Councillor for over 30 years and is currently Chair of the 'Bradwell Against New Nuclear Group' (BANNG) and Co-Chair of the BEIS NGO Nuclear Policy Forum. Professor Blowers' book looks at the nuclear legacy and radioactive waste issue that has been problematic for all countries that have developed a nuclear power programme. Members were encouraged to attend the seminar, which has been extended out to NGO representatives.

***NFLA Welsh Forum –***

A major one-day conference is being held by a number of national and international anti-nuclear groups at the National Library for Wales in Aberystwyth, Ceredigion on Saturday March 11<sup>th</sup>. Further details on this meeting are attached in Agenda Item 10.

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES -  
WORKING FOR A NUCLEAR FREE, LOW CARBON WORLD**

To complement this event, the NFLA Secretary has arranged a NFLA Welsh Forum seminar on March 10<sup>th</sup> in Ceredigion County Council offices. The seminar will include some of the speakers from the Saturday event. A programme is being put together and will be sent out in early February, in addition to the flyer for the Saturday programme.

#### ***NFLA All Ireland Forum –***

The NFLA All Ireland Forum hosted the NFLA Annual Policy Seminar in Dublin City Hall on the 25<sup>th</sup> November. It was well attended and of real quality. The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of NFLA reports on Irish and UK energy futures. Oisín Coughlan of Friends of the Earth Ireland talked about its vision for Irish energy policy. Dr Paul Dorfman talked about concerns over Sellafield and UK new nuclear and their potential impact on both sides of the Irish Sea. The presentations are on the NFLA website.

The next NFLA All Ireland Forum's will be in Newry on the 24<sup>th</sup> March. The meeting will look at issues with renewable heating in Northern Ireland, progress with Irish energy policy and concerns over the UK new nuclear programme and its impact on Ireland. A programme is being prepared and will go out in mid February.

#### ***NFLA Finance Report and Organisation and Administration Committee –***

The Steering Committee approved the NFLA Finance Report deferred from the NFLA AGM. The Steering Committee also agreed it would be useful to hold an Organisation and Administration Committee meeting after the March 31<sup>st</sup> business meeting to discuss upcoming all-out elections and membership retention and recruitment issues.

***Agreed: To note the report and to encourage members to attend the March meeting.***

### **3. Implications of the EU referendum vote on nuclear policy**

The NFLA Secretariat report on the implications of the decision by the UK electorate to vote to leave the European Union (EU) on nuclear policy and other relevant areas of NFLA policy is almost complete and will be published shortly. In late January the UK Government confirmed it would leave the Euratom Treaty. The Treaty oversees nuclear safety, nuclear security and nuclear power matters within the EU. This decision is likely to have profound implications for nuclear policy and it was important to hold off on the NFLA report to consider what they may be.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

### **4. Nuclear new build**

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on issues around the proposed development of new nuclear power stations in England and Wales.

#### ***UK Government policy on new nuclear -***

Since the review of the Hinkley Point C project by the UK Government, it has become clear that new nuclear is seen as a core part of UK infrastructure policy. The Government has said it will pro-actively support the development of new nuclear at Hinkley Point, Wylfa, Sellafield Moorside, Sizewell, Bradwell and Oldbury to deliver 18GW of new electricity capacity. In addition, the support of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors is also expected to move forward.

By the same token, the support for renewable energy has been very much slowed down with substantial cuts to subsidies and little to no state support being now provided to onshore wind and solar. The UK Government appears to believe that renewable electricity has reached levels it is content with, and any support in this area is more likely to go on renewable heat and transport initiatives.

The Steering Committee noted this change of policy and sought the Secretariat to focus its work on challenging the need for new nuclear whilst promoting the benefits of expanding renewable energy.

### ***Developments at Hinkley Point C -***

Some early work has begun at the Hinkley site to prepare for much more intense work after 2019. Construction at Hinkley depends on the start-up of EDF's planned new reactor at Flamanville in France which is of a similar design. This is now not scheduled to be completed until the end of 2018 – already six years late.

The French nuclear regulator ASN is concerned over the safety of the reactor pressure vessel at Flamanville after the discovery of a high carbon concentration in the steel, leading to lower than expected mechanical toughness values. The results of an investigation by EDF at Flamanville will be delivered to ASN in the coming weeks. The regulator will then analyse the findings and is expected to issue a report in 'the first half' of this year.

A Greenpeace France commissioned audit report by Alpha Value, the equity research company, claims that EDF would need to find a further €165 billion during the next decade to finance projects such as Hinkley Point, fix its aging reactors in France and deal with the radioactive waste and decommissioning legacy of its plants in France and the UK.

The legal challenge to the European Commission's approval of the strike price deal by Austria is still continuing. It is possible Austria's legal case may bring in recent issues from the Commission's decision this month to approve Hungary's controversial deal with the Russian nuclear company Rosatom to build two new nuclear reactors.

### ***Developments at Sizewell -***

EDF is currently conducting a second round of public consultation over the development of a new nuclear reactor at Sizewell. This project is very much dependent on progress with the Hinkley Point C development. The Steering Committee agreed a draft NFLA submission to the consultation which focuses on the lack of environmental information in the EDF consultation. This response will go on the NFLA website with an accompanying media release.

### ***Developments at Wylfa -***

NFLA submitted its views in late November to a second consultation on the proposed nuclear power plant in Anglesey. A well attended public meeting in Llangefni organised by NFLA, PAWB and CADNO will be followed up with a public meeting in March in Aberystwyth. It was clear from the November meeting that there remains a considerable part of the local community concerned by the development.

The UK Chancellor Philip Hammond met with his Japanese counterpart and with Hitachi and Toshiba in December to find ways of putting together a financial package to develop the Wylfa and Sellafield Moorside reactor sites.

The NFLA Secretary attended a joint EA / NRW event in Birmingham on the 24<sup>th</sup> January considering the safety, security, environmental protection and waste management issues around the Advanced Boiling Water Reactor design planned for Wylfa and Oldbury. The NFLA Secretariat will look to respond to this consultation prior to its March 3<sup>rd</sup> deadline.

### ***Developments at Sellafield Moorside -***

There appear to be major financial problems facing the two companies in the Nugen consortium that seek to construct as many as three reactors on the site. There are persistent rumours in the media that the French state energy utility Engie (formerly GDF Suez) is seeking to withdraw from the development and sell its stake. Engie has been refocusing its work to get more into the renewables and decentralised energy market. It has been suggested that it is in talks with the Korean state nuclear company Kepco to sell its share.

Of greater concern is the financial plight of the Japanese utility Toshiba, which has become embroiled in major financial problems which have seen its share price slump by over 40%. At the end of December Toshiba announced it would have to make write-downs of "several billions of dollars" to cover cost overruns linked to its US nuclear construction company Stone & Webster. Energy analysts calculate the write-down could cost between \$5bn and \$8bn. Such

a funding issue may require it to sell 'noncore' assets. As such Toshiba has announced it is reviewing its entire nuclear business, putting investment in Moorside very much under doubt.

#### ***Developments at Bradwell -***

The UK Government announced in January that the Chinese HPR1000 reactor design will start formal consideration under the Office for Nuclear Regulation's Generic Design Assessment (GDA). It is expected the GDA process will take around four years. The Chinese state nuclear utility CGN is the majority shareholder taking on the Bradwell site. The reactor is similar to EDF's EPR but has clear design changes to it as well.

#### ***Developments with Small Modular Nuclear (SMR) Reactors -***

Bids by various consortiums to develop SMR technology is currently being considered by the Government with a shortlisting announcement still expected to be announced in early 2017. A possible breakthrough in the design process for a SMR was announced by the US nuclear utility NuScale who have submitted designs for consideration by the US nuclear regulator. This will be the first commercial SMR reactor design to go through such a process.

#### ***Agreed: To note the report and monitor developments.***

### **6. Radioactive waste management**

The NFLA Secretary outlined the key issues in relation to its interaction with UK / Scottish / Welsh Government policies on radioactive waste management.

#### ***Update on the process to develop a deep underground waste repository -***

Radioactive Waste Management Ltd (RWM) is expected to publish its analysis on geological screening for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in the spring. This may give potential volunteer communities a greater level of initial knowledge as to whether the area could be geologically suitable for a deep repository.

It is expected that the Government's formal invitation to seek communities to 'volunteer' will come after the English County Council and Welsh Council elections. A consultation is also expected shortly on the conclusions of the Government's group that considered in detail the definition of a community that could put its name forward to volunteer. NFLA will keep a close watching brief on all of these developments and respond accordingly.

#### ***Welsh Government stakeholder event on community engagement for a 'GDF' -***

The NFLA Secretary attended a 6<sup>th</sup> January stakeholder event in Cardiff organised by the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government, as part of its amended policy to support new nuclear build, has aligned its radioactive waste management policy to support the UK Government policy to find a volunteer community to host a deep underground repository.

Around 40 representatives were invited to the event. The day involved a background to the issue and confirmation that, should a Welsh community put itself forward to host a repository, the Welsh Government would use the Welsh 2016 Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Welsh planning system to consider and underpin such a process. If there is just a sole Welsh site left in the process then the Welsh Government said final approval for the repository should lie with Welsh and not UK Ministers. A consultation on this matter is expected to be published by the end of March to assist determination of a new Government policy on the matter by October. It was noted by the NFLA that, as 95% of higher activity waste is currently in England, there would be a major political issue if it was to be transported to Wales.

#### ***Scottish Government implementation policy for managing radioactive waste -***

The Scottish Government has published an updated strategy on how it plans to implement its different policy of 'near site, near surface' for the management of Higher Activity Waste located in Scotland. The Steering Committee welcomed a NFLA Radioactive Waste Policy Briefing on the issue. NFLA broadly agrees with the updated Scottish Government policy. NFLA's main concerns remain with the way the Scottish Government applies the waste hierarchy.

### ***Sellafield / NDA update -***

In December the last of six large doors covering the contents of one of the Sellafield site's most hazardous buildings was installed on the Pile Fuel Cladding Silo. The waste retrievals in this facility will begin in 2020. The first transfer of a 500-litre drum of separate radioactive sludge from cooling ponds in this facility was completed at the end of 2016, following years of planning and preparation. This will be transferred to an encapsulation plant, with the sludge grouted and processed ready for storage. It will take several years to remove all of the sludge in the pond. Sellafield Ltd has made much of this project being delivered 10 years ahead of schedule and for half of the predicted cost of £200 million. A 10-year project to de-water the pond will start in 2019, while the sludge is still being removed.

The NDA is consulting on its business plan for 2017 – 2020. The Steering Committee agreed a NFLA submission to it.

### ***Consultation on release of nuclear sites from radioactive substance regulation -***

In 2016 NFLA responded to the UK Environment Agencies (in England, Scotland and Wales) consultation on draft guidance for the clean-up of nuclear sites and their release from the formal regulatory regime. Subsequent to this, the NFLA Secretary was invited to two stakeholder workshops on this policy process. A third workshop organised by the UK Government took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> November in Manchester, which the NFLA Secretary attended. This workshop noted that the Government planned to change legislation to enable changes to the regulatory regime and were seeking comments to a consultation on this matter.

The NFLA's has responded to the UK Government consultation on these matters with its response published on the NFLA website.

### ***Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS -***

NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum for England and Wales) met in London on the 7<sup>th</sup> December. The NFLA Secretary attended the meeting. Members discussed an update on the Geological Disposal Facility siting process, developments in NDA strategy and operations, and NuLEAF site visits for 2017. The next NuLEAF meeting will be in Manchester Town Hall on the 15<sup>th</sup> March.

SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) is meeting in Edinburgh City Chambers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

### ***NFLA survey on SSG and LLC engagement -***

The NFLA Secretariat has compiled a detailed survey of the effectiveness of civil Site Stakeholder Groups and defence Local Liaison Committees. This has been sought from NFLA representatives, NGO representatives and independent representatives to these groups. A good selection of both groups has now been attained. The report is now almost complete with specific recommendations for improvements of these groups and on wider nuclear policy stakeholder engagement. This report will be published shortly.

***Agreed: To note the report. To endorse the NFLA response to the UK Government discussion paper on delicensing nuclear sites.***

## **7. Alternatives to nuclear energy**

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on developments in pursuing effective alternatives to nuclear power.

### ***NFLA briefings on decentralised energy -***

At the last NFLA Steering Committee the NFLA Secretariat presented two extensive pieces of research on the potential for decentralised energy. Both reports are on the NFLA website. The first briefing was an analysis of the growth and potential of renewable energy on the island of Ireland and the barriers to growth. It advocated a greater role for local authorities. The second briefing provides a study of best practice in the development of local authority-led decentralised energy.

### ***APSE report on local government investing in electricity -***

The Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE) has published a new report 'Investing in electricity – reducing costs and increase income for local authorities'. The report argues it is essential for Councils to retain a strong knowledge base of expertise in the energy sector. The report considers the operation of the UK electricity market and the different ways various Councils have begun to develop projects generating renewable electricity.

The report concludes:

- The electricity market is changing rapidly in the UK with renewable energy now being commonplace and a core part of that market.
- Battery storage will provide the essential link to remove problems with the intermittency of renewable energy and make it a reliable part of the energy mix.
- The private sector has recognised the huge potential of energy storage and is investing heavily in building it up.
- Local government has learnt from the private sector and more are ready to develop the likes of solar farms and other renewable energy facilities.
- The report emphasises that local government needs to be considering adding battery storage to their energy plans and exploring the innovative routes to much higher rewards for the energy that they produce.
- Such a strategy can be in addition to a more extensive intervention in the local marketplace, such as developing an Energy Service Company. Either way allows for a positive move towards a decentralised and decarbonised energy system and reducing fuel poverty.
- There is something in this agenda for EVERY authority and the report hopes to stimulate greater activity in this area.

### ***Concerns over investment in renewable energy in the UK -***

The environment with which to develop renewable energy in the UK has got much more difficult due to what looks a deliberate government policy to support 'big' energy over 'decentralised' energy of the renewable kind. A report by the Green Alliance notes that investment in renewable energy could slump by as much as 95% by 2020. This would have a major impact on decentralised energy projects.

Such profound changes need to be fully and carefully considered by local authorities. Whilst a few more Councils have announced a plan to develop an Energy Services Company, like Aberdeen, or a 'white labelling' arrangement, like Leeds; others have inevitably started to change their policy direction. For example, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority has decided the risks to develop either model are now too high to justify going ahead with such an initiative. The GMCA will look at smaller ESCO's around bespoke energy projects.

This is all the more galling to Steering Committee members as renewable energy generation in the UK hit new records of generating capacity. Over Christmas week Renewables UK calculated that wind power set records for hourly, daily and weekly records. On Christmas Day, 41% of the UK's electricity needs came from wind power, and with other forms of renewables that figure hit 47%. Over that week 20% of electricity was generated by wind and 28% when adding all renewables. The previous month was also the first time that renewables provided more energy than coal.

### ***Overspend of the Renewable Heat Initiative in Northern Ireland and energy developments in the Republic of Ireland -***

Politics in Northern Ireland have been markedly affected after the full implications of a huge overspend of the Executive's Renewable Heat Initiative (RHI) scheme became known at the end of 2016. The scheme began in 2012, but its tariff was set at too high a rate and was heavily over-subscribed. By the end of 2016 it had been calculated that the scheme had overspent by over £480 million. The UK Government has said it would not bail the Executive out of the scheme.

This overspend has precipitated a collapse of confidence in the relationship between the governing parties and led to the collapse of the government. Elections have been called for

March 3<sup>rd</sup>. For NFLA the main concern is what negative effect this issue will have on the Executive's future financial support for renewable energy.

In the Republic of Ireland, an EPA report on renewable energy says generation rates remain too low. It noted that in 2016 the amount of renewable energy used to generate electricity continues to increase, but still only accounts for 23 per cent of electricity generation. This compares with Scotland, where 97 per cent of required household electricity was generated from wind power in 2015.

The EPA report argues for a much greater mix of renewable energies – such as wind, wave, solar, hydro and geothermal power – would be of real benefit. The report says a move to a 'low-carbon, energy-efficient society' will require "large-scale public and private investment in energy infrastructure, including energy-efficient and innovative energy management systems, energy distribution and smart grid systems". The report makes clear that Ireland should start prioritising solar energy in addition to wind, and look to take advantage of new technology in energy battery storage.

On the positive front, the Irish Government announced in December that it had secured around \$350 million of funding from the EU 'Horizon 2020' program from the EU. This would assist accelerating the transition to a low-carbon economy by facilitating research and development in renewable energy fields.

#### ***Scottish Government overarching draft energy strategy / Welsh Government policy -***

The Scottish Government will shortly publish its draft, new over-arching energy strategy imminently for consultation. Whilst the Scottish Government has had the most expansive development of renewable energy in the UK and Ireland, the new strategy will consider:

- Clear shifts in UK Government policy,
- New powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament,
- Emerging trends in energy systems worldwide, and
- The Scottish Government's strengthened ambition to tackle climate change.

The aim of the strategy is to create a long term vision for the energy system in Scotland, setting out how its energy policy can deliver economic, social and environmental outcomes that contribute to achieving sustainable, economic growth and reduce fuel poverty.

In Wales, the Welsh Environment Secretary Lesley Griffiths commented in mid December that the progress of renewable energy projects in Wales is being frustrated by a "lack of clear policy" by the UK government. She added that concerns were being raised by the industry about a lack of financial support in particular. She called for powers over the offering of financial incentives to be handed to the Welsh Government.

#### ***Independent report backs development of tidal energy -***

While the UK Government has largely turned away from onshore wind, biomass and solar developments, it still remains supportive of 'big' renewable energy projects like offshore wind. The publication of a Government-requested report on the viability of tidal energy by former Energy Minister Charles Hendry has come out in favour of supporting tidal lagoons.

The review of tidal power concluded a small trial lagoon at Swansea Bay was a "no regrets option" that it could open the way to at least five other full-scale projects around the UK. Tidal Lagoon Power, which has proposed the project for Swansea, has already spent £35m on the south-west Wales lagoon. It said that if a subsidy deal could be agreed with the government construction could start next year and could provide 2,000 jobs.

The price for tidal is likely to be similar to the £92.50 per megawatt hour negotiated for the Hinkley Point C new nuclear deal. It has been argued by advocates of tidal energy that costs would then come down for further projects as the technology improved. The Steering Committee welcomed these positive moves to develop tidal energy.

However, the Energy Technologies Institute (ETI) has warned that tidal energy is at risk of being priced-out of an increasingly cost-competitive low-carbon market in the UK, unless a successful Contract for Difference (CfD) agreement can be implemented with the government.

#### ***Developments in fracking -***

Cuadrilla has started work on developing an access road to its approved fracking site in Lancashire, after the Government overturned Lancashire County Council's decision last year. The company is expected to start drilling in the spring and hopes to be fracking by the autumn. Two other approved sites in North Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire are expected to have further investigatory work over the year ready for fracking.

2017 is likely to see a number of other sites put forward in England for fracking, despite determined efforts from the environmental movement. The moratoriums on the procedure remain in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

***Agreed: To note the report and encourage the dissemination of NFLA Policy Briefings to relevant council officers and councillors.***

### **8. Mayors for Peace update**

The NFLA Secretary outlined progress in NFLA's co-operation with the Mayors for Peace and its campaigns on the nuclear weapons issue.

#### ***International Mayors for Peace development -***

As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, 7,205 towns and cities were now members of Mayors for Peace in 162 countries. 43 new members have joined in the past two months to take the organisation over the 7,200 mark. Notable new members are Helsinki and Oslo as well as Tomioka, a town close to the Fukushima site.

The Mayors for Peace Secretariat has sent letters from the Executive Board to President Obama urging him to continue to work on the nuclear weapons issue after his term of office ends, and to President-elect Trump, encouraging him to be pro-active in advocating and working for nuclear disarmament.

A joint letter has also been sent to all UN member states and to the UN Secretariat welcoming the decision of the General Assembly on December 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss a nuclear weapons ban treaty at two conferences in March and June 2016. The Mayors for Peace letter encourages governments to get fully involved in a positive manner to these important talks.

The Hiroshima Secretariat is considering how it will be present at these two conferences as well as the NPT Preparatory Conference in Vienna in May. In August 2017 the Mayors for Peace Executive and General Conference will take place in Nagasaki. Manchester is endeavouring to be at the Nagasaki Conference.

Mayors for Peace have also been looking to develop national / regional Chapters. In December conferences were held in Madrid and in the Basque country to promote developing groups to link in with the Catalanian sub-chapter. A Dutch Chapter has been set up and has organised an educational event. Specific events have also been held in Australia and New Zealand.

#### ***UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter progress -***

The UK and Ireland Chapter meets on the afternoon of January 27<sup>th</sup> in Manchester Town Hall, following the NFLA Steering Committee. The Secretariat is also continuing to pursue voluntary invoices and nominated representatives from member Councils, as well as organising a recruitment drive. A major aim of the meeting is to consider the potential for developing a Mayors for Peace Conference later in the year.

#### ***Bike for Peace Irish tour, May 2017 -***

The Norwegian 'Bike for Peace' group has contacted the Secretariat to discuss the possibility of holding a third bike tour with Mayors for Peace. The first took place in England in early 2014 and the second in Scotland in summer 2014. This third tour would be from Belfast to Dublin

and has been set for the 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> May. Member authorities in Ireland have been contacted and a schedule is being developed.

***Agreed: To note the report and support the Bike for Peace tour.***

## **9. Nuclear Weapons and defence nuclear safety update**

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of various issues relating to the nuclear weapons disarmament debate and defence nuclear safety matters.

### ***UN General Assembly nuclear weapon prohibition treaty discussion in 2017 -***

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> December the United Nations General Assembly formally supported a recommendation of its First Committee to pass a landmark resolution to launch negotiations in 2017 on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. As ICAN has pointed out, this is the first time in more than two decades that multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations have taken place. The last such negotiations were in 1996, when the international community concluded a global ban on all forms of nuclear testing.

The resolution now mandates the organisation of two conferences in March and June 2017 at the United Nations HQ in New York. The first of these conferences will be held on the 27<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> March, with the second on the 15<sup>th</sup> June – 7<sup>th</sup> July. The first NPT Preparatory Conference of the 2016 – 2020 session will come in between these two conferences, being held from the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017 in the UN offices in Vienna.

ICAN are organising a global week of action from the 10<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017 to raise public awareness of the upcoming nuclear ban treaty negotiations and to pressure governments to commit to participating and to work towards a strong and effective treaty.

### ***President Trump's nuclear weapons policy -***

The outgoing President Obama sought to provide evidence of his nuclear disarmament commitments by making some final unilateral cuts in the United States nuclear weapons arsenal. In a speech to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the outgoing Vice President Joe Biden announced that the US had reduced its nuclear weapons stockpile since September 2015 by 533 weapons to a total of 4,018 weapons.

President Obama's successor Donald Trump has an unpredictable take on the issue of nuclear weapons. He has gone on record a number of times to say that reducing nuclear proliferation is a real priority. However, in a 'tweet' just before Christmas he suggested that it was imperative that the United States increases its nuclear weapon stockpile - which is prevented under the NPT - and potentially start a new nuclear arms race. Since that tweet, Trump has spoken in a very different tone in an interview with the pro-Brexit MP Michael Gove, where he suggested that he wished to organise a peace summit with Russia to look at ways of reducing nuclear weapon stockpiles and tensions in Eastern Europe.

There are other areas of concern in the nuclear weapons area. Throughout his election campaign Trump repeatedly said he would tear apart the agreement made between nuclear weapon states and Iran over its nuclear programme. Both the Secretary-General of the IAEA and the Director of the CIA have called for this policy not to be implemented. Trump's proposed Defence Secretary General Mathis has also suggested that this international treaty will not be amended.

The Steering Committee asked the Secretariat to keep a watching brief of these issues.

The NFLA SC Chair and the five NFLA National Forum Chairs agreed to endorse a joint letter organised by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, counter-signed by a large number of prominent people and groups, to President-elect Trump calling for him to be pro-active in encouraging nuclear disarmament. The Steering Committee welcomed this initiative.

### ***Policing concerns at nuclear weapon sites -***

The NFLA has raised concerns over the policing of the Burghfield nuclear weapon sites in west Berkshire. Recent Freedom of Information requests by the Nuclear Information Service have uncovered serious issues over inadequate policing on the nuclear weapons facility, and an ensuing problematical inquiry dealing with the issues raised.

A NFLA media release outlined the key issues of the policing crisis at the Burghfield site. It included accusations that routine policing of the site perimeter of the nuclear weapons facility had not been taking place. The subsequent inquiry may have exacerbated the low morale that is evident amongst the local site police force. The NFLA Secretariat has written to the Defence Minister Michael Fallon seeking a response to the issues raised. The letter also queries the state of policing at other defence nuclear sites.

### ***NIS report on historical review of accidents affecting UK nuclear weapons programme -***

Following a number of recent reports now made public under the 'Thirty Year' rule showing a number of major incidents and accidents affecting the UK's nuclear weapon programme in the early to mid 1980s, the Nuclear Information Service (NIS) are shortly publishing a report which summarises the amount of accidents affecting the programme over the past 30 years.

The report will complement the ICAN-UK 'Nukes of Hazard' report and highlight real concerns over such transports. The NFLA Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretary attend the NIS event launching the report. It is taking place in Portcullis House, Westminster on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

### ***ICAN Don't Bank on the Bomb report -***

NFLA issued a media release welcoming the third annual report by ICAN looking at the global financing of the nuclear weapons industry by banks, investment companies and other finance companies. The report outlines the extent of investment by financial institutions in companies involved with the production and maintenance of nuclear weapons.

In the UK, the Co-operative Bank was praised for its active policies not supporting any financial support to such companies. However, 390 financial institutions provide investment totalling over \$498 billion in companies assisting with nuclear weapon programmes. In the UK there are 33 such institutions, up from 26 in 2015.

It appears that no UK local authority superannuation schemes are on this list, which was welcomed by the Steering Committee.

### ***Defence diversification progress -***

Following a November conference to consider the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lucas Workers Arms Conversion plan, it has been agreed to set up a working group to look at taking a campaign to encourage defence diversification projects forward, in a process being led by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. The NFLA Steering Committee welcomed the Secretariat hosting this meeting in Manchester on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

### ***Agreed: To note the report.***

## **10. Nuclear health and safety issues**

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on progress with civil nuclear safety and health issues.

### ***COMARE report on Sellafield and Dounreay and attempts at constructive engagement -***

As noted at the last Steering Committee meeting, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) published a report assessing local cancer risks in close proximity to the Sellafield and Dounreay nuclear sites. In the report, COMARE concluded that children living near Sellafield and Dounreay showed no specific increase in a risk of leukaemia or non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in a new analysis of cancer rates from 1991 to 2006. The report's authors argue that the increased incidence of cancers found in earlier years may have been associated with exposure to "infections" as people from elsewhere moved into these previously isolated rural areas, in line with the 'Kinlen theory'.

The report has come in for considerable criticism from independent experts. At the most recent BEIS NGO Forum meeting, a detailed proposal was put to the UK Government around a number of issues of concern in the area of low level radiation and its effect on health. The proposal calls for a meeting between COMARE and independent experts as soon as possible.

#### ***Irish response to Sellafield report and public health -***

At the November NFLA Annual Policy Seminar Dr Paul Dorfman outlined his involvement on the NFLA's behalf as its representative to the Irish Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Radiation Issues Committee.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> December, the EPA published the report 'Potential radiological impact on Ireland of postulated severe accidents at Sellafield'. This assessed the potential radiological impact on Ireland of a range of severe hypothetical accident scenarios at the Sellafield nuclear fuel reprocessing plant. The report found that for each of the accident scenarios that were considered, the predicted radiation doses were found to be below the levels which would give rise to sheltering, relocation or the evacuation of people being required.

NFLA responded to this report in a media release, which was picked up by Irish newspapers, radio and TV. The response noted a number of specific concerns raised by Dr Dorfman on 'beyond design basis incidents' like Fukushima. It also compared the Irish report with a similar report by Norwegian radiological health authorities, which was much broader in scope. And it called for a full audit of emergency planning in this area. The NFLA Secretariat is liaising with Dr Dorfman as to how to take these actions forward with the committee or direct with ministers.

#### ***Fukushima update and special anniversary event in Wales -***

The Japanese Government has estimated the costs in cleaning-up radioactive contamination and paying compensation to those affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster has more than doubled to around 20 trillion yen (£142 billion). Its original estimate in 2011 had been £50 billion, raised to £100 billion by 2014. Such a figure was predicted by NFLA in a 2013 report.

A 7.4 magnitude earthquake close to Fukushima hit in late November. The earthquake led to a small tsunami, but only limited damage and injuries took place. TEPCO said there was no significant damage on the Fukushima site, though a pump that supplies water to a cooling pond stopped working. A backup pump was able to restart shortly afterwards. The incident was a clear reminder of the continuing risks and hazards that exist from further natural disasters.

On March 11<sup>th</sup> 2016 - the sixth anniversary of the disaster - a number of groups have joined together to organise a major conference at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. Confirmed speakers for the conference include Plaid Cymru and Labour MEPs, a Welsh Green Party representative and international representatives. NFLA members are involved in it.

#### ***Chernobyl shield lifted into place -***

A giant hangar-like confinement shield has been successfully put in place over the remains of the sarcophagus that was created after the Chernobyl disaster. Funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the arch-shaped steel structure has taken over a decade to build. The shield was put in place due to cracks occurring in the sarcophagus leading to significant releases of radiation. The £1.6 billion new structure has been built to be in place for at least 100 years. This will allow time to dismantle the structure underneath and protect the local environment. The Steering Committee welcomed this development.

#### ***More cracks found on Hinkley B and Hunterston B reactor pressure vessels -***

As noted at the last Steering Committee meeting, a BBC documentary has highlighted real concerns over the reliability of the reactor pressure vessels at the Hinkley Point and Hunterston nuclear power plants due to an increased level of cracks in the graphite bricks around the vessel. It is expected that the ONR will announce shortly its review of EDF's request to extend the operating life of these reactors and comment further. The Steering Committee asked the NFLA Secretariat to directly respond when the announcement is made.

#### ***Agreed: To note the report.***

**11. Nuclear emergency planning, nuclear security and nuclear materials transportation**

The NFLA Secretary provided a report of work on progress with issues around nuclear security, nuclear emergency planning and nuclear transportation.

***Nuclear emergency planning and security progress -***

It was agreed at the newly reconstituted BEIS NGO Nuclear Policy Forum that sub-groups on nuclear emergency planning and nuclear security should be re-established. The NFLA Secretariat is keen for this to happen as the UK Government is implementing the European Basic Safety Standard into UK law by 2018. This may require some changes around UK nuclear emergency planning legislation, particularly REPPiR (Radiation Emergency Planning and Public Information Regulations). This may well focus on developing improved and relevant public information around radiation emergencies, principally around nuclear sites.

This issue is not just unique to the UK. Nuclear Transparency Watch has recently made highly critical remarks about the Belgian National Nuclear Emergency Plan. The NFLA are also concerned over the lack of testing of Ireland's National Nuclear Emergency Plan.

At the BEIS NGO Forum in December, Dr David Lowry gave a presentation on nuclear security concerns taken from the NFLA Policy Briefing he authored in co-operation with the NFLA Secretary. Dr Lowry used the presentation to show the many areas of risk and concern to the UK and global nuclear security systems, particularly in the area of cyber attacks.

***Nuclear transportation concerns by road, rail and sea -***

The ongoing concerns of the NFLA over transports of radioactive materials from the Dounreay site were heightened following a Sunday Herald report that the runway at Wick Airport could be unsuitable for flights of highly enriched uranium to the United States. This is despite a £9 million upgrade with funds provided by the NDA. The report led to local MSP's noting their concerns and asking detailed questions within the Scottish Parliament.

The Scottish Government confirmed in mid January that they are in active discussion with the UK Government over all transports of material from Dounreay to Sellafield and the United States by road, rail, sea and air. The NFLA Secretary has been asked to speak at the 'Highland Against Nuclear Transport' AGM in Inverness on February 3<sup>rd</sup> with John Finnie MSP on such matters.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

**12. Next NFLA Steering Committee meeting**

The next NFLA Steering Committee meeting will take place in ***Committee Room 8, Level 2, Manchester Town Hall Extension on Friday April 7<sup>th</sup> 2017.*** Members are encouraged to attend this meeting. An afternoon NFLA Finance and Administration Committee meeting would also take place.