

NFLA Policy Briefing No.173



Date: 12th February 2018

Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee meeting, Manchester, 2nd February 2018

1. Introduction by NFLA Steering Committee (SC) Vice-Chair, Scotland

The NFLA Steering Committee Vice-Chair, Scotland, Councillor Bill Butler, welcomed members to the meeting in Manchester Town Hall Extension. The Vice Chair noted this was the first of five NFLA Steering Committee meetings being held in 2018, as part of a new practice to rotate them around the four NFLA National Forums, which is to be welcomed.

2. One minute silence for Councillor Mark Hackett

Tributes were given at the meeting for Councillor Mark Hackett, former Lord Mayor of Manchester and the NFLA's Steering Committee Chair from 2011 – 2014, who sadly died in mid-December. The NFLA Secretary and former NFLA English Forum Chair Michael McGowan represented the organisation at Mark's funeral, which was also attended by the current Lord Mayor of Manchester and a number of Manchester councillors. A minutes' silence was held in Mark's memory.

3. 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 English Forum –

The NFLA English Forum hosted the NFLA Steering Committee, 2017 AGM and a joint seminar with the UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter in Manchester on the 1st December 2017. The AGM re-elected Councillor Galsworthy as NFLA Steering Committee Chair for 2018. The well attended meetings agreed NFLA consultation responses and policy briefings. The joint seminar included excellent presentations from Elizabeth Minor of ICAN (on it winning the Nobel Peace Prize and its plans for 2018), Dr Nick Ritchie from York University (on the UK nuclear weapons debate), the NFLA Secretary (on the Mayors for Peace General Conference) and Nick Taylor from the Foundation for Peace on their work to promote peace education across Greater Manchester following the May terrorist incident in Manchester.

The next meeting of the Forum will be to host the next NFLA Steering Committee and a follow-up joint seminar with the Mayors for Peace Chapter in Leeds Civic Hall on the 23rd March. The seminar will focus on the work of ICAN, PNND, Mayors for Peace and peace education. All Steering Committee members are encouraged to attend both meetings.

NFLA Scotland Forum -

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a short business meeting in Manchester on the 1st December. This considered a detailed progress report from the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor and the approval of a number of policy consultation responses. The next meeting of the Forum would be held in Glasgow City Chambers on the 1st March and would include its AGM.

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES:
A MEMBER OF ICAN, THE 2017 NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE**

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It is also hoped to hold a short seminar on the potential benefits of hydrogen as a green gas alternative in Scotland. Members also welcomed the decision of East Ayrshire Council to decide at its December meeting to affiliate to the NFLA and Mayors for Peace.

NFLA All Ireland Forum -

The next meeting of the NFLA All Ireland Forum will take place at The Grange, Omagh on the 9th March. This meeting will consider the state of renewable energy across Ireland and ways to stimulate it on the island. It will also consider NFLA updates on renewable energy, to the OSPAR Radiation Substances Committee and on Sellafield. Discussion on Brexit, Ireland and wider energy policy will also be considered. Members are encouraged to attend it. A flyer will be issued shortly.

NFLA Welsh Forum -

The NFLA Secretary is discussing a joint event with a number of groups that would be held in conjunction with the NFLA Welsh Forum's next meeting on April 13th / 14th in Machnylleth, Powys. The Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance (WANA) has reformed, as has the Trawsfynydd local group CADNO. With the groups People Against Wylfa B (PAWB), Stop Hinkley, CND Cymru and Friends of the Earth Cymru there are plans to organise a day conference on the key nuclear and renewable energy issues in Wales. This may also include the Centre for Alternative Technology, which is based in Powys. A separate Forum meeting is also being planned to focus on new build issues, radioactive waste policy and Wales and the need to expand renewables more rapidly in Wales. A flyer will be issued shortly for both events.

Agreed: To note the report.

3. Implications of the EU referendum vote on nuclear policy

The NFLA Secretary gave a round-up of key nuclear policy issues around the UK leaving the European Union.

Progress with the Nuclear Safeguards Bill for replacing the Euratom arrangements -

As part of leaving the European Union, the UK Government is going ahead with also leaving the Euratom Treaty, which governs European nuclear safety and nuclear fuel movements. The Nuclear Safeguards Bill is currently going through Parliament to transpose the core parts of the Euratom regime into UK law. It is currently in committee stage. The Bill will seek to enshrine into UK regulations all the reporting and verification processes by which the UK demonstrates to the IAEA that civil nuclear material is not diverted into military or weapons programmes. It will also establish the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) as taking on the Euratom role of overseeing reporting on civil nuclear operations, verification (that is then checked by international inspectors from the IAEA rather than Euratom), containment measures and surveillance of such materials. Additional protocols will be put in place to ensure enhanced IAEA observance, in a role that would have been previously undertaken by Euratom inspectors. Arrangements are being undertaken separately around the international trade of nuclear fuel with specific treaties having to be established with the EU and with the likes of Canada, the United States, Australia, China and Japan. All this at present will need to be in place by March 2019, but may be extended by a 'transition period' into 2020/21.

NFLA has supported a response by Dr David Lowry to the Bill Committee that the UK is taking internal control of what has been an independent, external inspections programme. The concern remains over the diplomatic acceptability of a nation state asserting that it will replace an independent international safeguards verification regime with a self-verified regime. Within this, an ongoing area of concern is whether the ONR has sufficient time to recruit enough specialist nuclear safeguards inspectors to adequately police a post-Euratom regime. The ONR has to date recruited four new safeguards inspectors but says it will need more time to fill what are highly specialised roles. At a meeting of the BEIS NGO Forum it was confirmed that this remains an issue and at least 30 – 40 inspectors have to be recruited by the time the new regime is implemented. Discussions with the EU, and the IAEA, for external support and advice, are now actively taking place by the government.

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.

Consultation on a new National Policy Statement for new nuclear programme -

In mid-December the UK Government issued a public consultation on an updated National Policy Statement (NPS) for new nuclear programmes. It is required as the original NPS had suggested that most of the proposed sites would be in the process of being completed or developed by 2025. As it stands, no new nuclear power station will be delivered by then, with an outside chance that Hinkley Point C could be on track by the end of that year. The NPS process allows such development to go through the National Infrastructure Planning system, which NFLA has consistently argued does not allow for adequate local considerations to be fully taken into account.

The new NPS will seek to designate new nuclear reactors that will be developed between 2026 and 2035. It keeps the same sites for potential deployment as the original NPS – Wylfa, Oldbury, Sizewell, Bradwell, Heysham, Hartlepool and Sellafield Moorside. Hinkley Point is not included in the list as the new nuclear site planned there has outline development consent. The NFLA has put together a draft response to the consultation, which was approved by the Steering Committee.

The conclusions of the draft NFLA submission includes:

- The electricity system has changed radically in the years since the project to build new third generation nuclear in Britain was initiated.
- Renewable energy costs have drastically reduced at a time when new nuclear costs have ballooned.
- Clearly EN-1 (an analysis of the entire UK energy needs over the next 3 decades), upon which EN-6 depends (the need for new nuclear), should be completely re-written. There is no “need” for new nuclear power stations. This current consultation should be scrapped and the Government should go back to the drawing board and re-write EN-1 to take account of major changes in energy generation.

A workshop on the NPS will be held by BEIS on the 22nd February, and the NFLA response will be published around that time.

Update with Hinkley Point C, Wylfa B and Sellafield Moorside -

There remains slow progress in the development of new nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point, Wylfa and Sellafield Moorside whilst financial concerns continue to remain.

After a series of negative recent public reports about the financing of the Hinkley Point deal, the National Grid has now been publicly critical of Ofgem’s proposals over an £800 million project which would connect a completed Hinkley Point C to the electricity network. They say the project may put investment to the wider UK energy sector at risk. The 57km National Grid plan would require new substations, underground cables and a less intrusive T-pylon design. However, National Grid criticises the Ofgem proposal of seeking to simulate the effect of putting the project out to competitive tender, as part of a proposal that is aimed at making £100 million savings. National Grid argues the proposal does not produce the returns required to ensure sustainable investment.

The new Chief Executive of EDF in the UK, Simone Rossi, has claimed that Hinkley is on track to be completed on time by the end of 2025. However, the key measures to fund the project are still being put together.

At Wylfa B, media reports suggest that the Japanese Government and the UK Government have agreed to look at direct options to find public finance, loans and financial guarantees with Hitachi to deliver the project. A report in the Financial Times suggests both Governments have agreed to work with financial institutions to extend as much as £14 billion in loans to finance Wylfa, along with a public stake in the business. The report suggests formal letters exchanged between the two governments had allayed market fears with the project and could allow for ‘low cost’ public finance to be pumped in to the project. Hitachi have said they expect an agreement in the near future on the deal.

The NFLA has submitted its views on the radioactive waste issues that could arise from a Wylfa B development. The submission has gone to Natural Resources Wales who are considering an environmental permit for the site. The submission notes the waste from Wylfa B alone could increase the current UK radioactive inventory by as much as 80%. This response has also been widened to consider the impacts of prospective new nuclear projects for a joint submission with KIMO to the OSPAR Radiation Substances Committee. The Steering Committee endorsed both responses, which will go on the NFLA website.

Talks are still ongoing between the UK and South Korean Governments over Kepco taking on Toshiba's stake for the Sellafield Moorside site. These are expected to be concluded in the next few months. Late last year, Kepco announced it was the preferred bidder for the site. Meanwhile, Toshiba's stake in Westinghouse – which went bankrupt in the United States sending Toshiba £8 billion into the red – has been sold to the Canadian owned investment firm Brookfield for £3.4 billion. Brookfield are likely to focus on core parts of Westinghouse's US business.

Update with Sizewell C and Bradwell B -

The new CEO of EDF has claimed that a Sizewell C new reactor could be built 20% cheaper than Hinkley Point C, at around £15 - 16 billion. It is claimed replication of construction techniques, existing grid connections and the exploration of new finance models with pension firms would all help in reducing costs significantly. Meanwhile, at Bradwell, whose Chinese reactor design is now being considered by the nuclear regulators, the first planning applications for preliminary works on the proposed site have been submitted.

Developments with Small Modular Nuclear (SMR) Reactors -

Further reports from different parts of the nuclear industry continue to extol the benefits of small modular nuclear reactors. The latest is from Policy Exchange, which acknowledge the problems in delivering large nuclear sites could be resolved with a rapid move towards SMRs. Yet, a report by Atkins for the UK Government notes that energy generated from small modular reactors (SMRs) could cost nearly one-third more than conventional large nuclear power plants in 2031. This is due to reduced economies of scale and the costs of deploying a 'first-of-a-kind' technology. The analysis also said there was "a great deal of uncertainty with regards to the economics" of the smaller reactors. However, the authors argued such reactors should be able to cut costs more quickly than large ones because they could be built and put into service in less time.

Agreed: To note the report and continue to monitor developments.

5. 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.

UK and Welsh Government consultations on managing radioactive waste -

After much delay, the UK Government has published two consultations seeking to move forward with a new strategy to find a willing 'community' to host a deep underground radioactive waste repository for intermediate and high level materials. In a carefully aligned approach, the Welsh Government has also launched a parallel consultation. The Northern Ireland Executive is supportive of the consultations. The Scottish Government has a separate policy of 'near site, near surface' storage of intermediate level waste and is taking no part in these consultations.

In NuLEAF's initial analysis of the 'communities' consultation it notes that:

- The 'community' for the siting process will be identified from a wider 'Search Area' which is then reduced in scope. This smaller area will be based on an assessment of the area affected by the impacts of the development and existing administrative boundaries.
- Initial interest and discussions can be initiated by anyone within an area, but will need to be opened up to include the wider community at an early stage. As the process moves towards this 'formative engagement', local authorities will need to be informed and also involved in discussions if they wish.
- A Community Partnership would then be set up which would take forward constructive engagement with the community. The Partnership would sign a Community Agreement (essentially a Memorandum of Understanding) to take forward this engagement and would

receive up to £1million per annum of community investment funding. This will rise to £2.5 million for communities that progress to deep borehole investigation.

- Local authorities (including both counties and districts in two tier areas) will need to be invited on to the Community Partnership but may choose to be directly involved, to observe, or to remain neutral.
- Both the community and the developer has the right of withdrawal from the process right up to the test of public support.
- The test of support could be done via a range of methods including a referendum, consultation or representative polling.

The National Policy Statement seeks to set the development of a repository in the National Infrastructure Planning arrangements. This would put it on a par with new nuclear reactors, HS2 and suchlike. However, this arrangement differs in that it requires community consent. The Welsh Government's consultation also provides opportunity for Welsh Councils and community groups to comment in the event that any community comes forward with an interest in hosting a repository. If such a community does come forward, it would be the Welsh Government that will lead the discussions forward in conjunction with RWM and the UK Government.

It is expected that RWM will also publish a website shortly providing a geological screening of core underground rock in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This would provide generic information of the known geological information to assist a potential host community know if the rock / clay is potentially suitable for a repository. The Steering Committee agreed that the Secretariat put forward a response for approval at the 23rd March Steering Committee meeting.

Swedish court rejects canister design for Forsmark deep underground repository -

A potential blow for the UK deep repository process in the longer-term comes from a decision by the Swedish Environment and Land Court to reject the application to move forward with the current Swedish radioactive waste policy. The Swedish policy has been similar to that of the UK Government, though considerably more intensive in terms of community engagement. In the court case, the Swedish NGO MKB brought detailed evidence based information relating to concern that it is not proven the proposed canisters can safely store the waste underground for the hundreds of thousands of years required of them, and that leakage into the environment was possible. Despite the Swedish nuclear regulator approving the canister design, the Courts were not convinced of its robustness and have rejected the application. They have asked the developer to provide much more detailed information before they would reconsider it.

Progress with Scottish waste issues: ILW policy, Dounreay, Rosyth and Dalgety Bay –

The Scottish Government has a quite different approach to the management of intermediate level waste (ILW) – what is often referred to as storage in 'near site, near surface' facilities. NFLA have been heavily involved in this policy process and broadly supports its approach. The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor has been a member of the Scottish Government's Project Board on this matter and is continuing to engage with it. Further clarity on taking this policy forward is expected shortly.

As noted at the last NFLA Steering Committee meeting, the BBC Radio 4 'File on Four' documentary strand investigated the failed contract process for cleaning up Magnox reactors. As well as outlining the major mistakes of the NDA during the procurement process, the documentary outlined that similar concerns lay within the separate and earlier attained contract for decommissioning the Dounreay site, which was also won by Cavendish Fluor. The documentary suggested Energy Solutions believed that this contract had also been under-bid for, but they did not challenge this at the time as the Magnox contract was currently being considered. The NFLA wrote to the Scottish Environment Secretary calling for her to query this contract with the UK Government. The response to the letter from the Scottish Government has been considered and a further response is being prepared.

At Dounreay, planning permission is being sought for the demolition of the landmark dome structure at Dounreay – the exterior superstructure, also known as the sphere and the golf ball of the Dounreay Fast Reactor. Work on dismantling the interior is due to begin next year and the sphere will ultimately be removed by 2026. A planning application has been submitted to Highland Council for the dismantling of all the site's reactors. The site owners DSRL has also applied for

construction of new buildings to store low level radioactive waste. These are currently held in the original low level waste pits which are at risk of being exposed due to coastal erosion.

At Rosyth, the Dunfermline and West Fife MP Douglas Chapman has called on the Ministry of Defence to speed up a programme to dismantle seven nuclear submarines in Rosyth. He said work to rid Rosyth of the vessels was “excruciatingly slow”. This call came after SEPA released its latest Radioactivity in Food and the Environment (RIFE 22) Report which showed that radiation levels around Rosyth dockyard had increased last year, although levels were well within safety limits. According to the SEPA report, the total dose level in the vicinity of Rosyth dockyard went up from 0.006mSv in 2015 to 0.017mSv last year. The increased reading is less than 2% of the recommended dose limit and would only apply to someone spending “*a large amount of time over marine sediments*”. The highest dose for a member of the public in Scotland reported in RIFE was 0.058 mSv which is the total estimated dose around Dounreay. SEPA describes this as around one twentieth of the legal limit, but it is almost three times the target level for 2020 as suggested through the OSPAR arrangements agreed upon in 2002.

As reported at the last Steering Committee meeting, plans to reduce and control the health and environmental risks of radium contamination at Dalgety Bay were approved in October by the West Fife Planning Committee. This includes work on the foreshore, installing a geotextile membrane and replacing and reinforcing rock armour to isolate and remove higher activity material. The existing jetty and slipways at Dalgety Bay Sailing Club are also set to be replaced. Work will be carried out over two consecutive six-month summer periods – approximately April to September 2018 – due to the risk of impacting wintering birds in the Bay area.

Hinkley Point C ‘radioactive mud’ and Wylfa B radioactive waste consultation -

In late 2017, NFLA published a report by the independent marine radioactivity consultant Tim Deere-Jones over concerns that approvals had been granted to allow EDF to dump dredged materials from the proposed Hinkley Point C reactor containing low levels of radiation into a site close to Cardiff Bay, known as the Cardiff Deep Grounds. This issue has been actively taking up by independent AM Neil McEvoy. Two separate petitions have attracted over 60,000 signatures and have been submitted to the Welsh Assembly. The Petitions Committee has held two hearings seeking clarification with Natural Resources Wales, and they have been given a deadline to provide further information. Neil McEvoy and other AMs are also calling for a full debate in the Senedd. The NFLA will continue to monitor progress with these matters.

NFLA analysis of nuclear site stakeholder engagement -

The ONR Chief Executive commented that the NFLA report on stakeholder engagement had been informative. As such, the Chief Nuclear Inspector has tabled parts of the report to the Nuclear Industry Safety Directors Forum meeting. It is expected that the NFLA Secretary and a civil and defence NGO sector representative will be invited to a future meeting of this Forum to discuss ways to improve stakeholder engagement in the nuclear sector. The NFLA Secretary is meeting with the ONR Chief Executive on the 27th February to discuss these matters and wider engagement with the ONR.

Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS -

The LGA’s NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum for England and Wales) group held a business meeting in London on the 6th December. This discussed developments with the deep underground repository consultations, engagement with Magnox and international liaison. The next meeting will be Manchester on the 21st March with a special workshop on the repository consultation.

COSLA’s SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) group met in Edinburgh on the 30th November. Two new Co-Chairs from Renfrewshire (Councillor Michelle Campbell) and Inverclyde Council (Councillor Jim McEleny) were nominated and a seminar was held on Scottish waste policy. A location and budget for the Secretariat is being discussed to take over from Edinburgh Council. The next meeting will be held in Glasgow on the 12th March.

Agreed: To note the report and respond to the consultations.

6. Alternatives to nuclear energy

The NFLA Secretary gave an overview of activity in promoting local, decentralised and renewable forms of energy.

UK Clean Growth Plan Strategy -

As noted at the last Steering Committee, the NFLA submitted a detailed joint response with the Stop Hinkley group at the end of 2017 to the UK Government's Clean Growth Plan.

The two key conclusions of the NFLA submission include:

- It is clear to the NFLA and Stop Hinkley that solar power, offshore wind and onshore wind costs are falling. By making the most of renewable technologies, along with a combination of energy efficiency, battery storage, hydrogen, combined heat and power and district heating networks, we should be developing an integrated energy strategy which not only cuts carbon emissions but also cuts costs for consumers, tackles fuel poverty and doesn't produce nuclear waste in the process.
- In a joint view, as all the weight of argument we have noted above, Hinkley Point C can still be cancelled more cheaply than continuing with it. R&D funding should be directed away from the idea of reviving the old, outdated ideas of small modular reactors and reprocessing and redirected at technologies for the future such as P2G and developing district heating networks with heat storage.

Helm Review of the UK Energy Market -

In mid-2017, the UK Government commissioned a review of energy costs, led by Oxford academic Professor Dieter Helm. This has concluded that UK energy prices have been pushed up by years of government policymaking distorting the market and shackling consumers with hefty legacy costs. The review also argues the costs of high-profile clean energy policies such as the Renewable Obligations Certificate, the Feed-in Tariff and Contracts for Difference (CfD) schemes are largely responsible for rising energy prices.

Following approval from the Steering Committee, a detailed NFLA / Stop Hinkley response to it was produced. The key conclusions of it include:

- The best way for the Government to keep costs as low as possible over the coming decades, while delivering its carbon targets, ensuring security of supply, and seizing the economic opportunities of the low carbon transition, is to cancel Hinkley Point C, scrap the nuclear programme, launch a much more comprehensive energy efficiency programme and expand its renewable energy ambitions.
- Cancelling Hinkley Point C now might incur a cancellation cost of around £2bn but consumers could save around £50bn over its lifetime.
- Offshore wind is already approaching half the cost of nuclear power and Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) predicts costs will drop a further 71% by 2040.
- Removing the current block on onshore wind could save consumers around £1bn.
- Solar power is expected to be the cheapest source of energy (not just electricity) anywhere in the world by 2030 or 2040.
- Cost-effective investments in domestic energy efficiency between now and 2035 could save around 140 terawatt hours (TWh) of energy and save an average of £270 per household per year at current energy prices. The investments would deliver net benefits worth £7.5bn to the UK.
- Baseload is not helpful in balancing a variable energy supply – it simply leads to further overproduction of energy at times when renewables can meet demand on their own.
- Switching from gas to electric heating would put a huge strain on the power transmission and distribution system and entail constructing a large number of new power stations in a short space of time that would only be used for a few months of the year. It would also be incredibly wasteful if the only recently modernised gas grid was to be ditched.
- The Government should be investigating rather in power-to-gas (P2G) technology which can produce renewable hydrogen, using surplus renewable electricity, which could then be fed into the gas grid for storage or used for producing renewable heat.

Scottish renewables policy -

In his report for the December NFLA Scotland meeting, the NFLA Scottish Policy Advisor outlined many ways the Scottish Government was seeking to consolidate its leading role in developing renewable energy sources. It also considered the potential creation of a Scottish Energy Company and a Scottish Energy Investment Bank. The NFLA Secretary plans to seek NFLA Scotland support for a report summarising the positive moves forward in Scottish energy policy, and commenting on the way forward, at its March meeting.

Irish Government Renewable Support Scheme consultation -

In November 2017, the NFLA submitted a response to the Irish Government on how it could support a more rapid deployment of renewable energy schemes. This is amidst concern deployment is too slow and Ireland is falling behind many other European Union states, as well as potentially not meeting low carbon targets.

The key conclusions of the NFLA submission were:

- In the immediate future technologically neutral auctions are likely to favour onshore wind over other less well developed renewables. Solar, offshore wind and other more nascent technologies may not be able to compete against the cheapest renewable.
- Eirgrid predicts that solar farms will reach grid parity by the mid-2020s, but this is too late to have an impact on the renewable targets for 2020.
- Solar energy is key to Ireland reaching its 2020 targets and avoid fines of up to €300m per year from Europe. It is estimated that 1500MW of solar farms could be built by 2022, which equates to 5 per cent of Ireland's electricity demand.
- The Irish Government, therefore, should give solar farms priority access to RESS funding over the next 5 to 10 years.
- Plans to increase community ownership and participation are to be welcomed. Community groups will need more than just money and developing a thriving community and co-operative energy infrastructure should be a major Government objective.
- The Minister is reported to have asked the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to examine how best micro-generation can be supported before a policy framework is designed – but this appears to apply to just householders rather than public authorities. Local authorities and municipalities should be supported and encouraged to develop projects which can apply for a Feed-in Premium as quickly as possible, and where appropriate in co-operation with community energy groups.

Decentralised energy schemes continue to expand -

Across the UK and Ireland, many Councils are continuing to look at ways to develop renewable and decentralised energy schemes. The NFLA Secretary plans to do a further update of progress in the spring. The NFLA Secretary has been asked to put together a paper for Manchester City Council's Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee summarizing such developments and considering the way forward in Manchester and Greater Manchester. This will be shared more widely with NFLA members when it is formally published in late February.

Developments in fracking -

While moratoriums on fracking remain in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, in England the Government has been trying to support the industry. A number of exploratory projects are taking place. However, a blow to the industry came in January when the Business Secretary Greg Clark said that fracking companies must undergo financial health checks if they want to win a green light for their operations. This may create a further barrier to exploration in the UK. The decision comes after Third Energy, who are ready to start extracting gas at Kirby Misperton in North Yorkshire, were not granted permission from the government to go forward with operations until it submits overdue accounts and the Treasury had assessed its financial resilience, including the firm's ability to clean the site up afterwards.

Agreed: To note the report and respond to the relevant consultations.

7. 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 and wider peace issues.

International Mayors for Peace development -

As of January 1st 2018, 7,536 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace in 162 countries. 67 new members have joined in the past two months, allowing Mayors for Peace to pass the 7500 mark in early December. East Ayrshire Council will be added to the February list of members.

Further discussion has taken place between European Lead Cities around the proposed development of a loose European Secretariat structure and the potential creation of a new post of a European-based Mayors for Peace Executive Advisor. A second telephone conference has been held. It was agreed that the NFLA Secretary (in his local role for the Mayors for Peace) will discuss with colleagues in Ypres and Hanover over developing a more detailed organisation chart, budget and pathway forward. The aim is for discussion with Hiroshima and the European cities over the next few months for outline agreement to be made at a meeting in Geneva during the NPT Preparatory Conference at the United Nations buildings.

The President of Mayors for Peace, the Mayor of Hiroshima, recently visited Germany, Italy and the Vatican City for a series of events and meetings. These included a talk at Beuth University, a meeting with the Mayor of Hanover in Germany and the Mayor of Thiene, Italy, a reception with Pope Francis, a speech at the Italian Parliament and a meeting with the Vice President of the International Peace Bureau. A full report can be found on the Mayors for Peace website.

Mayors for Peace delegation at the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony -

A small Mayors for Peace delegation attended the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony and associated events in Oslo between December 8th and 11th 2017. The delegation was led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and also included the Mayors and officers of Frogn (Norway), Biograd na Moru (Croatia) and the NFLA Secretary representing Manchester.

Amongst the events over the weekend included:

- Attendance at the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Television cameras at the ceremony regularly showed the reaction of the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- A candlelit evening vigil and evening discussion with the Mayors for Peace delegation.
- Attendance at the Nobel Peace Forum on indigenous rights, and attendance at a following reception in Oslo University.
- A reception with ICAN and Mayors for Peace Norwegian members with the Mayor of Oslo. The Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had met the Mayor of Oslo in a separate meeting.
- A reception at Oslo University to formally plant ginkgo trees originating from an A-bombed tree.
- Attendance at the Nobel Peace Prize evening concert, which is televised live in 150 countries.
- Attendance at the opening of an exhibition on ICAN's work in the Nobel Peace Centre.

A full report of the events is on the NFLA website.

UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace progress -

A UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter meeting was held as a joint seminar with the NFLA on the afternoon of the 1st December in Manchester. The seminar had four excellent speakers and was well attended. A follow up joint Mayors for Peace / NFLA seminar is being planned for the 23rd March in Leeds Civic Hall. It is hoped to have a number of Lord Mayors attending this meeting. NFLA members are encouraged to attend it.

Sheffield City Council held a special event to celebrate its renewal of interest in the Mayors for Peace. This was held on 31st January at Sheffield Town Hall. The event included speeches from the Lord Mayor of Sheffield, the NFLA Secretary (on behalf of the Lord Mayor of Manchester), Rebecca Johnson from ICAN UK and Bruce Kent of CND UK. A report on it is on the NFLA website.

Manchester City Council's 'Project G' initiative is coming to its conclusion. In December, four Manchester primary schools and Manchester Children's Hospital received Hiroshima originated ginkgo trees for planting. Others will be planted over 2018. The Council has also received a £2k from Historic England for an update and reprint of its Young People's City Centre Peace Trail.

Bike for Peace tour Manchester to Liverpool, May 2018 -

Discussions have taken place with the Norwegian group Bike for Peace to hold a bike ride between Manchester and Liverpool in May 2018. A number of Norwegian Mayors and professional cyclists may take part in it. Once the event is finalised the NFLA Secretary (in his Mayors for Peace role) will seek to publicise it with relevant Councils. It is currently aimed for stops in Manchester, Warrington and Liverpool.

Agreed: To note the report.

8. Nuclear Weapons, defence nuclear safety and defence diversification update

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

ICAN's 2017 Nobel Peace Prize and how it impacts on the debate in 2018 -

On the 10th December the Nobel Committee formally conveyed on ICAN the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize. The award has led to considerable, positive global media coverage and the ceremony was shown around the world. The ICAN Chief Executive Officer Beatrice Fihn and Hiroshima hibakusha Setsuko Thurlow received the award and spoke eloquently of the need for global engagement to bring about nuclear disarmament.

The NFLA Secretary is seeking to use the upcoming NFLA / Mayors for Peace joint seminar as a way to consider how ICAN's Nobel Peace Laureate position could be used in UK political discourse. 2018 is also the 60th anniversary of the creation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. A special Parliamentary reception is being held to commemorate it on the 21st February, which will be attended by Cllr Sue Lent and Cllr Grace Fletcher-Hackwood on behalf of the NFLA, along with the NFLA Secretary. The event will commence a year of action of events, direct actions, national rallies and lobbies.

Two major upcoming international UN conferences will dictate much of the international debate in the next few months – the second Preparatory Conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty being held in Geneva in late April to early May; and the High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament being held in New York in mid-May. ICAN, Mayors for Peace, CND and PNND, with other groups are planning a strategy for the events and lobbying national governments to attend them.

Trident costs and UK defence policy -

In late December the Ministry of Defence told Parliament that it is considering shifting the cost of funding the Trident nuclear programme out of the defence budget to be linked with other large projects such as the funding of HS2. The defence budget is presently £36 billion whilst the Trident budget is estimated as at least £31 billion, though other groups like Greenpeace, CND and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Crispin Blunt has suggested it could be much higher.

North Korea and Iran nuclear weapons debate -

Whilst the tensions between the United States and North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme remain, some positive bilateral peace talks between North Korea and South Korea around the Winter Olympics, with food aid for the north, has helped to reduce some of the tension. Increased sanctions at the United Nations were agreed in early January and are putting severe financial pressure on the North Korean economy. However, it remains clear that North Korea still wishes to pursue with vigour their nuclear weapons policy.

The Cold War type paranoia that the tensions have resurrected could be seen in Hawaii, when an incorrect warning of a missile attack on the islands led to mass panic and rapid evacuation of the population to civil defence sites. The message came as a result of human error and IT glitches. A full Government inquiry is now taking place to this very alarming incident. Meanwhile, in terms of the potential unravelling of the Iran nuclear programme deal, President Trump stepped back, waiving a number of sanctions as required by the 2015 agreement. However, he said to European states that this would be the last time he does this unless there is radical changes to the original agreement. The EU and Russia remain supportive of the original agreement with Iran.

Defence diversification progress -

As noted at the last Steering Committee meeting, two motions urging energy democracy and the establishment of a Shadow Defence Diversification Agency were passed at the TUC Annual Conference. The NFLA is involved in a Defence Diversification Steering Group, which has brought together an impressive range of trade unions, academic groups, NGOs, faith groups and cross-party politicians together. The meeting agreed it was important to talk with spokespeople on business and defence matters in the Labour, SNP, Plaid and Green Parties. A small delegation including the NFLA Secretary is meeting with Labour's Shadow Business Secretary Rebecca Long-Bailey at her Salford Constituency Office on the 8th February, and another meeting is being prepared with Shadow Peace and Disarmament Secretary Fabian Hamilton in his Leeds Constituency Office. Members of the group are also discussing what a Defence Diversification Agency could look like.

Agreed: To note the report.

9. Nuclear health and safety issues

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on progress with civil nuclear safety and health issues, which included a brief update of its report of concern on nuclear plant life extensions.

NFLA / CNFE letters to the European Commission on transboundary nuclear health and safety -

NFLA has cooperated with the CNFE Secretariat in Vienna and the Dutch Council of Bergen op Zoom around concerns over transboundary issues with aging nuclear reactors. CNFE has a number of German and Dutch members close to the Belgian border and the reactors at Doel and Tihange, which are of great concern to such Councils in the event of a nuclear accident taking place and having large off-site consequences. Bergen op Zoom for example is little over 20 miles from Doel. Many Austria members have the same concern over reactors in Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic. NFLA has raised similar concerns on behalf of its Irish members of the potential effect on them from a UK based nuclear incident. The joint letter, signed by the CNFE Chair and the NFLA UK and Irish Chairs has been sent to the Chair of the European Commission and to two Commissioners responsible for health and safety.

NFLA / KIMO submission to the OSPAR Radiation Substances Committee -

Over the past decade, the NFLA have cooperated with KIMO International to submit relevant reports to the Radiation Substances Committee (RSC) of the OSPAR Inter-governmental Commission. OSPAR was set up to improve the marine quality of the North East Atlantic, including the Irish Sea, North Sea and English Channel. The RSC has been asked to deliver the OSPAR commitment of having 'close to zero' radioactive discharges in the marine environment by 2020.

A draft report has been developed by NFLA, and will be submitted by KIMO to consider the potential impacts on gaseous and liquid radioactive discharges from the proposed new nuclear programme in England and Wales. The submission concludes:

- The new reactors would produce extremely high levels of radioactive spent fuel. In the year 2200 spent fuel arisings would amount to almost five times the radioactivity contained in all existing legacy wastes from the UK's nuclear power industry.
- The requirement for 'Best Available Techniques' (and clean technology) for producing electricity should rule out building new electricity generating stations which produce such highly dangerous wastes. Especially as less expensive, quicker and safer alternatives are available which don't produce such wastes.

The Steering Committee supported this draft submission. It will go on the NFLA website shortly.

Fukushima disaster update -

In late January 2018, the operator of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant revealed new video footage of what is believed to be fuel debris in the failed reactor Unit Number 2. In a new probe of the reactor, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) confirmed that material at the bottom of the reactor containment vessel appears to be a mixture of melted nuclear fuel and structure parts. TEPCO says the new footage has provided useful data for determining how to advance the cleanup work.

As the 7th anniversary of the Fukushima disaster approaches in March, NHK World report that 2018 will be a major year for TEPCO in its attempts to remove fuel debris from the stricken reactors. Fuel debris is a mixture of melted nuclear fuel and broken reactor parts. Removing the debris is considered to be the biggest hurdle to the final decommissioning of the reactors. The Japanese Government and TEPCO aim to begin removing debris in 2021.

Agreed: To note the report.

10. 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.

Changes to UK nuclear emergency planning arrangements –

At the last Steering Committee meeting, members approved a detailed response from the NFLA to the UK Government's proposed changes to national nuclear emergency planning arrangements as a result of transposing the European Basic Safety Standards Directive. This response is on the NFLA website. It is expected a government response to consultation responses is expected in the spring. The NFLA has received approval from Dr Ian Fairlie to publish his analysis of the real difficulties in evacuation in the event of a serious nuclear incident, which will go on the NFLA website.

Nuclear transportation issues –

Following publication of the Nukewatch Scotland report on concerns over public information provision around the safety of nuclear weapon road convoys, the NFLA is looking to organise a NFLA English Forum meeting in June in Oxford to consider these concerns for an English audience.

Agreed: To note the report.

11. NFLA Finance and Communications report

The NFLA Secretary presented a financial report of expected income and expenditure for financial year 2017/18. The report was approved and it was agreed to increase the NFLA member affiliation fees by the inflation rate – 2.5% in the UK and 0.5% in the Republic of Ireland. A new NFLA logo was also approved and is now being used in all NFLA materials and its website. A social media presence is also being developed.

Agreed: To note the report.

12. NFLA Steering Committee meetings in 2018

The next NFLA Steering Committee meeting will take place in ***East Room, Leeds Civic Hall on Friday 23rd March 2018.***