

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 9th July 2012

No.98

Subject: Summary of the NFLA Steering Committee meeting, Manchester, 29th June 2012

1. Introduction

The Steering Committee was opened and chaired by Manchester City Councillor Hackett, who welcomed all to Manchester Town Hall. The NFLA Chair and a number of other councillors had been unable to attend the meeting due to serious flooding in the north of England.

Councillor Hackett welcomed all those that had managed to brave the difficult weather to attend the meeting. He also welcomed Councillor O'Neill from West Dunbartonshire Council and Councillor Brown from Renfrewshire Council to their first Committee meeting.

2. National NFLA Forum meetings

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of the work of the four NFLA National Forums:

NFLA All Ireland Forum –

The NFLA All Ireland Forum held a seminar in Dundalk Town Hall on the 20th April. The seminar followed on from previous meetings by considering the implications of a UK new nuclear build programme on Ireland and promoting Irish Councils becoming more involved in the promotion of renewable energy. Speakers include the NFLA Secretary, the independent marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones, and Aideen O'Hora from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. Over 40 delegates were in attendance.

Officials from the Republic of Ireland Government's Environment Department have agreed to meet with members of the Forum to discuss its concerns around nuclear policy and to clarify the Irish Government's view on developments across the Irish Sea. The next NFLA All Ireland Forum meeting is planned to be held by Down District Council in October.

NFLA Scotland Forum –

Due to all-out local government elections in Scotland on May 3rd the Forum has not met since the last Steering Committee meeting. The retirement of councillors and the results of the elections had meant a considerable amount of change in individual council NFLA representatives.

It had been confirmed that Glasgow City Council's new NFLA representative would be Councillor Fariha Thomas. As Glasgow hosts the NFLA Scotland Forum Secretariat its constitution outlines that Councillor Thomas also becomes the NFLA Scotland Convenor. Appointment of a Vice Convenor and other representatives to the NFLA Steering Committee, along with a seminar on Scottish nuclear developments is being organised and will take place in Glasgow City Chambers in late August / early September.

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NFLA English Forum –

Due to local government elections, the NFLA English Forum has not met since the last NFLA Steering Committee meeting. The NFLA English Forum Chair was not re-elected in the local government elections. In a short meeting following the Steering Committee it was agreed that Manchester's NFLA representative would take over as interim NFLA English Forum Chair with Councillor David Blackburn of Leeds City Council as interim NFLA English Forum Vice Chair.

The next NFLA English Forum meeting will be a seminar in Rotherham which will consider issues around the transportation and decontamination of radioactive steel and other metals. The seminar will also consider the potential benefits of geothermal energy in the regeneration of parts of the country. It will be held in October (date to be confirmed).

NFLA Welsh Forum –

Again, due to local government elections, the NFLA Welsh Forum has not met since the last NFLA Steering Committee meeting. Councillor Ed Bridges of Cardiff City Council and Councillor Ray Davies of Caerphilly County Borough Council have agreed to be interim Co-Chairs of the NFLA Welsh Forum.

The NFLA Welsh Forum was thanked for its submission to the Welsh Assembly inquiry into energy policy. The former Chair of the NFLA Welsh Forum gave a verbal submission to the Welsh Assembly Environment & Sustainability Committee in late March.

The next NFLA Welsh Forum meeting will be a seminar in Cardiff which will consider the Welsh Assembly energy inquiry report, the PAWB 'Ynys Mon Manifesto', new nuclear developments at Wylfa and Hinkley Point and consider if Milford Haven could be used as Trident submarine base.

Agreed: To note the reports and encourage attendance at autumn meetings.

3. Nuclear new build

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on a wide range of issues around the proposed development of new nuclear power stations –

Hinkley Point C planning application –

The NFLA Secretariat had submitted a detailed response, in association with the local group Stop Hinkley, to the National Infrastructure Directorate, giving its views on the EDF planning application for a proposed new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point in Somerset. The submission can be found on the NFLA website. The submission formally opposes the development of such a facility.

Generic Design Assessment process and Westinghouse design for UK reactors –

The NFLA Secretariat has been co-operating with the publicising of an initial assessment by the influential and independent civil engineering consultancy Large & Associates. Large & Associates have considered all of the available documentation with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) / Environment Agency's Generic Design Assessment (GDA) for the two proposed new build designs – EDF-Areva's EPR and Westinghouse's AP-1000.

Both designs have received interim approval from the Office for Nuclear Regulation and the Environment Agency, though the AP-1000 design is now on hold given the decision by RWE and E-on to pull out of developing new nuclear reactors at Wylfa and Oldbury. John Large's assessment of the GDA outlines that 31 of the 32 outstanding issues in the GDA have not yet been dealt with by EDF-Areva for the EPR design. It is becoming clear that the original deadline of completing the GDA process by the end of 2012 will not be met, and even the anticipated later date of March 2013 remains an ambitious target. Nuclear new build at Hinkley Point will not go ahead until full approval is given through the GDA process.

UK Government draft Energy Bill and investment decisions on new nuclear build

A key issue for the development of new nuclear power facilities will be a stable funding mechanism and the potential availability of public funds and assistance to electricity utilities.

The UK Coalition Government has an agreed policy of 'no public subsidy' for a new nuclear programme and has published a draft Energy Bill which outlines proposed reforms of the electricity market to assist with price certainty and the development of new nuclear reactors.

The Parliamentary Energy & Climate Change Select Committee have organised an inquiry into the draft Energy Bill and the NFLA Secretariat have submitted a full and detailed response to it, which can be found on the NFLA website.

The key conclusions of the NFLA submission are:

- The UK Government appears to be planning to force consumers to subsidise nuclear power through its electricity market reforms contained within the Draft Energy Bill, despite having repeatedly promised there would be no public subsidy for new reactors.
- Offering new nuclear operators a fixed unit price for the cost of spent fuel management and disposal represents a subsidy of perhaps as much as £427 million per reactor. Underwriting nuclear operators' nuclear waste and decommissioning costs also represents a subsidy.
- Any limit on liability on the costs of nuclear accidents eases the burden on nuclear operators. Paying for commercial insurance could add around half a euro to the cost of a unit of electricity, so a cap on liability represents a subsidy. Though this is being dealt with through a different policy process, this is indicative of the kind of unfair support the nuclear industry is receiving.
- Subsidising a nuclear technology which has already existed for over 70 years without achieving the expected cost reductions, and which produces a dangerous waste we are not sure what to do with, is certainly not in the interest of the taxpayer or the electricity consumer.

The finalised bill with secondary legislation is expected to be formally tabled to Parliament later this year.

Welsh Government policy on new nuclear build -

The Welsh Government's updated energy statement on how to develop more 'low carbon' energy in Wales included a key policy change in support of developing a new nuclear power station at Wylfa. The NFLA Secretariat has been in detailed correspondence with the Welsh Government on the matter and this correspondence was discussed with the Steering Committee. With the decision of RWE and E-on to pull out of developing a new nuclear reactor at Wylfa and Oldbury a bidding competition has been called to take over this site. To date, no final decision on who may take over this site has been determined.

Anti-nuclear campaigners meeting –

The NFLA Secretariat has worked with other groups to develop a one-day workshop conference on improving communications and developing a common strategy on the nuclear new build issue. This is being held on June 30th, the day after the next NFLA Steering Committee meeting, in Manchester.

Agreed: To endorse the NFLA response to the Hinkley Point inquiry and to the UK Government's draft Energy Bill. To continue to raise serious concerns over the development of new nuclear reactors. To give its support to the event for nuclear campaigning groups on the 30th June.

4. Fukushima and nuclear safety

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on the state of the stricken Fukushima nuclear reactors and wider issues around nuclear safety standards.

European Commission post Fukushima stress test report -

The NFLA Secretariat issued a media release on the publication of the European Commission's overall assessment of nuclear safety following 'stress tests' at all European civil nuclear facilities.

Some of the key points of the European Commission findings included:

- The European Commission (EC) report noted that Sizewell B has no specific design provisions for the mitigation of hydrogen generated in severe accident conditions.
- The EC report also noted that Sizewell B has no design or operational provisions in the fuel building for the management of hydrogen generated by zirconium oxidation by overheating fuel in the fuel storage pond.
- EDF concluded that it was not in a position to carry out meaningful margin assessment for seismic, flood or extreme weather conditions in the timescales of the stress test assessment for all its sites, including Sizewell and Hinkley Point. Though ONR considers the design basis requirements to be robust, it does believe more robust, systematic research is required for 'beyond design basis' events.
- The EC review team identified that most nuclear site Emergency Control Centres do not have proper ventilation systems to cope with severe accident conditions or are not sufficiently protected against radiation in case of a severe accident. None of the Advanced Gas Reactors (AGRs) and Magnox reactors have a fully functioning Backup Control Room (ECR) - allowing control and shutdown to safe condition of the plant if the Main Control Room becomes uninhabitable.
- There are 24 recommendations alone to improve nuclear safety at the Sellafield site, and a further 51 recommendations for other sites such as at Aldermaston, Dounreay and Springfields.
- Why have the French stress tests on EDF sites recommended safety system improvements costing 40 – 50 billion euros, but the UK stress tests mention no such figure?

The former NFLA All Ireland Forum Co-Chair had attended a meeting on the EC report in Brussels. He commented that there was cutting criticism at the meeting of the stress test reports from Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, which they accused as a 'Greenwash' process. At the meeting, the European Commissioner responsible for nuclear energy noted there are now plans, following the stress test procedure, to push for new EU nuclear safety legislation on nuclear reactors, and in particular to address the issue of proper insurance.

The ONR are planning a follow-up report on its Fukushima report and its stress test reports in the autumn.

ONR NGO Forum –

The NFLA Secretary attended a meeting of the ONR NGO Forum in London on the 23rd May. The Chief UK Nuclear Inspector Mike Weightman attended this meeting, along with the head of nuclear safety at the Environment Agency. The meeting provided a very useful opportunity to question ONR staff over the stress tests, post Fukushima issues and nuclear safety. There were more detailed workshops on security issues, post Fukushima lessons, technical issues over the GDA and ONR openness and transparency.

European Cities Initiative on post Fukushima nuclear safety –

The NFLA Secretary outlined an initiative led by the City of Vienna to bring together European cities concerned about nuclear policy developments as an effective lobby at the European Commission level. An initial meeting has been planned to be held in Brussels on the 25th and 26th September to meet with European Commissioners and their officials, MEPs, European nuclear NGOs and to discuss wider strategy with the cities that attend. The Committee welcomed this development and agreed that the NFLA Chair and Secretary should represent member authorities at the meeting.

Fukushima update -

The NFLA Secretary outlined to the Steering Committee current progress in dealing with the effects of the disaster in the Fukushima area. The report noted that on May 2nd 2012 Japan temporarily went 'nuclear free' as all of its 54 reactors were closed down. Despite very large public opposition, two nuclear reactors are planned for re-opening in early July. There is slow and steady progress at the site but major problems exist in dealing with large volumes of

radioactive water and rubble on the site. It is acknowledged that it will take many years to clean-up the site.

Agreed: To note the report. To send the NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary attend the European Cities Nuclear Safety Initiative in Brussels in September.

5. Alternatives to nuclear energy

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on plans to update the 2011 NFLA energy reports for England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The updated briefings would be prepared in the summer and would focus on the key alternatives to new nuclear build – a wide renewable energy mix, increased efforts to develop energy efficiency projects in alleviating fuel poverty and the promotion of community-led microgeneration schemes.

Steering Committee members were keen to continue to develop examples of the ways Councils can actively promote such schemes. Focus was also requested on the economic benefits of such schemes. Further research on the potential benefits of geothermal energy and district heating schemes was also encouraged.

The Steering Committee were concerned that the UK Government's proposed 'Green New Deal' would not provide the levels of financial commitment required to rapidly develop renewable energy, microgeneration and energy efficiency at the local level, and urged the Secretariat to focus on this issue as well within the national energy updates.

Agreed: To note the report and encourage updates of the four NFLA energy reports.

6. Radioactive waste management

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on developments in radioactive waste management policy.

Consultation on plutonium and developments at Sellafield –

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has initiated a new consultation on whether or not to build a new mixed-oxide fuel (MOX) plant in the UK, probably at Sellafield. In 2011, DECC had held a consultation on the management of the UK's civil plutonium stocks – to which the NFLA had responded by stating that the stocks should be immobilised and stored. The Government announced that its preferred option was to re-use it in a new mixed oxide fuel facility, despite the commercial failure of the existing facility, which is in the process of closure.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has indicated there is a need for a 'Justification of Practice', as required under EU laws, which necessitates a second DECC consultation. The new consultation will look at the safety, security and financial implications of using plutonium as well as the justification for the proposal. The NFLA Secretariat will develop a submission for the consultation consistent with its previous responses and produce a model response for its members.

The NDA has also confirmed that the Thorp reprocessing plant at Sellafield will close by 2018. All remaining spent fuel on-site and fuel from any new reactors will be placed in interim storage pending disposal in the proposed deep geological repository. Spent fuel from any existing reactors which have their operating life extended would also go into storage. The NDA decision also means that it will abandon its £1.2 billion plan to construct new high-activity reprocessing waste storage tanks at Sellafield to replace the ageing 21 tanks. These have been a serious safety concern due to continued issues with the coolant systems.

The NDA has admitted that a new Evaporator required for dealing with highly radioactive waste at the Thorp facility will now cost £673 million. This is an almost sevenfold increase from its original cost. The NFLA Secretariat submitted letters to the Guardian and Irish newspapers, which were published, raising its displeasure over such a huge cost increase.

At the Sellafield Site Stakeholder Group it was announced that droppings from swallows on the site had been found to be radioactively contaminated. The Environment Agency believes the

contamination comes from the birds gorging on mosquitoes from the radioactive spent fuel ponds. Previously seagulls and pigeons have been found to be contaminated and had to be destroyed.

Developments at Dounreay -

The new owners of the Dounreay site, Babcock, have announced that all decommissioning work at the site should be completed by 2023. This is 15 years earlier than previously estimated due to additional annual funding of £150 million for the work from the NDA.

Meanwhile, a third summer of work to clean up radioactive particles from the seabed off Dounreay commenced in May 2012. Around 2,000 particles have been removed by a remotely-controlled robot. SEPA have abandoned their original plan to return the seabed to a "pristine condition" arguing that the work involved might cause more harm than good.

West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely consultation -

In late March 2012, the NFLA Secretariat submitted a detailed response to the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) Partnership consultation. The consultation was seeking views on whether the Partnership should recommend to Copeland, Allerdale and Cumbria Councils with proceeding to the next stage of searching for a suitable site in the area for a deep-underground radioactive waste repository in the county. The NFLA response concluded that the three Councils should not go further ahead with this process due to a large number of technical and scientific uncertainties in developing a deep-underground repository, and the unsuitability of the geology of West Cumbria.

In mid May, the Partnership presented official responses to the consultation and the results of an Ipsos Mori telephone poll in Copeland, Allerdale and the county of Cumbria. The poll reported that 51% of people in Allerdale and 68% of people in Copeland supported taking part in the search for a suitable site for a nuclear dump with 37% and 23% opposed respectively. In the rest of Cumbria 50% of people said they supported Allerdale and/or Copeland taking part in the search for a site for a repository compared with 35% who were opposed. However, as opponents of the plan for a repository pointed out, 19% of those asked had never heard of the proposals; and 61% had either just 'heard of it' or knew 'just a little'. Only 4% said they knew 'a lot' about it and 16% knew a 'fair amount'.

In written responses to the consultation around 60% of respondents opposed Cumbrian Councils going ahead with the next stage of the process. It should also be noted that 75% of parish councils – including the three closest to the Sellafield plant – have also formally opposed hosting a deep underground repository in Cumbria. The Partnership is expecting to produce a final report later this summer.

European developments and Scottish Government Policy -

The European Commission is seeking to develop a common strategy for how to manage high and intermediate level waste. The EC's likely preferred option would be for a deep waste repository, as is being pursued by the UK Government. The quite different policy of the Scottish Government to store waste, 'near site, near service' in monitorable and retrievable facilities may be seen as a challenge to this policy. Independent consultants have confirmed to the NFLA Secretariat that Scotland will be allowed to have a separate policy if it so wishes as the science for the deep waste repository still remains so unconvincing. The Commission though does want all member states to produce by 2015 national radioactive waste plans that outline the direction of policy, the technologies considered and a time-line for implementation of such strategies.

Dalgety Bay contamination -

The radioactive contamination of parts of Dalgety Bay beach in Fife has been a major issue of local concern in the area. The radioactive particles arise from painted radium dials and other materials from Second World War fighter planes that used to be hosted at a former airfield site at Dalgety Bay. The site was cleared and the planes buried, but substantial retail and residential development has seen parts of the site being disturbed and increased amount of radioactive particles rising to the surface. SEPA and the MOD have closed part of the beach

due to concerns over public safety. SEPA has now banned fishing and the gathering of shellfish from Dalgety Bay on the Firth of Forth. So far about 2,000 radioactive particles have now been recovered, far more than originally estimated by the Ministry of Defence. The MOD have now agreed to complete a thorough survey of the area, which is due to be completed in 2013.

Update on CoRWM -

A brief update on the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) was provided through a paper from the NFLA Steering Committee Policy Advisor. CoRWM is being rationalised with a new Chair. It has a heavy and extensive work programme over the next 12 months which the NFLA will closely monitor.

Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS -

The LGA group on nuclear decommissioning and radioactive waste matters, NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum), met in Manchester on the 25th April. It was announced that the new NuLEAF Executive Director, on a job-share basis, would be the former NFLA Secretary, Stewart Kemp and Philip Matthews, who has previously worked for the Sustainable Development Commission.

The COSLA group on nuclear decommissioning and radioactive waste matters, SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) was due to hold a business meeting and seminar on March 23rd in Edinburgh. However, with the all-out elections and low expected attendance the meeting was cancelled and is being rescheduled for the autumn.

Agreed: To note the report. To develop a submission on the DECC consultation on plutonium management.

7. Nuclear emergency planning

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on nuclear emergency planning. The NFLA Secretary had presented a paper to the DECC NGO Forum outlining concerns that need to be addressed across a number of aspects of nuclear emergency planning, within the current UK Government review. The presentation was well received and a meeting with DECC and appropriate officials is being organised for later in the summer.

The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretary put together a briefing on the following aspects of nuclear emergency planning:

- The UK and ONR emergency planning reviews.
- The key points from the post Fukushima nuclear safety reports.
- The issues raised from the European stress test reports.
- Concerns over the size of emergency planning zones and extendability of an emergency response.
- What the impact of cuts on the emergency services and local authorities may have on an effective nuclear emergency response.
- The DEFRA report on flooding risks around nuclear sites.
- Concerns over nuclear transportation and nuclear terrorism.

The NFLA Secretariat is also seeking to develop a more detailed briefing on the transportation of radioactive contaminated heat exchangers from decommissioned nuclear power stations for recycling at a facility in Sweden. An outline briefing can be found on the NFLA website.

Agreed: To note the report. The NFLA Secretary to develop a briefing on nuclear emergency planning and on the transportation of contaminated steel heat exchangers to Sweden.

8. Radiation and health issues

The NFLA Secretary reported that, after considerable pressure from NGOs and a formal letter from the Energy Minister, the COMARE (Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment) Secretariat had agreed to a meeting with its scientific critics over the effects of low level radiation on health. This follows a recent French study which confirms the overall trend

that there may be significant health issues around such exposure. A recent study published in 'The Lancet' has also uncovered research which has found a small but significant risk that exposure to naturally occurring gamma rays may account for higher childhood cancer rates in certain parts of the country.

Agreed: To note the report.

9. Mayors for Peace developments

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of the NFLA's involvement in co-operating with the Hiroshima and Nagasaki-led Mayors for Peace.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Conference -

The first Preparatory Conference of the United Nations Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty process, leading up to its next formal review in 2015, was held at the Vienna International Centre (headquarters for the International Atomic Energy Authority) in the first two weeks of May. An international Mayors for Peace delegation of 55 delegates, including the NFLA Secretary took part in the NGO section of the conference in the first week of May. The NFLA Secretary has developed a detailed briefing on a reasonably positive conference, which can be found on the NFLA website.

International development of Mayors for Peace -

As of June 1st 2012, 5,296 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace in 153 countries. As an organisation that theoretically represents around 1 billion people it was more noticeable that national state delegations were keen to discuss with Mayors for Peace delegates how to take forward the NPT at the PrepCom in Vienna.

The NFLA Secretary has also represented Manchester City Council at a series of officer meetings seeking to improve the organisation, structure and financial underpinning of Mayors for Peace, given its tenfold increase in members in the past decade. A further meeting of this process is being held on the 2nd and 3rd July and the NFLA Secretary has received approval to attend it. A full report will be provided to the next NFLA Steering Committee meeting.

UK and Ireland development of Mayors for Peace -

There are 84 members of Mayors for Peace in the UK and Ireland. As a Vice President City, Manchester City Council seeks to develop and deepen membership. A number of Councils have paid voluntary invoices to the Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign. New recruitment letters will also be issued by Manchester, via the NFLA Secretariat (the NFLA Secretary is also UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Working Group Secretary).

Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bomb exhibition-

The NFLA have a large panel exhibition provided in 2010 by the Mayor of Nagasaki which has been exhibited by NFLA members and Mayors for Peace members across the UK and Ireland. The NFLA Secretary confirmed that the exhibition was being hosted in Dublin in the last two weeks of July, before transferring to Tower Hamlets Town Hall in London, where it will be exhibited during the London Olympics in an Olympic host borough. It is then going for exhibition in Newcastle Central Library. The exhibition will be available for hire from September onwards.

Agreed: To note the report. To encourage member authorities to get more involved in the work of Mayors for Peace and consider hosting the A-bomb exhibition.

10. Nuclear weapons update

The NFLA Secretary provided an update and overview of a number of issues relating to the nuclear weapons debate including:

- Positive interaction with the UK and Republic of Ireland Governments at the NPT.
- A report confirmed that UK nuclear warhead decommissioning of part of its stockpile of weapons has begun.
- A report of 33 significant issues raised by the ONR's 'stress tests' of defence nuclear sites.

- £1 billion is to be spent on overhauling the Rolls Royce site in Derby ready to develop nuclear reactors for a new Trident missile programme (even though a final decision on Trident replacement will not be made until 2016).
- £1 billion is also to be spent on operating and upgrading the Aldermaston nuclear weapons facility over the next year.
- The Aldermaston facility is being prosecuted by the ONR for a serious fire incident which took place in 2010. This prosecution will be in early August.

Agreed: To note the report and develop NFLA Forum seminars on Trident replacement.

11. Nuclear submarine dismantling project (SDP)

The NFLA Secretary reported that he had attended a recent meeting of the MOD's Submarine Dismantling Project Advisory Group, which considers the options available for dismantling redundant nuclear powered submarines.

At the meeting the MOD provided an overview of consultation responses from the recent public consultation. The NFLA's response to the consultation is on its website. The MOD is now considering all responses to the consultation and will formally take forward their options in 2013. A key parallel issue is over where intermediate level radioactive waste from the submarines will be stored. This was not discussed in the recent consultation as the MOD is considering available options with the NDA. The NFLA Secretariat is closely involved in this public engagement process.

Agreed: To note the report.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is planned for ***Friday 21st September in Manchester Town Hall from 11am – 1pm (time to be confirmed)***. This day coincides with the United Nations International Day of Peace and a local event, under the auspices of Mayors for Peace, is being organised in Manchester. It is hoped to involve NFLA Steering Committee members in attending this event following the Committee meeting. Further details will be forwarded to members shortly.

NFLA Secretariat, 9th July 2012.