

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 17 December 2008

No. 64

Subject: Summary of the main points from the NFLA Annual General Meeting and Steering Committee, Town Hall, Manchester, 12 December 2008

1. New NFLA Chair and NFLA Secretary

The NFLA Steering Committee expressed its sincere thanks to **Councillor Mike Rumney, Fife Council**, who was standing down as the NFLA Chair. Councillor Rumney had been NFLA Chair from 2006 – 2008 and had led the organisation through considerable change.

Councillor Bill Risby, Manchester City Council, was elected as the new Chair of the NFLA's. He will work closely with the newly appointed NFLA Secretary, **Sean Morris**, to develop the organisation and ensure it is at the centre of the nuclear policy debate. The Secretariat will also benefit from the administrative support of **Rebecca Bromley**.

Councillor Risby said:

"I am honoured to be elected as Chair of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities. For 28 years this organisation has provided valuable leadership and effective, high quality research and advice on nuclear issues. I will seek to lead the organisation further in highlighting the continued and ever present threat of Nuclear War, and the alternatives to nuclear new build. The NFLAs will also argue that the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy can effectively deal with the effects of climate change and the concerns over energy security.

Furthermore, the NFLAs will also continue to work closely with the Hiroshima led Mayors for Peace movement to highlight world-wide concerns over nuclear proliferation and for their 2020 Vision of a nuclear weapons free world".

2. New Nuclear Build

The NFLA Scotland Policy Adviser commented on Edition 14 of the NFLA's 'New Nuclear Monitor', which has been issued to all member authorities prior to the meeting.

'New Nuclear Monitor' considered the 'facilitative actions' of the Government to progress the building of new nuclear power stations, which will have an effect on local authorities in and around potential new sites:

- The Government has established the Office of Nuclear Development (OND) to build more effective cross-Government working on nuclear energy, and facilitate new nuclear investment in the UK.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

The OND has staff drawn from both the civil service and from industry, bringing together the relevant Government teams and resources to achieve its objectives.

- NFLAs have provided a robust response to the Government's consultation on identifying and assessing potential suitable sites for new nuclear power stations. The response can be found on the NFLA website <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>.
- The Government's Planning Bill has completed its passage through Parliament and received Royal Assent. NFLAs are concerned that the Act will speed up new nuclear development. It will create an 'Infra-Structure Planning Committee' to decide upon projects of national significance in England and Wales. The NFLAs have specific concerns over the 'democratic deficit' in considering any new nuclear development.
- The nuclear regulators – the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Environment Agency – have been carrying out a new process called 'Generic Design Assessment' (GDA), which looks at the safety, security and environmental implications of new reactor designs before an application is made to build that design at a particular site. A prioritisation process of the most effective design is planned in 2009 and the GDA should be completed in 2011.
- A major consultation on the 'Justification Process' began on 17th December 2008 for 12 weeks. The 'Justification Process' is required under European Union regulations. Companies hoping to build a nuclear facility must show the benefits outweigh the potential health risks. The deadline for responses is 25th March 2009 and NFLA councils are recommended to get involved in the process. A NFLA response will be drafted. The consultation is at: <http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/energy/sources/nuclear/consultations/open/pa/ge44523.html>
- The Government pledged not to subsidise new reactors, and to 'make sure that the full costs of new nuclear waste are paid by the market'. This has now mutated into the more nuanced "fixed unit price" which the Government will set for waste disposal at the time when approvals for the station are given. This effectively caps the costs of nuclear waste disposal to the operator and transfers the risk of cost overruns on to the taxpayer.
- The Government's "Managing Radioactive Waste Safely" process, has now reached the White Paper stage - setting out the framework for implementing geological storage. It also invites local authorities in England and Wales to consider hosting a nuclear waste repository in deep underground vaults in return for government investment in jobs, infrastructure and health screening.
- A programme of regional & sectoral initiatives will be developed to improve the capability of the UK supply chain. The Nuclear Industry Association will lead this with the Office of Nuclear Development, Regional Development Agencies and UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) - the Government's international business development organisation.
- As well as the Office for Nuclear Development the Government has set up a Nuclear Development Forum, chaired by the relevant Secretary of State, to bring together the key players from across Government into a joint forum with key delivery partners from across industry. The Nuclear Development Forum will keep industry informed, and enable the Government to listen to the industry.

The Committee agreed to take part in consultations on the facilitative actions.

Other new nuclear developments that were noted by the Committee included:

- British Energy is to be bought by EdF of France for £12.5bn. Centrica, the parent company of British Gas, has asked its shareholders for £2.2bn to help fund its purchase of a 25% stake in British Energy from EdF.

- The NDA has offered land for sale at Wylfa, Bradwell and Oldbury. Such sites could be used as locations for new nuclear power stations. Operators at Dungeness, Hinkley and Sizewell are also lobbying local communities to support new nuclear build at these sites.
- NFLAs are considered developing a briefing to highlight to councillors that new nuclear build may not have a major positive effect on climate change, as is being suggested.
- A number of epidemiological studies have spotlighted continuing concerns on the health effects of radioactive discharges from nuclear facilities. A study by the University of South Carolina carried out an analysis of 17 research papers covering 136 nuclear sites around the world. The incidence of leukaemia in children under 9 living close to the sites showed an increase of 14% to 21%. A German study (KiKK – Childhood Cancer in the Vicinity of Nuclear Power Plants) found a higher incidence of cancers and a stronger association with nuclear installations than all previous reports.

3. **Radioactive Waste Management**

The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor provided an update on developments in radioactive waste management policy. Local authorities have an important role to play in this debate. The main points of the report were:

- The Government's White Paper on 'Managing Radioactive Waste Safely' invited Councils in England and Wales to 'volunteer' to host a nuclear waste repository. By mid December 2008 Cumbria County Council was 'minded' to table an expression of interest for the Copeland District Council and Allerdale Borough Council areas. A number of opposition councillors in Cumbria were reported in the media to be dismayed that the decision had not been made by the full Council, but by the Cabinet. No other Councils have to date expressed an interest to host a repository.
- There continues to remain concern over whether the geology of West Cumbria is suitable for a radioactive waste repository.
- Copeland Council is set to receive millions of pounds in community benefits now that construction of the ninth vault of the low level radioactive waste repository at Drigg has begun. Meanwhile, the Dounreay Stakeholder Group is encouraging Highland Council to seek similar benefits if a low level waste repository is built there.
- The operator of the Sellafield site is considering constructing an incinerator to burn domestic and low level waste.
- The NDA has chosen the Nuclear Management Partners (NMP) consortium to run the Sellafield site licence company (which covers Sellafield, Calder Hall, Capenhurst and Windscale). The consortium comprises Amec, URS Washington Division and France's Areva. The contract could be worth upto £22 billion of public money.
- Shipments of recycled MOX (plutonium) fuel from Sellafield to France are expected to resume shortly, after being halted in May.
- The Government's latest submission to the International Atomic Energy Agency noted that its stockpile of plutonium from reprocessing has risen to 108 tonnes, which is enough for 13,500 nuclear bombs. NFLAs have made a submission to the NDA consultation on what to do with the plutonium, which can be found at the NFLA website.

- NFLAs have made a submission to the DEFRA consultation on the draft revised strategy for radioactive discharges 2006 – 30. The submission can be found at the NFLA website.

4. **Mayors for Peace**

The Mayors for Peace Development Adviser noted that membership in the UK of the organisation had now grown to 50. Mayors for Peace are an international organisation led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which seeks the abolition of nuclear weapons by 2020.

The Mayors for Peace Working Group met in Manchester and agreed to the following:

- Signed and encouraged local authorities to endorse the Mayors for Peace's 'Hiroshima Nagasaki Protocol' supporting a review of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- Encouraging UK local authorities to consider attending the Preparatory Conference of the NPT at the United Nations in New York in June 2009 and lobbying the UK Government delegation.
- Increase the profile of the work of Mayors for Peace in the UK and how it can extend beyond the role and duties of the Mayor.
- Put forward a preliminary application to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust's 'Peace One-Off' grants.

Councillor Bill Risby of Manchester City Council represented the Lord Mayor of Manchester at the Mayors for Peace Executive Committee in Ypres, Belgium around Remembrance Sunday in November. This meeting encouraged members of Mayors for Peace to consider a small affiliation fee to the organisation to help develop its work, while also considering preparations for the NPT Conference in New York and the Mayors for Peace Conference in Nagasaki in August 2009.

For more information about Mayors for Peace consult <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org> or email Peter Burt – peterburt@phonecoop.coop.

Recommendation: Encourage membership of Mayors for Peace.

5. **Other matters**

The NFLA Secretary put forward a priorities report for consideration, which was broadly welcomed. It was agreed to establish an Organisation and Administration Committee to discuss new ideas, development and finance issues.

It was agreed that the NFLA Secretariat develop the UK and Irish Local Authorities Conference on Nuclear Hazards around the provisional subject title of 'The World in 2020 – Does Nuclear Have a Role to Play?' This will consider whether nuclear power can provide a positive role in dealing with the effects of climate change by 2020, as well as considering issues around nuclear weapons proliferation in reference to the Mayors for Peace '2020 Vision'.

6. **Dates and venues of next NFLA Steering Committee meetings**

2.00pm – 4.00pm Thursday, 5 February 2009, Committee Room 3, Town Hall, Manchester for NFLA Organisation and Administration Committee

11.00am -1.00pm, Friday, 6 February 2009, Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Manchester for NFLA Steering Committee

11.00am – 1.00pm Thursday, 22 April 2009, date and venue TBA (in conjunction with consolidated 11th joint UK & Irish Local Authorities Conference on Nuclear Hazards on 23 April, 2009)

For more information on any of the above matters contact: Sean Morris on 0161 234 3244 or email: s.morris4@manchester.gov.uk