

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 12th February 2009

No. 65

Subject: Summary of the main points from the NFLA Steering Committee Meeting, Town Hall, Manchester, 6th February 2009

1. National NFLA Forum meetings

The NFLA Secretary announced that arrangements were now in place for meetings of the four NFLA national Forums.

NFLA Scotland will be holding its Annual General Meeting on Friday 27th February in Dundee City Hall. The meeting will elect Steering Committee members and decide its priorities for the year. Arrangements to look at Dundee City Council's 'eco-house' project – an example of promoting energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions - are being developed.

NFLA All-Ireland Forum will be holding its Annual General Meeting on Friday March 13th in the Carrickdale Hotel, Dundalk. The meeting will also include a special seminar considering radioactive discharges into, and nuclear shipments via, the Irish Sea. The Republic of Ireland's Environment Minister, John Gormley, has also agreed to be a keynote speaker at the event.

NFLA Wales Forum will be holding its Annual General Meeting on Friday April 3rd in Bridgend Civic Offices. The meeting will also include a short seminar considering two major prospective energy projects in Wales – a Wylfa 2 new nuclear power station in Anglesey and the Severn Tidal Barrage Project in south Wales.

NFLA English Forum will be holding a special seminar on Friday April 24th in Lancashire County Hall in Preston. The seminar will consider the implications of developing a radioactive waste repository in the north west of England and how the public can be reassured and involved in this process. The keynote speaker will be Professor Andy Blowers, a former Director of Nirex and member of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) and a former County Councillor. A speaker from CoRWM has also been arranged.

All NFLA member authorities will be provided with details of the relevant seminars shortly.

2. New Nuclear Build

The NFLA Secretary and the NFLA Scotland Policy Adviser provided a report on the numerous developments to commence a new UK nuclear build programme.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

Justification Process Consultation –

In mid December the Department of Energy and Climate Change announced a public consultation on the 'Nuclear Industry Association's Application to Justify New Nuclear Power Stations'. The consultation continues until the end of March 2009 and is required under European Union law and the 'Justification of Practices Involving Ionising Radiation Regulations 2004'. The consultation is arguably one of the most important of 2009 and an opportunity for the NFLA and its member authorities to voice its opposition to new nuclear build and the design of new power stations at an early stage.

The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor had been tasked with developing a response to the consultation, which was discussed at the meeting. The response was approved and NFLA member authorities will receive a copy of it as NFLA 'New Nuclear Monitor 15' which is sent with this briefing document. NFLA member authorities are encouraged to send its own submissions to the consultation, using the NFLA submission as a basis, and contact the NFLA Secretariat if they do so.

Recommendation: NFLA member authorities put their own submission to the consultation process.

EDF takeover of British Energy and the likely sites for new build –

The Government and the European Commission confirmed the takeover of the nuclear site operator British Energy on the 5th January 2009. EDF has paid £12.5bn to take over British Energy. As part of the conditions placed on it by the European Commission, it has agreed to sell its own generating plant at Sutton Bridge and BE's coal-fired power station at Eggborough in East Yorkshire. It has also committed to selling minimum volumes of electricity in the UK wholesale market. EDF has also pledged to dispose of a site in order to build a new nuclear plant at Dungeness, Kent, or Heysham in Lancashire.

The likely sites for new nuclear power stations are being put forward by nuclear site operators. All are adjacent to existing sites in England and Wales as follows:

- Sellafield – the NDA has offered land for 2 new reactors on the site
- Sizewell – EDF are very keen to build a Sizewell C nuclear power station
- Hinkley – EDF wish to build upto 2 reactors on the site. The Steering Committee also heard that West Somerset, Somerset County and Sedgemoor Councils have written to EDF seeking £750,000 to facilitate the planning process for a new site.
- Dungeness, Bradwell, Heysham and Oldbury – site operators have all held public consultation exercises noting their desire to build new power stations at these sites.
- Wylfa – a vigorous debate is ongoing over the possibility of developing a Wylfa B station in Anglesey, Wales. The Council is supportive of this initiative. RWE Npower is also developing a large off-shore wind-farm off the coast of Anglesey.

Paying for waste and decommissioning –

The Office for Nuclear Development is issuing a set of three pre-consultation discussion papers on the development of estimates of the costs of decommissioning and waste management. A formal public consultation is expected to take place in May 2009. The Government's Nuclear White Paper said: "...it will be for energy companies to fund, develop and build new nuclear power stations in the UK, including meeting the full costs of decommissioning and their full share of waste management costs". However, the nuclear industry needs certainty on how waste management and decommissioning costs will be funded. Despite the fact that the Government has stated that there will be no subsidies, there is a large amount of scepticism about whether this would be possible, and the funding of waste and decommissioning costs offer opportunities for the Government to hide any subsidies.

Nuclear Costs and Finances

The Guardian newspaper reported that EDF's new European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) being built at Flamanville in France is already 20% over budget. The nuclear power station being built in Olkiluoto, Finland will now not be finished until at least 2012, three years longer than planned and over 2000 quality control issues have been raised by the Finnish nuclear regulator. Meanwhile, the rapid decline in the value of sterling has added over 40% to the cost of constructing new reactors in the UK. This raises the prospective cost of electricity generated by the nuclear power station to around £70 per megawatt hour, or over £20 more than the current wholesale price.

3. Radioactive Waste Management

The NFLA Secretary and 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:

- Steering Committee members and officers met Professor Brian Clark and John Rennilson of the independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM). A full and frank discussion took place and it was agreed to hold regular meetings with CoRWM in the future. NFLA staff will be participating in CoRWM's stakeholder dialogue on its report to Government on the interim storage of radioactive waste, which will take place in Reading on 19th February 2009. CoRWM's reports to Government have to be completed by June 2009.
- The NFLA Secretary attended CoRWM's recent plenary meeting in Manchester, at which the draft report on interim storage of radioactive waste was discussed. There was also considerable debate over CoRWM's recommendations on the 'geological disposal' (CoRWM's words) of radioactive waste. It was noted that the Government is likely to take up expressions of interest for a repository from Cumbrian Councils, but is unlikely to fund 2 separate processes – one for Copeland and one for Allerdale, with any other offers. The Secretary observed that disquiet was raised in the meeting at how the Government had 'cherry-picked' CoRWM's 2006 recommendations on a radioactive waste repository to push ahead with a repository and CoRWM will recommend that future Government policy needs to take on board all its recommendations and ensure it seeks to satisfy all stakeholders to ensure public transparency and acceptability of future decisions in this area.
- The NFLA Chair and Secretary had also attended a recent meeting of NuLeaf (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum), which had agreed upon a proposed hierarchy of siting preferences in the storage of low-level radioactive waste. The most preferred is the development of 'local facilities' on, or adjacent to an existing nuclear site that deals with low level waste from that site or from neighbouring stations at multi-station sites. The development of regional facilities is the next preferred, followed by a combination of local, regional or national facilities based on community engagement. The least preferred is the use of facilities at off-site locations that manage non-nuclear waste.
- NFLA member authorities in England and Wales are encouraged to attend NuLEAF seminars on the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) draft low-level waste strategy in either Manchester Town Hall on 7th May 2009, the LGA headquarters in Manchester on 12th May 2009 and at Taunton Town Hall on the 14th May 2009. Further details can be found on the NuLEAF website.
- NFLA member authorities in England and Wales were also encouraged by the Steering Committee to attend NuLEAF meetings to ensure suitable balance over the new nuclear build debate.
- Councillor George Regan of Dundee City Council reported on progress with the Scottish Committee on Radioactive Substances (SCoRS), which is facilitated by the Council of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), that he chairs. All 32 Scottish Councils are members of it and its remit includes all radiation substances. It is shortly meeting with the Scottish Executive, SEPA and the NDA over future priorities.
- The NFLA Secretariat had made a submission to the NDA on its draft business plan. The NFLA disagreed with the request to reduce future consultations on such plans

from 12 to 6 weeks. The NFLA are concerned with the potential contradiction of the NDA role in decommissioning civil public sector nuclear sites while maximising revenue from existing commercial assets and operations. The NFLA disagreed with the NDA view to invite proposals for the sale of its assets to support a new nuclear build programme. The NFLA firmly reiterated its opposition to the resumption of operation at the Thorp and Mixed Oxide Plant (MOX) at Sellafield. The NFLA also concluded that the NDA sets a poor precedent -in giving extensions to the operations of the Oldbury and Wylfa power stations – in terms of developing openness, transparency and stakeholder dialogue if the results of this process are then repudiated by the NDA without further discussion.

- The Steering Committee recommended that the Secretariat should report further on the NDA's options on dealing with the UK's stockpile of over 100 tonnes of plutonium and engage fully in stakeholder consultations.

Recommendation: NFLA members engage in the work of NuLEAF and SCORS and participate in the NDA plutonium options consultation.

4. **Alternatives to nuclear power in tackling climate change**

The NFLA Secretary and NFLA Scotland Policy Adviser provided a report of examples of Councils promoting alternatives to nuclear power in tackling climate change.

The NFLA Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA had to promote clean alternatives to nuclear power, particularly renewable energy and local micro-generation projects. The NFLA Conference would showcase some excellent examples of Councils involved in such projects, and the Committee agreed to consider developing a booklet highlighting such examples.

A number of examples were noted, including:

- Europe's largest low carbon zone could be created in Wales' Heads of the Valleys (HoV) region. The HoV Low Carbon programme would see 40,000 micro-generation units or their equivalent installed in the area over the course of 15 years. At the same time 65,000 homes would have their energy efficiency measured with 39,000 energy reduction measures implemented. The project is expected to reduce energy bills in the area by £1.7 million, and help alleviate fuel poverty.
- A scheme in Kirklees, West Yorkshire allows homeowners to have solar panels or windmills to generate energy attached to their homes for a share in the capital value of the house. The Kirklees scheme has been a success with more homes producing renewable energy than anywhere else in the UK and more insulation provided in one year than the total number of London homes which have benefited from the UK government's scheme. The Kirklees Warm Zone is one of the biggest and most comprehensive programmes to tackle domestic energy efficiency and climate change in the UK. Every home in Kirklees which is suitable for loft and cavity wall insulation will receive this work for free. It will be introduced on a house by house basis.
- Npower renewables and Bristol-based tidal power developers Marine Current Turbines (MCT) have announced a pioneering partnership to help deliver one of the world's first commercial-scale tidal stream projects, off the coast of Anglesey, north Wales. This exciting and innovative showcase tidal farm scheme would be capable of generating 10.5 megawatts (MW) of clean, green power, drawn entirely from the sea's major tidal currents.

Recommendation: NFLA Secretariat to develop a booklet on the role of Councils in promoting renewable energy and micro-generation of electricity.

5. Nuclear emergency planning

The NFLA Secretary presented a detailed report explaining the structure of emergency planning in the UK and Ireland with particular reference to nuclear issues. It was agreed that this paper is extended and widened as a NFLA briefing.

The Committee also agreed the following actions:

- The NFLA Secretary will write to the Department of Energy and Climate Change to encourage more local authority membership to the Nuclear Emergency Planning Liaison Group and work towards a greater involvement of Council emergency planning officers in developing nuclear emergency plans.
- NFLA elected members contact their own emergency planning officers to receive a briefing on nuclear emergency planning.
- NFLA Scotland to clarify the reasoning behind the reduction of the public information zone for the Dounreay site.
- The NFLA Secretary to write to the Cabinet Office in the UK and the Department of the Environment in the Republic of Ireland to raise concerns over the lack of a joined up approach in warning and informing the public around nuclear sites and on nuclear issues in general.
- The NFLA Secretariat to investigate a possible seminar on CBRN (Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear) terrorist attacks and contacts the Home Office to encourage a public information campaign on the issue.

Recommendation: NFLA Secretariat to provide a briefing paper on emergency planning and investigate hosting a CBRN seminar.

6. Mayors for Peace and Nuclear Proliferation

The NFLA Secretary and the Mayors for Peace Development Adviser provided a report on progress with Mayors for Peace. A Mayors for Peace Working Group meeting was being held in Oxford on 10th February 2009.

The Steering Committee was provided with an update on two major conferences in 2009 – the Preparatory Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty at the United Nations in New York in May, and the Mayors for Peace Conference in Nagasaki in August. The Committee decided it was important for the NFLA to be involved in both conferences and agreed that the NFLA Chair and the NFLA Secretary attend on its behalf.

The Steering Committee also agreed that the NFLA Secretary write to President Obama in the United States welcoming his proposals to make a significant reduction in stockpiles of nuclear weapons in a bilateral agreement with Russia.

Recommendation: NFLA Secretary and Chair to attend the NPT and Mayors for Peace Conferences. NFLA Secretariat to write to President Obama and develop a press release on the issue.

7. AWE Burghfield and developments with Trident

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on a major planning application made by the Atomic Weapons Establishment at its Burghfield site to West Berkshire Council, which would be a part of the upgrade of the Trident nuclear weapons programme.

The NFLA Secretary had lodged an objection to the application around the issue that a thorough environmental impact assessment of the site was required, particularly after serious flooding in 2007. It also noted the need for a local transport survey and concerns over increasing the site as a potential terrorist target if the application went ahead.

The Committee also noted a spate of leading political and military figures arguing that the Trident upgrade should be scrapped. These include Field Marshal Lord Marshall, General Lord Ramsbotham and Sir Hugh Beach who argue that the resources for Trident should be

used on conventional weapons and the armed forces. A similar argument was recently made by Douglas Hurd, Malcolm Rifkind and David Owen.

Recommendation: NFLA Secretariat develop a joint briefing paper on Trident and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

8. **Nuclear Test Veterans**

The NFLA Secretary provided the Steering Committee with an overview of an ongoing court case issued by the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association against the Ministry of Defence. The BNTVA seek compensation for illnesses incurred by their members whom they believe are as a result of radiation exposure from the tests of the 1950s and 1960s.

Recommendation: The NFLA Secretary contacts the BNTVA inviting them to future national Forums or a Steering Committee meeting.

9. **NFLA Conference 2008/9**

The NFLA Secretary provided a draft agenda for the 2008/9 NFLA Conference. The Conference would combine the issues of combating climate change and nuclear proliferation by considering the importance of the date 2020. This date is an important target in reducing carbon dioxide emissions and is also a key landmark in the Mayors for Peace campaign to remove all nuclear weapons.

The Mayor of Ypres, Chair of the Mayors for Peace 2020 Campaign has been invited as a keynote speaker. A number of Councils will be contacted to showcase their work in combating climate change and specialist speakers will also talk about concerns over nuclear proliferation. The date of the conference will be determined by the availability of the keynote speaker, but it is hoped to host it on either 15th May or 19th June 2009.

Recommendation: The NFLA Secretariat develops the Conference on the issues of climate change and nuclear proliferation.

10. **NFLA Organisation and Administration Committee**

The NFLA Steering Committee had met the previous day to discuss ways to modernise and improve the organization. Key issues that were agreed were to develop a much improved website, approval for a monthly newsletter, develop updated leaflets, develop improved contact lists and media lists, consider involvement at fringe meetings at party conferences and develop a group of Parliamentary contacts. It was noted that the wider financial recession needs to be monitored in reference to the NFLA budget.

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

2.00pm – 4.00pm Thursday, 14 May or Thursday, 18th June 2009, Town Hall, Manchester – prior to NFLA Conference, date to be confirmed.

11.00am -1.00pm, Friday, 18 September 2009, Town Hall, Manchester for NFLA Steering Committee

11.00am – 1.00pm Thursday, 3rd December 2009, venue TBA (in conjunction with consolidated 11th joint UK & Irish Local Authorities Conference on Nuclear Hazards 2009)

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