

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 24th September 2009

No. 68

Subject: Summary of the main points from the NFLA Steering Committee Meeting, Town Hall, Manchester, 18th September 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 England and NFLA Wales will be holding a joint seminar on Friday 9th October in Liverpool Town Hall. The seminar will be considering major changes to planning laws for major developments with the upcoming creation of the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC). The IPC will determine planning approval for all large-scale national infrastructure projects such as the development of new nuclear power stations, larger renewable energy developments, airport terminals and high-speed rail lines. There are major concerns over the democratic deficit for Councils and the wider public in this process. Confirmed speakers include Hugh Ellis, Chief Planner of the Town and Country Planning Association; Pete Wilkinson, formerly of CoRWM and a member of Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates; David Hunt, Director of Eco Environments; and Pete Roche, NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor. NFLA England and NFLA Wales members are encouraged to attend and arrangements are in place for a short business meeting.

NFLA Ireland will be holding a seminar on Friday 16th October in Bray Town Hall. The seminar will consider some of the major nuclear policy issues affecting Ireland. Confirmed speakers include Tim Deere-Jones, independent marine pollution consultant; Pete Roche, NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor; and Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary. It is hoped that Brian Hurley, former Chief Scientist of Airtricity Ireland will also be able to speak at the seminar. NFLA Ireland members are encouraged to attend and arrangements are in place for a business meeting.

All NFLA member authorities have been provided with details of the relevant seminars. Non-NFLA member authorities have also been invited to attend. Further details have been tabled on the NFLA website – <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>.

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

Generic Design Assessment of new nuclear reactors –

The NFLA Secretariat participated in a stakeholder dialogue organised by the Health and Safety Executive, the Environment Agency and the Health Protection Agency considering the processes and issues around a generic design assessment of the two reactor designs put forward by the Nuclear Industry Association in their justification request to Government for new nuclear build. The seminar provided a useful opportunity to discuss safety issues, concerns over low level radiation and issues around security. The non-governmental organisations present raised concerns that the very tight schedule on approving new reactor designs prevented adequate time for a thorough, open and transparent consultative process. The dialogue was welcomed and it was encouraged to hold similar future events.

The NFLA Steering Committee approved support of a joint letter sent by a number of nuclear policy and environmental policy pressure groups to the Department of Energy and Climate Change encouraging it to undertake a similar dialogue.

DECC / DWP consultation on the creation of a sector specific independent nuclear regulator –

The Government issued a consultation document to receive comments on the creation of a sector-specific independent nuclear regulator. This would merge the HSE Nuclear Installations Inspectorate with other nuclear regulatory agencies, including the Office for Civil Nuclear Security, the Radioactive Materials Transport Team and the Transport Security and Contingencies Directorate. The Environment Agency, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and transport regulators would remain separate independent agencies.

The NFLA Steering Committee endorsed an official response to the consultation welcoming the creation of the new regulatory body but raising relevant issues around the regulator being open, transparent and firmly independent. The response is tabled on the NFLA website.

National Nuclear Policy Statement, the 'Road to 2010' and the National Nuclear Centre for Excellence -

The NFLA Steering Committee was provided with an update on a number of Government facilitative actions to develop new nuclear reactors. The national nuclear policy statement is expected shortly to give the Government's decision on the justification of new nuclear power stations and the process in developing them. A consultation on the statement will be responded to as it is announced.

The Government had also published a 'Road to 2010' framework document that outlined its desire to expand nuclear power in the UK and expand access to civil nuclear energy around the world. Within the document it outlined that £20 million will be provided by the Government to develop a UK Nuclear Centre for Excellence to improve the skills set in the nuclear industry.

Recommended: The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretariat write to the Government as to why a parallel Renewable Energy Centre for Excellence is not being established with generous funding.

Counter-claims to the 'Nuclear Renaissance'

Despite numerous media reports and concrete actions to develop nuclear power in the UK and other countries the NFLA Secretariat noted that opinion polls suggest continued public scepticism about the need for new nuclear build. An influential report by Mycle Schneider, Steve Thomas and Anthony Froggatt – The World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2009 – notes that nuclear power has continued to decline and there is no obvious sign that the nuclear industry is turning the decline into a promising future. The report notes that, assuming an average lifetime of 40 years for all operating and in-construction reactors it will require an additional 42 reactors to be planned, built and started up by 2015 to maintain nuclear power's current share of the energy market – that is one every six weeks.

NFLA new build dialogue workshop with NGOs –

Following the NFLA Steering Committee a special dialogue was held with nuclear and environmental pressure groups on the nuclear new build issue. Further details on this event can be found below at section 12.

3. **Radiation Safety Standards**

The NFLA Secretary and NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor provided an update on developments in radiation safety standards.

Environmental Permitting Programme –

The NFLA Secretariat had responded to a consultation from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which was seeking to simplify the various safety regimes relating to the environment and human health. The NFLA responded to a specific part of the consultation which related to radioactive discharge limits.

The response was converted to an NFLA Radioactive Waste Briefing and can be found on the NFLA website. A number of NFLA member councils had sent in local versions endorsing the Secretariat response. The NFLA response centred on the need to have a clear set of environmental principles guiding safety principles.

Sizewell and Hunterston incident –

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on correspondence with the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Environment Agency over the recent uncovering of a potentially very serious incident at the Sizewell nuclear reactor. The incident in January 2007 involved a breach in pipework of the spent fuel water recirculation system. Fortunately the presence of an external contractor prevented 40,000 gallons of radioactive water seeping out, though a quarter of it did discharge into the marine environment. The site operator was not prosecuted for the incident.

The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor also noted at the meeting that a similar incident had been recently publicised at the Hunterston reactor on the west coast of Scotland, where 2600 litres of radioactive water had seeped out after a breach to pipework. Again the site operator has not been prosecuted, but rather given a severe warning.

Recommended: The NFLA Secretariat to develop a model letter for Councils to send to their MPs querying these decisions. Further correspondence with the regulators should also take place.

German KiKK study

An update was provided on this important study commissioned by the German government, which considered cancer rates around nuclear sites and the general population. The study uncovered startling figures suggesting cancer rates are higher within 3 kms of a nuclear site than in other parts of the country, particularly in cases of childhood cancer. Dr Ian Fairlie will be presenting the study at the next NFLA Scotland meeting and members felt it was important to lobby the UK Government and the devolved governments to undertake local studies.

Recommendation: NFLA Secretariat to write to the UK Government and devolved governments to consider the KiKK study and commission a local study.

4. **Radioactive Waste Management**

The NFLA Secretary and NFLA Scotland Policy Adviser provided an update on developments in radioactive waste management.

NDA Stakeholder Dialogue –

The NFLA Secretary and Councillor Nickerson (Shetland Islands Council) represented the NFLA at the June 2009 Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's Stakeholder Dialogue.

The dialogue had provided some very useful debates on the national deep underground waste repository, the management of plutonium and NDA policy on key waste streams – low level waste strategy, interim storage of highly active radioactive waste and waste treatment optimisation (the potential incineration of low and very low level radioactive waste. The main points of the dialogue can be found on the NDA website.

Both the NFLA Secretary and Councillor Nickerson made some important points in plenary sessions and were interviewed by a Japanese TV crew outside the dialogue, who were undertaking an important documentary on radioactive waste management.

NDA consultation on low-level radioactive waste management

The NFLA Secretariat has responded to an official NDA consultation document on solid low-level waste management strategy. The NFLA response was converted into a Radioactive Waste Management Briefing and issued to all NFLA members, along with adding to the NFLA website.

The detailed response concluded as follows: "...there is a legacy of public mistrust in the nuclear industry which needs to be overcome in order to implement any kind of LLW strategy. A couple of badly-presented proposals being taken forward at the same time could easily lead to the above interpretation taking root across a large section of society. A search for a new LLW site could, for example, generate a great deal of public anger if it begins after new reactor construction has already started."

CoRWM draft report on research and development in radioactive waste management

The NFLA Secretariat had participated in a stakeholder dialogue held by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management on the research and development being currently undertaken in radioactive waste management and its recommendations for government to improve this policy area. A response to CoRWM's draft report was also produced and converted into an NFLA Radioactive Waste Briefing, sent to members and placed on the website. A key central element of the NFLA response was that an analysis of the scientific uncertainties and technical deficiencies raised by the Nirex inquiry report and subsequent research was urgently required to determine if a deep-waste repository was an appropriate choice to be made for long-term radioactive waste storage.

DECC consultation on plutonium storage strategy

The NFLA Steering Committee endorsed the Secretariat's response to the Government's discussion paper on the key factors for managing the UK's plutonium stockpile. The response argued that all immobilisation options should be investigated further and tested against environmental principles. The submission was sent to all NFLA members and placed on the NFLA website.

Scottish Government stakeholder dialogue on radioactive waste management

A number of NFLA members and officers attended a dialogue organised by the Scottish Government on its radioactive waste management policy. The Scottish Government policy is not to go for a deep-waste storage facility but look at near-site, near surface storage. The dialogue assists the Government in preparing a consultation that will be issued shortly.

Recommendation: NFLA Secretariat participates in the next NDA Stakeholder Dialogue in November.

5. **Radioactive material shipments on the Irish Sea**

The NFLA Secretary provided an update with ongoing discussions with the UK and Irish Governments over improving emergency planning arrangements over the safety of radioactive material shipments over the Irish Sea.

Recommendation: The NFLA Secretariat should write to the Governments urging a national emergency planning exercise on radioactive material shipments.

6. **Mayors for Peace**

The NFLA Secretary and the Mayors for Peace Development Adviser provided a report on progress with Mayors for Peace.

The NFLA Chair and the NFLA Secretary had attended the Mayors for Peace Conference in Nagasaki and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bomb Peace Commemoration Ceremonies. The Conference was attended by 312 delegates from 126 countries and had endorsed a detailed Action Plan encouraging increased membership, financial security and for adoption of the 'Hiroshima Nagasaki Protocol' into the debate at the 2010 Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. A report of this visit can be found on the NFLA website.

A Mayors for Peace Working Group meeting has been set for November 19th to discuss developing the organisation in the UK and Ireland, including organising meetings with the relevant Ministers on counter-proliferation issues. A letter signed by the Lord Provosts of Glasgow and Edinburgh and the Convenor of the Shetland Islands Council encouraging membership of the Mayors for Peace had been sent to 27 Scottish Councils.

Recommendation: NFLA members who are not Mayors for Peace members are encouraged to consider joining the organisation.

7. **Submarine Dismantling Project**

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on a Ministry of Defence stakeholder dialogue group which is considering how redundant nuclear submarines should be dismantled.

The NFLA Secretariat and members from Fife Council are members of the Group and taking an active part in its development. A formal consultation document on future options is expected to be issued in late 2009 / early 2010. The next meeting of the group will be in Scotland and include a visit to the Rosyth submarine base.

Recommendation: NFLA Secretariat to take a full part in the SDP Advisory Group.

8. **Trident Replacement and the NPT**

The NFLA Steering Committee endorsed a policy briefing paper which provided an overview of the issues arising from the Government's policy to replace and upgrade the Trident nuclear weapons system. The paper particularly emphasised the likely heavy costs involved in the programme over the next few years at a time of severe pressure on public spending. The NFLA Policy Briefing has been sent to all NFLA members and has been tabled on the NFLA website.

The replacement of Trident also jars with Government policy on reducing nuclear weapons proliferation as the approaching conference on the review of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty draws near.

Recommendation: NFLA national Forums hold meetings on Trident and the NPT in the approach to the 2010 NPT Conference.

9. **NFLA Membership Development**

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on the challenges in both retaining existing members and recruiting new members given the severe financial pressures on local government budgets at a time of an international recession. The existing NFLA budget was also reviewed and it was agreed that proposals be made to the NFLA AGM in December.

Recommendation: The NFLA Secretary produce a report on funding streams and a financial plan for the NFLA AGM.

10. **NFLA and KIMO**

The NFLA Steering Committee endorsed an approach to seek formal co-operation with the international local authority marine pollution organisation KIMO. This would allow NFLA officers to represent KIMO at OSPAR international government meetings on radioactive safety standards in the marine environment.

Recommendation: Subject to approval by the KIMO board, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding developing co-operation between NFLA and KIMO.

11. **NFLA AGM and upcoming 30th anniversary**

The NFLA Secretary provided a discussion paper on the 2009 AGM and possible ideas for events commemorating the NFLA's 30th anniversary in 2010. The Steering Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to seek to hold the 2009 AGM in Wales with a seminar on nuclear safety and nuclear emergency planning.

It was also agreed that the discussion paper for events in 2010 be taken to the AGM for fuller consideration due to time pressure.

12. **NFLA / NGO dialogue on new nuclear build**

Following the NFLA Steering Committee a well attended, useful and informative series of workshops were held with nuclear policy non-governmental organisations. These considered the subjects of nuclear safety, radioactive waste, the economics of new nuclear build and alternatives to nuclear power. They were facilitated by Jean McSorley (Greenpeace), Andy Blowers (formerly CoRWM and now with the NCG), Peter Burt (NIS) and Pete Roche (NFLA).

Recommendation: A small Steering Group be established looking to develop a common strategy to critique new nuclear build.

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

11.00am – 1.00pm Thursday, 3rd December 2009, venue TBA (in conjunction with the NFLA AGM and Policy Seminar 2009) – the Steering Committee agreed that an NFLA Wales authority be approached to host the meeting.

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