

briefing



Date: 13th April 2012

No.96

Subject: **Summary of the NFLA Steering Committee meeting, Manchester Town Hall, 30th March 2012**

1. Introduction and minutes silence for Fukushima anniversary

The Steering Committee was opened by the NFLA Chair, Councillor Brian Goodall, who welcomed all to Manchester Town Hall.

A minutes silence was held to remember all those who died in the March 11th 2011 natural disaster in north east Japan and those still suffering from the evacuation of the area around the stricken Fukushima nuclear reactors. Silent reflection was also given to the memory of Barbara Cooper, wife of former NFLA All Ireland Forum Secretary Stephen Cooper, who has sadly and suddenly died.

The Chair noted that this was the last Steering Committee before all-out local government elections in Scotland and Wales and annual local elections being held in a number of English cities and unitary authorities. A number of NFLA representatives had announced they were retiring as councillors at the local election including former NFLA Chair Bailie George Regan (Dundee City Council), Councillor Rick Nickerson (Shetland Island Council), Councillor Conor Snowden (Edinburgh City Council) and Councillor Jim MacKechnie (Glasgow City Council).

Agreed: To formally write to retiring members thanking them for their service to the NFLA and encourage them to assist in the recruitment of a suitable successor.

2. National NFLA Forum meetings

The NFLA Secretary provide an overview of the work of the four NFLA National Forums –

NFLA Scotland Forum –

The NFLA Scotland Forum held its AGM, a short business meeting and a seminar at Renfrewshire House, Paisley on the 10th February. It was agreed at the AGM to elect Councillor Audrey Doig as its Convenor up to the May elections so as to allow for continuity with such a short time before the all-out Scottish local government elections. The first Scottish meeting after the elections will then determine the Convenor once it is known which councillors have been elected and who has been appointed as the Council's NFLA representatives.

A special afternoon seminar was also held on the 10th February around Trident replacement and radioactive waste matters. NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor Pete Roche provided a useful overview of radioactive waste issues and Dalgety Bay activist Helen

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

a report that there was no alternative base in England or Wales that could host Trident submarines if Faslane became unavailable. Bill Kidd MSP also provided a useful contribution on the work of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Nuclear Weapons. The seminar was well attended with a useful panel discussion. Presentations have been placed on the NFLA website.

The next meeting of the Forum would be determined following the local elections, with Glasgow being the likely venue.

NFLA English Forum –

The NFLA English Forum held a seminar in Leeds Civic Hall on 24th February. The seminar considered three nuclear issues of interest to English authorities – an overview of low level radiation and health by Dr Ian Fairlie, the consultation over a possible deep-underground facility in West Cumbria by Jean McSorley from Greenpeace and the UK nuclear emergency planning review by the NFLA Secretary. The seminar was well attended and the presentations have been placed on the NFLA website.

The NFLA Secretary noted that a public meeting – ‘What now for nuclear power?’ is being held in the Friends Meeting House in Manchester on April 26th to commemorate the 26th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. Dr Paul Dorfman, Anna Gorchakova and Mike Koefman are confirmed speakers for the meeting.

The NFLA Secretary is also discussing with other nuclear concerned groups a joint conference on new nuclear build in Manchester on June 30th. A separate NFLA English Forum seminar to follow up nuclear emergency planning, also in Manchester, is being considered once the UK nuclear emergency planning review has been published.

NFLA Welsh Forum –

The NFLA Welsh Forum held a seminar in County Hall, Cardiff on 2nd March. The meeting followed on from the themes considered at its last seminar with a cross-party panel of Welsh politicians discussing the current Welsh Assembly inquiry into the future development of Welsh energy policy.

The aim of this seminar was to consider the level of political consensus over Welsh energy policy and whether attempts will be made to lobby for this power being fully devolved to the Welsh Government. Representatives from Labour, Plaid Cymru, Liberal Democrats and the Welsh Greens were on the panel. The panel discussion was very interesting and useful, though it needed a pro-nuclear speaker to inject a wider debate. There was a good attendance to the debate.

The NFLA Welsh Forum Chair Councillor Stephen Churchman was invited to discuss its submission to the Welsh Assembly on energy policy at an Environment and Sustainability Committee meeting on the 29th March. His presentation to the Committee was well received and coincided with the decision of RWE and E-on to pull out of developing new nuclear power stations at Wylfa and Oldbury.

A public meeting in June with other anti-nuclear groups in Caernarfon will be developed for the next NFLA Welsh Forum meeting.

NFLA All Ireland Forum –

Councillor Mark Dearey has arranged for the next NFLA All Ireland Forum meeting to be held at Dundalk Town Hall on the 20th April. The seminar will follow 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.

Confirmed speakers include the NFLA Secretary, the independent marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones and Aideen O’Hora from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.

Agreed: To note the reports and encourage attendance at the Dundalk seminar.

3. Nuclear new build

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

RWE and E-On pull out of nuclear new build –

The Steering Committee welcomed the decision by RWE Npower and E-On to formally pull out of the development of new nuclear reactors at Wylfa and Oldbury. A combination of increased costs placed on the companies in Germany, the economic downturn and associated finance issues were noted as the reason behind the decision. Steering Committee members approved the NFLA media release on the matter which argued for a re-focusing of UK energy policy as a result of this decision. The media release also noted more general issues around the financing of new nuclear reactors. It is on the NFLA website.

Hinkley Point C IPC planning application –

Despite the decision by RWE and E-On, the Infra-structure Planning Commission (IPC) has started its consideration of EDF's planning application for building a reactor at Hinkley Point with a public meeting on 21st March. The agenda of this first meeting was of concern as, despite the judicial review decision requested by Greenpeace that the IPC could, and should, have a wide remit the IPC were seeking to concentrate on more local and fairly parochial issues. Anti-nuclear groups are insisting that emergency planning, flooding, health and safety, waste management and discharges are all considered over the six months. The Steering Committee approved that a NFLA submission is made to the IPC by its deadline of May 3rd.

Generic Design Assessment process and Westinghouse design for UK reactors –

The ONR and the Environment Agency have granted interim Design Acceptance Confirmations (iDACs) and interim Statements of Design Acceptability (iSoDAs) for the UK EPR and the AP1000 reactor designs. At the time, the Regulators also confirmed that they are satisfied with how EDF and Westinghouse plan to resolve the GDA issues identified during the process.

There has been considerable media coverage that Westinghouse is increasingly concerned that it will not be selected by any of the proposed new nuclear operators. According to these reports Westinghouse has been lobbying the UK Government on the matter, stressing the competition concerns if the Areva / EDF design is the only one taken forward. This has been heightened with the decision made by RWE and E-On for Wylfa and Oldbury, as it was believed to be the only likely consortium considering taking up the AP1000 design. The Steering Committee agreed that this issue be monitored.

Welsh Government policy on new nuclear build -

The NFLA Secretary noted that a new Welsh Government energy statement seeking to see major developments of 'low carbon' energy in Wales included a key policy change in support of developing a new nuclear power station at Wylfa. Despite concerns over the risks of nuclear power, the Government argues that issues such as Welsh energy need, the urgency of climate change mitigation and the positive benefits on jobs and economic regeneration outweigh the risks. The decision now made by RWE and E-On to pull out of nuclear new build at Wylfa puts a question mark over this policy, though the Welsh Government has said it will work with the UK Government to find an alternative company to seek to develop the Wylfa site with a new nuclear reactor.

Other matters –

The NFLA are also working with other groups to develop a one-day workshop conference on the nuclear new build issue. This is planned for June 30th, the day after the next NFLA Steering Committee meeting, and will be in a location in Manchester.

Agreed: To respond to the Hinkley Point IPC inquiry. To continue to raise serious concerns over the development of new nuclear reactors. To support event 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.

Fukushima anniversary -

March 11th was the first anniversary of the Fukushima disaster and large-scale events to commemorate it were held around the world. Over 60,000 people attended events in France and over 45,000 in Japan. The main event in the UK took place by the Hinkley Point proposed new reactor with Kate Hudson and Jonathan Porritt the main speakers. The NFLA commemorated the anniversary through the issuing of a media release advocating a refocusing of energy policy.

ONR stress test report and Greenpeace Fukushima report -

The Office for Nuclear Regulation's (ONR) report on post Fukushima 'stress tests' at UK nuclear facilities was now being peer-reviewed by the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group. The ONR also announced that it would produce an updated report on the potential issues of the Fukushima on the UK nuclear industry in the autumn.

Greenpeace International published a detailed independent analysis of the Fukushima disaster prior the first anniversary. Its three main findings included:

- Japanese authorities and the operators of the Fukushima plant were entirely wrong in their assumptions about the risks of a serious accident. The real risks were known but downplayed and ignored.
- Even though Japan is considered one of the best-prepared countries in the world for handling major disasters the reality of a large nuclear disaster proved to be far worse than what was planned for. Nuclear emergency and evacuation plans utterly failed to protect people.
- Hundreds of thousands of people have been deeply affected by evacuations to escape radioactive contamination. They cannot rebuild their lives due to a lack of support and financial compensation. Japan is one of only three countries with a law making a nuclear operator liable for the full costs of a disaster. Yet, the liability law and compensation schemes are inadequate in Japan. Even a year after the disaster began, impacted people are essentially left without formal support and Japanese taxpayers are ending up paying much of the costs.

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 only 2 of Japan's 54 reactors were operational due to a detailed 'stress tests' programme and wider public concern. 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.

5. **Alternatives to nuclear energy**

The NFLA Secretary provided a short update on plans to update the 2011 NFLA energy reports for England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The updated briefings would be prepared to go out shortly after the local elections 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.

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.

NDA matters –

John Clarke has been appointed the new Chief Executive of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). The NDA are seeking public comments on its draft strategy for nuclear site restoration. The NDA has also sought views from nuclear companies on possible alternatives to the DECC preliminary view for the UK's plutonium stockpile. The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretariat should seek to respond to the NDA site restoration consultation.

West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely consultation

The NFLA has submitted a detailed consultation response to the Cumbrian partnership considering if it should go forward with expressing a formal interest to host a deep-underground radioactive waste repository. The NFLA response concluded that the three Councils should not go further ahead with this process due to the technical and scientific uncertainties in developing a deep-underground repository and the unsuitability of the geology of West Cumbria. The submission has been placed on the NFLA website.

NFLA meeting with the Scottish Government

The NFLA Chair, NFLA Scotland Convenor and the NFLA Secretary met with representatives of the Scottish Government Radioactive Waste Team to discuss various issues of interest. The meeting considering Scottish Government Higher Activity Waste policy, concerns over Dounreay waste rail transports, concern over Dalgety Bay radioactive contamination and the MOD's submarine dismantling consultation.

Dounreay exotic fuels consultation

The NFLA has submitted a consultation response to a follow-up NDA strategy document on options for dealing with Dounreay's exotic radioactive fuels. As with the previous consultation, the preferred option is to transport these materials by rail to Sellafield. The NFLA objected to the movement of the materials by rail, arguing it was better to manage them as a waste at the Dounreay site.

Dalgety Bay contamination

The NFLA remain concerned around the clean-up of a site around Dalgety Bay in Fife, which had significant radioactive contamination. A proposed MOD clean-up plan was presented at a public meeting at the end of March. The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretary should liaise with the NFLA Chair and officers in Fife Council to progress the issue further.

NuLEAF and SCCORS

A brief update on NuLEAF and SCCORS was provided. The Steering Committee agreed that a letter should be sent to NuLEAF over a draft protocol between it and the New Nuclear Local Authorities Group (NNLAG). The Committee also agreed that it was important to have good NFLA representation at the next SCCORS meeting, which would determine a new Chair and Secretariat Council.

Agreed: To note the report. To respond to the NDA Site Restoration consultation. To liaise with Fife Council over Dalgety Bay developments. To write to NuLEAF over its draft protocol with the NNLAG. To encourage NFLA representatives to attend the next SCCORS meeting.

7. Nuclear emergency planning

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on nuclear emergency planning. A series of reviews of UK nuclear emergency planning is taking place by the UK Government, the Nuclear Emergency Planning Liaison Group and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR). These reviews should be completed shortly.

The NFLA Secretary gave a presentation on nuclear emergency planning to the NFLA English Forum. The nuclear emergency planning review will be considered at the DECC NGO dialogue

meeting on the 1st May and the NFLA Secretary has been asked to put forward issues of concern including the size of the detailed emergency planning zones around nuclear sites, flooding concerns, the transportation of nuclear materials, the extendability of an emergency response in a nuclear incident and the capability of the emergency services to deal with a major nuclear incident.

The Steering Committee noted the recent publication of a DEFRA report on flooding risk around nuclear sites in the UK. Its main conclusions included that:

- 6 sites have high risk of flooding;
- 4 sites have high risk of coastal erosion;
- 5 of the 8 new nuclear build sites have a high flooding risk;
- 5 of the 12 waste sites in high flood risk areas;
- Existing nuclear sites are currently well protected, but sea level rise and coastal erosion will reduce this protection without substantial and expensive mitigation.

The NFLA Secretary also noted that a Policy Briefing will be developed over the commencement of transport shipments of heat exchangers from the decommissioned Berkeley nuclear power plant in Gloucestershire to a Studsvik site in Sweden. The licence for a recent proposed transport from Canada to the same Swedish site has lapsed.

Agreed: To note the report and to welcome a briefing on the transport of radioactive waste by sea.

8. Radiation and health issues

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on a number of issues around low level radiation and health.

The independent consultant on radioactivity in the environment, Dr Ian Fairlie, provided an overview of a new French 'GEOCAP' study on leukaemia rates around French nuclear facilities to the NFLA English Forum. The study confirms a strong growing trend among international studies indicating there may be a link between increased childhood cancers and proximity to nuclear power plants. The study is being considered by the UK COMARE committee.

The BBC Trust decided not to uphold a complaint by the NFLA and other nuclear concerned groups over a Radio 4 documentary on the potential health effects of the Chernobyl disaster. The BBC Trust acknowledged that some of the wording in the documentary had been not completely accurate but that broadly speaking it had been a fair documentary. Though the complaint has been ultimately unsuccessful, the exercise has been useful in making the BBC aware of the sensitivity in the reporting of nuclear issues.

The NFLA Secretary also reported that the joint reports with KIMO International that were made to the OSPAR Radiation Substances Committee had been developed into a Policy Briefing and placed on the website.

The British Nuclear Test Veterans Association has lost their appeal in the Supreme Court. They had sought to take further claims for compensation over the illnesses they believe derives from radiation exposure from the tests. The Supreme Court voted 4 – 3 against the veterans case. The NFLA will seek to contact the BNTVA as to their next course of action.

Agreed: To note the report.

9. Mayors for Peace developments

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on the development of the Mayors for Peace in their campaign to abolish nuclear weapons.

Mayors for Peace now has 5,136 members worldwide. A meeting was held in Hanover to discuss how to develop the structure, financing and organisation of the Mayors for Peace at the national, continental and global levels. The NFLA Secretary attended this meeting and is fully

contributing to this debate. The Mayors for Peace Executive Board will be meeting in Vienna on May 6th to discuss these developments. An international Mayors for Peace delegation will also attend the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Conference at UN offices.

The UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Working Group met in Manchester on March 29th and considered strategies to deepen and increase membership. It also considered fund-raising matters. Voluntary invoices have gone out to all members and recruitment letters will also be issued to non-members.

The Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-bomb exhibition has a number of bookings for 2012 with Rotherham, Fife, Dublin, Newcastle and London boroughs interested in hosting it. A smaller exhibition is also being developed by Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the August A-bomb anniversaries.

Agreed: To note the report and encourage member authorities to pay voluntary invoices.

10. Nuclear weapons update

The NFLA Secretary reported a number of developments in the issues surrounding nuclear weapons.

The cross-party Trident Commission has considered and published the NFLA's submission to it on Trident replacement. The recent NFLA Scotland seminar included presentations from John Ainslie of CND Scotland and Bill Kidd MSP. A CND report has detailed how there would be no suitable alternatives to the Faslane Trident base if there was a need to move it from Scotland following a future independent referendum.

The report also outlined recently published safety concerns at the Faslane and Coulport bases in Scotland. It was noted that the nuclear weapons facility in Aldermaston has been granted permission for the construction of a Technology Development Centre to develop radiographic instrumentation for monitoring and analysing the results of hydrodynamic research experiments will be conducted at a new joint research facility at Valduc in France. A Freedom of Information response has also noted that Berkshire fire crews were called to Aldermaston on average four times a week between 2000 and 2011. In this period 158 small fires broke out requiring Fire Service attendance.

Agreed: To note the report and write to the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator over safety concerns at Faslane and Coulport.

11. Nuclear submarine dismantling project (SDP)

The NFLA Secretary reported that a detailed submission had been sent to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) on potential sites and options for the dismantling of redundant nuclear submarines currently sited at Rosyth and Devonport. The NFLA response is on its website. The MOD have noted that they will set up a meeting of the SDP Advisory Group to discuss their conclusions from submission responses. The NFLA will be fully represented at this meeting.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is planned for Friday 30th June in Manchester Town Hall from 11am – 1pm.