

Nuclear Free Local Authorities briefing



Date: 26 July 2001

Subject: **Summary of main points from the NFLA Steering Committee Meeting,
Manchester Town Hall, 29 June 2001**

1 Dounreay

The appreciation of the NFLA Steering Committee was recorded for the significant and unique contribution by the NFLA Legal Adviser to the DTI decision to end reprocessing at Dounreay.

The Committee was informed that the NFLA Legal Adviser, Jamie Woolley, persuaded the DTI to consult for the first time ever on whether to underwrite the necessary investment to enable reprocessing to recommence. Secondly, work by the NFLA Legal Adviser revealed last year that an externally commissioned report concluded that reprocessing was not the best option at Dounreay. The UKAEA attempted to conceal this. The Legal Adviser brought this information to the attention of the then Energy Minister, Helen Liddell, and publicised the cover-up in the Scottish media.

It was also reported that: SEPA had started a new public consultation for a revision to the gaseous discharges from Dounreay; a total of 360 particles had been found on the seabed within 2km of Dounreay (268 of them have been removed) and a total of 222 particles have been found on the foreshore - 16 of them on the Sandside beach; SEPA is threatening legal action against Dounreay operators, the UKAEA, over waste tanks containing uranium and ammonia in the D1208 high-level liquid waste plant; and three workers received radioactive contamination in April while working in the complex's fuel cycle area.

2. New Nuclear Build

The Committee was informed of progress with the production of a new series of briefing papers which would critically review a) the nature and scale of economic, safety, waste management and proliferation hurdles to be overcome by nuclear energy and b) the processes for deciding on new nuclear build (eg. stakeholder and public involvement).

Financial assistance for this work has been provided by the JMG Foundation and the research and drafting work will be undertaken by the Committee's policy adviser, Fred Barker. A briefing distribution list has been drawn up to include non member local authorities, energy journalists and journals, energy business analysts, government departments, MPs, and other interested parties. The first Briefing should be circulated in July.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES



Manchester City Council, Town Hall, Manchester, M60 2LA

Tel: 0161 234 3244

Fax: 0161 234 3379

E-Mail: nfznscc@gn.apc.org

Website: <http://www.gn.apc.org/nfznscc/>

3. BNFL update

The meeting received reports regarding:

3.1 Sellafield MOX Plant

A briefing paper for use by member councils in responding to the 4th round of consultation on the justification for operating the Sellafield MOX plant had been circulated by the Secretariat. The Legal Adviser reported an a further round of consultation which would follow publication by DEFRA of an economic evaluation of the MOX Plant. This further consultation, expected to last four weeks, followed a legal challenge by Friends of the Earth.

3.2 Stakeholder Dialogue

The NFLA Secretary and Legal Adviser reported to the Committee on officers' involvement in the ongoing 'stakeholder' dialogue with BNFL about its future environmental policy. Work was currently pursued through: 1) a *Spent Fuel Management Options Working Group* (SFMOWG) which oversees two sub groups: a *Socio-Economic Subgroup* and a *Transport Subgroup*; and 2) a *Plutonium Working Group*. The Legal Adviser also reported his participation in a BNFL *Decommissioning: Timescales Working Group*.

The Committee discussed NFLA involvement in these dialogues. Recognising the considerable resource implications for the Committee it was decided:

That the Chair and a Steering Committee member attend the next Stakeholder Main Group meeting between 18-19 July to assess its usefulness in advancing NFLA policy objectives.

3.3 EA Technetium-99 Abatement Consultation

The Legal Adviser reported that a submission had been made to the Environment Agency in response to a public consultation, arguing for maximum reduction of Tc-99 discharges from Sellafield at the earliest opportunity. The Secretariat had sent copies of this submission to the European Commissioner for the Environment, to the Nordic Council, as well as to Environment Ministers in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, and also to SAVOS (South and West of Norway Assembly) and the Isle of Man Government. It was understood that a draft Tc-99 decision document would be discussed at an Environment Agency (England and Wales) Board meeting in June.

4. Radioactive Waste Management Policy

4.1 UK Nirex Ltd

The Secretary continues to assist UK Nirex Ltd in the development of its policy towards future radioactive waste management most recently in a May meeting with Nirex commissioned consultants, Environmental Resources Management, about the process of environmental policy development and the need for transparency and accountability.

4.2 EU COWAM Project

The Legal Adviser has been successful in securing financial assistance for attendance at the COWAM (Communities and Nuclear Waste Management) 2001 Forum, which is to take place between 19-22 September, Oskarshamn, Sweden. It was reported that Shetland Islands Council would also be represented at the Forum.

4.3 ISOLUS: Decommissioned Nuclear Powered Submarines

The Secretary continues to be represented on the MoD sponsored Steering Group to oversee initial consultation on the development of policy for the Interim Storage of Laid Up (nuclear powered) Submarines (ISOLUS).

4.4 Government Policy Consultation Paper

This is now expected in September.

4.5 Stakeholder Dialogue: Remediation of Radioactively Contaminated Land

The Legal Adviser reported on his participation in the dialogue that aims to establish written best practice in the health, safety and environment aspects of managing contaminated land on civil nuclear sites and defence sites.

4.6 Stakeholder Dialogue: Policy Towards Nuclear Site Decommissioning

The Legal Adviser reported on his participation in the dialogue that aims at achieving an agreement on a generic decommissioning strategy for all BNFL Magnox stations. A number of decommissioning timescales were under discussion and it was noted that the industry regulator considered shorter timescales were achievable.

5. Control of Radioactive Scrap Metals

5.1 Publication of Contaminated Scrap Briefing

The published briefing attracted good coverage in the recycling press and this prompted many requests for copies.

5.2 Seminars

Both the Wales Forum and NFLA (Scotland) are planning seminars to consider the implications for their countries of the Briefing's findings and recommendations.

5.3 Further developments

Further incidents at Hunterston Nuclear Power Station were reported to the meeting. On 1 May raised levels of radioactivity was detected in an imported consignment of scrap at a freight terminal in Coatbridge, North Lanarkshire. The Environment Agency has issued an enforcement notice on Magnox Electric, a subsidiary of British Nuclear Fuels, after radioactive waste metal was sent from the Dungeness A reactor in Kent to an unauthorised disposal site. In a submission to the US Department of Energy earlier this year the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) in the US identified 66 smeltings world-wide involving radioactive scrap items - more than the IAEA has reported to date. In early June a court in Spain ordered the Acerinox plant near Cadiz to pay damages of \$2.7 million for accidentally smelting a Caesium source in 1998 and causing environmental contamination.

5.4 UK National Response Plan

The Environment Agency is reviewing its emergency response arrangements in the light of current incidents to improve information sharing to prevent illicit trafficking and to "...ensure that the response to an incident of illicit trafficking is co-ordinated across all member organisations, so as to ensure it is effective."

6. Depleted Uranium: Developments

The Secretary provided a report on progress with recommendations agreed by the Committee at its 28 May 1999 meeting and on other relevant developments regarding depleted uranium including: a further statement by MoD regarding DU munitions testing, assessed low environmental and health impacts and plans to continue operational use; publication in May by the Royal Society of its investigation into the health hazards of DU which concluded DU munitions use and battlefield exposures presented a low risk except in extreme circumstances (though a number of areas for future research were identified). The Environment Agency is preparing a survey of uses of DU in the UK but no publication date has been provided. Matters arising from the DU seminar organised by the English NFLA forum were discussed and it was decided:

To raise with the European Parliament the health and environmental impacts of manufacturing and other processes within the EU which involve the present or past use of DU.

7. US Ballistic Missile Defence: Local Authority Issues

The Secretary provided an update on developments in Ballistic Missile Defences with local implications and reported the circulation of the NFLA BMD briefing.

A Parliamentary Early Day Motion tabled by Malcolm Savidge MP which expressed concern about BMD implications had attracted over 250 signatures including over half the members of the Parliamentary Labour Party. A motion calling on the Scottish Executive to urge the British Government not to support US missile defence plans had been tabled in the Scottish Parliament. Harrogate Councillors have written to the Prime Minister to express concerns over US missile defence plans and implications for the bases at Menwith Hill and Fylingdales in Yorkshire.

8. Progress Report

The Secretary and Legal Adviser briefly report on several different areas of NFLA policy work including: UK Draft Regulations on Justification; Trawsfydd decommissioning; Relevant extracts from Political Party election manifestos; Mayors for Peace.

9. Date of next meeting: 3.00pm 24 October 2001 City Chambers, Glasgow

For more information on the above matters contact: **Stewart Kemp** 0161 234 3244