

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 17 April 2002

No. 23

Subject: **Summary of main points from the NFLA Steering Committee Meeting, De Valence Pavilion, Tenby, Pembrokeshire, 22 March 2002**

1. 4th Irish & UK Conference on Nuclear Hazards, 21-22 March 2002, Tenby, Pembrokeshire, Wales

The NFLA Steering Committee met in Tenby immediately following the conclusion of the 4th *Joint Irish and UK Conference on Nuclear Hazards*. The pre-conference press notice is reproduced on p4 for information. Conference papers are now being collated and will be circulated to conference delegates shortly. NFLAs not represented in Tenby can obtain copies from the NFLA Secretariat*.

The Steering Committee received a report on the Conference that raised a number of important matters in relation to emergency planning post 11 September 2001, particularly with regard to the concept of a 'reasonably foreseeable' radiation emergency. This concept underpins UK nuclear emergency planning. The Conference also heard from the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland that all households there had now been provided with basic information about what to do should an overseas nuclear accident affect them. This position contrasted sharply with the limited pre-distribution of basic information to the public in the UK. Limited detailed 'off site' emergency planning at UK nuclear sites was also compared with overseas practice. NFLAs will continue to urge relevant authorities to require, and operators to fund, greater detailed emergency planning around nuclear sites.

**The paper from a presentation by John Large accompanies this briefing for the information of officers and members not able to attend the Tenby Conference. The John Large paper illustrates the need to step up contingency planning for radiation emergencies pending full implementation of more secure radioactive waste storage at the Sellafield site.*

2. BNFL Update & Nuclear Liabilities Consultation

The NFLA Steering Committee was informed about Government plans for a new Liabilities Management Authority (LMA) to take charge of most of the assets of BNFL and all of UKAEA. This includes the Sellafield and Dounreay nuclear sites and all the first generation Magnox nuclear power stations that will close over the next decade. A DTI public consultation on the LMA proposals is expected by the early summer and the NFLA Secretariat has already been approached for its views to inform consultation paper preparation. With overall nuclear liabilities in the UK now costed at around £85 billion the NFLA Secretariat urged maximum transparency and public accountability in the operation of an LMA – including local government representation on an LMA management board.

The NFLA Steering Committee continues to support the BNFL Stakeholder Dialogue and received a report on the last Stakeholder meeting between 7- 8 March 2002. The meeting was attended by the NFLA Secretary, NFLA Chair (Cllr Ken Wyatt) and Steering Committee member (Cllr Maria Green). The Stakeholder meeting received a survey indicating two thirds of non BNFL contributors remained to be convinced that the Dialogue was influencing BNFL's business practice – but the Company strongly insists that it is.



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/>

The Secretary further reported that restrictions imposed by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate on the generation of high level liquid wastes (HLW) at Sellafield, which followed detailed work on liquid HLW hazards by NFLAs throughout the 1990s, was now causing BNFL to cut back on nuclear reprocessing to stay within HLW ceilings.

3. Government Energy Review Consultation

Key points from reports of the Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit, Parliamentary Trade and Industry Committee, House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, British Energy and BNFL about future prospects for nuclear energy were outlined to the NFLA Steering Committee. It was reported that issue No. 3 in the series of NFLA briefings monitoring developments in nuclear energy - *New Nuclear Monitor* - had been published and circulated to all local government. Issue 4 would be published in May and will concentrate on a DTI energy policy consultation paper expected around that time.

4. Radioactive Waste Management Policy Consultation

The NFLA Steering Committee made three submissions to the DEFRA *Managing Radioactive Waste Safely* consultation and these were summarised for the Steering Committee by the NFLA Legal Adviser who drafted the papers. NFLAs in Scotland commissioned their own study for submission to the Scottish Executive. Many individual councils wrote separately. DEFRA says it has received some 5,000 pages of comments in total.

The NFLA Secretariat circulated guidance to all member councils, via its series of Briefings on radioactive waste management policy, to assist them in responding to the Government consultation and the Secretariat also assisted the Local Government Association with its response. NFLA policy also strongly influenced the views of the Parliamentary Environment and Rural Affairs Committee in its comments to DEFRA (though not all NFLA recommendations were endorsed).

5. Streamlining the Planning System in England: DTLR Consultation

The Legal Adviser presented a report explaining how the DTLR Planning Green Paper and Major Infrastructure Projects (MIP) Consultation Paper could remove important development control powers from local authorities and disempower local communities in England. Responses to both consultations had been prepared and submitted to DTLR by the Legal Adviser. Of particular concern to the NFLA Steering Committee was the affects of planning reform on future nuclear power station and radioactive waste management facility construction. Proposals for planning reform in Wales were not as radical as that in England but Councillor Ray Davies, Caerphilly County Borough Council, remained concerned that Welsh practice may eventually follow that in England. Councillor Davies agreed to take this matter to the next Welsh NFLA Forum meeting. The Legal Adviser reported that proposed reforms in Scotland did not seek to erode local control over MIP development in the way that proposals for England would if implemented unamended.

6. Decommissioning Developments

The Legal Adviser reported to the NFLA Steering Committee on developments in the BNFL 'decommissioning' Dialogue. He also reported on decommissioning at Trawsfynydd where the Welsh Assembly was expected to call for a public inquiry very soon.

7. NFLA Organisational Review

The NFLA Secretariat continues to implement the organisational changes agreed by the Steering Committee last year. Irish councils had been approached about Association with the NFLAs and some early interest had been stimulated. Good progress was being made with the development of a *Local Authorities Nuclear Policy Advisory Service (LANPAS)*. It was decided that after the 2002 local government elections that the NFLA Chair should write initially to all Leaders of non NFLA English Councils introducing LANPAS and that a Seminar be arranged (probably a London venue) to outline current nuclear issues affecting local government and the advisory services NFLAs could provide through its LANPAS arm.

8. 2002 AGM and Annual Policy Briefing, Slough, Berkshire, 17 –18 October 2002

The NFLA Steering Committee agreed a new format for the AGM and a half day Annual Policy Briefing to replace the usual full day Annual Conference. The aim was to respond to budgetary and time pressures on Members and Officers whilst continuing to deliver high quality policy presentations and opportunities for NFLA policy discussion. External expert speakers on current issues will be invited and NFLA officers will provide more policy input. Initial programme details and registration information will be circulated to all NFLAs within the next few weeks. [*Please enter these dates in your diary now.*]

9. International Issues

The NFLA Steering Committee agreed that the Secretary assists the Director of Veterans and International Affairs, Jersey City, USA, with a planned UK visit later in the year. The meeting approved a submission from the NFLA Secretariat to the MoD consultation on the *Strategic Defence Review New Chapter* and endorsed representations by *Mayors for Peace* to President Bush and Prime Minister Blair about sub critical nuclear weapons testing.

A press report from *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 March 2002, was circulated at the meeting. This suggested the UK Secretary of State for Defence had indicated a willingness to use Trident nuclear missiles against Iraq in response to a chemical or biological weapons threat against British troops. The meeting expressed grave concerns about the implications of this statement and adopted a resolution prepared by the Legal Adviser as follows:

The UK NFLA Steering Committee:

- *notes that statements attributed to the Secretary of State for Defence suggest that he is prepared to*
 - o *deploy troops in an attack on Iraq*
 - o *authorise the use of nuclear weapons against Iraq should Iraq use chemical weapons against British troops*
- *instructs the NFLA Secretary to write to the Secretary of State to establish:*
 - o *if this is so, and if so*
 - o *to condemn the reckless disregard of*
 - i) *the need at all times to respect international law*
 - ii) *the breach of the relevant 'negative security assurance' under the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty*
 - iii) *the destructive effect this would have on efforts to implement Global nuclear non proliferation*

10. Date of Next Meeting: 28 June 2002, 11.00am, Manchester Town Hall

For more information on any of the above matters contact: **Stewart Kemp** 0161 234 3244 or email: office@nuclearpolicy.info



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19 March 2002

4th Joint UK & Irish Councils Conference on Nuclear Hazards

Councils Review Nuclear Risks In Wake Of 11 September Attacks on America

DE VALENCE PAVILION, TENBY, PEMBROKESHIRE

1.30pm 21 March – 1.00pm 22 March 2002

Delegates from authorities in the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands meet in Tenby, South Wales to review nuclear risks in the wake of 11 September 2001. Local Euro MP, Jill Evans opens the meeting that includes expert speakers on nuclear safety and emergency planning.

The conference takes place as the Government reviews security at nuclear sites and launches a new initiative to find a way to safely manage the 50 year legacy of nuclear industry waste which is now forecast to grow to half a million tonnes at a clean up cost of £85 billion. In parallel, the UK nuclear industry, with Government support, is developing new plans for new nuclear stations at existing nuclear sites.

Nuclear Free Local Authorities Chair and Rotherham Councillor, Ken Wyatt, said:

“This conference is very timely. Local councils have responsibilities for public and environmental protection and we need to understand the risks that our communities carry as a result of nuclear operations. We need to assess whether there is more we can do to drive down nuclear hazards. Clearly after the attacks on America last year we need to ask whether nuclear power stations are terrorist targets and whether it is wise to build more of them. The conference will not answer all our questions but it will help us to better represent the interests of our communities on these vital matters.”

Conference speakers include: David Lowry, former adviser to Michael Meacher; John Large, adviser to the Russian Government on the successful raising of the stricken *Kursk* nuclear submarine; Linda Gunter, US safe energy campaigner; Chris Hone, Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland; and John Asquith, local government nuclear emergency planning expert. Delegates are meeting in Tenby to enable a visit to the former Navy facility at Trecwn which current owners offered for nuclear waste storage.

PRESS & BROADCASTING MEDIA ARE INVITED

Contact: **Stewart Kemp** (M) 07771 930 196

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/>