

# Nuclear Free Local Authorities

# briefing



Date: 9 April 2003

No. 31

Subject: **Summary of main points from the NFLA Steering Committee Meeting, City Hall, Cork, 21st March 2003**

1. **NFLA Policy and Organisational Review:** The Secretary reported on: a proposal to establish working groups to further develop NFLAs; current projected outturn for FY 2002/03 and implications for contracted services; developments with the subscription based Local Authorities Nuclear Policy Advisory Service (LANPAS) and NFLA Associate links in Ireland.

The Legal Adviser tabled a work programme that focused on the preparation of a new series of Legal Briefings to assist member authorities. These would provide an assessment of: environmental powers under the Local Government Act 2000 and new health scrutiny functions for councils in England and Wales; the scope for local authority joint action to lobby for reductions in radioactive waste discharges to sea; the scope for further action to bring information about all previously shortlisted sites for nuclear waste disposal into the public domain; the Radiation Emergency Preparedness and Public Information Regulations; the adequacy of the nuclear regulatory framework post '9/11' and an analysis of the role of the DTI's Office for Civil Nuclear Security; Strategic Environmental Assessment, and scope for public participation, in energy, radioactive waste and military nuclear and radioactive waste management policy decisions; developments in radioactive waste transportation since the Greater London Authority inquiry; the present opportunities to lobby for reform of the EURATOM treaty; the scope for participation in 'non statutory' decision making at MoD/AWE sites; and opportunities for the development locally of positive policies that promote peace in the community and internationally.

Considering these matters the Steering Committee decided to:

- write to all member councils seeking views on the establishment of new NFLA working groups
- agree legal services for FY 2003/04
- note projected income and expenditure in 2003/04
- continue to receive progress reports on LANPAS and Irish Council interest in NFLA Associate links

2. **Government Energy Policy Review:** The Secretary reported on the Government's Energy White Paper, *Our Energy Future*, that was published on 24 February. The White Paper ruled out any Government support for new nuclear construction – at least until after the next general election, stating:

*"Its current economics makes new nuclear build an unattractive option and there are important issues of radioactive waste to be resolved. Against this background we conclude it is right to concentrate our efforts on energy efficiency and renewables".* This very much echoed the views submitted during the consultation by NFLAs and many other organisations.

The Steering Committee was informed that a briefing on the White Paper was being prepared for circulation to all member authorities and that this would highlight Government intentions to keep the prospects for nuclear energy under review. In pursuance of existing policy, the Steering Committee decided to continue to lobby the DTI to establish an open, transparent and continuous review mechanism involving all 'stakeholders' to ensure all relevant information affecting future Government policy towards nuclear energy is placed in the public domain.

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](mailto:nfznscc@gn.apc.org)

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

3. **Radioactive Waste Management:** The Secretary reported on: a response that he and the Legal Adviser had made to an informal DTI consultation on the European Commission's 'nuclear package'; further investigations by the Legal Adviser regarding the continued withholding of information about the list of sites formerly identified by Nirex as potentially suitable for radioactive waste disposal; progress with the development of the Government's radioactive waste policy (including the appointment of a new Committee on Radioactive Waste Management to oversee further public consultation on policy); progress with the MoD's ISOLUS process to identify an interim storage strategy for decommissioned nuclear submarines (including available information about a planned public consultation expected between August and November); and other related matters. The Steering Committee agreed that officers continue to represent NFLA interests on these issues.
4. **Radioactive Sources and Contaminated Metals:** The Secretary reported that he had asked the Environment Agency for a progress report on a) radiation monitoring coverage within the metals recycling industry and at legitimate points of entry into the country, and b) details of all reported incidents of lost radioactive materials and 'orphaned' sources in the UK since the Steering Committee's survey in 2000. The inquiry followed journal reports suggesting terrorist concerns had prompted radiation monitoring at points of entry to be significantly increased in the United States. The Steering Committee's survey in 2000 strongly recommended that radiation monitoring be stepped up in the UK though at the time this was prompted by a number of incidents involving contaminated scrap metal consignments entering the UK, rather than as a response to concerns about radioactive materials being smuggled into the UK for malevolent purposes.
5. **UK and Irish Conference on Nuclear Hazards, 20-21 March 2003:** The Secretary reported verbally on a very well attended conference hosted by Cork City Council that attracted over 130 registrations from more than 40 local authorities. Dr John Large, Consulting Engineer, and Mycle Schneider, Director of the Paris based World Information Service on Energy, both leading international nuclear safety experts, opened the conference with reviews of safety and security in a post '9/11' world at the Sellafield, Cumbria and Cap la Hague, Normandy, nuclear complexes. The European Commission's Head of Nuclear Safety, Mrs Nina Commeau, spoke about plans for standardising nuclear safety across an expanded European Union whilst Friends of the Earth (Europe) campaigner, Mark Johnston, reported on a new NGO lobby to end the privileged status of nuclear power in the EU.  
  
Local government speakers from Norway, Ireland and the UK explored opportunities to co-ordinate work to reduce and prevent nuclear discharges from the Sellafield complex that pollute northern seas and Irish, UK and Norwegian coastlines. These links would be pursued after the conference with proposals for joint lobbying of Environment Ministers attending the June OSPAR Convention meeting in Bremen, Germany, where progress on reductions in radioactive discharges to sea would be reviewed.
6. **Nuclear Security and International Terrorism:** The Secretary reported that he and the Legal Adviser had helped the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) with information and advice to assist their study, on behalf of the Parliamentary Defence Committee, into the potential risks and consequences of a terrorist attack on a UK nuclear installation. The Secretary reported further on proposals for a new Civil Contingencies Bill to replace the Civil Defence Act 1948. It is anticipated that the Bill will be published for consultation in the Summer, included in the Queen's Speech in November, and enacted in early 2004. Details of a new US analysis of consequences of an attack on spent nuclear fuel in storage was provided together with a summary of an International Atomic Energy Agency conference in Vienna about the Global risk of a terrorist act involving the use of radiological materials (so called 'dirty bomb').
7. **Local Councils and the Iraq Crisis:** The Secretary reported on resolutions carried by Cambridge City Council, Dundee City Council, Edinburgh City Council, Glasgow City Council, Manchester City Council, Redcar and Cleveland Council, Shetland Islands Council and Slough Borough Council.
8. **Date of Next Meeting:** 27 June 2003, 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](mailto:office@nuclearpolicy.info)