

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 4 August 2003

No. 34

Subject: **Summary of main points from the NFLA Steering Committee Meeting, Town Hall, Manchester, 27 June 2003**

1. Radioactive Waste Marine Discharges

The Legal Adviser reported that a member briefing paper, about nuclear reprocessing that results in radioactive discharges to the marine environment, based on his presentation to the joint Irish and UK Nuclear Hazards Conference in Cork last March, had been produced and circulated to all NFLA member authorities. NFLA member authorities had been urged to use the briefing to lobby Governments and devolved administrations, to further reduce radioactive discharges to sea, particularly Technetium 99 (Tc-99) that had been found to accumulate in some seaweeds and sea life.

In preparation for a Ministerial meeting of signatory states to the Oslo - Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic ("OSPAR Convention"), Bremen, Germany, between 23-27 June 2003, the Legal Adviser had also prepared a resolution that gained the support of NFLAs, the South and West Norway Assembly of County Councils, the General Council of County Councils in Ireland and the KIMO local authorities environmental group. This resolution, which sought a suspension of Tc-99 radioactive discharges from Sellafield, was sent to all OSPAR ministers. The KIMO Secretary, Mr Rick Nickerson, also distributed and promoted the joint resolution at the OSPAR meeting that he attended.

Shortly before the OSPAR meeting the Environment Secretary, Margaret Beckett, asked BNFL to suspend Tc-99 discharges for nine months, pending a review of options for land based disposal.

The meeting was also informed of an expected Environment Agency consultation on discharges from BNFL's Springfields plant. Considering the report the Steering Committee decided:

- *that officers continue to pursue current policy on this issue including efforts to formalise joint working with the other local government groupings identified in the report*
- *that officers prepare a Committee response to the consultation regarding a radioactive waste discharge authorisation application at BNFL's Springfields site in due course*
- *to record thanks to NFLA staff and advisers, and to KIMO, for their joint efforts to secure commitments to further marine discharge reductions at the OSPAR Ministers meeting.*



2. Radioactive Waste Management

The Secretary and Legal Adviser reported on: further work 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 Government's radioactive waste policy development process; progress with the MoD's ISOLUS process to identify an interim storage strategy for decommissioned nuclear submarines (public consultation on options for land storage of old nuclear propulsion systems is expected around the end of August through to November 2003); a proposal to develop, under the auspices of the Local Government Association, a 'Special Interest Group' on radioactive waste management that, on establishment, could link with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association; and other related matters.

3. Decommissioning and Remediation Policy

Decommissioning

The Legal Adviser informed members of developments relating to decommissioning, delicensing and site remediation. At the time of meeting the Inspector's report on the public inquiry relating to Trawsfynydd decommissioning was with the Welsh Assembly Government Environment Minister and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. (This was published in late July together with a decision approving BNFL's planning application for construction of a store to hold intermediate level radioactive wastes and reduction in height of reactor buildings.)

The BNFL sponsored decommissioning 'stakeholder' dialogue has faltered and seems unlikely to resume. It is likely that the new Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA – see below) will eventually sponsor a new form of dialogue and consultation.

The DTI recently issued for further comment a report with recommendations for improving the operation and accountability of nuclear site local liaison committees. This report reflected many of the concerns submitted by NFLAs in response to the *Managing the Nuclear Legacy* consultation last year, but some important concerns, for example, the quality of the information provided to local liaison committees, remains to be addressed. The DTI also published draft legislation and associated documentation about the creation of a Nuclear Decommissioning Authority for consultation and issued a paper inviting comments on how best to establish a framework for future stakeholder engagement with the new Authority. Advice on these matters was issued to all NFLA members via *Radioactive Waste Management Policy Briefing No.9*.

The meeting was also informed of an anticipated Government consultation paper on nuclear decommissioning policy.

Delicensing

Under present law a nuclear licensed site cannot be 'delicensed' by the Health and Safety Executive until the HSE decides that there has ceased to be any 'danger' from ionising radiations. A consultation on HSE Guidelines on what constitutes 'danger' is anticipated in about January 2004. In advance of this, the Legal Adviser obtained a full list of sites that have been delicensed in whole or in part.

The Legal Adviser also reported recent advisory work for the nuclear industry sponsored *Safegrounds* project that had already produced guidelines on how to deal with radioactively contaminated land. Considering the report the Steering Committee decided:

- *that the Secretariat write to authorities where 'delicensing' had taken place to ask about their role in this process*
- *that a submission in response to the DTI consultation on NDA and stakeholder engagement be made in consultation with the Chair.*

4. Legal Scope for Local Authority Work on Peace Issues

The Legal Adviser reported on legal developments in England and Wales, and separately in Scotland, providing local authorities with a power to promote the well being of all or part of their areas or all or some of their inhabitants. The Legal Adviser will prepare a briefing on these legal powers. The position in Northern Ireland was being clarified.

5. Public Accountability over Development at Atomic Weapon and Defence Sites: Aldermaston, Fylingdales and Menwith Hill

The Legal Adviser reported that he had been assisting the English Forum Secretary in the analysis of opportunities for improving accountability and promoting public involvement in decision-making relating to Menwith Hill. To this end he recently discussed ideas with David Bowe, MEP, European Parliamentary Labour Party Spokesperson and Government Link on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy Committee, and a member of the Menwith Hill Forum. Opportunities to develop a greater degree of participation in decision-making should also be applicable to relevant developments at Aldermaston. The Legal Adviser would prepare a legal briefing on this matter.

6. Nuclear Non Proliferation Review Conference 2005

The Secretary informed the Committee of: an initiative by Mayors for Peace to co-ordinate a Mayors lobby and delegation to press for progress on nuclear non proliferation at the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 'Prepcom' in 2004 and at the NNPT Review Conference in 2005; and an invitation he had received to address the 2nd Nagasaki Global Citizens Assembly and the Annual Meeting of Japanese Nuclear Free Zone local authorities, 22-24 November 2003. The invitation to Japan would not involve the Committee in any additional expenditure. Considering the report the Steering Committee decided:

- *that the Committee gives its support to the Mayors for Peace lobby to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime*
- *that the Committee agrees a small contribution of £250 to Abolition 2000 UK to assist them in the preparation of information materials that their supporters can use locally to encourage local authorities to support the Mayors for Peace initiative*
- *that the NFLA Secretary speak on behalf of the organisation at the 2nd Nagasaki Global Citizens Assembly and at the Annual Meeting of Japanese Nuclear Free Zone local authorities, 22-24 November 2003.*

7. AGM and Annual Policy Briefing 2003, Town Hall, Manchester 16 October 2003

The Secretary reported on progress with arrangements for the 2003 AGM and Annual Policy Briefing. A programme was proposed around two policy themes: community engagement in radioactive waste management policy; and safety and security implications of nuclear proliferation. Considering the report the meeting decided:

- *that the NFLA Annual Policy Briefing programme for 2003 be agreed*
- *that inclusive registration fees be held at £60 (first Delegate) £100 (two delegates) £140 (three delegates) and £40 per delegate thereafter*
- *that observers from Irish authorities be invited*

8. NFLA Policy & Organisational Review

The NFLA Secretary reported on: progress with a proposal to establish working groups to further develop NFLAs; developments with the Local Authorities Nuclear Policy Advisory (subscription) Service (LANPAS); NFLA Associate links in Ireland; and NFLA membership developments. Considering the report the Steering Committee decided:

- *that a finance and development working group be established and all Committee members be invited to an initial meeting on 3 October 2003*
- *that a seminar be arranged to encourage local authority support for LANPAS*
- *that a seminar be arranged in Ireland to encourage Irish local authority support for NFLA associate links*
- *that the Committee continue to receive progress reports on membership, LANPAS and income developments at each meeting*
- *that the Forums include membership development as a standing item on their future meeting agendas*

9. Finance Report

The Secretary submitted the final outturn in FY 2002/03 and estimates for 2003/04 and 2004/05. The meeting decided:

- *that the final outturn in FY 2002/03 and estimates for 2003/04 and 2004/05 be approved for submission to the 2003 NFLA AGM*
- *that the AGM be asked to agree NFLA subscriptions in FY 2004/05 be increased in line with inflation (percentage figure to be advised by Manchester City Council Treasurers Department).*

10. Arms Conversion Project

The minutes of the final meeting of the ACP on 20 March 2003 were received by the Steering Committee

11. Date of Next Meeting

16 October 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