

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 21 April 2004

No. 38

Subject: **Summary of the main points from the NFLA Steering Committee Meeting, City Chambers, Glasgow, 26 March 2004**

1. **Solid Radioactive Waste Management Policy**

The Secretary and Legal Adviser reported on: developments with the Government's Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM); progress with the MoD's public consultation on proposals for the interim management of decommissioned nuclear submarines (ISOLUS); developments in the management of liquid radioactive waste discharges from the Sellafield site; progress with the BNFL Stakeholder Dialogue; further work to obtain information about sites formerly considered by UK Nirex Ltd for national radioactive waste repository development; the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency consultation on a proposal to transfer low level radioactive waste from Dounreay in Caithness for disposal at Drigg near Sellafield, West Cumbria; and further progress in the development of a general local government 'Special Interest Group' (SIG) on radioactive waste management and nuclear decommissioning issues.

Regarding the SEPA consultation, officers had been advised informally that there was no timetable for a decision. Regarding the ISOLUS consultation, it was reported that opinion was divided in the consultation steering group about the merits of releasing or withholding information on 117 MoD owned coastal sites being sifted for suitability for storage of decommissioned nuclear powered submarines. NFLAs were urged to contact their MPs (and MSPs in Scotland) about this and to ask them to urge the Secretary of State for Defence to publish details of the 117 sites. Regarding the 'Nirex list', the NFLA Legal Adviser was asked to assist Shetland Islands Council in raising this matter with the Islands' MP and MSP. Regarding the SIG, it was requested that a briefing on the new group be provided to the Chair of CoSLA's Environment Forum.

Considering these various matters it was decided:

- *that the Secretary and Legal Adviser prepare a draft letter (to follow) for NFLA member authority use urging the MoD to publish the full list of 117 sites that they are sifting for suitability for decommissioned nuclear submarine storage*
- *that the Legal Adviser assist Shetland Islands Council regarding the 'NIREX list'*
- *that CoSLA's Environment Forum Chair be briefed on the new LGA Special Interest Group on Radioactive Waste Management and Nuclear Decommissioning*



THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

2. **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Draft Guidance on Exemption & Clearance of Radioactively Contaminated Materials**

The Secretary introduced a report commissioned jointly with Greenpeace UK for submission to DEFRA in response to its 'informal consultation' on draft guidance prepared by the International Atomic Energy Agency about exemption and clearance of radioactively contaminated materials from regulatory control. The Secretary highlighted the inconsistencies between the IAEA draft guidance, the EURATOM Basic Safety Standards Directive, and the control regime that currently applies in the UK. DEFRA has forwarded the joint NFLA/Greenpeace report to IAEA for its consideration. Though DEFRA insisted no change to the UK regulatory regime is currently contemplated the NFLA Steering Committee nonetheless recognised the pressure on the UK regulatory regime from the huge volumes of lightly contaminated materials that were beginning to arise from the decommissioning of nuclear sites. The Secretary further advised that this concern had prompted the proposed programme for the 2004 NFLA Annual Policy Briefing (see Item 9 below).

3. **BNFL Springfields: Consultation**

The Legal Adviser updated the Committee on developments with the Environment Agency consultation about the draft radioactive waste discharge authorisation application by BNFL at the Springfields nuclear fuel fabrication plant near Preston.

Officers had prepared a briefing to assist authorities in responding to this consultation and the Legal Adviser had also written to the Agency and to DEFRA asking for specific information and seeking a review of the justification of the Magnox fuel cycle as a whole (i.e fuel manufacture at Springfields, fuel use in Magnox power stations and fuel reprocessing at Sellafield), urging the earliest closure of all remaining operating Magnox power stations.

4. **DTI Decommissioning Policy: Consultation Response**

At its last meeting, the NFLA Steering Committee was (i) advised that the DTI was consulting on a revised policy for decommissioning nuclear sites and (ii) provided with a draft briefing. This was finalised for circulation to NFLAs as *Radioactive Waste Management Briefing No 10* and was submitted to DTI with a covering letter prepared by the Legal Adviser raising additional concerns.

The Committee's submission supported the notion that decommissioning plans should result from stakeholder consultation, but it raised concerns about the precise content of such stakeholder consultation and the content and definition of the Best Practicable Environmental Option studies that would form the focus for determining the approach to be adopted. The Legal Adviser was particularly concerned that the issue of timescales had not been addressed at all and that the principle of inter-generational equity was nowhere mentioned.

5. **DTI Consultation on Radioactive Waste Substitution**

The Legal Adviser briefly reported verbally on a consultation initiated by DTI on proposals by BNFL to return small volumes of high level radioactive waste generated by reprocessing spent nuclear fuel from overseas customers at Sellafield whilst retaining for storage or disposal much larger volumes of intermediate radioactive waste generated from this work.

The consultation paper had been discussed by the new LGA SIG at its meeting on 18 March. The consensus appeared to be to respond to this consultation by seeking clarification on a number of issues rather than agreeing or disagreeing with the waste substitution proposals.

Considering the report the Steering Committee decided:

- *to give its support to the approach adopted by the LGA SIG and ask officers to assist the SIG in seeking clarification on many points raised by DTI in their consultation paper on radioactive waste 'substitution'.*

6. **Mayors' Nuclear Non Proliferation Initiative**

The Secretary updated the Committee on action taken in support of the Mayors for Peace *Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons* including: asking the Mayor of London to host a seminar where local government and NGO strategy towards the 2005 Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference could be discussed; and establishing a working group to promote support for the Mayors for Peace initiative.

The Mayor of London confirmed he was considering options for assisting Mayors for Peace including the possibility of an event for local authorities and representation in New York to support a Mayors delegation led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at both the NPT 2004 preparatory committee in April and the full 2005 NPT review conference twelve months later. Glasgow City Council would also be represented in New York to support the Mayors delegation attending the NPT 'prepcom' between 27-28 April 2004. Manchester City Council, a Mayors for Peace Vice President City, agreed to fund the attendance of the NFLA Secretary on its behalf to support UK delegates in the Mayors for Peace delegation.

CND also asked the Committee to support its Easter 2004 rally and march to Aldermaston to highlight the concern that the Government was considering work on a new generation of British nuclear weapons and had begun upgrading the Aldermaston nuclear weapons plant in readiness for this.

In discussion Shetland Islands Council reported that it had recently joined international Mayors for Peace and were looking to support the Mayors work through the 'on line' Global Classroom and possibly sending a school student to New York in 2005 as the Islands' ambassador attached to the Mayors for Peace delegation. Shetland Islands was also considering displaying the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A bomb exhibition. Leeds City Council was liaising with Leeds Metropolitan University about displaying the A Bomb Exhibition. The NFLA Secretary reported that the A Bomb exhibition had been hugely successful in Manchester with *The Guardian* describing it as 'unmissable'. The Greater London Authority was considering displaying it over the summer. Watford Council may also be interested to take the exhibition.

Considering these various matters the Committee decided:

- *that the Secretary continue to assist international Mayors for Peace as appropriate in the promotion of the Mayors' NPT initiative*
- *that the Committee give its support to CND's rally in Trafalgar Square on 9 April and the following march to the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston*

7. **Aldermaston: Notice of Proposed Planning Development**

The Legal Adviser reported that the MoD had withdrawn its Notice of Proposed Development for a new laser facility for nuclear weapon testing at Aldermaston in the face of a legal challenge on its failure to consult publicly about its proposals. The court challenge was grounded in legal arguments first developed by the Legal Adviser for the Steering Committee. The Legal Adviser had also drafted text for the Mayor of Hiroshima to use in an appeal to West Berkshire District Council (the planning authority for Aldermaston) urging the Council to object to the laser development.

8. **Joint Irish and UK Local Authorities Conference on Nuclear Hazards, Glasgow City Council Conference Facilities, 25 – 26 March 2004**

The Steering Committee considered that the conference arrangements and conference content had been very successful. The conference had provided an opportunity for interaction between delegates and speakers involved in radioactive waste management policy development and implementation. The Secretary explained that conference papers and presentations would be pulled together for distribution to all conference delegates.

9. **Annual Policy Briefing: Hull 14-15 October 2004: Draft Programme**

The Secretary proposed a programme for the 2004 Annual Policy Briefing focusing on consumer protection and the impact of recycling radioactively contaminated materials into new consumer products or new construction. This theme was broadly welcomed. Shetland Islands Council asked that a representative of the steel industry be invited to speak. Nottinghamshire County Council urged the Secretariat to circulate programme details, when finalised, to Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers. A recommendation was also made to increase Annual Policy Briefing & Annual Dinner attendance fees in 2004. Considering these proposals the Committee decided:

- *that the proposed Annual Policy Briefing (APB) programme be agreed*
- *that the APB and Annual Dinner fee for 2004 be increased to £65 for the first delegate from each authority with discounts for additional delegates (£110 x 2, £150 x 3, and £45 per delegate thereafter)*

10. **Legal Adviser's Progress Report**

The Legal Adviser briefly reported on: progress with the production of briefings for local authorities on current powers to pursue NFLA work; continuing work and opportunities to open up decision making processes on nuclear issues at all governmental levels, including a DEFRA consultation on the implementation of an EU requirement for new nuclear practices to be justified; follow up work on the consultation on radioactive discharges from the Springfields nuclear plant; follow up work on the DTI consultation about nuclear decommissioning policy; and work in a number of different areas arising from aspects of UK nuclear defence policy.

Considering these matters the Steering Committee decided:

- *to authorise the Legal Adviser to prepare a briefing and response to the DEFRA consultation paper on 'justification'*

11. **Diary Dates**

NFLA (Scotland)	Dundee	30 April 2004
English Forum	Venue TBA	2 July 2004
NFLA Steering Committee	Manchester	9 July 2004
NFLA Steering Committee	Hull	14 October 2004
Wales Forum	Hull	14 October 2004
NFLA (Scotland)	Hull	14 October 2004
English Forum	Hull	14 October 2004
NFLA AGM	Hull	14 October 2004
NFLA Annual Policy Briefing	Hull	15 October 2004

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