



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

# information

**NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

## **NFLA re-elects Chair and considers key nuclear security and nuclear weapons concerns**

Despite the poor weather, the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) held a UK & Ireland Steering Committee, its 2013 Annual General Meeting and 2013 Annual Policy Seminar in Cardiff County Hall last Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> December.

In the NFLA Steering Committee, members received and considered a thorough overview of all the issues and matters NFLA is involved in with the nuclear policy area. Of particular importance was its final submission to the UK Government Department of Energy and Climate Change's consultation on siting a deep underground radioactive waste repository, where it raised many concerns over the centralising nature of a deeply flawed decision-making process. (1)

In the NFLA Annual General Meeting, member authorities re-elected Councillor Mark Hackett of Manchester City Council as its UK & Ireland Chair for 2014. The AGM also endorsed its 2014 Service Plan and its Steering Committee Constitution (2).

At its Annual Policy Seminar, NFLA members and NGOs were given three excellent and well researched presentations around major concerns with nuclear security and nuclear weapons proliferation, along with the real lack of Parliamentary scrutiny of such matters.

Dr David Lowry argued that the UK suffers from under-regulation of nuclear security matters, noting the complete lack of new research being undertaken in this area by the Office for Nuclear Regulation. In his presentation he also commented on French involvement in Iran's nuclear programme and his deep misgivings about Chinese involvement in the UK new nuclear build programme at Hinkley Point.

He argued: "Nuclear power's insecurity has been the 'elephant in the room' for the nuclear industry from the start of the commercialisation of the technology in the early 1950s. Today, ministers routinely drop into speeches that safety and security are their number one priority when they sanction any nuclear go-ahead decision. Yet, post September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, at a minimum, it is difficult to argue that there is any country with major nuclear facilities where an attack by a small group of well-armed, well-trained terrorists, using at least a lorry / truck bomb and having the assistance of one insider, is not a plausible threat against which security systems should be prepared to defend. National standards and regulations should include regular, realistic, independent testing of the performance of security systems in defeating intelligent, well-trained insider and outsider efforts to overcome them." (3)

Dr Rebecca Johnson highlighted the real need for Governments and NGOs to take on board a new nuclear disarmament approach in order to construct an international treaty to ban nuclear weapons. There also needs to be new and imaginative ways to move away from the stalemate within the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime and acknowledge the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapon attack.

With this in mind, Dr Johnson highlighted a new report by the group International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), which calculates that even a limited nuclear war between the like of Pakistan and India (over disputed borders in Kashmir) could set off a global famine leading to the deaths of over 2 billion people and effectively ending human civilisation as it currently is. (4)

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The seminar was concluded by the veteran and highly experienced Paul Flynn MP. He provided an expert overview over the limitations of current Parliamentary scrutiny of nuclear policy matters, the paucity of quality debate on such issues and the real need for NGOs and other groups to challenge the 'pro-nuclear' consensus of the three UK political parties, that is often based on a sketchy and superficial understanding of the issues.

NFLA Chair Councillor Mark Hackett said:

"The quality of debate held in the NFLA's Steering Committee and Annual Policy Seminar needs to be urgently replicated at the Parliamentary level. Our MPs and Lords in Westminster, as well as Parliamentarians in the Dail in Dublin and devolved assemblies in Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont need a more critical and independent understanding of the real risks and dangers of nuclear insecurity, nuclear weapons proliferation and nuclear reactor new build programmes. As its newly re-elected Chair I will continue to push for the NFLA to remain one of those independent voices and work with other groups to educate our law-makers of the critical need to hold to account the nuclear industry. I believe we need such critical voices to help us avoid making further costly mistakes in policy in the future."

Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 0161 234 3244 or 07771 930196.

Notes for editors:

- (1) The NFLA formal response to the UK Government's consultation is dealt with in a separate NFLA media release and submission issued today, which can be found on the NFLA website: [http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/radwaste/Rad\\_Waste\\_Brfg\\_45\\_MRWS\\_GDF\\_Siting\\_Final\\_Response.pdf](http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/radwaste/Rad_Waste_Brfg_45_MRWS_GDF_Siting_Final_Response.pdf).
- (2) The NFLA Service Plan and updated Constitution have been placed on the NFLA website today.
- (3) Directly quoted from David Lowry's presentation to the NFLA Annual Policy Seminar. The presentation will be shortly loaded on to the NFLA website and is available on request from the NFLA Secretary.
- (4) The IPPNW report can be downloaded from the front page of its website <http://www.ippnw.org> and is profiled in a December 10<sup>th</sup> report by the Daily Telegraph - <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/10507342/India-Pakistan-nuclear-war-could-end-human-civilisation.html>

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