



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

# information

**NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

## **NFLA wonders why it has taken the UK Government almost two years to admit serious issues in the reactor core of test nuclear submarines**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) is astonished to hear today the statement by UK Defence Minister Philip Hammond of significant radiation issues with its submarine test reactor facility at Dounreay in Caithness (1), getting on for two years after the problem was discovered.

Mr Hammond informed Parliament today that low levels of radioactivity had been found in the cooling waters of the nuclear submarine test reactor at Dounreay. This was discovered originally in 2012.

NFLA is relieved that no leaks have been found and no staff or the environment have been put at risk, but the fact that £120 million extra will have to be found to refuel a new nuclear core on HMS Vanguard shows the ongoing risks and huge financial costs of maintaining our nuclear submarine fleet.

The NFLA urges a full and open investigation into the reasons for this problem and for such a report to be published in detail, and analysed by independent experts. The NFLA would also like to know the reasons why the new class of submarines being considered after the 2015 general election will not be affected by the same type of problems. NFLA agrees with the Opposition spokesperson Vernon Coaker's assertion that "a fault, however small, that develops in a nuclear reactor is something that the British people and this House (of Commons) should have been told about."

Such submarines travel all over the planet so such serious issues affecting its reactor core have to be seen as alarming. That £120 million is required to rectify the problem means other parts of the stretched defence budget could be affected again, in a manner similar to the significant costs of clean-up of the Dalgety Bay radiation contamination debacle in Fife.

NFLA Chair Councillor Mark Hackett said:

"I am greatly concerned with this incident, not just from the point of view of the radiation risks raised by it, but by the amount of time it has taken the Government to make it public. NFLA constantly calls for greater openness and transparency in the operation of civil and defence nuclear operations which eat up large amounts of public money. It is disgraceful for Mr Hammond to have waited so long in telling the House of Commons about this incident and it does not bode well for the future development of the Astute class of nuclear submarines."

Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 0161 234.

Notes for editors:

(1) BBC News Online, 6<sup>th</sup> March <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26463923>

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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES