



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

# information

For immediate release, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009

## Major Infra-structure Planning – is there a democratic deficit?

Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) England and NFLA Wales are holding a special seminar on the major changes to planning law in both countries on **Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> October, in Liverpool Town Hall**. The changes to planning law, with the creation of the National Infra-structure Planning Commission (NIPC), represents one of the most important changes in the process for developing large-scale transport and energy projects in decades.

From the end of October the NIPC will take control of the planning process for what the Government deems as 'national infra-structure' projects. These could include the future development of new nuclear power stations, the national radioactive waste repository, large-scale renewable energy projects, airport runway and terminal extensions and high speed rail projects. According to the Local Government Chronicle (1), up to 50 projects have been earmarked for consideration by the NIPC in the next 12 months.

The Local Government Association (2) has voiced concerns over the possible democratic deficit and the costs to local government of this major change to planning law. The Nuclear Free Local Authorities share such concerns, and are particularly worried that a significant number of new nuclear power stations will be built without adequate discussion over safety, design, location and environmental protection issues.

The NFLA special seminar on the NIPC, being held during Liverpool City Council's 'Year of the Environment', is being organised to allow Councillors and local community groups the opportunity to consider whether democratic scrutiny will be eroded and what the changes will mean both for new nuclear build and the more positive development of wind and tidal energy projects.

The seminar will be addressed by an impressive collection of experts in the field:

- Hugh Ellis, the Chief Planner for the Town and Country Planning Association,
- Pete Wilkinson, a former member of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management and a consultant with the Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates,
- David Hunt, CEO of the local Merseyside renewable energy company, Eco-Environments,
- Pete Roche, Nuclear Free Local Authorities Policy Advisor.

The NFLA Chairperson, George Regan, will be chairing the seminar. He said:

"The hugely important changes to planning law concern me greatly. The scrutiny of planning developments in our local areas is one of the most important roles a councillor gets involved in. It is also the arena for interface with the local community and the media. The NIPC may prevent locally elected politicians having a true say on a major development in their own area. It may also cost Councils a lot more money, in a time of deep recession; in order to allow approval of something they may fundamentally disagree with, particularly the creation of up to a dozen new nuclear reactors.

As a locally elected politician I want to be able to represent the views of the people that elected me. If the community does not want such a project how can I reflect those views to the NIPC, and will they listen? Who do people appeal to if they are not happy with it? I urge councillors and planning officers to attend the seminar and find out more."

*The seminar takes place at 10am on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October in Liverpool and is open to all councillors and planning officers – for further information email [office@nuclearpolicy.info](mailto:office@nuclearpolicy.info) / ring 0161 234 3244.*

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

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## Ends

(1) & (2) Local Government Chronicle, 'LGA raises fears of massive Councils costs', 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009.

## Notes for Editors:

The flyer for the NFLA English NFLA Wales joint seminar is attached below.

For interviews with speakers or NFLA representatives contact the NFLA Secretary, Sean Morris, on **0161 234 3244 or 07771 930196**.

## **NFLA England and Wales Joint Seminar**

**Date: 10.00am – 12.30pm, Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

**Location: West Reception Room, Liverpool Town Hall**

## **Major Infrastructure Planning Policy – do Councils have any role to play in the new nuclear development debate?**

### PROGRAMME

10.00am	<b>Registration:</b> Tea/Coffee
10.15am	<b>Welcomes:</b> Councillor Colin Eldridge, Chair of the Sustainable Communities Select Committee, Liverpool City Council and Bailie George Regan, NFLA Chair
10.20am	Dr Hugh Ellis, Chief Planner, Town and Country Planning Association – The N.I.P.C.'s democratic deficit, how do Council's respond to new nuclear build and other planning projects?
10.45am	Pete Wilkinson, Independent Consultant, Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates - How will the voice of local communities be heard in the new planning process?
11.10am	David Hunt, Eco Environments Ltd – How is the renewable energy sector affected by current planning law and how will the changes affect it?
11.35am	Pete Roche, NFLA Policy Advisor – EDF / Councils Planning Performance Agreements: A Conflict of Interest?
12.00pm	Panel Discussion chaired by Bailie George Regan, NFLA Chair
12.30pm	<b>Conclusion</b>

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