



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA All Ireland Forum Media release - for immediate release, 14th May 2014
NFLA say nuclear is the wrong direction for Ireland's energy needs.

As one of the Co-Chairs of the Irish Forum of Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA), Councillor Mark Dearey notes that the Government is seeking views on the potential use of nuclear power, in its recently published Green Paper on Energy.

The Green Paper suggests it is "technically possible" to construct a small nuclear reactor to replace the coal-burning Moneypoint plant in County Clare, which is expected to close in 2025. (1)

The policy paper also says that UK nuclear power may become a part of that mix indirectly through the interconnector between the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

In public comments made about the consultation, Energy Minister Pat Rabbitte says:
"In light of considerations on the future of the Moneypoint coal plant, it may be questioned whether the time is right to consider in greater depth the potential economic and technical implications, or indeed to test public acceptance of nuclear generation located on the island of Ireland." (2)

NFLA fundamentally disagrees that nuclear generation should be part of our energy mix. International experience shows it to be an overly expensive energy source – the projected cost of the new Hinkley Point nuclear power station in the UK is put at around £7 billion for example. Any analysis must also include the long term storage plan for highly radioactive waste from spent fuel rods and the cost of storage over many generations. Will these full costs be borne by the consumer or does the Minister envisage the kind of nuclear subsidies currently being investigated by the EU Commission in relation to the proposed new facility at Hinkley Point? (3)

The cost of a full nuclear regulatory framework and attendant safety service involving the establishment of several new quangos will also need to be costed and factored into price.

Ireland's coastal communities know all about the environmental and health risks of nuclear power through the radioactive discharges emitting from sites like Sellafield into the Irish Sea. The effects of the Chernobyl and the Fukushima disasters comprehensively show the true danger of nuclear power when it goes drastically wrong.

NFLA calls on the Government to be more vocal in its commitment to an energy policy that will dramatically reduce Ireland's dependence on fuel imports (currently 88%) and instead pursue an energy policy that delivers 100% renewable energy over time.

NFLA has previously calculated that Ireland has a practically accessible renewable resource of around 675,000 GWh – or more than three times its actual energy demand. (4) What has been missing in Government strategy has been a more joined-up policy of encouraging all new renewable energy projects to have community consent, co-operation and ownership at the core of their vision. With the role of Councils also changing after the local elections now is the time to free up Councils to more actively promote and support such policies through their community planning role, as is beginning to take place in the UK, and which is commonplace amongst many EU states.

NFLA will fully respond in such terms and submit a detailed response outlining its energy vision to the Government's Green Paper consultation.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES



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NFLA All Ireland Forum Co Chair Councillor Mark Dearey said:

“Despite the assertions of the pro nuclear lobby in Ireland, the fact is that nuclear power is a risky, overly expensive and waste incurring energy source.

By statute, we are a nuclear free country and this policy continues to have broad public support. You can be clear that NFLA will outline in detail to the Green Paper consultation its deep concerns over nuclear power. It will also lay out a vision for developing an energy revolution that will generate clean, sustainable sources of energy, create thousands of new high quality jobs and do so without the risks of an accident like Chernobyl or Fukushima.”

Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 00 44 161 234 3244 (0161 234 3244 in Northern Ireland) or 00 44 7771 930196 (07771 930196).

Notes for editors:

- (1) Irish Government News Service, 12th May 2014
<http://www.merrionstreet.ie/index.php/2014/05/minister-rabbitte-launches-green-paper-on-energy-policy/?cat=67>
- (2) Irish Independent, 12th May 2014
<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/nuclear-energy-back-on-table-as-pat-rabbitte-eyes-future-fuel-mix-30268022.html>
- (3) In March 2014, the NFLA submitted a detailed joint response with the Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe and the community group Stop Hinkley to a European Commission inquiry. This is considering whether the deal between the UK Government and EDF to construct a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point is a legal form of state aid. For a copy of the joint response consult:
http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/nuclearmonitor/NFLA_New_Nuclear_Monitor_No34.pdf
- (4) NFLA Policy Briefing 87 on developing a renewable energy policy in Ireland
[http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/briefings/A201_\(NB87\)_Ireland_and_renewable_energy.pdf](http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/briefings/A201_(NB87)_Ireland_and_renewable_energy.pdf)

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