



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

# information

**NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

## **NFLA urges comprehensive nuclear policy review by new government and to rethink its nuclear advocacy**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) calls today on Prime Minister David Cameron, new Energy Minister Amber Rudd and Defence Minister Michael Fallon to initiate a timely review of UK energy policy and UK nuclear weapons policy to take into account major changes in the international nuclear policy agenda.

Last Thursday's election result has left the Conservative Party with a small overall majority. It has also seen the election of 56 SNP MPs and the likely continuation of a quite different policy agenda in Scotland. NFLA also notes the comments made yesterday by former Labour Special Adviser Damian McBride that, had there been a new Labour Government, it would be considering scrapping the Hinkley Point C project because 'Treasury' insiders had told the former Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls that the "costs are frighteningly out of control, especially for (radioactive) waste disposal". (1)

As the Financial Times energy analyst Nick Butler has commented:

"A number of looming issues are already obvious and the government will have no control over most of them. The first is the further postponement of the plans for nuclear development starting at Hinkley Point in Somerset...The reluctance of investors to commit will not be helped by the technical problems in the reactor vessels, which are now under investigation by the French nuclear regulator...In the UK, the challenge for the new government is that development that is already seven years behind schedule will be further delayed (no station here can go ahead until at least one EPR reactor is working somewhere in the world).

The new problems are likely to increase still further the amount of financial guarantees required. This will all push up the final price consumers will have to pay. At worst, the current regulatory tests could require the reactor vessels to be redesigned and rebuilt. That could extend the delay well into the 2020s, leaving a gap in supplies that the government will have to fill by approving either more expensive off-shore wind capacity or a new series of gas-fired stations and sacrificing some of the more ambitious targets for reducing emissions." (2)

NFLA agree with much of this assessment, and add to it the legal challenge to the European Commission's state aid approval of the Hinkley Point C financial package by the Austrian and Luxembourg Governments. New Energy Minister Amber Rudd needs to review this issue immediately. NFLA argue that it is better now to grasp the nettle and accept that a refocusing towards a wide renewable energy mix, decentralised energy led by new Local Authority energy models, and new energy storage solutions should be rather prioritised. A model focusing on new nuclear build is overly expensive with ongoing safety concerns – just this weekend for example there was a serious safety incident at an American nuclear facility, where a transformer fire at the Indian Point nuclear reactor has led to thousands of gallons of oil leaking into the Hudson River. Following this incident, the Governor of New York State has raised concern around a spate of recent emergency incidents at the facility. (3)

Nick Butler also notes that "the handover of Sellafield to new management under the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority is not going well". NFLA believe it is essential for the new government to get a full handle of the ever-increasing costs of radioactive waste management and encourage full, open and transparent participation in delivering sensible and practical solutions to the UK's huge waste burden.

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**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES**



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On nuclear weapons policy, the new Government needs to engage with the views of over 160 non-nuclear weapon states at the ongoing Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference that the 'legal gap' towards development of a Nuclear Weapons Convention cannot now be ignored. This critical arms reduction treaty is under serious threat that it might tear apart at the seams. (4)

Furthermore, with 56 SNP MPs strongly opposed to a 'like for like' Trident replacement policy, and an increasing number of MPs in all the other parties in the new Parliament also sharing such a view, NFLA will seek to engage with this cross-party coalition and other disarmament groups to emphasise the huge costs of a Trident replacement policy and the international desire for a nuclear weapons free world.

NFLA Chair Councillor Mark Hackett said:

"The manifesto of the new government advocates large increases in new nuclear build and a reduction in support for renewable energy, particularly onshore wind and solar. If such measures are taken, it would fly in the face of the rapid renewable energy revolution taking place in much of the industrialised world. Hinkley Point C is beset with problems and support for it should be cancelled. I urge the Government to also be careful at rushing headlong into 'like for like' Trident replacement. The next five years are going to see many energy and international relations challenges to the UK. A review of both policies is surely required. We need to ensure that we prevent costly errors damaging security of supply and stymieing the booming renewable energy sector with long-term economic harm to the UK. A review is also needed to ensure that defence needs and requirements are adequately met. Trident replacement could jeopardise this."

Ends

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

Notes for editors:

- (1) Sunday Times, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2015  
<http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/focus/article1554408.ece>  
In response to a tweet from a NFLA member Damian McBride confirmed the issue over Treasury sources suggested costs were getting 'frighteningly out of control'.
- (2) Financial Times, 10th May 2015  
<http://blogs.ft.com/nick-butler/2015/05/10/beyond-the-election-the-energy-agenda-for-the-new-government/>
- (3) The Guardian, 10th May 2015  
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/may/10/cuomo-new-york-nuclear-plant-fire-oil-spill-hudson-river>
- (4) Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, 7th May 2015  
<http://thebulletin.org/how-nuclear-realists-falsely-frame-nuclear-weapons-debate8306>

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