



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

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NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 5th October 2012

As new nuclear build and radioactive waste options flounder, NFLA believes now is the time for a radical rethink in UK Government policy

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) notes a whole range of announcements and media stories which highlight serious doubts over the potential private sector support for a new nuclear build programme in the UK and associated concerns over long-term solutions for high and intermediate level radioactive waste management. These developments lead it to the view that it is essential that the UK Government starts rapidly looking for a 'Plan B' for the UK's future energy mix and the storage of radioactive waste.

In the past few days the following has been announced or 'leaked' in the media:

- As bids for taking over the 'Horizon' consortium for constructing new reactors at Wylfa and Oldbury end last week, the expected joint bid from French utility Areva and Chinese utility Guangdong Nuclear Power Corporation failed to materialise (1). The Russian utility Rosatom also decided not to bid for the sites (2). Chinese and Russian investment in new nuclear build was seen as one of the best hopes for the development of new reactors.
- *The Sunday Times* claimed that Scottish Power owner Iberdrola is considering pulling out of the consortium to build a new reactor at Sellafield Moorfields in Cumbria (3). Given Scottish and Southern Energy have already pulled out of the consortium such a decision would just leave GDF Suez to press ahead with the project (4). Iberdrola has recently refuted these claims but has said it will not make an investment decision on this project for a further three years (5).
- *The Times* has also claimed that Westinghouse owner Toshiba is considering pulling out of developing any nuclear reactors in the UK and getting out of the nuclear sector altogether (6).
- At Hinkley Point, EDF have still to resolve 22 of 31 issues in the 'Generic Design Assessment' of the reactor design for the facility and are unlikely to resolve the issue before the planned deadline of the end of 2012. Media reports also suggest it is trying to bring in another utility to fund new nuclear reactors (7).
- The pressure group Supporters of Nuclear Energy (SONE) and leading advocates of nuclear power like Sir Bernard Ingham have claimed the 'strike price' for new nuclear will be too high. They have argued for direct public financial support for new build as the only answer to the lack of private sector financing (8). The GMB Union have also argued that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority should be renamed the 'Nuclear Development Authority' and provide full public and financial support for a new build programme (9).
- The leaked European Commission post Fukushima 'stress test' report has exposed hundreds of problems with the 143 nuclear reactors in the EU. It could require as much as 25 billion Euros to resolve these issues (10).
- In Cumbria, the three Councils considering going forward with the process of hosting a deep-underground radioactive waste repository have announced a three month postponement in this decision (11). In their letter to the UK Government they have asked for more assurances on the right to withdraw from the process and clarification for alternative interim storage solutions to be fully considered (12).
- In Kent, a referendum by Shepway Council found that almost 65% of residents did not want the Council to register a formal interest as a potential site for such a repository. The Council has now withdrawn its interest in the project (13).

The NFLA believe all these recent developments are proof positive that new nuclear build is impractical, too expensive and too time consuming to develop. It argues that, rather than the

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suggested 'dash for gas' there should be a 'rush for renewables' to follow what is becoming increasingly the norm around Europe. In its own energy reports the NFLA advocate the development of a wide range of renewable energy options, a concerted effort at promoting energy efficiency projects and local decentralised community-owned microgeneration schemes (14).

This can be achieved with the sufficient political will. For example, in Germany renewable energy production has increased from 3.6% of electricity generation in 1990 to 19.9% by 2011 (and it has touched as high as 25% in summer 2012). This is achieved by the type of energy mix the NFLA is currently advocating. It should also be noted that coal-fired electricity in Germany has dropped from 56.7% to 43.5% in the same period, whilst the share generated by nuclear power has also significantly dropped (15).

NFLA Chair Councillor Brian Goodall said:

"The NFLA has consistently argued that the sums do not stack up for a new nuclear programme whilst the financial and safety risks remain too high, even more so after Fukushima. With all these recent media reports and official announcements pointing to a collapse in investment for new build I call on the UK Government to immediately refocus UK energy policy towards renewable alternatives in co-operation with Councils and neighbouring countries like the Republic of Ireland.

I also welcome the decisions made by Cumbrian Councils to postpone their decision on going forward with development of a deep-underground radioactive waste repository. This is a good time to reconsider if such a repository is the only answer to our waste management strategy and consider alternative interim storage strategies like the Scottish Government's radioactive waste management policy. The time for real change in nuclear policy has arrived, and not a moment too soon."

Ends

Further information - Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary - 00 44 161 234 3244 or 00 44 7771 930186.

Notes to editors:

- (1) Guardian, 3rd Oct 2012
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/oct/03/british-nuclear-china-investors-pull-out>
- (2) i-Nuclear, 3rd Oct 2012 <http://www.i-nuclear.com/2012/10/03/rosatom-drops-bid-for-horizon-after-studying-uk-reactor-licensing-process/>
- (3) Sunday Times, 30th September 2012
http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/business/energy_and_environment/article1136794.ece
- (4) i-nuclear, 1st October 2012 <http://www.i-nuclear.com/2012/10/01/iberdrola-silent-on-pull-out-from-uk-nuclear-joint-venture-but-nugen-says-reports-untrue/>
- (5) Whitehaven News 4th Oct 2012 <http://www.whitehavennews.co.uk/news/initial-work-to-start-on-nuclear-new-build-1.1001821?referrerPath=news>
- (6) Times, 4th Oct 2012
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/business/industries/naturalresources/article3557665.ece>
- (7) Guardian, 3rd Oct 2012
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/oct/03/new-uk-nuclear-power-station-setback>
- (8) Telegraph, 3rd Oct 2012 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/comment/jeremy-warner/9585315/UK-is-haring-off-down-the-wrong-path-on-new-nuclear-power-plants.html>
- (9) GMB, 3rd Oct 2012
http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest_news/public_sector_should_build_nuc.aspx
- (10) Independent, 4th Oct 2012 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/europes-dangerous-nuclear-plants-need-25bn-safety-refit-8196457.html>

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- (11) Guardian, 3rd Oct 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/the-northerner/2012/oct/03/three-month-delay-nuclear-waste-burial-cumbria>
- (12) Cumberland News, 3rd Oct 2012 <http://www.cumberlandnews.co.uk/cumbrian-councils-defer-decision-on-underground-nuclear-waste-store-1.1001532?referrerPath=business>
- (13) BBC News Online, 20th September 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-19656382>
- (14) The NFLA reports on future energy development in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland can be found on its website <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>
- (15) Renew Economy, 4th Oct 2012 <http://reneweconomy.com.au/2012/how-renewables-are-replacing-coal-fired-generation-in-germany-33022>

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