



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

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**NFLA All Ireland Forum media release - for immediate release, 11th November 2013
NFLA reiterate concerns of the impact of a UK nuclear accident in Ireland;
and calls on the Oireachtas Environment Committee to invite independent
radiation specialists to give their own assessment**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) welcomes the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland's (RPII) presentation on the 5th November, of its June report on the potential impacts to Ireland of an accident at an existing or new UK nuclear reactor, to the Oireachtas Environment Committee.

The RPII report profiled at the meeting (1) argued the health effects of such an accident would be very low, and it would take only a very unlikely severe accident scenario for potentially negative health effects, such as a meteorite hitting Sellafield. It did though report significant socio-economic issues could take place involving the likes of food imports and in the area of public protection.

The NFLA All Ireland Forum held an earlier seminar in Swords, Fingal in June discussing the very same report. As well as Dr Ciara McMahon speaking from the RPII, the NFLA also invited Dr Ian Fairlie, an independent radiation consultant, to give his assessment (2).

Dr Fairlie complemented large parts of the report and acknowledged the very low risk of a UK nuclear-base catastrophic incident impacting on Ireland. However, in his presentation to the NFLA he focused on information provided in the RPII report of its 'worst case' scenario – 'an unmitigated Interfacing System Loss of Coolant Accident (LOCA) with containment bypass (random failure of check valves causes rupture in low-pressure system piping outside the containment)'.

In such a scenario, which is given a probability of occurring as 1 in 33 million per year, Dr Fairlie notes that the comparative Fukushima disaster has been ongoing for 2 years, so the probability is actually 1 in 16 million. Using the RPII figures in such a scenario, Dr Fairlie calculates what the collective dose for the Greater Dublin area (with a population of 2 million people) could be in the event of an accident at Wylfa, Anglesey. Using the RPII figures of an average dose of 0.044 Sv, Dr Fairlie calculates a collective dose of 88,000 Sv. Applying a 10% per Sv risk factor to this figure gives a potential figure of 8,800 fatal cancers in Greater Dublin from the RPII's most serious accident scenario.

Though such a scenario remains remote there have been 3 severe nuclear accident scenarios around the world in the last 33 years – Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima – which were similarly unlikely to have happened, but did so, and caused major environmental and health impacts over a wide area.

Furthermore, independent marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones (3) informs the NFLA that, in the case of the RPII study of post accident releases of radioactively actively contaminated water, none of the proposed accident scenarios for accidental release lasted longer than 1 week. Yet, the Fukushima disaster radioactive releases to sea are now over 2 years 6 months in duration and continuing.

Similarly the RPII Report also says that, following the three release scenario types, peak radioactivity concentrations at the Irish coast will persist for 120 days. Again at Fukushima there has now been over 900 days of intermittent discharge and it cannot be assumed that peak concentrations have been achieved.

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Given just this short summary of comments, the NFLA urges the Oireachtas Environment Committee and the Northern Ireland Environment Committee to invite independent consultants like Dr Fairlie and Dr Deere-Jones to provide it with a full critique of the RPII report and wider analysis.

NFLA also note comments made following the Environment Committee calling for full publication of the Irish Government's report on the impacts of an accident or malicious attack on the Sellafield plant to Ireland (4). The NFLA All Ireland Forum Co-Chairs, NFLA All Ireland Secretary and NFLA UK & Ireland Secretary met with Irish Government officials in May 2013 and also called for full publication, but were informed this was impractical due to the sensitivity of the data and issues around national security. The NFLA remains concerned that this expensively commissioned report should not be the last word on the matter and it also believes it needs to be independently reviewed given its impact on Irish Government emergency planning strategy for dealing with a UK nuclear accident.

The NFLA has been disappointed that the Government has not been as vocal in recent years over the legitimate concerns it should have about the risks of the existing nuclear legacy in the UK, particularly at Sellafield, and in the development of new nuclear facilities over the next decade. Polite, private annual meetings between the UK and Irish Governments on nuclear issues are just not good enough given the lack of independent advice provided to it on such matters. The fact that An Taisce has put in a legal challenge to new nuclear build in the UK, but the Government has said little in public about such developments, is a key example of the lack of a robust challenge to UK nuclear policy.

Councillor Mark Dearey, Co-Chair of the NFLA All Ireland Forum, said:

"NFLA wants to see a much more robust challenge from the Government of the UK's ridiculous moves to develop new nuclear power stations at a time when it is still struggling to resolve its existing nuclear legacy. Only this week the UK's Chief Nuclear Inspector's Report has commented that legacy radioactive waste facilities at Sellafield do not meet modern engineering standards for nuclear plants. There have also been further damning reports on Sellafield from the UK's National Audit Office and the UK Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee. I urge the Oireachtas Environment Committee to call on independent experts to give it a more critical edge to its deliberation on the impact to Ireland of UK nuclear facilities. With moves to develop the first new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point gathering pace it is crucial that the Government speaks out now and works with the German and Austrian Governments to stop EU approval for the Hinkley deal."

Councillor Michael Carr, Co-Chair of the NFLA All Ireland Forum, added:

"I call on the Stormont Assembly's Environment Committee to invite the RPII, DECC and independent experts to discuss these important reports that could affect the whole island of Ireland. As Fukushima and Chernobyl have shown, nuclear accidents do not respect artificial national borders and Northern Ireland could be as affected by a nuclear accident in Britain in the same way as other parts of Ireland. I believe we need to be informed much more of these risks and for politicians of all parties to take them seriously."

Ends

For more information or interviews with Ian Fairlie and Tim Deere-Jones please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 00 44 (0)161 234 3244.

Notes for editors:

- (1) The RPII report can be accessed at <http://www.rpii.ie/site/Publications.aspx>
- (2) Dr Fairlie's presentation is on the NFLA website – http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/events/070613/NFLA_Ian_Fairlie_RPII_talk_june_13.pdf

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Dr Fairlie's website contains a biography and further reports on low level radiation and health <http://www.ianfairlie.org>

- (3) Tim Deere-Jones is an independent marine pollution consultant who lives in Pembrokeshire. He has worked previously for Greenpeace International, Friends of the Earth, Marinet and the World Wildlife Fund. He has produced a number of reports and given presentations at NFLA events. He is a member of the Nuclear Consulting Group. A copy of his presentation on Sellafield derived discharges to the west coast of Ireland is available from the NFLA Secretary.
- (4) Sinn Fein media release, 5th November <http://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/27899>

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