Robust dialogue with DECC on waste & emergency planning

The second official dialogue meeting between DECC and NGOs / NFLA took place in Westminster on 8th December.

This particular meeting concentrated on issues around nuclear emergency planning and radioactive waste.

There was a large amount of discussion around the sensitivity of nuclear security plans and whether any independent scrutiny actually takes place of such plans.

Further robust debate took place over the proposals for a deep-waste repository and the linkage DECC has made in developing new nuclear reactors.

This dialogue group has also been chosen as a case study of how DECC improves its interaction with its stakeholders. A good discussion was held on DECC’s policymaking process and how it can be made more open, transparent and accessible to NGOs and the NFLA.

Charles Hendry, the UK’s Energy Minister, is planning to attend the next meeting.
NFLA to hold its AGM in Dundee with special health seminar

The NFLA is planning its 30th anniversary annual general meeting in Dundee City Hall, host authority of its current Chair, George Regan. A number of meetings are planned over the 27th and 28th January. These include a Finance & Admin Committee meeting to consider how the NFLA retains and recruits members in the midst of large cuts to local government finance. The NFLA Steering Committee and NFLA Scotland will be holding their AGMs to elect Chair and Vice Chairs for 2011. A civic reception and a special seminar on low level radiation and health are also being planned. Prof Eric Wright and Dr John Urquhart are speaking at it. The NFLA’s A-bomb exhibition will be hosted in Dundee in late January and early February, before hopefully moving on to Newry and Clydebank.

UK Government electricity reform – a nuclear subsidy?

The UK Government has initiated a major consultation seeking radical reform to the electricity market to assist development of a ‘low carbon’ economy. The Electricity Market Reform consultation provides four areas where the Government will assist companies in the development of ‘low carbon’ electricity over the next 4 decades. These include:
- a ‘feed in tariff’ with long-term contracts to give low-carbon investors stability;
- a capacity payment to handle surges in demand;
- formal carbon price support to seek to incentivise low carbon sources;
- an emissions performance standard.

Whether this unlocks new investment is a real issue, as are EU rules in this area. The Daily Telegraph has called it an indirect subsidy to new nuclear build.

Other nuclear power consultations announced

A number of other important consultations have been announced in December on nuclear policy, which the NFLA will endeavour to respond to. The UK Government has initiated consultations on national energy policy statements, a revised Funded Decommissioning Programme and an updated Waste Transfer Pricing consultation for new reactors. The Scottish Government is also consulting on a policy for substituting overseas radioactive wastes at Dounreay. Further details can be found on their websites.
Scottish Parliament discusses Nuclear Weapons Convention

The Scottish Parliament held a December Members debate on a motion by Bill Kidd MSP to support a nuclear weapons convention. Though a vote was not held on the motion, more cross-party work is ongoing to develop support for it in Scotland and further afield.

There are a number of continental Nuclear Weapons Free Zones (NWFZ) in Latin America, Central Asia, Africa, Antarctica and Australasia.

A number of national Parliaments have passed such motions including New Zealand, Mongolia and Belgium.

In the same week as the Scottish debate, the Canadian Parliament passed a motion calling for the international community to debate and approve a nuclear weapons convention as a key milestone in the process for multilateral disarmament. The NFLA and Mayors for Peace will continue to take a key role in this debate.

Other news in brief

Letter to Cameron & Sarkozy on UK / France Joint Defence Treaty – The Mayors for Peace are sending letters of concern to David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy over a joint defence treaty to develop nuclear weapon technology between France and the UK. The letter argues it goes against the spirit of the Nuclear NPT.

Mayors for Peace nears 4500 members – With around 100 new members joining each month, Mayors for Peace is likely to pass the 4500 mark by the end of 2010.

NFLA to develop new nuclear EP study – NFLA is writing to the Emergency Planning Units of the 24 largest towns and cities in the UK and Ireland over a number of nuclear emergency planning issues.

NFLA to meet INS in new year – The NFLA is meeting nuclear ships company INS to discuss its report on the safety of such shipments.

NFLA writes to RPII – Over concerns about its Irish Sea discharges report.

Forthcoming NFLA meetings

NFLA Scotland AGM – Dundee City Hall, 27th January.

NFLA Finance & Admin Committee - Dundee City Hall, 27th January.

NFLA SC seminar on low level radiation & health – Dundee City Hall, 28th January.

NFLA National Forum spring meetings and seminars to be timetabled at the AGM.