New Vision – NFLA Policy Briefing 09

A highly informative NFLA Annual Policy Briefing was held in Manchester Town Hall on June 12th.

The Briefing was looking at two of the key issues affecting the planet in the next 10 years – how to tackle the effects of climate change and how to challenge the development in increased nuclear proliferation around the world.

Keynote speakers were Mayor Luc Dehaene from the City of Ypres and the civil nuclear policy consultant JW Storm van Leeuwen.

Mayor Dehaene gave a powerful speech on the importance of towns and cities joining the Mayors for Peace ‘2020 Vision’ to encourage nuclear weapon states to eliminate nuclear weapons by the year 2020.

JW Storm van Leeuwen provided a timely and logical overview of why nuclear power is not the low carbon option for tackling climate change.

All presentations from the Policy Briefing will be available on the NFLA website shortly.

NFLA Annual Policy Briefing – leading the way on tackling climate change and nuclear proliferation

The NFLA Annual Policy Briefing also heard from 3 Councils leading the way in tackling the climate change challenge.

Councillor Richard Cowell gave a thorough overview of Manchester’s ‘Call to Action’ on climate change and a number of very innovative projects with business and the community.

Paul Muldoon from AirEn gave a presentation on Dundalk 2020 – creating a sustainable energy zone in Louth and Newry and Mourne. And Fraser Thomson showed the many innovative ways Fife Council is ‘crunching its carbon’.

Concerns over nuclear proliferation and the Trident system were addressed by Mayors for Peace Development Adviser Peter Burt.

Iran and North Korea’s desire for nuclear weapons was discussed by Carol Naughton and Nick Ritchie considered concerns over nuclear terrorism.
NDA Stakeholder Dialogue – the future of nuclear waste

The NFLA Secretary and Steering Committee member, Councillor Rick Nickerson (Shetland) represented the organisation at the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority’s (NDA) stakeholder dialogue.

The dialogue is held every 6 months and involves an update on NDA decommissioning and radioactive waste management work.

Specific workshops were held on plutonium management, the national underground waste repository, the NDA’s strategy management system and its overall waste management strategy.

The NDA announced at the event that a new Chief Executive had been appointed – Tony Fountain from BP.

The NFLA challenged the NDA in a number of areas – the lack of NGOs at the meeting, the selling of land for new nuclear build, the possible incineration of low level radioactive waste and concerns over the recession and decommissioning. The next dialogue is in Manchester in Nov ’09.

Major Leakages at Sizewell and Sellafield

NFLA’s real concerns over new nuclear build and nuclear safety were recently amplified over the uncovering of major incidents at the Sellafield and Sizewell nuclear sites – two key nominations for new build sites.

The Sizewell leak was uncovered by Channel 4 News and relates to a 2007 incident where the site came within hours of a 40,000 gallon leak of radioactive water into the North Sea. Significant water contamination did take place and the NFLA are following up why no prosecution of Magnox South has yet taken place. The East Anglian Daily Times published NFLA concerns over the issue.

Meanwhile, at Sellafield evidence of a 50 year radioactive leak, which has just been ‘plugged’ at the original Windscale site, has just emerged.

It has also emerged in a FOI request from ‘The Observer’ that there have been 1,767 leaks, breakdowns or other events between 2001 – 2008 at UK nuclear sites, according to the HSE. NFLA are following up this report with the HSE.

NFLA Steering Committee hears from nuclear test veterans

The NFLA Steering Committee met in Manchester on the 11th June in front of cameras from Japanese state TV (see May newsletter).

A passionate address from John Lowe, Chair of the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association, highlighted the recent court victory over the MOD in their campaign for financial compensation and justice.

The Committee also agreed to send representatives to the Mayors for Peace Conference in Nagasaki.
Stakeholder dialogues – the key role of the NFLA

A key role of the NFLA is to represent its members at official stakeholder dialogues with Government and the nuclear industry. At these NFLA can directly affect and influence official thinking and provide a basis for its response to important consultations.

The NFLA Secretariat is presently involved in the following dialogues:

- The Government’s dialogue on dealing with the UK plutonium legacy
- The NDA Stakeholder dialogue noted above
- Scottish Government dialogue on high level radioactive waste management
- MOD ‘Isolus’ dialogue on nuclear submarine decommissioning
- HSE dialogue with NGOs on new nuclear build design
- Government dialogue on the Radiation Exemptions Regime
- CORWM plenary meetings on radioactive waste

Such interface provides real value for money to all NFLA member councils.

NFLA National Forum Developments

NFL Scotland held a business meeting in Lerwick, Shetland Islands on the 19th June.

The meeting involved a ‘video-conference’ to allow involvement of the NFLA Secretary and Chair.

A NFLA membership development pack was approved and a seminar on the key nuclear issues for Scotland agreed for October in Glasgow.

NFLA England and NFLA Wales are holding a joint Forum meeting considering the major changes to the planning laws. Logistics on the date of the meeting are being agreed with Liverpool City Council and it is hoped to hold the meeting in September.

NFLA Ireland is holding a seminar in October considering the effect of new nuclear build on Ireland. The recent elections means a number of new councils and councillors will be invited.

The NFLA Secretariat is liaising with the Irish and UK Governments over concerns of nuclear shipments, as noted in the April newsletter.

Forthcoming NFLA meetings

NFLA Wales / NFLA England joint meeting – Friday 4th Sept, Liverpool Town Hall (tbc).

NFLA Steering Committee and new build seminar -

NFLA Wales – Friday 18th Sept - Manchester Town Hall.
NFLA Scotland – Friday 9th October, Glasgow City Chambers (tbc).

NFLA All Ireland – Friday 16th October

Bray Civic Offices, Irish Republic.

Early notification: NFLA UK / Ireland AGM, SC and seminar – 3rd / 4th Dec 2009 in Ireland (tbc)