

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

briefing



Date: 11th December 2015

No.138

Subject: **Summary of NFLA Steering Committee, AGM and 35th anniversary commemoration, Manchester Town Hall, 4th December 2015**

1. **Introduction by Acting NFLA Chair**

The NFLA Acting Chair, Councillor Norman McDonald, welcomed all to the meeting. Councillor McDonald noted how pleasing it was to hold the four NFLA meetings held on the 4th December in Manchester Town Hall, the home of the organisation. He was also looking forward to the civic reception marking the 35th anniversary of the NFLA.

2. **National NFLA Forum meetings / CNFE progress**

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of the work of the four National NFLA Forums across the UK and Ireland.

NFLA Welsh Forum –

The NFLA Welsh Forum met on the 9th October in Cardiff City Hall. The seminar focused on a number of issues of interest to Welsh members. Roy Pumfrey from the group 'Stop Hinkley' outlined its concerns over the risks of developing a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point. David Clubb from Renewable Energy Cymru considered the prospects for tidal energy in Wales and the problems of recent cuts to renewable energy subsidies. The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of its report on post-Fukushima nuclear emergency planning. CND UK's General Secretary Kate Hudson provided an overview of the Trident replacement debate and of the Rethink Trident initiative. Welsh members passed a resolution at the end of the meeting which was translated into a media release.

NFLA All Ireland Forum –

The NFLA All Ireland Forum met on the 30th October in Dundalk Town Hall, County Louth. It focussed on recent concerns around incidents of collisions or near collisions between UK nuclear submarines and Irish fishing trawlers. The local MP for South Down Margaret Ritchie outlined her concern on these incidents and independent marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones put these incidents in a proper historical context. There were also presentations on the development of UK new nuclear build and of changes in Irish radiation safety advisory arrangements. A post meeting media release was issued.

NFLA English Forum –

The NFLA English Forum met on the 20th November in Oxford Friends Meeting House. It focussed on concerns over defence nuclear safety and the transportation of nuclear weapons by road with presentations from Peter Burt of NIS, Nigel Day of Nukewatch and Rebecca Sharkey of ICAN-UK. The NFLA Secretary considered concerns over the development of local authority energy policies at a time of UK Government cuts. A post meeting media release was issued.

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES -
WORKING FOR A NUCLEAR FREE & LOW CARBON WORLD**

c/o Town Hall, Manchester, M60 3NY

Tel: 0161 234 3244 Fax: 0161 274 7397 E-Mail: s.morris4@manchester.gov.uk Website: <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>

NFLA Scotland Forum –

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a business meeting prior to the NFLA Steering Committee in Manchester on the 4th December. It was agreed that the NFLA Secretariat write letters of concern to the Dounreay site owners and the NDA over transport of nuclear materials to Sellafield. A letter of concern will also go to SEPA over recent incidents of increased levels of radiation contamination found in honey produced close to Dounreay; and to the Scottish Government over extensions to aging Scottish nuclear reactors.

Agreed: To note the report.

3. Nuclear new build

The NFLA Secretary provided an update on issues around the proposed development of new nuclear power stations in England and Wales.

Hinkley Point C developments -

As part of a state visit to the UK the Chinese Government formally agreed deals with the UK Government for Chinese nuclear state utilities to provide around 33.5% of the investment for two new nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point. The deal will also provide similar support for two new reactors at Sizewell and allow China to take control of the Bradwell site for its own nuclear reactor design to be developed at this site. EDF has said this will lead to a final investment decision – the point of no return with the development – by the end of the year. EDF claim the reactors will then be constructed and be producing electricity in 2025 – eight years after their original construction date.

It was noted that the amount offered by China is less than the 40% EDF had sought. It may have to lead to a sale of a large amount of EDF's assets in order to find its share of the £24 billion required to finance the project. Reports suggest that EDF plans to sell as much as €10bn of assets over 5 years to shore up its balance sheet. EDF has also agreed in principle to buy between 51% and 75% of Areva NP, which will cost between €1.3bn and €2bn, and it is looking for other partners to take a stake alongside it in Areva NP – having had talks now with Japanese companies like Mitsubishi.

EDF's shareholders association has publicly warned that the Hinkley Point investment could risk the future of the company. Investment bank Investec has advised its clients to sell shares in EDF amid fears that its connection with Hinkley could put payouts to shareholders under threat. Moody's and Standard and Poor have also issued warnings that EDF and its Chinese partners will face credit downgrades if it goes ahead with Hinkley C.

As part of the agreement the UK Government also informed Parliament that its formal policy of not providing public subsidies had now been reversed. In an energy policy 'reset' speech, Energy Minister Amber Rudd put new nuclear at the centre of the Government's energy policy, along with fracking, new oil and gas, energy imports and some offshore wind. The Government argue this is all part of a policy which will provide value for money for the consumer. Greenpeace analysis suggests the proposed deal to build a new fleet of these three nuclear power stations could cost the average bill-payer more than £30 a year in new subsidies, or a total subsidy of £2.6bn per year. The deal will last over 30 years and could push up bills by over 5%.

Despite these moves, two key obstacles still remain in building Hinkley Point. Firstly, there are the ongoing problems with the steel within the reactor at the EPR being built at Flamanville in France. It may take 12 – 18 months for the French nuclear safety regulator to approve changes to it, after raising major concerns over too much carbon in the steel, making it potentially brittle and liable to cracks under high temperatures. Secondly, the lawsuits filed by the Austrian and Luxembourg government against the European Commission could also lead to delays. Dr Dorte Fouquet, a Partner at the law firm BBH Brussels who has been advising Austria, told an audience at Platts Power Summit in central London that the legal challenge could set back construction of the Hinkley Point C project for as long as four years.

Developments at Sizewell and Bradwell -

The Chinese deal will also provide support for the Sizewell plant, but the core part of the agreement for China is it will allow Chinese nuclear utilities to build new reactors at the Bradwell site in Essex to its own nuclear reactor design. This design will have to go through the Office for Nuclear Regulation's (ONR) Generic Design Assessment, which should take at least four years. There have been suggestions made in the media that the UK Government would put pressure on the ONR to 'fast-track' such an assessment.

A major concern for developing Bradwell comes from the capacity and the environmental sensitivity of the Blackwater Estuary by the new build site. Conservation charities like the RSPB and the Marine Conservation Society have raised concerns over damage to wildlife habitats and the effects on the marine environment from the large amounts of cooling water that would be needed for a new site. These have been reiterated by the local group, Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group (BANNG).

Developments at Sellafield Moorside and Wylfa -

The impact of the investment deal for Hinkley C may have an effect on the plans for the Sellafield Moorside and Wylfa sites in terms of what levels of future investment will be available from the Government to support their development. At present, both sites are moving forward with their generic design assessments and on-site preparatory works. In a similar way to Hinkley, they are also confidently claiming thousands of new jobs and economic opportunities will come from these developments.

It was announced in late October that the Wylfa site could move into the final stage of Generic Design Assessment. Step 4 is the most detailed part of the assessment process and a public consultation is expected in autumn 2016. The aim of Horizon Nuclear at Wylfa will be to have the assessment fully approved by the end of 2017. The Toshiba Moorside AP1000 design has restarted under the generic design assessment process and it is looking for a 2018 date for this to be concluded.

Developments with small nuclear reactors -

In the UK Government's November Spending Review, it announced £250 million to sponsor research into new nuclear and the development of small modular reactors. The Government's long-term nuclear strategy envisages the UK working in international partnerships leading to the direction of future technology advances across the nuclear fuel cycle. It also plans to be a key partner in commercialising new reactor-types such as Small Modular Reactors (SMR) worldwide. A nuclear research and development programme has now been sketched out which would allow the UK the option of promoting a 'high-nuclear' scenario for the country with up to 75GW of nuclear capacity by 2050, providing 86% of the UK's electricity supply.

The Energy Technologies Institute (ETI), a public-private partnership between the UK Government and energy and engineering companies has produced an 'insights' report on the future UK role of nuclear power. Although the report concentrates on all potential future nuclear technologies, it gives little attention to large scale reactors. It is rather focussed on the potential for SMRs. ETI argues that 21 GW of these SMRs might be in place by 2050, compared to a 'theoretical capacity' of 63 GW.

The Steering Committee agreed with the Secretariat's analysis of two serious issues with this. The first problem is that ETI only expects SMRs to be economically viable if there is a pre-existing district heating network at city-scale. SMRs could feed otherwise wasted heat from the nuclear reaction into this network – in addition to feeding electricity into the grid. Such a network would already have to exist and have been paid for. The costs of adding this network to the costs of SMRs could be enough to render SMRs economically unviable. The second problem is that the economic appraisal of the construction costs of SMRs is still unknown. Dr Gordon Mackerron of Sussex University says the ETI report may reflect the growing disillusion within the nuclear community over large reactors being so hard to finance and deploy. Mackerron suggests it would be much more prudent to wait and see whether other countries' proposed deployment of SMRs proves successful before premature commitments are made to a technology that is economically and socially high-risk.

Agreed: To note the report and continue to challenge the need for new nuclear build.

4. Radioactive waste management

The NFLA Secretary outlined the key issues it is involved with in relation to UK / Scottish / Welsh Government policies on radioactive waste management.

UK consultation on geological screening -

A consultation concluded on the 4th December on the process to develop a national geological screening process for a suitable site for a deep-underground radioactive waste repository. The NFLA Secretariat responded to this consultation.

Steering Committee members welcomed the response, which argued:

- Experience from Cumbria suggests that the public wants to see the best geological barriers AND engineered barriers, not simply adequate or poor geology with a greater reliance on engineered barriers.
- The Geological Screening process will produce a huge amount of information, but it is not clear how non-experts, such as councillors and local authority officials, will be able to make an assessment of that information. Funding needs to be available to help them obtain independent advice to interpret the information made available.
- Local authorities and communities need an assurance that should they volunteer, a right to withdraw will remain until they are in a position to obtain an independent assessment of boreholes and other detailed geological investigations.
- There needs to be much more discussion about how and when public opinion will be tested. Any test should be carried out after an independent assessment of boreholes and detailed geological investigations has been published.

Consultation on draft NDA strategy and NDA Stakeholder Dialogue -

The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretary and Councillor Goodall of Fife Council should represent it at the NDA's National Stakeholder Dialogue on the 13th and 14th January in Manchester.

Steering Committee members welcomed the NFLA response to the NDA Draft Strategy 2016 - 2021. It argued:

- Nuclear Waste Management should be conducted according to a clear set of environmental principles. In particular radioactive and toxic substances should be concentrated and contained rather than diluted and dispersed and should be managed in accordance with the proximity principle.
- The way in which the NDA applies the waste hierarchy to radioactive waste is not compatible with environmental principles and results in the dilution and dispersal of waste into the sea; around landfill sites; and into the atmosphere via incineration and metal recycling.
- Whilst the NFLA has no objection to re-visiting the timing of Magnox reactor dismantling in the light of recent advances in robotics, this should be through the prism of an agreed set of environmental principles, not because new opportunities for spreading waste across the country have arisen.
- Although both reprocessing plants at Sellafield are due to close in the next five years every opportunity to end this method of diluting and dispersing waste in the Irish Sea as soon as possible should be taken.
- All methods of re-using plutonium, thus keeping weapons-useable material in circulation, should be dropped in favour of immobilising this material.
- NDA should avoid all unnecessary transports of radioactive waste around the country. This particularly relates to the transport of radioactive materials from Dounreay to Sellafield by rail or sea.

Sellafield update -

The Steering Committee noted a NDA four year study which may improve and reduce the costs of radioactive waste management at Sellafield and other sites. The study focused on the chemical behaviours of the pyrophoric Intermediate Level Waste (ILW) stored in Sellafield's Magnox Swarf Storage Silo (MSSS) – one of the UK's most hazardous buildings. It was

previously thought a 22-step mechanical treatment and encapsulation process would be needed to manage and ultimately dispose of the ILW stored in silos constructed over 50 years ago. However, the study's findings suggest an alternative three step solution that stores the waste 'raw' with concrete grout inside a shielded container is possible. The process would speed up decommissioning of the silo by several years and provide major savings. The new alternative three step process means that the NDA has been able to cancel the contract for a Silos Direct Encapsulation Plant which would have cost £3.2bn and could have potentially held up the Magnox Swarf retrieval by another decade.

More delays at Sellafield's Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP) were confirmed in October when it admitted to local stakeholders that the projected completion date for overseas fuel reprocessing of November 2016 could no longer be met. Instead, the outstanding overseas contracts would be completed by November 2018 – the date set for the final closure of THORP itself.

Dounreay matters -

The Steering Committee noted that contracts for the construction of a new high-level waste storage facility at the Dounreay site have been signed. The £22 million facility will be an extension to the existing Dounreay Cementation Plant. It will hold encapsulated waste arising from the decommissioning activities on the Dounreay site, providing more storage for 500-litre drums and a drum inspection area. It will use a remotely-operated process to condition and immobilize higher activity liquid waste for long-term storage by mixing it with cement in steel drums.

Following the NFLA Scotland meeting, the NFLA Secretariat is writing to the Dounreay site and the NDA over continuing concerns around the transport of nuclear materials to Sellafield. The letter will also raise concerns over honey harvested near the Dounreay site being found to contain more than 14 times the average level of Caesium-137. The Steering Committee welcomed this initiative.

Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS -

NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum for England and Wales) held a business meeting and AGM in LGA House in London on the 15th November. The meeting included a workshop by RWM on the geological screening process. The meeting discussed the process towards developing an underground waste repository and the NDA's draft strategy. The next meeting is planned for the 28th January in LGA House. SCCORS is beginning to reactivate now that Edinburgh City Council has taken on the role of its Secretariat. It recently responded to the recent Scottish waste management policy consultation and is planning to hold a meeting shortly.

Agreed: To note the report. To attend the NDA National Stakeholder Dialogue.

6. Mayors for Peace update

The NFLA Secretary outlined progress in NFLA's co-operation with the Mayors for Peace and its campaigns on the nuclear weapons issue.

International Mayors for Peace development and Executive Conference -

As of December 1st 2015, 6,940 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace in 161 countries.

The Executive Conference of Mayors for Peace was held on the 11th to 13th November in Ypres, Belgium. The NFLA Secretary and the Lord Mayor of Manchester attended the conference and related civic events. The Executive Conference included a discussion on its work programme and action plan. The meeting agreed for the transfer of the 2020 Vision Campaign from Ypres to Hiroshima. An action plan focused on nuclear weapon issues and cooperation with civil society groups like ICAN, ICRC, PNND, IALANA and Religions for Peace. This was broadly welcomed.

A wide-ranging discussion also took place around other peace issues which the Mayors for Peace Covenant caters for – such as the refugee crisis, peace and development, gun and drug crime around the world, climate change, poverty and inequality and so forth. There was consensus that the primary issue of Mayors for Peace should remain the abolition of nuclear weapons, but that Lead Cities, with some support from the Secretariat, can develop additional issues of local concern within the development of national / cross-national chapters and wider events.

Visit to Manchester and London of the Mayor of Hiroshima -

The Mayor of Hiroshima, the Secretary General of Mayors for Peace and two other Mayors for Peace staff officers went straight from the Executive Conference to Manchester on the 13th November in order to make an official civic visit to Manchester and to London.

On 14th November three events were held in Manchester:

- A special event in Manchester Museum / Manchester University to bring the prize winners of the 'Project G' children's art and poetry competition to meet with the Hiroshima delegation. This event was the highlight of the day, with the schoolchildren sharing their views on peace, nuclear weapons and the role nature has in recovering after disaster.
- A civic ceremony in Manchester Town Hall. This saw Manchester presented with a certificate of thanks from Hiroshima for establishing the UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter; and a peace crane garland put together by Hiroshima schoolchildren. Amongst those attending this event was the Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council, North West England MEP Julie Ward, and NFLA Wales Co-Chair Councillor Galsworthy, representing the NFLA Steering Committee.
- A visit to the headquarters of the Mines Advisory Group (MAG).

The Hiroshima delegation and the NFLA Secretary travelled on to London. On the morning of the 16th November a well attended and useful meeting in Parliament was held to talk about Hiroshima and the Mayors for Peace and allow for questions from the invited audience. A cross-party representation of Parliamentarians attended along with NGO representatives. A helpful, short meeting with London's Deputy Mayor Sir Edward Lister in City Hall concluded the event.

Agreed: To note the report and to welcome the success of the Mayor of Hiroshima's civic visit to the UK.

7. Nuclear Weapons and defence nuclear safety update

The NFLA Secretary provided an overview of various issues relating to the nuclear weapons disarmament debate and defence nuclear safety matters.

UK Government Strategic Defence & Security Review and Trident nuclear weapons -

The UK government's Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) was published in late November. It acknowledges that the cost of building four new Trident submarines has risen to at least £31 billion. The Review also concedes that submarines are not now scheduled to enter into service until the early 2030s.

The review reveals that cost estimates for the new submarines have risen by around 20 per cent over the past year alone. In addition to the anticipated costs, the government has also decided to set aside a contingency of £10 billion for the 'Successor' project, indicating a risk that costs could increase beyond the current estimates. The SDSR report says that the costs of the design phase for the new submarines – currently underway - has now reached £3.9 billion, compared with the MOD's May 2011 estimate of £3 billion when the 'initial gate' decision was made to commence design work.

A new team is to be established within MOD to take over management of "all aspects of the defence nuclear enterprise", including submarines, warheads, infrastructure, nuclear policy, and recruitment and retention of skilled personnel. A "new delivery body" will also be set up to manage the submarine enterprise and strengthen arrangements for the procurement and in-service support of nuclear submarines. The SDSR does not say whether the delivery body will

be under the control of HM Treasury, as has been suggested in the media, or whether it will remain within the Ministry of Defence.

Trident replacement debate and Parliamentary vote -

The Parliamentary debate on Trident replacement will be the last set-piece opportunity to challenge its utility and prevent it moving forward. The Government is likely to have the arithmetic to get the vote passed, but the Steering Committee agreed that the next few months give the opportunity to raise fundamental questions on Trident replacement and to campaign around it. Issues around its huge cost, its utility in an unstable world and the international call for nuclear disarmament are all part of this debate.

A policy review on Labour's nuclear weapons and wider defence policy is being undertaken by the Shadow Defence Minister Maria Eagle and former MP and Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone. The Scottish Labour Conference voted to scrap Trident with a 70% vote in favour. In Wales, a 'Stop Trident' campaign was initiated and has received cross-party support.

The SNP, SDLP, Plaid Cymru and the Greens have all pledged to vote against Trident replacement. The Liberal Democrats are seeking a reduced Trident fleet. The DUP and UUP have indicated they would support Trident replacement and DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson has gone even further by suggesting submarines could be relocated to Lough Foyle in Northern Ireland in the event of a Scottish independence vote. Steering Committee members agreed a media release opposing such a move should be issued.

One of the few Conservative MPs to openly oppose Trident is the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Crispin Blunt. In late October he was informed by the Ministry of Defence that the in-service costs of Trident would take-up 6% of the defence budget through to the 2060s. Blunt calculated the total bill of Trident replacement over its life-time to be £167 billion, which he called "overly excessive".

NFLA English Forum and concerns with defence nuclear safety -

The recent NFLA English Forum seminar noted real concerns over defence nuclear safety. At the Oxford meeting, Peter Burt of NIS outlined in some detail particular concern with the Aldermaston site, but failings have also been found at Devonport, Burghfield and Faslane. These issues appear to be a combination of a shortage of skilled staff at defence nuclear sites, complex problems with dealing with aging facilities and an inability of the Ministry of Defence to fully get to grip with nuclear operations. The added complications of delivering the Trident replacement programme add to this complexity.

Steering Committee members agreed for a NFLA Secretariat report to be produced early in the new year which should focus on:

- Calling for the AWE management consortium to be stripped of its contract to run the Aldermaston and Burghfield facilities.
- Advocating the Office for Nuclear Regulation is given full, open and transparent control of the facilities, in place of the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator.
- Promoting the need for a more effective, independent and transparent Local Liaison Committee is required to scrutinise the work of the facilities.
- Emphasising a comparison of burgeoning costs for the Trident replacement programme with the deep cuts to local authority budgets and critical local emergency services.

Agreed: To note the report and to request that the Secretariat develops a NFLA Policy Briefing on defence nuclear safety.

8. Fukushima, civil nuclear safety and health issues

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on progress with civil nuclear safety and health issues and with the safe control and decommissioning of the damaged reactor site at Fukushima, Japan.

Fukushima / Chernobyl seminar / conferences in January and March –

NFLA are cooperating with Green Cross International and NCG to develop a Parliamentary seminar in Portcullis House on the 28th January 2016. Keynote speakers being planned include Green Cross patron and former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and former Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan. The Steering Committee welcomed this seminar and believed it could be of real interest to MPs and the media.

NFLA are also working with a number of groups to develop a series of events between March 17th and 20th in London and Manchester for the 5th anniversary of Fukushima and the 30th anniversary of Chernobyl. This will include a Parliamentary event in London, a special NFLA seminar in Manchester, a major conference on low level radiation and health and renewable energy conference and a one-day activist conference. The Steering Committee welcomed these high quality series of events.

Fukushima update -

A published study by a team led by Dr Tsuda of Okayama University argues childhood thyroid cancer rates could be 20 to 50 times higher around the Fukushima area than the national average. The research challenges that of the World Health Organization and UNSCEAR, which argue childhood cancer rates will stay broadly similar to the national average.

In a separate study published in 'The Ecologist', independent marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones argues that the Japanese authorities and the IAEA are ignoring the radiation risks to coastal populations in Japan. Using similar research methods he has presented over such risks to coastal populations in the UK and Ireland, he argues radiation can be carried long distances by sea currents, concentrated sediments and transports in sea sprays as much as 16kms or more inland.

At Fukushima, recent severe weather incidents have led to concerns that a considerable amount of radioactively contaminated water has gone into the Pacific Ocean or been dumped on nearby land. Since September, TEPCO has been permitted to dump lower level contaminated water into the sea due to the critical waste problems on the site. Despite this, the Japanese Government is still pushing for more reactor restarts. Sendai is the only operating reactor in Japan, but approval has been given for a further 3 sites to restart their reactors. It is possible around 10 nuclear sites may reopen, despite widespread public opposition.

Agreed: To note the report and participate in the upcoming events.

9. Alternatives to nuclear energy

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on developments in pursuing effective alternatives to nuclear power.

UK Government Spending Review and change in energy policy -

In mid November the UK Energy Minister Amber Rudd gave a policy speech 'resetting' energy policy. The new policy gives distinctive support for new nuclear, fracking and gas. There is support for offshore wind but only if it provides 'value for money'. The speech said little about renewables in general, only that they should 'stand on their own feet'. The Government has slashed subsidies for solar and onshore wind, and reduced support for energy efficiency improvements, as noted in the last Steering Committee report.

In the November Spending Review, the Chancellor announced that the Energy Companies Obligation will be replaced in 2017 and there has been a £700 million cut to the Renewable Heat Incentive. He also announced that the Government will commit up to 10% of any shale gas tax revenues that are developed into a 'Shale Wealth Fund', which could deliver up to £1 billion of investment to the local communities hosting shale gas developments. The Chancellor further announced that it will ditch its £1bn ring-fenced budget to encourage competition in developing carbon capture and storage facilities.

Such policies show a major scaling-back of ambition on renewable energy from the UK Government. It is likely to have a major effect on future low carbon targets and a highly

negative effect on the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries. It will also have an impact on developments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Steering Committee members agreed it was imperative in 2016 to promote an alternative decentralised energy vision and co-operate with other like-minded groups where possible and practical.

Committee on Climate Change new 'carbon budget' report -

On the same day as the Spending Review, the independent Committee on Climate Change (CCC) published its 5th 'carbon budget'. It calculates that the UK requires a carbon emissions cut of 57% by 2032. It seeks the delivery of such cuts by calling for substantial new investment in renewable energy and other low-carbon power, and new projects such as carbon capture and storage plants. It also requires substantial investments in home energy efficiency improvements, and measures to help households install their own renewable energy, such as solar panels or heat pumps. It is unclear how the Government's new energy policies will be able to implement some of these challenges.

NFLA submission to the UK Energy and Climate Change Select Committee -

In seeking to determine what the implications of Government energy policy changes will be, the Parliamentary Energy and Climate Change Select Committee has launched an inquiry into developing a low carbon energy infrastructure around the UK.

The NFLA has made a submission to the Select Committee. It concludes:

- Future low carbon electricity networks need flexible back-up generation which can be turned on and off quickly to provide electricity at peak times when renewables are not producing much. Large centralised baseload power stations undermine moving towards a clean energy future, and would result in more renewable electricity going to waste.
- Flexible renewable sources of electricity such as geothermal, biomass (from sustainable local sources) and anaerobic digestion which have identical variability to coal-fired power stations should be promoted.
- The UK should aim to double its international grid interconnector capacity by 2020.
- The UK should combine scaling renewables up with grid-scale storage so that surplus output is captured for use later when the sun fails to shine or the wind fails to blow. A National Policy Statement for energy storage should be developed to encourage would-be investors and developers in storage technology.
- A national strategy to install new district heating networks is required. New CHP Stations can provide the back-up flexible generation needed in a renewable dominated system, and heat stores working in conjunction with heat pumps can make the most of renewable electricity surpluses.
- Local authorities should be encouraged to establish energy service companies. New legal, planning and institutional frameworks as well as incentives will be required.

Local Authority Energy Policy and Community Energy progress -

It will take some time to work through how Government cuts to renewable subsidies will affect the development of more definitive local authority energy policy and energy companies. Notwithstanding that, following the launch of Nottingham City Council's Energy Company, Robin Hood Energy Ltd; Bristol City Council launched its own energy company in October.

Bristol City Council is putting £1.5 million into setting up the company, and has forecast that it could be making up to a 35 per cent profit within ten years of establishment.

In Manchester, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority have now completed an analysis of which energy company model they wish to develop and recommendations are being made to councillors for approval. It will be a similar entity to Bristol and Nottingham, and will be developed over the next 18 months. As the first English region to sign a devolution package, Greater Manchester have also agreed with the Treasury and DECC a series of new powers that will help to deliver an energy company.

In an initiative of the Labour Shadow Energy Minister Lisa Nandy, the Leaders of 50 City Councils have made pledges to run entirely on green renewable energy by 2050. The move was to show support ahead of the Paris Climate Change Conference.

Potential changes in renewable energy in Ireland -

The publication of a White Paper on energy policy in Ireland – particularly the Republic but with some co-operation with the North – is still expected from the Irish Government by the end of the year. As the Steering Committee has noted, the Irish Government has said it would see a major move away from previous ‘top down’ approaches to embrace decentralised and community energy initiatives attempting to bring local communities into such a model via stronger engagement.

Agreed: To note the report and monitor the effects on renewable energy by changes to UK Government policy. To support the development of LA energy policy.

10. Nuclear emergency planning, nuclear materials transportation and nuclear security

The NFLA Secretary provided a report of work on progress with issues around nuclear emergency planning, nuclear transportation and nuclear security.

Nuclear transportation concerns by road, rail and sea -

At the recent NFLA All Ireland meeting, there was considerable discussion over concerns of collisions and near collisions between UK nuclear submarines and fishing trawlers. Tim Deere-Jones provided an overview of a number of incidents that have occurred in the Irish Sea, English Channel and North East Atlantic over the past two decades and the real lack of accountability from the Ministry of Defence when collisions take place. Margaret Ritchie MP noted how concerned she was with a recent incident off the County Down coast and noted she had been in meetings with Defence Ministers to raise the concern of the fishing community. Questions to Ministers in the UK and Scottish Parliaments have also been made in assistance with NFLA and CND Scotland.

Similar concerns over nuclear transports were raised in the NFLA English Forum meeting around nuclear weapon convoys between Aldermaston and Faslane / Coulport. The Nukewatch speaker Nigel Day noted that the MOD has finally replaced some of the vehicles in the convoys, which had been promised for over a decade due to their age. It was agreed that NFLA would support a forthcoming project with Nukewatch and ICAN to raise the profile of such convoys and call for greater involvement with the emergency services and local authorities. Concern was particularly raised about the difficulty to provide an effective emergency response to a major incident given the level of cuts to emergency providers.

These issues confirm the concern of local authorities to the transport of nuclear materials by road, rail and sea. The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretariat should consolidate these concerns into a new policy briefing.

Agreed: To note the report and welcome the Policy Briefings.

11. Date of next NFLA Steering Committee meeting

The next Steering Committee meeting is planned for ***Friday 5th February in Manchester Town Hall***. An afternoon meeting of the UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter is also being planned.

12. NFLA AGM and 35th anniversary reception

The NFLA AGM elected Councillor Ernie Galsworthy as its new Steering Committee Chair. It approved Secretary, financial, Service Plan and constitution reports. A special civic reception was also held to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the NFLA. It was hosted by the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Paul Murphy, who was one of the original signatories of Manchester’s 1980 resolution that helped to establish the NFLA. Further details of the reception can be found in the NFLA’s December newsletter.