

NFLA Policy Briefing No.180



Date: 4th October 2018

Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee meeting, Cardiff County Hall, 28th September 2018

1. Introductions by NFLA Steering Committee (SC) Chair and SC Vice-Chair, Scotland

The NFLA Chair, Councillor Ernie Galsworthy, welcomed all to Wales and the fourth Steering Committee meeting of 2018. He thanked the Vice Chairs for assisting him this year after illness. The NFLA Steering Committee Vice-Chair, Scotland, Councillor Bill Butler, also welcomed members to the meeting in Cardiff County Hall, and it was agreed he would chair the meeting due to an overnight illness of the NFLA Welsh Forum Co Chair.

2. National NFLA Forum meetings

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

NFLA English Forum –

The NFLA English Forum held a seminar in Oxford Town Hall on the 15th June which considered nuclear transport concerns and the NFLA's latest report on decentralised energy. Its next meeting will continue the theme of decentralised energy and will look at Council energy companies, hydrogen gas networks and developing support for renewable energy companies, as well as consider issues around radioactive waste management policy. It will be held in the Guildhall, Hull on the 26th October.

NFLA Scotland Forum -

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a business meeting and afternoon seminar in in Clydebank Town Hall on the 20th September. The joint seminar was held with the Mayors for Peace Chapter and ICAN UK and had representatives from a number of international representatives from ICAN groups around the world. The seminar had a focus on the passing of resolutions supporting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by a number of American cities, and it was agreed to develop a similar resolution for NFLA and Mayors for Peace members to use in the UK context. The seminar also included further best practice in promoting best practice in peace education. The Secretariat thanks West Dunbartonshire Council for providing excellent facilities and a civic reception after the meeting. The next meeting will be in East Ayrshire Council offices, Kilmarnock on the 8th November.

NFLA All Ireland Forum -

The NFLA All Ireland Forum's next meeting will be held in Dundalk Town Hall on the 12th October. This meeting will focus on the impacts of climate change as well as look at transboundary impacts to Ireland of UK new nuclear and radioactive waste developments. The Forum will also be hosting the UK and Ireland NFLA AGM and meetings in Newry on the 7th December. The Annual Policy Seminar will focus on the issues around Brexit, Ireland and nuclear policy.

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES:
AN ICAN COALITION PARTNER, A NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE**

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NFLA Welsh Forum -

The NFLA Welsh Forum will hold its next meeting directly after this Steering Committee in Cardiff County Hall on the 28th September. This seminar is focusing on the new nuclear developments in and surrounding Wales at Wylfa, with the Hinkley Point C mud issue close to Cardiff Bay and with small modular reactors mooted for Trawsfynydd. It will also consider the alternative benefits of decentralised, renewable energy and Welsh political developments. A very good and wide attendance is expected.

Co-operation with CNFE and KIMO International -

The Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe (CNFE) Secretariat discussed with the Austrian Government the decision to appeal over the European Court of Justice rejecting its case over the European Commission's approval of the state aid deal with the UK Government and EDF on the Hinkley Point C project. Vienna City Council are also co-organising their annual nuclear policy symposium being held in late September.

The NFLA Secretariat joined with KIMO International to publish a joint media release raising concerns over the dumping of over 300,000 tonnes of dredged mud from the Hinkley Point C site to an area a few miles off Cardiff Bay. It was agreed that both organisations would continue to support groups involved in this campaign. KIMO hold their annual conference and general meeting in Aalborg, Denmark on the 5th October.

Agreed: To note the report.

3. Implications of the EU referendum vote on nuclear policy

The NFLA Secretary gave a round-up of key nuclear policy issues around the UK leaving the European Union.

Consultation on regulations to the role of a UK Domestic Nuclear Safeguards regime to replace the current arrangements within the Euratom Treaty

Despite considerable misgivings made within both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the UK Government's Nuclear Safeguards Act was narrowly approved by Parliament and received Royal Assent in June. The Act is a part of the UK's plans to leave the European Union and the parallel Euratom Treaty. The Act puts procedures and arrangements in place for the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) to take over the duties of Euratom inspectors in inspecting the safety and security of UK nuclear sites and to ensure that unrestricted nuclear proliferation of UK materials does not take place.

The UK Government is consulting on how the regulations within the new regime will be effectively administered to ensure national arrangements and international treaty obligations are maintained. Separately the UK Government has had approval from the European Commission to start bilateral discussions with non EU countries it trades nuclear fuel with such as the United States, Canada, Japan and Australia.

The NFLA Secretariat has developed a response to the consultation which were approved by the NFLA Chair, and submitted. The NFLA response outlines real concern on the lack of time with which to develop all of these arrangements for full operation by April 2019. The workshop also outlined real concern within the nuclear sector over the potential increased bureaucracy of a new domestic system. At the workshop the Government confirmed that, in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit, these arrangements would still be put in place, but the timings on some of their implementation may have to change.

A wider briefing and a special seminar was approved by the Steering Committee for its Annual Policy Briefing in December.

Agreed: To note the report and welcome the NFLA submission.

4. Nuclear new build

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

Financing UK new nuclear reactors -

As noted in the last Steering Committee report, the UK Government has announced it is considering offering Hitachi up to £5 billion in taxpayer financial support for building the Wylfa B nuclear power reactor. As the NFLA Policy Advisor Pete Roche has pointed out, the UK Government is now considering using a controversial financing system to build new nuclear power stations which could see customers charged for construction costs long before a project has actually been built. The approach, called the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model, concerns many expert commentators who see it as giving almost an “open cheque book” for developers, as consumers could be locked into paying the costs of a project going wrong – like construction taking longer than planned, or prices spiralling – indefinitely until it’s complete. BEIS has recently recruited Mark Corben, former chief financial officer at the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for the Thames Tideway Tunnel, which has pioneered this type of financing.

Shadow Energy Minister Alan Whitehead MP has said: “*The problem with this model as applied to new nuclear power stations is that it transfers all the risk of construction from the developer to the customers, with the rather wobbly promise of benefits to come in the future.*” As an example, in 2017, the Parliamentary cross-party British Infrastructure Group of MPs raised concerns that bill payers had been asked to write a “*blank cheque*” for the Thames Tideway project, which was financed under the RAB model. The National Audit Office (NAO) has also been critical of the Thames Tideway contract, as it argues it is still not clear how much consumers will have to pay. The idea of a RAB approach is popular with the nuclear industry. EDF boss Humphrey Cadoux-Hudson recently told the Financial Times that he is in talks with dozens of private investors over financing Sizewell C, the French giant’s post-Hinkley nuclear project in Suffolk – and that the RAB model could be pivotal.

The Steering Committee asked the NFLA Secretariat to look further into the risks and costs of this financing system which is being mooted for funding future new nuclear developments.

NFLA’s submission for the Wylfa B Planning Inspectorate inquiry

Despite Hitachi not making its final decision on financing Wylfa B until 2019 at the earliest, Horizon Nuclear has provided information to the National Infrastructure Planning Inspectorate for a Development Control Order to allow development on the site. The Inspectorate has deemed the information provided is sufficient to be considered with a planning inquiry to be set later this year or early next year.

Interested parties were asked to register if they would like to put submissions to a future inquiry, and the NFLA has done so. Its proposed submission to the inquiry was approved by the Steering Committee.

The core conclusions of the NFLA submission include:

- It is regrettable that the consideration of Horizon Nuclear Power’s application for a Development Control Order for the Wylfa Newydd Nuclear Power Station is reliant on Government National Policy Statements which are out of date. Nuclear Power stations are not economically competitive, cannot be built by 2025 and energy efficiency measures mean there is no longer a need for them.
- Regardless of this, the proposal put forward by Horizon Nuclear Power for this particular site on the Island of Anglesey is totally inappropriate and therefore should not be approved.
- Building such a large infrastructure project in a remote rural area like Anglesey is likely to increase local unemployment in the longer term, and have a disruptive impact on the local economy. Going ahead with Wylfa Newydd is likely to detract attention from the far greater job-creating potential of other industries, such as a domestic energy efficiency programme, and the offshore renewable industry, and may actually dissuade companies from setting up in Anglesey, as well as damaging existing industry, such as tourism and agriculture, which rely on an area’s reputation for a clean environment to attract business.
- It is also likely to be particularly disruptive to the future of the Welsh Language.

- Wylfa Newydd would produce nuclear waste which would contain almost 70% of the radioactivity in existing waste, and which will most likely need to be stored on the Anglesey site for at least the next 120 years.
- If there were an accident at Wylfa Newydd which required the evacuation of an area similar to the area evacuated around Fukushima, experience suggests this would cause complete chaos because of the limited capacity of routes to the mainland.
- Given that alternatives to Wylfa Newydd do exist which are cheaper and can be implemented more quickly it is particularly perverse to accept the rather devastating impact the proposals will have on designated conservation sites.
- The impact of sea level rise on the proposed site needs to be thoroughly examined in the light of the latest scientific projections on the impact of climate change.

The major issue with this type of inquiry is much of what the NFLA may wish to comment on does not lay in the remit of the Planning Inspector, as it has been decided by Parliament through the National Policy Statements on nuclear energy. This limits discussion often to more local matters. NFLA will monitor the timing of the inquiry and report back to the Steering Committee.

Hinkley Point C update –

While work continues to clear the site ready for developing new nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point, the problems with the developing of similar reactors in other countries, particularly at Flamanville in France, could signal further delays for the UK project. At Flamanville, EDF has detected quality deviations on a number of welds on the new reactor it is building. As a result, it has had to inform the French nuclear safety regulator ASN. This may incur further adjustments to the start-up timetable and budget. Further delays in opening the Olkiluoto reactor in Finland have also been announced, taking it to over 10 years late from its originally planned date.

A joint Austrian and Luxembourg Government appeal against UK Government funding for Hinkley Point C has been dismissed after an extensive court case. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled the UK government's contribution to the new nuclear power station did not constitute illegal 'state aid'. The Austrian and Luxembourg Governments have decided to appeal against this judgement.

Sellafield Moorside update –

The Sellafield Moorside development looks to now be in serious trouble, after KEPCO's interest in acquiring the site from Toshiba looked to have dimmed. This has forced Toshiba to make half of the existing staff in Nugen redundant in September. It is seeking other buyers now that KEPCO has been downgraded from its priority status. It would appear KEPCO has strong reservations about the proposed funding model - the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model, noted above. The company is now no longer the lead bidder, and, according to the Korean media, KEPCO prefers the Contract for Difference (CfD) deal given to EDF for Hinkley C. The Korea Herald quoted a Korean government official who claims that the deal for NuGen is being renegotiated because the UK government's decision to "change profit models for the project". Local Cumbrian MPs and the GMB union have called for the UK Government to step in and save the project. At present that does not look forthcoming and there does not look many obvious alternative utility companies that may be interested in taking on the site.

Bradwell update –

The Bradwell B nuclear project is entering a 'new phase' according to CGN and EDF. The developers have begun analysing the findings from early investigative work carried out on the site on the Dengie peninsula in Essex. China General Nuclear Power Corporation (CGN) and EDF are at the pre-planning stage of their plans to build a UKHPR1000 nuclear reactor plant, with the design for this currently undergoing a Generic Design Assessment (GDA) by the Office for Nuclear Regulation and the Environment Agency.

Developments with Small Modular Nuclear (SMR) Reactors –

The Expert Finance Working Group on Small Reactors (EFWG) said in a report that the UK Government should offer subsidies for small nuclear reactors to help de-risk the technology and kick start cost reductions. The report says the "Government should establish an advanced manufacturing supply chain initiative, as it did with offshore wind, to bring forward existing and new

manufacturing capability in the UK and to challenge the market on the requirement for nuclear specific items, particularly Balance of Plant (BOP), thereby reducing the costs of nuclear and the perceived risks associated with it.” Independent nuclear policy consultant David Lowry will be outlining the viability of SMRs at the seminar that follows the Steering Committee meeting.

Agreed: To note the report.

5. Radioactive waste management

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

UK and Welsh Government consultations on managing radioactive waste –

Over the past year the UK Government, with support from the Welsh Government, has been consulting with stakeholder over its determination to find a long-term solution to the management of higher activity radioactive waste. A core plank of this policy will be the find a host volunteer community for a deep underground radioactive waste repository, or Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) as it labels such a development.

NFLA has responded in detail to three consultations, which can be found on the NFLA website. The governments are currently considering the responses to these consultations. It is expected that a response to the consultation is expected over the autumn, and an announcement seeking volunteers to consider becoming involved in the process to find a potential site for a repository is expected before the end of the year / early 2019.

The UK Government has been involved in a number of informal discussions with Councils and some NGO representatives to ascertain further clarification on their consultation responses. The NFLA Secretary has discussed in detail with officers in BEIS the detail of its response. NuLEAF has been in discussion as well. A real challenge remains over the definition of a community, the issues around a veto and the long-term nature of the siting and volunteering partnerships being offered.

The BEIS Select Committee held a meeting considering the proposed National Policy Statement for a deep waste repository on the 10th July. NFLA raised points with the NuLEAF Secretary Phil Matthews and Professor Andy Blowers, Co-Chair of the BEIS NGO Forum, which were made at the select committee hearing. Both commented on the limited knowledge of MPs on this matter and the overly narrow consideration of the inquiry. The Committee though concluded that the NPS is fit for purpose with some caveats. It is expected that the Government will set the final parameters of the NPs ready for Parliamentary approval in early 2019.

The Steering Committee asked the NFLA Secretariat to keep a close watching brief as this process develops later this year.

NDA Stakeholder Summit and related matters –

The 2018 NDA Stakeholder Summit was held at the Berkeley Green Campus of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College on 10th and 11th July 2018. The NFLA Secretary and NFLA Scotland Vice-Convener Cllr Audrey Doig from Renfrewshire Council represented the organisation at it. There was also a considerable number of NuLeAF members and overseas representatives, particularly from Spain and Hungary. The NFLA Secretary and the NFLA Scotland Vice Convener found the summit somewhat frustrating in not allowing for greater levels of critical engagement. Much of the summit was rather focusing on NDA ‘achievements’, despite both the Chair and the CEO of the NDA acknowledging failings with the failed Magnox contract process and a damning NAO report. There was only limited time to ask pertinent questions and put forward critical comments within the meeting. The main areas which were more useful was a number of workshops, particularly around the deep underground repository project. The ONR and Environment Agency held a useful workshop on the regulatory issues around such a development, and RWM made it quite clear how determined they would be to try and pro-actively find and support a host community / local authority interested in hosting a GDF.

The NFLA Secretary included structured comments on the summit as part of a wider letter on nuclear transport matters. The NFLA Secretary is actively engaging with the NDA’s Stakeholder Engagement

Manager over an annual NDA RWM NGO Forum engagement meeting. This may be established before the end of the year. The Steering Committee agreed that it would welcome such a development.

NDA consultation on developing a single radioactive waste management strategy –

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has published a report and consultation on their plans for developing a single radioactive waste strategy to cover all levels of waste they manage across its estate. The report includes all existing waste, and materials that may become waste at some point in the future.

A draft NFLA model response to the consultation was put forward to the Steering Committee and was agreed. Its key conclusions are:

- The NFLA remain concerned that some options for NDA LLW management could result in increased dilution and dispersal, increasing the potential for public exposures, and adding to the burden of radiological risk that is carried by society. That concern remains with this consultation.
- The NFLA has consistently argued that developing radioactive waste management policy needs to be underpinned by a clear set of environment principles. The most important of these principles is that we should stop producing more waste as soon as possible.
- These principles also mean that waste policy should be about limiting and restricting discharges and dispersal of radioactivity into the environment, and aiming for a goal of zero discharges. If there are cases where, as the Government claims, complete containment is not a 'practical proposition' because of practices which have been carried out in the past and legacy wastes which have been stockpiled, then the waste producers need to make the case for an exception to be made.

Sellafield and Dounreay progress –

The Sellafield site is currently being prosecuted by the nuclear regulator after an employee was exposed to dangerous levels of radiation. The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) said it was taking action over an incident in February 2017 in which a worker at the facility was contaminated. This is the first prosecution of Sellafield since the ONR was formed in 2014. It is likely that the site operators will receive a heavy and substantial fine.

The National Audit Office has published its annual assessment of progress in reducing hazards at the Sellafield site. It notes that 'work to reduce risk and high hazard at Sellafield has taken an encouraging turn for the better. In recent years, Sellafield Limited has met significant milestones in retrieving hazardous waste from its legacy ponds and silos. While delays and cost overruns are still evident for major projects at Sellafield, the NDA has made progress with reducing these since we last reported. However, the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, UK Government Investments, the NDA and Sellafield Limited 'have more work to do to measure, evaluate and communicate progress more effectively'.

However, it also concluded that 'to sustain progress in the near term, the NDA and central government will need to clarify the NDA's role and to find the right balance between scrutinising decisions and enabling the leadership at Sellafield to exercise its legal duties, professional expertise and maintain motivation. To inform its longer-term strategy, the NDA must review the constraints that it says prevent further and faster progress with reducing high hazard at Sellafield'. NFLA published a media release that, while welcoming some improvement, remains concerned over other fundamental issues such as this key NDA conclusion.

In terms of Dounreay, the Scottish Government's Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham has written to her UK counterpart Richard Harrington raising concern over environmental and workforce issues at the site. The letter notes: 'There continues to be cause for concern in Dounreay's environmental performance, with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) having to take action. In addition, the recently published NDA annual report presented in stark terms the lack of progress at Dounreay across a wide range of projects. While I am aware that the exotics movement programme has been a priority, this is still a disappointing state of affairs, and sits oddly with the planned reduction in workforce at Dounreay. Local stakeholders have told me that they cannot understand why the current substantial voluntary redundancy programme is in place where there is still so much work to complete on the site'.

These matters were discussed at the NFLA Scotland Forum meeting, and it is monitoring the response to the letter from the UK Government.

Hinkley Point C ‘dredged mud’ issue –

Over the past year, NFLA and NGOs have raised concerns over approvals that had been granted by the Welsh regulator Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to allow EDF to dump 300,000 tons of dredged materials from the proposed Hinkley Point C reactor – likely to contain low levels of radiation – into a site close to Cardiff Bay, known as the Cardiff Deep Grounds. Two separate petitions have attracted over 70,000 signatures and the matter has been discussed by the Welsh Assembly.

Despite considerable public unease, the Welsh Government and the regulator has not changed its view that the dredging action can be permitted and the environmental consequences are low. EDF started dredging in early September with around 10,000 tons now dumped. A legal challenge by Welsh NGOs has been raised and the High Court has asked EDF to provide further detail over the environmental impact assessment for the material. The NGOs claim further analysis of the material being dredged and its impact on the marine environment should take place.

The NFLA issued a joint media release with KIMO International raising concerns over various issues of concern with this matter. Tim Deere-Jones is talking on the matters within this debate at the joint seminar that follows the Steering Committee meeting.

New Chair for the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) –

The UK Government announced on the 2nd July that it has appointed Sir Nigel Thrift as the new Chair of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) with the appointment due to run for 4 years. His background is in human geography rather than in engineering or physical science. He was previously the Vice Chancellor and President of the University of Warwick and Pro-Vice Chancellor for research at the University of Oxford. The Steering Committee asked the NFLA Secretary to write to the new Chair to provide NFLA’s views in this area.

Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS –

The LGA’s NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum for England and Wales) group held a business meeting and seminar in Manchester on the 12th September. Much of the business meeting was taken up discussing a presentation from RWM on a prospectus for a host community considering a deep-underground repository. The seminar looked at the NDA’s single radioactive waste repository strategy. The next meeting will be on the 5th December in London.

COSLA’s SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) group met last in Edinburgh on the 28th August. Renfrewshire Council has agreed to take over the group’s Secretariat from Edinburgh Council.

Agreed: To note the report.

6. Alternatives to nuclear energy

The NFLA Secretary gave an overview of activity in promoting local, decentralised and renewable forms of energy.

NFLA report on the state of decentralised energy in the UK and Ireland –

In May, the NFLA published a detail update on best practice in decentralised energy across the UK and Ireland. It can be found on the NFLA website, and it has been very well received. The NFLA Secretary gave presentations on the report at the NFLA English and Scottish Forums.

The Steering Committee agreed that the Secretariat should provide an annual update on such matters each May.

Scottish Energy Company submission –

The NFLA Scotland Forum has submitted its views on the potential development of a Scottish Government-owned Energy Company to the Scottish Parliament’s Energy Committee.

The key conclusions of the NFLA submission are:

- The NFLA supports the idea of establishing a Scottish Publicly Owned Energy Company (POEC), but is concerned that the promotion of new renewable energy projects has been relegated to a second phase. There is a risk that this second phase may never happen.
- A POEC which promotes energy efficiency and low cost renewable electricity would have the effect of reducing energy costs for Scottish consumers. It would provide a unique offer to Scottish consumers – a company which can provide cheap low carbon energy.
- A POEC should support and assist work already going on in local authorities and local communities, rather than setting itself up in competition with other community initiatives. A POEC should also support the innovative work on developing hydrogen and green gas currently going on in Scotland.

The Steering Committee welcomed the submission.

Renewable energy update –

The growth of offshore wind energy around the UK continues unabated. The world's largest offshore wind farm was formally opened off the coast of Barrow in Cumbria. The Walney Extension has a capacity of 659 megawatts and could power up to 590,000 homes. Slightly smaller, but containing some of the largest blades of any offshore windfarm, has also opened off the Aberdeenshire coast. Even larger windfarms are currently being constructed off the East Anglia coast (714 MW) and Hornsea One and Two (1200 MW and 1800 MW respectively) off the East Yorkshire coast are expected to be completed by 2019 / 20. The development of such technology is being discussed at the NFLA English Forum in Hull on the 26th October.

While such growth is positive, the position with solar and onshore wind is more concerning after a plummeting in investment due to huge reductions in subsidy support from the UK Government. This is despite renewables providing 29.3% of UK electricity. Indeed, while the long summer saw a reduction in generation from wind, it was balanced somewhat by record generation from solar energy, both of which remain highly popular in public surveys.

A report from the National Infrastructure Commission has recommended to the UK Government that it should prioritise supporting renewable energy projects over new nuclear or fossil fuels. The report suggested the UK Government should only support a maximum of two new nuclear power stations and rather invest in 'cheaper' renewable energy alternatives, energy storage schemes and smart energy schemes.

In Ireland, the Government has introduced a limited but, to date, popular scheme to offer a feed-in tariffs type scheme for householders to develop solar panels and energy battery storage schemes in their house. In a NFLA media release on the subject, qualified approval is given to the scheme, but that support for Councils and larger private enterprises should also be offered in the near future.

The potential of hydrogen green gas / geothermal energy –

As noted previously, a NFLA Scotland seminar highlighted real potential in the development of hydrogen gas schemes being developed by Scottish Gas Networks. The NFLA Secretary has asked Northern Gas Networks to speak at the upcoming English Forum meeting in Hull on its potential in England. The company is currently working with Yorkshire Councils, including Leeds, on the viability of such a scheme. Following this meeting, the NFLA Secretariat will look to develop a Policy Briefing on this potential new renewable heating scheme.

Another potential area of renewable heating is geothermal energy. In late August, Glasgow City Council and South Lanarkshire Council approved plans to develop a 'world class' geothermal research observatory in the east end of Glasgow. Work will begin on the site this autumn. The research at the observatory aims to contribute to an understanding of the potential for warm water in disused coal mines to be used for renewable heat. The observatory is one of two sites proposed in the £31 million UK Geo-energy Observatories investment led by NERC and the British Geological Survey. The Steering Committee welcomed this development.

Developments in fracking –

In May the UK Government announced measures that aim to 'relax' local planning laws to assist fracking companies to test drilling sites. A new regulator is also being considered as well as a planning brokerage service. Media reports over the summer suggest though that as many as 20 Conservative MPs may oppose these changes, potentially bringing a defeat in Parliament to the proposals. Labour and the Lib Dems has pledged that it will oppose fracking. The NFLA Secretariat will continue to monitor these issues.

Agreed: To note the report and for the Secretariat to produce a new report on hydrogen gas.

7. 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 and wider peace issues.

International Mayors for Peace development –

As of September 1st 2018, 7,650 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace. 54 new towns and cities have joined in the past 3 months.

Over the summer, the Mayor of Hiroshima made a visit to the United States and spoke to the US Conference of Mayors, which brings elected Mayors (over a population of 50,000) together. The Conference agreed a resolution supporting the need for positive engagement in reducing nuclear weapons in the US. Mayor Matsui also had meetings in Washington and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The German Mayors for Peace Chapter held in July their annual 'Flag Day' and Conference in Munster. The Flag Day saw 270 German members fly a Mayors for Peace flag and send out media releases of support and solidarity.

The Catalan Mayors for Peace Chapter held its second annual meeting. There are over 200 members in Catalonia. It works with a wider Spanish Chapter. Cooperation is taking place for a Mayors for Peace presence at the UCLG Congress in Madrid in November which will be looking at concerns around violence in cities, and the need to develop peace education programmes.

Events for Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day / upcoming events –

Events were held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and around the world to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of the atomic bombings of the two cities. Powerful Peace Declarations were made by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Across the UK and Ireland, a large number of events were also held to commemorate the two anniversaries. The NFLA Secretary developed a detailed Mayors for Peace Chapter briefing outlining these events and commenting on upcoming initiatives to encourage further support and developments across peace and nuclear free anniversaries.

One upcoming event that the Chapter Secretariat is looking to help to support is a visit of the Japanese Peace Boat to Liverpool and Dublin on October 16th and 17th 2018. Civic receptions and public meetings are being organised to bring some hibakusha to a local audience.

Another event, being held in conjunction with the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, is to support a visit of a number of Peace Legacy Ambassadors and A-bomb Narrators for a short UK tour. The Legacy Ambassadors have met with 'hibakushas' (survivors of the bomb) to provide their testimony of personal experience of August 6th 1945. Narrators are accredited and trained citizens from Hiroshima who read out the testimony of the hibakusha. Events are being planned on November 5th in Manchester and Oldham, November 6th in Warrington and November 7th in Coventry.

UK and Ireland Chapter meeting in conjunction with NFLA Scotland and ICAN –

The next meeting of the Chapter was held at Clydebank Town Hall on the 20th September. The meeting coincided with International Peace Day and considered nuclear weapons issues and peace education initiatives.

One of the speakers at it were Tim Wallis and Nancy Olsen of the US group 'Nuclear Ban.US'. This and other American NGOs within the ICAN coalition have encouraged a number of US City

Councils, including Los Angeles and Baltimore, as well as the California State Senate, to pass resolutions supporting the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and urging the US Government to become more involved in disarmament activities.

The meeting also looked at the work of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Nuclear Weapons and two further examples of best practice in peace education – the Manchester Children's Peace Trail and the 'Generation Y' Peace Academy held over the summer in Glasgow, along with the wider work of Peace Education Scotland.

Bike for Peace global tour, February 2019 –

The NFLA Secretariat has been informed by Tore Naerland of Bike for Peace that the group is planning its fifth global bike tour for peace, starting in February 2019. The 2019 tour will begin at Westminster and an event to include sympathetic Parliamentarians is being considered. The tour will then travel to France and Italy, India, China and the United States. Tore Naerland is also looking at the potential for a 'Run for Peace' based around the Belfast Marathon in May 2019. This may bring in events including peace groups in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: To note the report.

8. Nuclear Weapons, defence nuclear safety and defence diversification update

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

Resolutions to support Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) –

As noted in the Mayors for Peace report, as the UK is a nuclear weapon state, it is logical that NFLA / Mayors for Peace should encourage its own members to pass similar resolutions as those by cities from the United States. A model draft resolution supporting the TPNW and calling on the UK Government to engage in this policy process was agreed by the Steering Committee. It will be forwarded to all UK and Ireland NFLA and Mayors for Peace members, who are urged to consider tabling it within their own Councils.

North Korea and Iran nuclear weapons discussions –

After a summit in Singapore between the US and North Korea, talks on the latter's nuclear weapons programme appear to have stalled. Korean specialists have said that North Korea has not made any meaningful moves to deconstruct its nuclear programme, though talks continue. A third meeting between the North and South Korean leaders has been scheduled to try to put the wider talks with the United States back on track. In a symbolic move, the North Korean regime did not show off its nuclear weapons at its recent anniversary parade. However, there is little evidence that North Korea is willing to make major changes to its nuclear programme.

In a separate matter, the United States has commenced resuming harsh sanctions on Iran after President Trump decided to withdraw from the agreements relating to reducing Iran's civil and potentially military nuclear programme. Iran has been highly critical of the decision. The United States is also working hard at the diplomatic level to ensure the sanctions stop wider non-American investments and financial support to Iran. At present, the UK / EU, Russian and Chinese approach is to oppose the US move to impose sanctions, and they have offered Iran some practical financial and political support. It remains to be seen if this will continue. Meanwhile, more hard-line elements in Iran have started to call for a potential resumption of its nuclear weapons programme, which at present is being resisted within the Government. NFLA will continue to monitor both issues.

Major safety issues at Aldermaston and Burghfield –

As with previous reports, the Office for Nuclear Regulation has been concerned with the safety regime at the Aldermaston and Burghfield nuclear weapons sites for some time, with both sites in 'special' regulatory measures. Despite the large amounts of money being provided to the Trident programmes, much of the infrastructure on the sites is old and in need of repair or demolition for newer facilities. In late July / early August the ONR has required immediate safety changes to be made at the UK's nuclear warhead assembly facility and has said that even with the changes operations at the site can only continue for a limited period of time. If sufficient progress is not made on reducing risk at the facility ONR have said that operations may need to stop altogether.

There have been a regular series of announcements related to safety concerns at AWE. The news about the Assembly Technology Centre was released in ONR's annual report where it was also announced they will keep AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield in 'Special Measures'. This is the **6th consecutive year** that Aldermaston has been in Special Measures, (formally known as 'Enhanced Regulatory Attention'), and **the 3rd consecutive year for Burghfield**.

The threat over continued operations at the Assembly Technology Centre comes at a time when AWE are part-way through an upgrading to the UK's stock of warheads. The 'Mark 4A' warhead includes a number of updated components purchased from the USA including an arming, fusing and firing system that increases its accuracy. The same system is being fitted to US nuclear weapons and some analysts have raised concerns that this increase in accuracy could have a destabilising effect.

ONR cited the continued use of aging facilities, delays in undertaking periodic reviews of safety, use of ageing production facilities and the fact that AWE is behind schedule in building new facilities and implementing upgrades when justifying the decision to keep AWE in Special Measures.

Defence diversification / Just Transition / NET report –

A telephone conference of the Arms Conversion / Defence Diversification Steering Group took place on the 14th September. The meeting discussed a motion that was put forward by the GMB at the TUC Conference that appears to try to limit discussion in the union movement on just transition / defence diversification issues. There are also a number of notable fringe events at the Labour and SNP Conferences. A film on the Lucas Plan explaining the movement for worker participation to encourage defence diversification is premiering at the London Film Festival with two events on the 14th October at the ICA and on the 17th October in the British Film Institute. A longer and a short version of the film is then going to be made for use by trade unions and NGOs. There was also some discussion around putting views in to local industrial strategy workshops and events.

The next formal meeting of the group will be hosted by the NFLA and will be on the 29th October from 2pm – 4pm in Manchester Town Hall Extension. This meeting will seek to consider more strategic developments in encouraging a Shadow Defence Diversification Agency and related developments.

Agreed: To note the report.

9. Nuclear health and safety issues

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on progress with civil nuclear safety and health issues, which included a brief update of its report of concern on nuclear plant life extensions.

Temporary closure of Hunterston B and its potential impact on other operating reactors –

The NFLA has published a detailed and updated Policy Briefing outlining concerns with an increased number of cracks in graphite bricks that surround the Hunterston B nuclear reactor 3. Similar issues have also been found with Hinkley Point B and the Heysham and Hartlepool reactors, all approaching forty years of operation.

In May, EDF confirmed that Hunterston B would remain closed for at least six months while they seek to understand the extent of the cracks and wider safety issues with the graphite bricks around the reactor. They will also have to satisfy the nuclear regulator before the plant could be operated again. There remains a possibility that the reactor may not re-open, and it could have impacts on the other existing reactor sites as well. The NFLA Scotland meeting planned for Kilmarnock in East Ayrshire, adjacent to Hunterston will partially focus on this issue.

NFLA submissions on discharges from a new nuclear programme –

Over the past few months, the NFLA Secretariat made a joint submission with KIMO International and provided a model response for Irish Councils to respond over transboundary issues for Ireland of developing the Hinkley Point C site. Both submissions outlined real environmental concerns over a UK new nuclear programme. This matter will be a focus for the NFLA All Ireland Forum meeting in Dundalk, given the real interest that the model response created, following public meetings in Louth,

Fingal, Kilkenny, Wicklow and Kildare. A joint Parliamentary Select Committee in the Oireachtas also considered the consultation and the NFLA Secretariat assisted the Irish Environment Committee.

Fukushima update –

The most prescient issue at the stricken Fukushima site remains what to do with the huge and ever increasing levels of radioactively contaminated water that has cooled down the site over the past seven years. In early September, Japanese citizen and environmental groups reiterated their opposition to the idea of releasing any water from the site that contained tritium.

Public hearings are taking place at a number of locations as TEPCO wants to start releasing large amounts of water into the Pacific Ocean due to running out of space to store the contaminated water. Citizens groups continue to advocate long-term storage to allow radioactive decay to take place is more environmentally acceptable. In 2016, an expert panel of the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy discussed five methods to dispose of the tritium-tainted water —injection deep into the ground, release into the sea after dilution, release into the air through evaporation, conversion into hydrogen through electrolysis, and burying it after it is solidified. The panel estimated that the ocean release is the cheapest option, costing up to about ¥3.4 billion. However, strong public and fishing industry opposition to dumping water into the sea continues to thwart any final decision.

In August, a report by three UN human rights experts have criticized the Japanese Government for allegedly exploiting and putting at risk the lives of “tens of thousands” of people engaged in clean-up operations at and around the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant. In a joint statement the experts expressed their deep concerns “about possible exploitation by deception regarding the risks of exposure to radiation, possible coercion into accepting hazardous working conditions because of economic hardships, and the adequacy of training and protective measures.” The statement also noted that workers hired to decontaminate the site including migrant workers, asylum seekers and homeless people. The Japanese Government called the comments made by the experts as “regrettable” and one sided. The UN experts are seeking to improve international law to protect workers from the release of toxic substances.

Severe weather and issues with nuclear reactors –

A clear factor in the Fukushima disaster was the devastating earthquake and tsunami that damaged much of north east Japan. With real concerns that climate change is having a major impact on weather formations and severe weather incidents, there is increasing concern of how this could affect other nuclear sites around the world. For example, the recent Storm Florence that hit the United States necessitated the closure of a number of nuclear sites, and access to one of them after serious flooding was compromised. Similar concerns also occurred in China, where a similarly devastating ‘super typhoon’ hit the Guangdong Province, with a number of nuclear reactors closed down for safety reasons. This may well be the basis for considering a further NFLA Policy Briefing considering the impacts of climate change and severe weather on nuclear sites.

Agreed: To note the report.

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

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

Changes to UK nuclear emergency planning regulations –

In late 2017, the NFLA Secretariat submitted a detailed response to the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments on proposed and significant changes to nuclear emergency planning. The changes arise from the need to transpose parts of the Euratom Basic Safety Standards Directive (BSSD) into UK law. In the consultation the Government argued this would require major changes to the REPIR regulations (Radiation Emergency Planning and Public Information), which relate to offsite emergency plans at nuclear sites, and some minor changes to regulations on the transportation of radioactive materials. The UK Government has said it will provide its full response to consultation responses, and the next steps with legislation, in autumn 2018.

NDA response to NFLA concerns over nuclear transports –

Over the summer, the NFLA was made aware by HANT and media reports that one of the trains transporting nuclear materials from Dounreay to Sellafield went through a red signal at Kingussie in the Highlands. Shortly after this incident, a cargo ship the MV Priscilla run aground off Scapa Flow in Orkney, and it took three days before it was released by an Emergency Towing Vehicle. This raises concerns over the dangers of these shipping lanes for INS ships containing nuclear materials travelling from Scrabster to Barrow. The NFLA wrote to the NDA about these issues and wider concerns over the transport of Dounreay materials to Sellafield. The NDA has provided a detailed response. The response goes into some useful detail on the Kingussie incident and comments on the Priscilla matter as well. The letter was considered at the NFLA Scotland meeting and it was agreed to take up an offer of visiting INS and DRS to look at their ships and trains fleet.

NFLA nuclear transport and emergency planning briefing –

The NFLA Secretary has been developing a detailed briefing considering various aspects of concern around nuclear transports and nuclear emergency planning. This is almost complete and will be published in October. The briefing is considering civil rail, road and sea transports, defence nuclear weapon road convoys, the planned road convoys of nuclear submarines reactor pressure vessels and the air transports of enriched uranium from Scotland to the United States.

Agreed: To note the report.

11. NFLA Steering Committee meetings in 2018

The next NFLA Steering Committee meeting will take place in ***Council Offices, O'Hagan House, Newry on Friday 7th December 2018.*** It will also include the NFLA Annual General Meeting and its Annual Policy Seminar.