

NFLA Policy Briefing No.183



Date: 19th December 2018

Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee meeting, Annual General Meeting and Annual Policy Seminar, Newry Council Offices, 7th December 2018

1. Introductions to the meeting

The NFLA Steering Committee Vice-Chair (England), Councillor David Blackburn, welcomed all to Newry and the final Steering Committee meeting of 2018. Newry had provided a warm welcome to NFLA representatives and good representation was expected for the Annual Policy Seminar. A local welcome was also provided by the NFLA All Ireland Forum Co-Chair, Councillor Mark Dearey and Newry, Mourne and Down District Councillor and former Forum Co-Chair, Councillor Michael Carr.

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 Welsh Forum -

The NFLA Welsh Forum held a joint seminar with the Steering Committee in Cardiff County Hall on the 28th September. The very well attended seminar focused 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 also considered the alternative benefits of decentralised, renewable energy and Welsh political developments. A debate in the Senedd also took place on the 'Hinkley mud' issue, as noted below in Item 5. The NFLA Secretariat is looking to develop a joint public meeting in North Wales on the Wylfa issue for the next Forum meeting in February / March 2019.

NFLA English Forum –

The NFLA English Forum held an informative seminar in Hull Guildhall on the 26th October. It considered the theme of decentralised energy and looked at the potential of a hydrogen gas network in the north of England, the positive developments around Council operated renewable energy companies, and the multifarious issues around radioactive waste management policy. The next meeting of the Forum will be a joint meeting with the UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter in Manchester Central Library on the 8th February 2019.

NFLA Scotland Forum -

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a business meeting and afternoon seminar in East Ayrshire Council offices, Kilmarnock on the 8th November. The business meeting included detailed discussion on divestment from Council pension funds of investment in companies that fund nuclear weapons. The seminar considered concerns over safety at the Hunterston B nuclear reactor, the benefits of decentralised energy and a Scottish publicly owned Energy Company, and concerns over the transport of nuclear materials. The next meeting of the Forum will include its AGM and will either be in Glasgow or Dundee in mid-February 2019.

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES:
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NFLA All Ireland Forum -

The NFLA All Ireland Forum's planned seminar in Dundalk planned for the 12th October had been cancelled due to severe weather affecting Ireland. Presentations on national and international radioactive waste policy and impacts had been placed on the NFLA website. The Forum was hosting the NFLA 2018 Annual Policy Seminar directly following the Steering Committee and AGM. It would be considering climate change impacts, nuclear policy impacts on Ireland and the potential effects of Brexit on the areas of policy NFLA is interested in. The next meeting of the Forum will be in March 2019 and likely to be in Dundalk.

Co-operation with CNFE and KIMO International -

The Steering Committee welcomed the development of a new alliance between the Vienna-led Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe (CNFE) and a group called the 'Alliance of Regions for Phasing out of Nuclear Power Across Europe', which predominantly includes German 'Lander' regions. The Steering Committee agreed that the proposal of a joint meeting between the three groups in 2019 should be encouraged, probably in Brussels to allow for discussion with members of the European Parliament.

NFLA issued a joint media release with KIMO International raising their joint concerns over the environmental and marine radiation impacts of dumping over 300,000 tonnes of mud from the Hinkley Point C site to an area close to Cardiff Bay.

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.

Process of the UK leaving the European Union ('Brexit')

On the 25th November, after 18 months of intense and fraught negotiation, the UK Government agreed a draft agreement with the European Union. This has to now be approved by the UK Parliament, the other 27 EU member states and the European Parliament. The agreement is in two parts – a detailed 585 page agreement on all the core technical aspects of leaving the EU, and a non-binding political agreement that outlines the ambition for the future arrangements between the UK and the EU.

The next, and potentially most difficult challenge, now comes for the Government to get it through the Westminster Parliament. It also has to formally go through the European Parliament and the national Parliaments of the 27 other member states. This is all supposed to happen before the end of March, the formal date for leaving, though there remains a 'transition period' till April 2020 to allow time for all the technical aspects of departure to be implemented.

The UK Government has announced considerable Parliamentary discussion on the draft agreement and the political arrangements, with a vote planned for December 11th. At present all the opposition parties – Labour, Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Greens have said they will vote against the agreement. Importantly, the DUP, with the 'balance of power' have also said they will vote against the agreement. Initial debates in the House of Commons suggest a large number of Conservatives, both 'Remainers and Brexiteers' oppose the agreement as being too much of a compromise for both sides to accept.

The NFLA Secretariat has started putting together a report looking at the core issues of the Brexit agreement as they refer to its own areas of policy – the areas around a new UK domestic nuclear safeguards regime, the wider impacts on energy and environmental policy and public safety, and the potential corollary impacts on defence policy for the UK and the EU. There are also issues around the Irish single electricity market and the impacts on the arrangements for the NFLA in its All Ireland Forum. However, it makes little sense to finalise this briefing until after the Parliamentary vote, which will determine if the agreement as it stands goes forward, or whether a deep period of uncertainty occurs should it be, as is currently expected, it is voted down. The Steering Committee agreed to this course of action.

Agreed: To note the report and remain concerned with the potential impacts of Brexit on areas of NFLA policy.

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.

Toshiba cancels Sellafield Moorside -

At its board meeting in early November, the Japanese utility Toshiba decided to formally wind up the 'NuGen' entity that was seeking to develop new nuclear reactors at the Moorside site close to Sellafield in West Cumbria. In a widely anticipated move, Toshiba admitted defeat in finding an alternative utility to take on the project. As a result, the staff working on the project in NuGen's Manchester headquarters would be made redundant. The principal reason for Toshiba withdrawing from the project is the huge losses made by its nuclear subsidiary Westinghouse, which nearly brought the entire company – one of the largest in Japan – into a state of near collapse. Toshiba would take an additional £125 million cost from closing the NuGen entity. It has already spent £400 million on the project. It had been thought the South Korea energy company Kepco may take on the site, but changes to the Korean Government energy policy (away from nuclear and towards renewables) and the company's concerns over the UK Government's new financing scheme (see section 2 below) has cooled its interest.

NFLA issued a media release saying the demise of the Moorside project was predictable. It compared this decision with the many successful renewable energy projects being developed instead. It includes the particular support given towards renewables over nuclear by the National Infrastructure Commission – the UK Government's advisors – as well as the urgency of the IPCC report. The collapse of the scheme in the most nuclear intensive part of the country is a major blow to the nuclear industry as well. Steering Committee members saw it as further proof that the 'nuclear renaissance' has badly stalled, putting pressure on realising other new nuclear projects, all of which have significant financial issues.

Financing UK new nuclear reactors -

As noted in previous Steering Committee reports, 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. At present, it would look like the Government is considering doing this through a controversial new funding model, called the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) scheme. In the last Steering Committee report, the Secretariat reported on how this scheme has been called into question by the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee, the National Audit Office and the Parliamentary All-Party Infrastructure Development Group.

Research by the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor Pete Roche argues that the RAB model would allow the companies behind constructing new nuclear reactors to earn a "fair" rate of return on the money invested as well as recovering their operating costs. This "fair" rate of return should be the rate of return earned by private-sector projects with a similar degree of risk and it should be reassessed every five to eight years. Currently, monopoly energy companies are allowed to earn a real rate of return of about 6%. Under the RAB scheme, the likes of Hitachi or EDF would be allowed to start recovering their costs from consumers as soon as they start to invest. While this will be a major positive for investors, it places a major additional risk on consumers.

In his analysis of the possible use of the RAB model for the Wylfa B project, Dr David Toke calculates the loss to the taxpayer could be as high as **£20 billion**. This is because the whole project relies on their not being cost over-runs on a nuclear reactor project, something that has rarely happened for any global nuclear project, and recent international examples show huge final budgets compared to the original.

Steering Committee members were highly concerned with this proposed scheme, which looked even worse than the PFI schemes of the 1990s onwards. They requested that the Secretariat keep a close monitoring of these proposals.

NFLA submission to the Wylfa B Planning Inspectorate inquiry / NFLA model response to Irish transboundary consultation on Wylfa B -

Steering Committee members welcomed a NFLA Secretariat response to the National Planning Inspectorate for its inquiry into a Development Control Order and outline approval for the Wylfa B planning application in Anglesey. The submission is on the NFLA website.

In a separate development, following the recent transboundary consultation initiated by the Irish Government – and coordinated through Irish Councils – the Irish Government has announced a similar process to consider the potential impacts to Ireland of Wylfa B. The closing date for this consultation is 25th January 2019. The Steering Committee asked the NFLA Secretariat to put together as quickly as possible a model response for Irish Councils. It will likely fuse some of the elements from the NFLA response to the Wylfa planning inquiry with points it made in its joint response to KIMO on the marine and atmospheric impacts of a UK new nuclear programme, giving particular reference to Wylfa. This will be authorised by the All Ireland Forum Co-Chairs as soon as it is put together.

Hinkley Point C update and French Government announcement to close 15 reactors -

EDF has been given approval by the UK regulatory agencies to start to pour concrete to create the base for its first European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) on the Hinkley Point C site in West Somerset. Contracts are being signed for lots of work on the site, but wider problems could still create later problems for the project.

A key factor is the development of the identical EPR site at Flamanville in Normandy. This has been delayed now a number of times, and the current serious problem are issues with mismanaging faults in the construction of a prototype reactor on the site. EDF has been rebuked by French safety regulators for failings in the construction of a prototype reactor in Normandy. In late October, the French nuclear regulator ASN has demanded EDF carries out a thorough analysis of welds in a critical part of the Flamanville 3 EPR reactor. These issues means the site is not likely to now open until 2020 – several years late – and the budget for it has now tripled to £9.6bn.

As most of EDF is owned by the French state, its vulnerability to issues within French nuclear / energy policy is also a factor for the Hinkley C project. Following up what has been French energy policy for the past decade, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that 14 French nuclear reactors will be closed by 2035, of which between four and six will be closed down by 2030. The NFLA Secretariat will continue to monitor these developments and comment accordingly.

Bradwell and Sizewell update -

On the 15th November the nuclear regulators announced that the Chinese HPR1000 planned for the Bradwell B site has completed the second stage of Generic Design Assessment (GDA). The regulators have not identified at this stage of the GDA process any fundamental safety, security or environmental issues that would prevent the issue of a Design Acceptance Confirmation (DAC) and a Statement of Design Acceptability (SoDA). Following the completion of this initial high-level technical assessment, the process will now move on to a more detailed design assessment stage.

EDF have announced that they plan to start the third level of public consultation on their plans to develop new nuclear reactors at the Sizewell site in Suffolk from the 4th January 2019. The company was criticised in the previous stage by local Councils for the lack of information provided on key areas. NFLA will consider the consultation and provide a recommendation to the next Steering Committee meeting on whether to reply to it.

Developments with Small Modular Nuclear (SMR) Reactors -

In early November, the UK Government announced it would provide £32 million for businesses to test small modular nuclear reactors and bring them to market. The Advanced Manufacturing and Construction Programme will allow companies to bid for a share of the funding and help them commercialise the technology, which could “radically reduce” the costs associated with the nuclear industry.

Developers will also be invited to submit design proposals to identify potential risks with proposals early on, in an effort to reduce investment risks for potential backers. In a parallel announcement,

the UK nuclear regulators will commence Generic Design Assessment (GDA) of new, small reactors that are put forward by developers next year. This is all part of a process to try and speed up support this sector.

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 radioactive waste policy / CORWM policy –

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.

It was expected that a response to these consultations and an announcement of the next stage to seek ‘volunteer’ communities interested in hosting a deep underground repository would take place by the end of the year. Both look like they have been postponed until the new year, due to the amount of time the Government is having to put on dealing with the Brexit issue.

In a related development the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM), which advises the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments, has published a paper on the geological issues around a repository. In the paper, CoRWM notes that RWM, the UK’s delivery body for a GDF, has developed generic environmental safety cases (GESCs) for the three rock types: hard rocks (metamorphic and igneous rocks), soft rocks (clays and mudstones) and evaporites (salt deposits). CoRWM says the recognition that three very different rock types can provide for a safe GDF highlights the difficulty associated with selecting a ‘best’ geology as each rock type have their own advantages and disadvantages.

CoRWM concludes that geological attributes or parameters cannot be compared across rock types, and the concept of a site which scores ‘highest’ on all parameters’ simply cannot occur. The different and various roles played by geological settings proposed for GDFs across the world highlight this issue. CoRWM says it recommended against geological screening in 2014 – a core part of current UK and Welsh Government policy - because the level of knowledge of the geology of much of the UK at the depths under consideration is too rudimentary to support a ‘screening out/in’ process. This position could only be changed by introducing, country-wide, a level of geological investigation, including investigative boreholes. This would clearly be unsupportable on both economic and public acceptability grounds. The NGO Cumbria Trust fundamentally disagree with this paper and have written to CORWM raising concerns over their independence from government.

NDA / RWM NGO Forum postponed -

The first indication that UK / Welsh Government policy on ‘geological disposal’ had slipped was in an email to the NFLA Secretary that a proposed first meeting of a stakeholder Forum between NGOs and the NDA / RWM had also been put back from 10th December to February 2019.

The NFLA Secretary has been instrumental in seeking improvements from the NDA & RWM with stakeholder who take a more critical view of its activities. The Secretariat has been cooperating with the NDA Stakeholder Manager Bill Hamilton to hold a wide-ranging meeting on the core decommissioning and radioactive waste management activities of the NDA, and plans being developed by RWM around a new deep underground repository.

The NFLA Secretary is also engaging with the Safety Director of BAE Systems over a process to discuss a review of Site Stakeholder Groups and Local Liaison Committees that monitor the work of nuclear sites. A proposal has been made by the NFLA Secretary for meaningful discourse an answer to this proposal is still awaited.

The Steering Committee welcomed the leadership of the NFLA Secretariat on these issues.

NDA consultation on developing a single radioactive waste management strategy -

The NFLA has responded to the NDA over its 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.

NFLA has been particularly critical in the past of the NDA's moves to divert waste from the Low Level Waste Repository in to other waste streams. This 'divert and diluting waste' activity goes counter to NFLA's environmental principles. NFLA are also critical of the way the NDA use volume of waste as a comparator, rather than its radioactive content. The NFLA submission can be found on the NFLA website.

Sellafield and Dounreay progress -

The latest annual Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee report on progress at Sellafield was published at the end of October. While it acknowledges and welcomes safety improvements and project progress in a number of areas, it also highlights large cost overruns and ineffective management structures that were stifling the work of the NDA. It is also critical of the UK Government's oversight of Sellafield and the NDA, which it argues needs to considerably improve. A NFLA media release commented that it welcomed the improvements that have been made, but it remains concerned that costs are still not being brought under control at the site – an expected £913 million overspend on major projects at the site is very disappointing. The report also noted that the NDA is not clear how these cost overruns have taken place. The NFLA share the concern of the Committee on the long-running lack of decision as to what to do with the plutonium stockpile at Sellafield – the largest of its type in the world. NFLA responded to consultations on this matter over 8 years ago, and still no decision has been made on it. NFLA has called for the material to be immobilised and safety managed.

In November a major milestone took place at Sellafield with the final work of its Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant, or THORP. Its closure largely comes from the fact that there is now no international trade in reprocessing spent fuel, and has not been for some time, particularly exacerbated following the Fukushima disaster. NFLA was consistently opposed to its expensive creation, seeing it as a nuclear 'white elephant'. An excellent analysis of THORP by the NGO CORE shows it has never achieved the targets that were set for it, and the expense of construction and development of the plant was eye-wateringly expensive. The challenges in decommissioning it will also be complex, and likely to exercise the NDA for decades to come.

In terms of Dounreay, the site operator has awarded a £22million contract to the Graham Group to build an extension to the waste store on the site. Dounreay's existing above-ground intermediate level-waste store will be extended. The store holds waste processed and packaged as part of the multi-million pound decommissioning and clean-up of Dounreay. The construction project began in October and is expected to take about three years to complete. It was also noted that staff at Dounreay have been offered the chance of a new job once their work at the site is finished. About 1,100 Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) employees have been made the offer by DSRL's parent company Cavendish Dounreay Partnership. The new jobs would be with one of Cavendish Dounreay Partnership's firms. Alternatively, employees have been offered training to place them in the "strongest possible position" to take up a role with a local company. An interim end state, when the decommissioning work has been completed, is expected to be reached between 2030 and 2033.

Hinkley Point C 'radioactive mud' issue

Over the past year, NFLA and NGOs have raised real concerns that approvals 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 attracted over 70,000 signatures and the matter has been discussed by the Welsh Assembly. At the September NFLA Welsh Forum seminar it was clear that the issue had raised, and galvanised the anti-nuclear movement in Wales, as well as concerned many councillors across the south coast of Wales.

A second, at times acrimonious debate on the matter took place in the Senedd. Despite the considerable public unease, the Welsh Government opposed a joint Plaid Cymru / Conservative motion for tests to be made of the sediment due to be dumped at the Cardiff Deep Grounds. Despite this, a number of Labour AMs voiced real concern over the planned dredging and dumping. A legal action supported by the Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance had to be withdrawn as it was made clear, every day delaying EDF's dredging plans would cost the complainant £110k a day in costs. It also became clear that, given regulatory approval had already been given, the Welsh Government would also be liable to significant costs if there was a delay to the dredging.

As a result, EDF appointed dredging companies have dumped the first batch of 300,000 tonnes of mud from the cleared Hinkley Point C to the Cardiff Bay grounds. It has been made clear through this case, that a second, similar amount of mud is planned for dredging in the next couple of years, and this is likely to be challenged much more vociferously.

NFLA is keeping in close communication with the Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance, who are seeking further cooperation with Hinkley pressure groups and with and Irish environmental groups looking at the trans-boundary impacts of the Wylfa site.

Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS

The LGA's NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum for England and Wales) group met on the 5th December in London. The NFLA Secretary attended it and the main presentation came from RWM discussing the site criteria and work they would provide in the first stage of information to a potential volunteer site community.

COSLA's SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) group met on the 6th December. The new Renfrewshire Council Secretary of the group, has been in discussion with the NFLA Secretary over the agenda for the meeting. As well as the NFLA monthly newsletter, the NFLA report on Hunterston B keyway root cracks will also be tabled. The NFLA Secretary will speak with the Secretary after the meeting to see what the Committee plans to do on this and other issues.

The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor attended the Scottish Government Nuclear Sites meeting on the 29th November. At the meeting it was noted that SEPA plan to initiate a consultation on the Scottish Nuclear Sector Plan, which will probably take place between 21st December and February 8th. It will also be considered by SCCORS. The NFLA Secretary is discussing with the NFLA Scotland Convener and Vice Convener over developing a NFLA response which could look at its vision for the future of the Scottish nuclear industry in terms of decommissioning and safe radioactive waste management.

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 progress report on decentralised energy – APSE Energy Conference -

Each year the NFLA publishes a detail update on best practice in decentralised energy across the UK and Ireland. The latest can be found on the NFLA website, and it has been very well received. In putting together this report, NFLA interacts with the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) and its energy section. Through some external funding, the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor Pete Roche was able to attend the APSE Energy Conference in Stirling. This considered current progress in decentralised energy, and specific developments around a potential Scottish Government Publicly Owned Energy Company. The report was provided to a number of Members of the Scottish Parliament and the NFLA was able to publish it on its website.

IPCC report, 'zero carbon' towns and cities and wider central government policy

As widely reported across the media, the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that there is as little as just a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of

drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for potentially hundreds of millions of people. The authors of the landmark report argue urgent and unprecedented changes are needed to reach the target, which they say is affordable and feasible although it lies at the most ambitious end of the Paris Climate Agreement pledge to keep temperatures between 1.5C and 2C.

Responding to this urgency, a number of Councils have brought forward their targets to become a zero carbon town or city. The most ambitious to date is Bristol, which has set a 2030 zero carbon target. Manchester, on the advice of the Tyndall Centre, has set its target for 2038. A NFLA media release stressing the urgency with which local government has to revise its low carbon work and re-prioritise action plans is on its website, and was welcomed by the Steering Committee.

An important part of the IPCC report rather lost in the detail was its view that the time and cost in developing new nuclear is too long and too high for it to be deployed in great quantity in comparison to renewables. As the IPCC report notes: "the costs of nuclear energy have increased over time in some developed nations, mainly because of the prevailing conditions, where increased investment risks in high-capital-intensive technologies have become important." As the NFLA has noted the report effectively notes that the theoretical benefits nuclear energy could bring in the fight against climate change are too weak, too slow, too expensive and too risky.

Despite this, Steering Committee members were alarmed to hear that investment in renewable energy has been cut by 56% in the UK in 2017, the largest drop of any industrialised country due to policy changes, large cuts to feed-in tariffs and a 'stop-start' support from UK Government ministers. The opportunity to build a vibrant and resilient onshore wind and solar industry due to such change may now be lost, despite the positive moves in the area of offshore wind.

The issue is also of real concern in Ireland. The latest report from the Climate Change Advisory Council, an independent body which monitors performance in this area, says Ireland is falling well short of meeting carbon emissions reduction targets set by the European Union. "Irish greenhouse gas emissions are rising rather than falling", says the Council. "Ireland is completely off course in terms of achieving its 2020 and 2030 emissions reduction targets."

These issues remain of real concern to the NFLA Steering Committee and it was agreed to look to develop strategic alliances with other relevant groups that support urgent, affirmative action from government.

The potential of hydrogen green gas / geothermal energy

At the NFLA English Forum, attendees had a presentation on the potential of hydrogen gas from Dan Sadler of Northern Gas Networks. His presentation outlined that almost four million homes across northern England could be converted to use hydrogen gas for heating and cooking by 2034 under what would be a £23 billion scheme. Boilers and gas cookers would need to be replaced or converted under the plan, which would add more than £50 to the annual energy bill of every UK home, according to three of the main UK companies involved in gas supply.

The option of using hydrogen is being taken seriously by the UK Government, which has already committed an initial £25 million to funding demonstrator projects to show it can be run safely. In a new report by Northern Gas Networks and Cadent, who own 168,000km of British gas distribution pipelines, and Equinor, the Norwegian company that supplies about 25% of Britain's current gas needs, they set out a detailed plan for a switch to hydrogen. It is the most detailed plan to date and shows how the switch could begin in 2028 with a seven-year programme to convert 3.7 million homes and 40,000 businesses in cities including Leeds, Newcastle, York, Manchester and Liverpool. NFLA Steering Committee welcome such an initiative and requested a new year briefing considering the issues around developing hydrogen green gas across the UK and Ireland.

In the area of geothermal energy, drilling is now underway at the British Geological Survey's Glasgow Geothermal Energy Research Field Site. The NFLA Secretariat will monitor this promising development of a new form of energy.

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 November 1st 2019, 7,675 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace. 25 new towns and cities have joined in the past 3 months.

A number of European members of Mayors for Peace were present at the UCLG 'World Forum on Urban Violence and Education for Co-existence and Peace' which was held in Madrid on November 5th to 8th. The Catalan Vice President Granollers were also involved in a number of meetings in a global conference of municipalities looking at ways to create more peaceful towns and cities. Representatives from ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) were present at the Madrid Conference, and launched the ICAN Cities Appeal at it.

ICAN Cities Appeal and resolution to support the TPNW -

Following the UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter September meeting, a model resolution was developing asking Councils to formally supporting the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Manchester City Council passed such a model resolution at its full Council meeting on the 28th November. Renfrewshire Council is considering a similar resolution at its full Council meeting on the 13th December. In addition, on November 7th ICAN launched a 'Cities Appeal' to encourage towns and cities across the globe, particularly in states which oppose the TPNW, to pass resolutions of support for the Treaty. The Steering Committee welcomed the Council resolutions and fully supports the ICAN Cities Appeal.

Visit to the UK and Ireland of Peace Boat and Hiroshima Peace Legacy Ambassadors –

In early October, the NFLA Secretariat assisted the Japanese NGO 'Peace Boat' in two successful civic visits and associated meetings in Liverpool and Dublin. This was followed by a short UK tour of Hiroshima Peace Legacy Ambassadors bringing the message of the 'hibakusha' (A bomb survivors) to councillors and schools. This included civic meetings and associated peace education events in Manchester, Oldham and Coventry in early November. The Steering Committee welcomed these events.

Agreed: To note the report and for Councils to seek to pass TPNW resolutions.

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.

House of Lords consultation on UK nuclear weapons policy -

The House of Lords International Relations Select Committee has launched an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty at a time of growing international tension. The Committee is concerned in particular about tensions rising between nuclear-armed states and the potential fragmenting of existing non-proliferation and arms control agreements. The inquiry will also consider the creation of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the growing frustration of over two thirds of UN members with the lack of sufficient progress in nuclear weapons disarmament. The inquiry wishes to consider the state of global nuclear diplomacy and the role of the UK within it. The closing date for the consultation is the 18th January 2019. The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretariat should develop a response to it.

US gives notice that it plans to withdraw from the INF Treaty -

The US Government has given notice that it plans to withdraw from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. This important nuclear disarmament treaty was established in 1987 by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev and it banned ground-launch nuclear missiles with ranges from 500km to 5,500km. This historic treaty led to nearly 2,700 short and medium-range missiles being

eliminated, and an end to the dangerous stand-off between US Pershing and cruise missiles on one side, and Soviet SS-20 missiles on the other, at the height of the Cold War in Europe.

The US Government has been in dispute for some time with Russia over what it sees as the development and deployment of a new cruise missile. There is also concern in the US Administration that the INF Treaty also limits the US in its strategic rivalry with China in the Pacific, where it has no response to China's medium-range missiles that could threaten US bases, its allies like Japan and shipping.

The decision to abrogate from the Treaty requires in international law six months' notice to be given, so this decision would come into effect around April 2019. President Putin has responded that the US announcement could generate a new arms race and put Europe back to the days of the Cold War. There is also real concern that the US may also not renew the 2010 New Start agreement with Russia, which comes up for renewal in 2021. This treaty signed by President Obama and President Medvedev is another core pillar of nuclear arms control, as it limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons on either side to 1,550.

NFLA supported a joint letter by the No Trident Replacement Steering Group to the UK Government and a joint UK disarmament group's letter to 'The Guardian' raising real alarm over these developments. The Secretariat will monitor this alarming issue.

Defence budget and Trident -

In the autumn budget, the Chancellor pledged the Ministry of Defence (MOD) an extra £1bn between November and the end of 2019. The additional money would help to modernise key areas such as anti-submarine warfare and expertise in cyber offensives. This additional money comes after £800m was pledged in summer 2018. However, the former head of the Royal Navy argues that it is "a drop in the ocean" that will not resolve the "hollowing out" of armed forces. It is also much smaller than the suggested £20bn increase called for by the House of Commons Defence Select Committee. Among the defence programmes that will benefit from the extra resource will be the UK's continuous-at-sea Trident deterrent Dreadnought submarines. The crisis in the MOD's budget will continue to put serious pressure on it as it seeks the expensive replacement of the Trident programme with all its other defence needs and requirements. The NFLA Secretariat will continue to monitor this issue.

Faslane safety issues -

An assessment by the 'Ferret' investigative journalism service has uncovered documents that show that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has been reprimanded by the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR) five times in recent years. The notices allege a series of serious safety failings with submarines stationed on the Clyde and at the Faslane naval base, the home of Trident submarines.

In the reports, the regulator accused the MOD of a 'failure of safety culture', 'inadequate resourcing' and 'continued non-compliance'. In 2017, the MOD changed the classification of annual DNSR reports to 'secret' which prevents their publication under the Freedom of Information Act. As a result DNSR reports for 2015 – 18 have not been published. However, 'The Ferret' has just managed to use the Act to get information out of the MOD on DNSR official safety notices in recent years. The most recent notice in September 2017 involved a DNSR notice on the MOD's Strategic Weapon Project Team in Bristol for failing to comply with safety requirements on organisational capability. As such it was ordered to implement "adequate arrangements to control any change to its organisation structure or resources which may affect safety".

Defence diversification progress and GM Industrial Strategy response

A meeting of the UK Arms Conversion Defence Diversification took place in Manchester on the 29th October. It was chaired by the NFLA Secretary. The NFLA have also endorsed a submission by NET to the GMCA consultation on developing a local industrial strategy. It highlights using the strategy to support local defence diversification projects.

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 impact on current operating reactors -

The NFLA has been concerned about an increased number of keyway root cracks in graphite bricks that surround the Hunterston B nuclear reactor 3, and to a slightly lesser extent, Reactor 4. Similar issues have also been found with Hinkley Point B and the Heysham and Hartlepool reactors, all approaching forty years of operation. In May 2018, 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 also have to satisfy the nuclear regulator before the plant could be operated again.

At the NFLA Scotland meeting in Kilmarnock, Dr Ian Fairlie provided his views on the extent of the issue, particularly as it has been reported as many as 350 keyway root cracks have now been found on the reactor. The presentation was undertaken in conjunction with the independent nuclear engineering consultant John Large, who sadly and unexpectedly died in early November. John Large's overall assessment was that the reactor at Hunterston should not reopen.

Dr Fairlie's presentation was shared with Rob Edwards of the 'Ferret' investigative journalism service, which published an exclusive story on it picked up by the BBC, the Times, the National and the Herald. Following the story, EDF confirmed a further extension of the outage on Reactor 3 to February 21st and to Reactor 4 to January 15th. A NFLA briefing in the Scottish Parliament has now been organised with Ross Greer MSP on the 9th January. Steering Committee members welcomed the work done in this area and would be represented in January by the NFLA Scotland Vice Convener.

Fukushima update -

The main current issue facing the site remains over what to do with the huge amounts of radioactively contaminated water on the site. Documents seen by the Daily Telegraph in late October suggest that the Japanese Government is planning to release into the Pacific Ocean water containing radioactive material well above legally permitted levels.

The Fukushima site is running out of space to store contaminated water which has to be daily put on the stricken reactors to cool them. The highly controversial plan to dump as much as 1.09 million tons of water into the ocean has led to a fierce local, national and international backlash. Documents provided to the Telegraph suggest that the Advanced Liquid Processing System which is trying to eliminate the most radioactive elements contained in the water – apart from tritium – is failing. This means the like to radioactive iodine, ruthenium, rhodium, antimony, tellurium, cobalt and strontium remain in the water at low levels. The reports also note that the Japanese Government is aware of this problem. Steering Committee members noted their alarm at such reports.

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 -

The UK Government has published its response to replies to its consultation on changes to UK emergency planning regulations. A special briefing was provided to NGO representatives including the NFLA Secretary on the 9th November. This allowed for a useful interface of views. A follow up presentation is going to be provided to the BIES NGO Nuclear Policy Forum in mid-January. The NFLA Secretariat welcome the engagement from the Government in this area.

The changes will require legislative changes to the UK REPPER (Radiation Emergency Planning Public Information) Regulations in 2019 and some minor changes to legislation on nuclear transports. A core good practice guide is also being put together. The changes put an increased

responsibility on local authorities, particularly those who prepare offsite evacuation plans around civil and defence nuclear sites. There is also new roles for other Councils up to 50 kms from a nuclear sites, to take into account international learning points from the Fukushima disaster. The Steering Committee requested that the NFLA Secretary put together a full information briefing for member authorities on these important changes for publication in early January. It is important to note that local authorities and emergency services will be given 12 months in order to implement these significant changes.

NFLA nuclear transports 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 finished. This has taken a long time to develop due to the sheer amount of other work the Secretariat has been involved in, and that this briefing is attempting to be as comprehensive as possible. It is hoped to publish it in early January.

Agreed: To note the report.

11. Next NFLA Steering Committee meetings

The next NFLA Steering Committee meeting will take place in ***Central Library, Manchester on Friday 8th February 2019.***

NFLA Annual General Meeting – brief actions

The NFLA Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place directly after the Steering Committee.

The core agreed actions made by the AGM included:

- Councillor David Blackburn of Leeds City Council was unanimously elected as the NFLA Steering Committee Chair until the 2019 AGM. Thanks were given to the previous Chair, Councillor Ernie Galsworthy, who remains NFLA Welsh Forum Chair.
- A NFLA financial report was approved. Affiliation rates were agreed and would go up at a rate just below the current inflation rate of 2.5% in the UK and 0.5% in Ireland.
- It was agreed to reduce the number of Steering Committee meetings from five to four, to allow the Secretariat more time to respond to consultations and conduct original research. These would be held in Manchester, but effort would be undertaken to include video and telephone conferencing. The NFLA AGM will take place in Manchester in December 2019.
- The NFLA Service Plan for 2019 was agreed.
- The NFLA Communications Strategy was approved with continued use of social media.
- All NFLA staff and consultants used for policy work were thanked for their dedicated service in 2019.

NFLA Annual Policy Seminar 2018

A well-attended NFLA Annual Policy Seminar took place after the AGM and looked at the following:

- Paul Price of the An Taisce / Irish National Trust Climate Change Committee explained the real urgency in dealing with climate change and developing low carbon strategies in local government.
- Attracta Ui Bhroin of the Irish NGO 'Green Sword' explained how important it was for Irish Councils to work with their UK counterparts and environmental NGOs over the impacts of the UK nuclear legacy and new build programme to the island of Ireland.
- Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary considered the issues and scenarios for how 'Brexit' may impact on its areas of policy.

The presentations from these 3 excellent presentations can be found at the following web page:

<http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/presentations/nfla-annual-policy-seminar-2018-the-impacts-on-councils-of-nuclear-policy-development-climate-change-and-brexit/>