

# NFLA Policy Briefing No.186



Date: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019

Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee meeting and Joint Seminar with Mayors for Peace, Manchester Central Library, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019

## 1. Introductions to the meeting

The NFLA Steering Committee Chair, Councillor David Blackburn, welcomed all to Manchester and the first Steering Committee meeting of 2019. The Chair was pleased to welcome the meeting in Manchester City Council's videoconferencing suite in the Central Library. This facility would allow councillors and council officers of member authorities in more distant locations to be able to remotely interact and attend the meeting. The facility worked very well for this meeting.

## 2. National NFLA Forum meetings and connections with international partners

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 is hosting a joint seminar with the Mayors for Peace and ICAN UK in Manchester Central Library, following the NFLA Steering Committee, on the 8<sup>th</sup> February. It will be providing an overview of joint NFLA / Mayors for Peace work on the nuclear weapons issue over the past few months from the NFLA / Chapter Secretary Sean Morris. Councillor Eddy Newman from Manchester City Council will outline the content and strategy in the unanimous approval of a resolution supporting the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty. Kelly Simcock of the Foundation for Peace and Sara Belhay from Peace Jam will also outline their work.

### ***NFLA Scotland Forum -***

The NFLA Scotland Forum will hold a business meeting and its AGM in Glasgow City Chambers on the 14<sup>th</sup> February. The business meeting will consider major changes in UK and Scottish energy policy, concerns over safety at the Hunterston B nuclear reactor and other issues of interest to the Forum. The AGM will appoint its Convener, Vice Convener and other representatives to the NFLA Steering Committee. There will also be a short presentation from the group 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' Scotland about divestment and Council pension funds.

### ***NFLA All Ireland Forum -***

The NFLA All Ireland Forum will host its spring seminar in Kilkenny City Hall on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March. The meeting will consider the step change needed in Irish energy policy to start meaningfully reducing carbon emissions, and the role decentralised energy could play. It will also consider the main nuclear hazards from the UK affecting Ireland. A flyer will be issued imminently.

### ***NFLA Welsh Forum –***

A joint public meeting is being organised with other groups to look at core nuclear issues following the decision to halt the Wylfa B development in Anglesey. This is being planned for late March / early April and is likely to take place in Gwynedd. Other participating groups in the meeting include PAWB, CADNO, WANA and CND Cymru. A flyer will be issued once the meeting is confirmed.

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES:  
WORKING FOR A RENEWABLE, SAFE & RENEWABLE FUTURE**

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### **Co-operation with international partner groupings-**

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 with a joint meeting planned for October. A joint letter of concern has been sent to the Slovakian Prime Minister calling on him to stop the opening of the Mochovce nuclear reactors based on technology from the 1970s and 1980s.

NFLA have been in discussion with **KIMO International** over the publication of a briefing over sea-to-land transfer of low levels of radiation, as well as the recent transboundary consultation on the Wylfa B nuclear reactor project.

NFLA have also cooperated with **Mayors for Peace**, the International Campaign to **Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)** and **Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND)**, as noted below in items 7 and 8.

**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')**

As Steering Committee members noted, the final part of the process for the UK to leave the European Union – the full assent of Parliament – is proving highly difficult and contentious, putting the possibility of an accidental 'no deal' Brexit as a real risk as time to resolve this matter runs out. The original deal was lost by over 200 votes in Parliament, and at present the Prime Minister has been asked to go back to the European Commission to renegotiate the 'Irish backstop' issue. The likelihood of change from the EU on this matter is unlikely unless the UK Government moves on some of its other 'red lines' – such as remaining in a Customs Union.

At this point, it is simply not possible for the NFLA Secretariat to predict the outcome of these talks or if an extension will be allowed should they fail. The consequences of a 'no deal' across all areas of policy, including nuclear and energy policy, remains of great concern. The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretariat should monitor this issue and respond when it becomes clear what the final outcome of these discussions will be.

In terms of the UK leaving the Euratom nuclear safeguards arrangements, the UK Government provided an update on this matter to the recent meeting of its Forum with NGOs. The update noted that a domestic nuclear safeguards regime is ready to be in place for the 30<sup>th</sup> March. In a separate meeting with the ONR Deputy Chief Nuclear Safety Inspector and the NFLA Secretary, he also confirmed that he was satisfied that adequate arrangements are in place. He was concerned with a 'no deal' scenario, which he said may require some last minute bilateral discussion to take place with the European Commission. The Government also noted contingency planning is in place for a 'no deal' scenario in this area of policy.

**Agreed: To note the report and to remain concerned with the potential impacts of a 'no deal' 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.

#### **Hitachi halts the Wylfa B new nuclear project –**

In mid-January, Hitachi announced that it was 'halting' plans to develop the Wylfa B new nuclear project. This is primarily due to its problems at raising the sufficient amount of finance for the project, putting too much a financial risk to the company. In addition, negotiations with the British government over additional funding beyond the generous amount being offered, hit an impasse. In

the end, Hitachi are not confident of finding adequate and significant external funding to support its own investment. The Hitachi board meeting decided to suspend all work on the plant, including design and preparations for construction. Hitachi will also freeze around £2.1 billion in assets held by its British nuclear business and write down their value, likely enduring a significant financial loss for the fiscal year ending in March.

The Steering Committee welcomed this decision, which comes shortly after the decision by Toshiba to abandon development of the Sellafield Moorside site.

The decision puts a major hole in the UK Government's energy policy, where new nuclear was going to provide a third of 'low carbon' electricity by 2035. The Energy Minister Greg Clarke acknowledged this in his statement to the House of Commons. He commented that part of Hitachi's reasoning is accurate in that the price of renewables, particularly offshore wind, have come down significantly in price. He reiterated though support for Hinkley Point C, as well as for Sizewell and Bradwell, and for small modular nuclear reactors. Mr Clarke also announced an energy white paper would be issued in the summer spelling out a shifted energy policy and its likely support for the Revenue Asset Base funding scheme for paying for energy projects, which the NFLA remain highly concerned about.

The decision is also a major blow to Welsh energy policy, particularly after the cancellation of support in 2018 for the Swansea tidal lagoon project. The new Welsh First Minister, Mark Drakeford, is expected to instigate a review of Welsh energy priorities. Financial support for Anglesey has been called for from all Welsh political parties. In this vein, NFLA supports the local pressure group PAWB's suggested manifesto for funding to support local, decentralised, renewable energy projects.

What is clear from the Hitachi decision is that the economics for new nuclear in the UK makes it difficult to realise as renewables continue to reduce in price. The Steering Committee welcomed this potential change to UK energy policy and sees the real challenge now is to use this opportunity to campaign for a refocused policy in favour of renewables, energy efficiency and energy storage.

#### ***Hinkley Point C update –***

EDF Energy announced in mid-December 2018 the completion of the first part of the concrete pouring for the base slab for unit 1 of Hinkley Point C (HPC). Four more pours of concrete will be required before the so-called "rafts" that supports the reactor building are complete. Work is expected to be concluded by June 2019. It is at this point that EDF claim construction of the reactor will officially begin, and for its final investment decision on the project to be made.

A key factor in developing Hinkley C remains for EDF to complete the identical Flamanville reactor in Normandy. However, it was reported in late January that welding problems on large parts of the reactor site may have to be redone on the order of the nuclear regulator ASN. At ASN's annual nuclear safety review, the chief regulator said there remained questions about the quality of eight weldings on pipes between the Flamanville 3 reactor and the turbine building, and that there was also a problem with one of the weldings. EDF said it would make further tests in February on faulty weldings at Flamanville 3 but added it still targeted loading nuclear fuel at the plant in the fourth quarter of 2019. However, if it is forced to make such reweldings that could see the timetable slip again – it is already 7 years late from its original opening date.

The NFLA Secretariat will continue to monitor these developments and comment accordingly.

#### ***Sizewell and Bradwell update –***

The third stage public consultation for Sizewell C began on 4th January 2019. It will run for 12 weeks until 29th March 2019. The Steering Committee approved that the NFLA Secretariat should respond to it. EDF says the proposals have been shaped through feedback received from two previous stages of public consultation. It is also clear that EDF are hoping that the UK Government may provide financial support for a Sizewell C through its proposed new Revenue Asset Base scheme. EDF claim the project can come in 20% cheaper than Hinkley Point due to learning the lessons from building the Hinkley Point C plant in Somerset.

Members noted that the Chinese owners of the proposed Bradwell B plant have suggested they can start accelerating this project – once the design assessment of it has been approved – to assist with the gaps created by other large nuclear projects being halted. They have announced a collaboration with Rolls Royce in an attempt to allay fears over Chinese investment into sensitive energy projects. It is notable as that the UK nuclear regulator, the ONR, has requested a long series of safety improvements to the proposed design of the Chinese HPR1000 (‘Hualong’) reactor.

***Developments with Small Modular Nuclear (SMR) Reactors –***

With large nuclear reactor projects floundering, those pushing for the development of small nuclear reactors are encouraging the UK Government to provide active support for this ‘new’ technology. In late January it was reported that a consortium led by Rolls Royce is seeking £200 million of financial support from the UK Government to develop its technology. The NFLA Secretariat will monitor this development.

***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 / Welsh Government policy on finding a site for a deep waste repository -***

The UK Government (with the Welsh Government following shortly afterwards) has formally launched a new search for a community to host a ‘geological disposal facility’ for the UK’s most hazardous nuclear waste by publishing two documents – one on implementing geological disposal and the other responding to comment on how the Government will seek to work with communities / Councils.

The report sets out the UK Government’s framework for managing higher activity radioactive waste through geological disposal, including how the delivery body, Radioactive Waste Management Ltd (RWM), will work in partnership with communities to identify a suitable location to host a geological disposal facility. The process to find a location for a deep underground response will be led by RWM Ltd, which is a subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). They are given the role to work with local authorities and other community representatives to find a suitable location. The Government has stressed that that the development will only be in a “willing community” and that local communities across the UK will have a “critically important role”.

Letters have now gone out to all Councils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to ask if they would be willing to express an interest in potentially hosting a deep waste repository. As Steering Committee members noted, this has already led to a number of Councils stating quite publicly that they would not express an interest. NFLA lead member in Northern Ireland, Newry, Mourne and Down Council, passed a unanimous motion saying it would not express an interest and calling on all Councils in Northern Ireland to do likewise. A number of Welsh Councils have made similar public comments and passed similar motions.

While the NFLA remains sceptical on the safety and appropriateness of such a development, it will monitor this policy process, and the Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretary should attend a RWM workshop on the 19<sup>th</sup> February consider the RWM’s ‘Site Evaluation’ criteria consultation. It was also agreed that the NFLA respond to this consultation.

***NDA / RWM NGO Forum and NDA Stakeholder Summit 2019 –***

The NFLA Secretary is in discussion with the NDA and RWM over holding a Forum with NGO’s – similar to that already undertaken by the UK Government and the Officer for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) – to discuss the deep waste repository issue and safety / waste issues at NDA sites. It is hoped this meeting will be held in March or April 2019. Steering Committee members welcomed this initiative.

The NDA have confirmed that the 2019 Annual Stakeholder Summit would be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July at Coleg Menai, Llangefni, Anglesey. This is close to the Wylfa A site. The Steering

Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretary and NFLA Welsh Forum Chair Cllr Galsworthy would represent it at the meeting.

### ***Environment Agency consultation on proposed changes to Sellafield's environmental permits***

Just before Christmas, the NFLA submitted a response to the Environment Agency commenting on its consultation on proposed changes to Sellafield's environmental permits. The changes applied for, according to Sellafield Ltd (SL), were as follows:

- some significantly reduced discharge limits;
- removal of some site discharge limits where discharges have fallen below significant levels;
- replacement of plant limits with plant notification levels to enable Sellafield Ltd to optimise discharge routing and the effective use of treatment plants;
- the introduction of a 2 tier site limit structure after the end of Magnox reprocessing (i.e. upper and lower site limits). This will allow a time-limited increase to an upper limit (where necessary, providing an acceptable BAT justification is made);
- introduction of a specific tritium limit for solid waste disposals at the on-site landfill (CLESA);
- an updating of the permit to the latest template so that it reflects recent guidance changes.

The conclusion of the NFLA to the application was as follows:

- NFLA finds the proposals extremely disappointing with a large 'headroom' usually allowed for between the allowable limits for discharges and the expected discharges which means that in almost every case actual discharges could theoretically end up being higher than they were in 2017 without breaching the allowable limits.
- Given the relatively high dose from historic discharges to the critical group and the fact that these are figures for adults which don't necessarily take into account the greater vulnerability of pregnant women and children, it is important to reduce additional doses from future discharges by the maximum amount feasible.
- NFLA calls for a considerable reduction in the headroom allowed with Sellafield Ltd required to make a case on each occasion it is predicting higher than expected discharges.

The Secretariat will monitor the response from the Environment Agency to this consultation.

### ***Scottish Nuclear Sector Plan -***

The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has put out for consultation a Scottish Nuclear Sector Plan considering the regulation around existing nuclear sites and the decommissioning strategy for the future. This is part of a whole suite of plans for all sectors SEPA interacts with.

SEPA claim to have consulted widely within the nuclear industry and that the plan is an ambitious way forward. SEPA do not seem to have interacted with NGOs and groups like the NFLA on this and the NFLA submission, argues that the Plan needs to be much more ambitious.

The NFLA response deals with the core issues of SEPA's plan, but also advocates a new vision which looks at the phasing out of nuclear power in Scotland in favour of a renewable Scotland. The Steering Committee welcomed this response and approved its publication.

### ***Sea to Land Transfers of Man-made Radioactivity -***

The independent marine radioactivity consultant Tim Deere-Jones has offered NFLA and KIMO a joint briefing considering the impact of radioactive discharges into the marine environment coming back to land through storm surges and suchlike. Having spoken with the KIMO Secretary, the NFLA Secretary is minded to publish this document as a joint briefing. The Steering Committee approved this report which will be published on the NFLA website shortly.

### ***Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS -***

The LGA's NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum for England and Wales) group is meeting in Manchester on the 20<sup>th</sup> March. This meeting will be primarily considering the UK and Welsh Government's policy processes to support a deep radioactive waste repository. The NFLA Secretary and a number of NFLA English Forum members are attending it.

COSLA's SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) group met on the 6<sup>th</sup> December. The new Renfrewshire Council Secretary of the group, David Low tabled the NFLA monthly newsletter and the NFLA report on Hunterston B keyway root cracks will also be tabled. The NFLA Secretary is consulting with the Secretary and the Co-Chair Cllr Michelle Campbell to see what the Committee plans to do on this and other issues. A verbal report was provided to the Steering Committee.

***Agreed: To note the report. To respond to the RWM Site Evaluation consultation.***

## **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 'Just Transition' at Hunterston -***

The NFLA regularly seeks to publish reports which highlight the benefits of decentralised, renewable energy to produce low carbon electricity and help to mitigate climate change. The latest report comes as part of the debate over the issues relating to the aging Hunterston B reactor in North Ayrshire.

The NFLA Scotland Forum commissioned the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor to provide an overview of how accelerated decommissioning, developing the Scottish Government's 'Just Transition' programme for supporting jobs from nuclear to renewables, and encouraging local Councils to consider developing decentralised energy projects could protect the local economy and enhance it after the nuclear site closed. That report is on the NFLA website.

The core conclusions to the report are:

- Jobs are not going to disappear at Hunterston B as soon as it stops generating.
- It will take ten years to prepare the station for a period of care and maintenance over which time the number of people employed will fall gradually.
- The NDA should consider accelerated decommissioning of the site, which would involve developing robotics to dismantle the reactors more quickly rather than waiting 60 years for radioactivity to decay.
- Nevertheless a host of 'social interventions' will be required to protect workers jobs and livelihoods.
- There is much to learn from the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership.
- Electricity supplies are not threatened in the immediate future by the closure of Hunterston B.
- Decentralised and smart energy projects should be promoted locally as a way forward for the future.
- There should be a particular focus on whole house retrofits to continue the downward trend for energy demand.
- Speeding up efficiency schemes – like the one run by the Energy Agency and South Ayrshire Council - would not only help to reduce consumption but it would also help to provide jobs.

This presentation very much helped at the Scottish Parliament briefing and for the cross-party group of MSPs that attended it.

The NFLA Secretariat is currently in the process of developing its annual overview of best practice in decentralised and smart energy across local government. The 2019 report will concentrate on the practicalities of prioritising such programmes as part of the ambitious low carbon policies most Councils are aiming to deliver by 2030 and 2050. The Steering Committee welcomed both of these important reports.

### ***Local authority 'climate emergency' resolutions and city climate commissions -***

As noted at the last Steering Committee, a number of Councils have considered the urgency and huge challenge from the IPCC report to seek to be zero carbon by 2030 and have started developing resolutions acknowledging this as a climate emergency that requires radical action. These 'Climate Emergency Declarations' have recently been passed by the likes of Bradford, Oxford, Kirklees, Brighton and Hove and Sheffield.

In a wide-ranging discussion on these matters, Steering Committee members agreed that such motions can give Councils a greater sense of urgency, generate important local publicity and assist in putting clear targets to meet the IPCC targets for being zero carbon by the 2030s. This will be a focal part for the NFLA's 2019 report in decentralised energy.

A further positive development for decentralised energy is the creation of city climate change commissions. Such commissions will be established in Edinburgh, Belfast, and Leeds to co-ordinate local climate action between businesses, the public sector, and civil society. They will also help to accelerate the flow of green finance across the UK and encourage local action to tackle climate change. The UK Government has provided £3.5m for this Place-based Climate Action Network (P-CAN), to help cities across the country attract low-carbon investment in support of regional climate strategies. The network will include researchers from universities across the UK, and will explore innovative approaches to sustainable finance, renewable energy and low-carbon projects, and also highlight the business opportunities and social and economic benefits of local energy projects to communities. NFLA welcomes this development and will invite its member Leeds City Council to explain it a future NFLA English Forum meeting.

### ***Energy efficiency and electricity demand -***

Information from the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) reported that the amount of electricity generated in the UK last year fell to its lowest level in 25 years. At the same time, output from renewable sources rose to another record high, generating an estimated 33% of the UK total in 2018. Lower per-capita electricity generation and cleaner supplies have contributed roughly equal shares to the reduction in power sector CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since demand peaked in 2005. This has helped to cut UK greenhouse gas emissions overall, even as the economy grows and population rises.

While continued reductions in UK electricity demand are likely in the short term, the CCC and others expect UK electricity demand to increase in the medium term, if climate goals are to be met. This is because continued improvements in energy efficiency would be more than offset by increased demand from electric vehicles (EVs) and electric heat pumps. For example, the CCC's central scenario to 2030 anticipates electricity demand of 365TWh, up around 8% on 2018 levels (335TWh of electricity was generated in the UK in 2018). This allows for 2m heat pumps and 20TWh for EVs. Demand from road transport could eventually reach more than double this level, if the whole UK fleet switches to EVs. However, it should be noted that a new report from Redburn, a UK research and investment company, suggests the growing energy efficiency of electric vehicles means that there may be a very limited increase in demand from the electrification of transport.

The Steering Committee agreed that a really positive campaigning point for the NFLA is that renewables are on course to overtake fossil fuels for the first time as the UK's primary electricity source as early as 2020, according to the latest market forecast from EnAppSys. If the current trends continue, the market analyst predicts growing renewable power sources such as wind and solar will generate 121.3TWh of electricity over the calendar year of 2020, pushing ahead of declining coal and gas-fired power sources with a forecasted 105.6TWh of generation. Another important figures comes analysis from the University of Birmingham and Imperial College which shows that Britain has shifted 30% of its electricity away from fossil fuels in **just nine years**. In 2009, Britain generated nearly 75% of its electricity using natural gas and coal. In 2018, this dropped to under 45% - a rapid transition away from fossil fuels in under a decade. It was agreed to use such figures both in future research and in upcoming Forum seminars.

### ***Agreed: To note the report.***

#### **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 January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, 7,709 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace. A core aim of 2019 will be to take membership beyond the 8,000 mark.

The NFLA Secretary (in his role as Manchester's Mayors for Peace officer), along with representatives from a number of European Mayors for Peace Vice Presidents took part in meetings around the 3rd Basel Peace Forum in Switzerland.

This allowed for a separate, joint European seminar of Mayors for Peace with the group Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) on January 15, facilitated by the Basel Peace Office. This was opened by a representation of the Basel Stadt Kanton who noted how they wished to get more involved in the work of Mayors for Peace. Presentations at the meeting were given by the Deputy Mayor of Hannover on the work of the German Mayors for Peace Chapter, the Honorary Mayor of Frogn on the role of legislators and the NFLA Secretary on the Mayors for Peace Action Plan and the Council's peace education policies. Other speakers talked about the PNND Action Plan, nuclear disarmament and nuclear divestment policies.

A 'Basel Appeal' was also adopted calling on the US and Russia not to abrogate from the INF Treaty and work rather on multilateral nuclear disarmament initiatives. The text of this appeal and its impressive list of endorsers is on the NFLA website. There was also time for a useful, short meeting for Mayors for Peace Lead Cities in Europe to discuss progress with developing a European Chapter and encourage greater cooperation in peace across the continent.

#### ***UK and Ireland Chapter meeting, February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019 and ICAN Cities Appeal -***

The next UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter meeting follows the Steering Committee meeting in Manchester Central Library on the 8<sup>th</sup> February. Speakers include:

- The NFLA / Chapter Secretary with a progress report on Mayors for Peace activity.
- Kelly Simcock of the Warrington Peace Centre on its work to develop a peace education schools programme and other activities.
- Sara Belhay from Peace Jam on their current initiatives in peace education.

As previously noted, Manchester City Council and Renfrewshire Council have formally passed resolutions supporting the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This has been linked to ICAN's Cities Appeal and joins with a number of prominent cities from the United States, Australia, Japan, Spain and Canada. The challenge is now to encourage other UK and Ireland NFLA and Mayors for Peace members to pass similar resolutions. Steering Committee members agreed it was important to prioritise this matter with their local Councils.

#### ***Bike for Peace global tour, February 2019 -***

The NFLA and Mayors for Peace is cooperating with the group Bike for Peace for its latest global tour for peace and a nuclear weapons free world, starting in February 2019. The 2019 tour will be launched at a special event in Westminster on the 27<sup>th</sup> February and will include cross-party Parliamentarians like Caroline Lucas, Fabian Hamilton and Douglas Chapman. The tour will then travel to France and Italy, India, China and the United States. The NFLA Secretary will attend the Westminster meeting and speak at the meeting. The Steering Committee welcomed the tour.

***Agreed: To note the report and encourage 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 -***

In late November, the House of Lords International Relations Select Committee launched an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 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 is also considering the creation of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the growing frustration from over two thirds of UN members with the lack of sufficient progress in nuclear weapons disarmament. The inquiry finally seeks to consider the state of global nuclear diplomacy and the role of the UK within it.

On the approval of the NFLA Chair, Vice Chairs and National Chairs, the NFLA Secretariat submitted a response to the Select Committee, which is on the NFLA website. It seeks to respond from the perspective of long-held NFLA policy in this area. The NFLA is also aware that both ICAN UK and their global office have responded to the consultation, as did CND and Medact. Beatrice Fihn and Rebecca Johnson of ICAN have given oral testimony to the Committee.

### ***US and Russia suspend the INF Treaty -***

After bilateral talks between Russia and the United States broke down in late January, both countries declared their intention to 'suspend' the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty on February 1<sup>st</sup>. The INF Treaty has been the cornerstone of European security since it was enacted in 1987 and saw the removal of nuclear and conventional missiles from much of the continent.

The interesting distinction is to 'suspend' rather than 'withdraw' from the Treaty. As ICAN have commented – 'suspension' from a bilateral treaty is different from 'withdrawal' as it means that the treaty continues to exist. By suspending its compliance with the Treaty based on rival claims of a material breach, it means both countries could potentially deploy prohibited missiles in Europe again.

These developments are of real concern to disarmament groups. Such increased unilateralism in nuclear weapons development does not bode well for the upcoming discussions at the NPT Preparatory Conference in May at the United Nations. There remains a six month window before the US and Russia formally leaves the INF Treaty and intensive discussions will continue to encourage maintenance of the Treaty.

The prospect of the INF Treaty's dissolution was one factor in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists January 24<sup>th</sup> decision to keep its iconic 'Doomsday Clock' at two minutes to midnight, as close to the symbolic point of annihilation as it has been since 1953. The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretariat should continue to liaise with Mayors for Peace, ICAN and the CND-led 'No Trident Replacement' Steering Group on these matters in order to support joint initiatives and campaigns over the next few months.

### ***North Korea and Iran nuclear weapons discussions -***

A second summit between President Trump and North Korean Leader Kim Jung-un is being organised imminently, despite persistent claims that the North Korean nuclear weapons programme is not being dismantled.

The US Special Envoy for North Korea has recently claimed that North Korea has pledged to destroy all its nuclear enrichment facilities. This has not been confirmed though by the North Korean Government. North Korea has been frustrated that positive talks with the US has not lead to any reductions in international sanctions on the country, and has become more reluctant to move any further forward. The summit is supposed to try and breakthrough that logjam. The Secretariat will continue to monitor this issue.

In reference to Iran and the US financial sanctions placed on it, the UK, French and German Governments have announced a new financial instrument to help European companies circumvent US sanctions in a bid to keep the nuclear deal with Iran active. The Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchange (INSTEX), which was registered in late January, is designed to facilitate legitimate trade with Iran without exposing European Union firms to US sanctions on Iran.

### ***Defence budget and Trident -***

A February 1<sup>st</sup> report from the influential Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) notes that it remains highly concerned that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is not making serious progress in plugging what could become as much as a £15 billion affordability gap in its core budget over the next ten years.

Despite the MOD pledging to tackle the funding shortfall last year, the PAC found the department had made "little progress". It also added that an upcoming public spending review was likely to lead to further delay and uncertainty. The MOD estimates the funding gap on its £193bn equipment

programme over the next decade to be at least £7bn but concedes it could rise to £14.8bn. The PAC said even that calculation looked to be “unlikely and overly optimistic”. Whilst Gavin Williamson, the UK defence secretary, won an extra £1bn for his ministry in last autumn’s Budget, helping to ease the short term financial pressures on the department, longer term pressures continue to burden the MOD.

The Steering Committee agreed that it appears clear from the PAC report that the great financial pressures in delivering Trident replacement is severely affecting the MOD’s scope on other core activity. Wider financial pressures on the budget coming out of the Brexit issue can only complicate this matter still further.

#### ***Defence nuclear safety issues -***

A response published by the ‘Ferret’ investigative journalism service has found 789 nuclear safety events has taken place at Scotland’s naval bases since 2008. This continues the trends which have been report consistently to the Steering Committee of real and serious pressures on the defence nuclear sector. However, it is becoming more difficult to get such figures for defence nuclear safety as the Government has begun the process of making such information ‘secret’ and therefore not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

The NFLA Secretariat is cooperating with other groups to find ways to encourage a change to this MOD policy.

#### ***Defence diversification progress and GM Industrial Strategy response***

A telephone conference of the UK Arms Conversion Defence Diversification took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> January. It was chaired by the NFLA Secretary. There has been a considerable amount of recent activity, and some encouraging moves taking place in lobbying for a Defence Diversification Agency. There includes a resolution passed by the North West Labour Conference calling for a Shadow Defence Diversification Agency.

#### ***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 reactor -***

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 Reactor 4. Similar but not as extensive issues have also been found with Hinkley Point B and the Heysham and Hartlepool reactors, all approaching forty years of operation.

At a NFLA meeting, Dr Ian Fairlie provided his views on the extent of the issue, particularly as it has been reported as many as 370 keyway root cracks have now been found on the reactor. A short technical report on the presentation was published on the NFLA website.

Following this, the NFLA provided a briefing on these matters in the Scottish Parliament. The meeting was co-chaired by Ross Greer MSP and the NFLA Scotland Vice-Convener and held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January. Dr Fairlie spoke to his report and Pete Roche considered the jobs issue, accelerate decommissioning of the plant and the ‘Just Transition’ initiative to support job transfers into the renewable energy sector. This report can be found in Agenda Item 7.

A cross party number of MSPs attended the briefing, along with a number of policy assistants for other MSPs, and a considerable amount of people from the Hunterston area. Subsequent to the meeting, the NFLA Secretary and Dr Fairlie had a detailed and very useful discussion on the matter with the Deputy Chief Nuclear Safety Inspector Donald Urquhart and ONR technical specialist Steve Harris. At the meeting, the ONR confirmed that they had received, and were considering EDF’s safety case for reopening Reactor 4, but had not had any safety case for Reactor 3. This makes it unlikely that Reactor 3 will not reopen until at least the summer, getting on for 15 months since it

last operated. The ONR welcomed the NFLA's involvement in this issue, and noted they would wish to meet again with it once the safety case for Reactor 3 has been received.

The Steering Committee welcomed the involvement of the Steering Committee in this issue, which remains very important in determining the future of aging nuclear reactors.

***Fukushima update -***

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) published its final report of an IAEA expert team that reviewed Japan's efforts to plan and implement the decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (NPS). The report urged the Japanese Government to spend ample time in developing a decommissioning plan for the tsunami-damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant and to be honest with the public about the remaining uncertainties. It also urged the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co., to secure adequate space and finish plans for managing melted fuel before starting to remove it from the three damaged reactors.

In order to improve and determine further methods to decommission the three stricken nuclear reactors at Fukushima, Toshiba has just unveiled a new mini-robotic device that will go into Reactor 2 on the site. Designed and built by Toshiba's Energy Systems & Solutions division, the robot measures around 30cm long and 10cm wide, weighing approximately 1kg. It features a camera, external LED Lighting, a pan-tilt mechanism, a radiation dosimeter and a thermometer. Unlike other robots that Toshiba has developed for the Fukushima site, the robot is also equipped with a finger drive mechanism for interacting with its environment and exploring the nature of deposits. It is to be seen if it will be more effective than previous attempts, given the very high levels of radiation in the reactors.

A major issue of local tension remains whether it is safe for people to go back to the areas near Fukushima, given considerable remediation efforts and pressure from Japanese public organisations. The Secretariat will continue to monitor these issues.

***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 -***

As noted at the last Steering Committee, the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments have provided a response to comments made to its consultation noting significant changes to nuclear emergency planning regulations. 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 REPPPIR 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.

Following a briefing to NGOs and the NFLA in late November, the NFLA Secretary was asked to put together a short report considering the changes and core issues of concern with them for the January BEIS NGO Nuclear Policy Forum meeting.

The changes will require legislative amendment to the UK REPPPIR (Radiation Emergency Planning Public Information) Regulations 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 are 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 NFLA Secretary is going to expand the report for the Forum into a longer paper and seek to publish it in February. Steering Committee members are welcome to comment on the paper.

***NFLA nuclear transport and emergency planning briefing / close proximity incident in the Irish Sea -***

The NFLA Secretary has been developing a detailed briefing considering various aspects of concern around nuclear transports. This is almost finished and it is hoped that it can be published shortly. A new example that will be added into the briefing was a report of a 'close proximity' incident between a Royal Navy submarine and a Stena Sealink passenger ferry travelling from Scotland to Northern Ireland. This apparently took place in November, but was only publicly noted in January after the Marine Accident Investigation Branch confirmed it was making further investigations into the incident.

Following some observations from independent marine pollution consultant, Tim Deere-Jones the NFLA issued a media release raising concern over the incident. The Steering Committee asked the NFLA Secretariat to write to the MAIB and IMO about this issue.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

**11. Next NFLA Steering Committee meeting**

The next NFLA Steering Committee meeting will take place in the ***Central Library, Manchester on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019.***

**12. NFLA / Mayors for Peace / ICAN Joint Seminar**

A joint seminar was held providing a progress report on Mayors for Peace / NFLA work in the area of nuclear weapons and disarmament. There were also detailed presentations on peace education programmes from the Foundation for Peace and the Peace Jam UK organisation. Links to these presentations will be on the NFLA website shortly.