

NFLA Policy Briefing No.188



Date: 19th June 2019

Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee meeting, Manchester Central Library, 31st May 2019

1. Introductions to the meeting

The NFLA Steering Committee Chair, Councillor David Blackburn, welcomed all to Manchester Central Library. The Chair was pleased that Manchester City Council's videoconferencing suite was again being used by NFLA members who were unable to attend the meeting in person.

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 hosted a joint seminar with the Mayors for Peace and ICAN UK in Manchester Central Library, following the last NFLA Steering Committee meeting on the 8th February. Its next meeting will consider climate change and the production of local low carbon energy projects by Councils. This will be held in Leeds Town Hall on June 21st. It will profile the NFLA's latest report on the climate emergency and look at how Councils will seek to 'bridge' the carbon gap and deliver 'zero carbon' targets by the late 2030s. Other speakers will look at the work of the Leeds Climate Commission and the district heating projects of Leeds and Leicester City Councils. The flyer is on the NFLA website.

NFLA Scotland Forum -

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a business meeting and its AGM in Glasgow City Chambers on the 14th February. A short presentation from the group 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' Scotland about divestment and Council pension funds was also held. Its most recent meeting was a business meeting and seminar in Dundee City Chambers on May 10th. The seminar profiled work to support local Council low carbon energy projects, fossil fuel and nuclear weapon divestment and a 'Just Transition' for directing workers into low carbon industry. It also profiled support for the ICAN Cities Appeal. The presentations are on the NFLA website. The next meeting will be in Fife.

NFLA All Ireland Forum -

The NFLA All Ireland Forum held a strategy meeting in Kilkenny City Hall on March 22nd. The meeting allowed for a detailed discussion of the Forum's priorities after 'all out' local government elections in May. It agreed, given the island of Ireland's 'nuclear free' status that the Forum should be renamed as the 'All Ireland Sustainable Energy Forum – a constituent part of the UK & Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities'. The next meeting location will be determined shortly.

NFLA Welsh Forum –

A joint public meeting with PAWB, CADNO, WANA and CND Cymru was held in Menai Bridge, Anglesey on April 13th. It was very well attended. The seminar considered issues around the radioactive waste issue, 'small' nuclear reactors, alternatives to new nuclear and an overview of,

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and benefits from, community and local energy. The next meeting of the Forum will be in Swansea in September.

Co-operation with international partner groupings -

A joint letter of concern between the Vienna-led *Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe (CNFE)* and the Salzburg-led *Alliance of Regions for Phasing out of Nuclear Power Across Europe*, was sent to the Slovakian Prime Minister, the European Commission and the European Nuclear Regulators Safety Group calling on a halt to the opening of the Mochovce nuclear reactors based on technology from the 1970s and 1980s. It was announced in late May that a full international inspection of the reactor led by the IAEA would be held before any opening of the site could take place. The three groups are pleased with this outcome.

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 potentially leaving the European Union (EU).

After a number of failed attempts to seek Parliamentary approval for the agreed deal between the UK Government and the EU, the date for now leaving the EU has been moved to the 31st October 2019. The Prime Minister Theresa May has announced her resignation as Conservative Party Leader and will stand down as Prime Minister when a new leader is elected. The core issues of how the UK leaves the EU, the possibility of a 'no deal' Brexit and of a potential general election all remain.

In terms of the UK leaving the Euratom nuclear safeguards arrangements as part of 'Brexit', the UK Government provided an update on this matter published in early April which outlined the contingencies in place in the event of a deal to leave or a 'no deal' Brexit. The NFLA Secretariat is aware that the Office for Nuclear Regulation are ready to put in place a full national regime to take over the role of Euratom on leaving the EU. However, this ongoing confusion over the UK's position with the EU is costing additional resources, as the ONR have recruited additional staff to take on this role, subsidised by the UK Government. A 'no deal' Brexit also risks other areas of energy policy, such as at the cross-border electricity system on the island of Ireland. It was agreed by the Steering Committee to keep a close watching briefing on the issue, and draft relevant reports and media releases when matters are clarified.

Agreed: To note the report and to remain highly 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.

The financing of new nuclear

Over the past year, major plans for new nuclear reactors at the Moorside site close to Sellafield, and at the Wylfa site in Anglesey have either collapsed or been 'halted' due to the difficulties in finding the required finance for it.

In its inquiry into the halting of the Wylfa B project, the Welsh Affairs Select Committee argue that the UK Government needs to set out schemes that can attract investment for new nuclear. It is expected that a White Paper will be published by the UK Government in the summer on offering financial support to new nuclear projects via the Revenue Asset Base (RAB) model. As the NFLA Secretariat has previously noted, there remain serious questions that this scheme effectively transfers the financial risks of new nuclear projects from the nuclear companies to the public purse. It looks increasingly likely that this may be the only potential solution to support larger new nuclear projects, and it was heavily suggested that substantial financial support may be offered in the Chancellors Spring Statement.

The NFLA Steering Committee agreed that the Secretariat should monitor this development and respond to the White Paper when it is published noting the higher energy bill costs to the consumer and the better and cheaper alternatives from renewables.

Wylfa suspended – report of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee

A recent inquiry from the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Select Committee was published in early May to look at the implications of Hitachi's decision for the Wylfa site and future economic regeneration of the Anglesey-Gwynedd area.

The Committee's core recommendation was that the UK Government, the Welsh Government, local authorities and other partners should work together to ensure that other projects in the North Wales Growth Deal bid can be accelerated to minimise the damage to the local economy. The report stressed the importance of capitalising on the geological benefits of the Anglesey site, and the skills of people working in the area, by considering a range of possible energy projects. They also argue that the two Governments should work on a joint proposal for a small modular reactor at Trawsfynydd, where a now-decommissioned Magnox nuclear power station remains in Gwynedd.

The failure of both the Sellafield Moorside and Wylfa to go ahead has cost the National Grid substantially as well. Shares slumped 31% as pre-tax profits were reduced significantly. The company has had to write £137 million off in shelving the plans for underground power supply lines for both sites.

Hinkley Point C update and issues with other EPR in France and Finland -

EDF Energy is continuing to develop the site that would house the Hinkley Point C reactor, particularly a concrete raft which the reactor would sit on. A full four more pours of concrete on the site are required. This is expected to be concluded by the end of June 2019 with 3,200 workers currently on site. These workers are providing some financial benefit to the local economy, but there also remains much frustration over the large increase in traffic to a fairly remote rural area and issues that local house prices and so forth are going up to the detriment of local people.

EDF / Areva (as it was) is still encountering many issues with the development of similar EPR reactors in France and Finland. The French nuclear regulator has asked EDF to either repair a long list of faulty weldings on the Flamanville plant or significantly strengthen the reactor to compensate. This will add significantly to the budget, which is billions over its original and years behind schedule. Further delays have also been found in the final process of opening the EPR reactor at Olkiluoto in Finland. A NFLA media release on these matters was published and welcomed by the Steering Committee.

Sizewell C update –

The third stage public consultation for Sizewell C concluded on the 29th March 2019. The NFLA's detailed response to the consultation is on its website. It argues that there was no specific energy need for the site as energy efficiency measures and cheaper renewable energy alternatives were more effective. The response also highlighted waste concerns and nuclear accident scenarios. The Steering Committee welcomed the response.

Developments with Small Modular Nuclear (SMR) Reactors -

At the NFLA Welsh Forum meeting, Professor Steve Thomas of Greenwich University provided a critical analysis of the push within the nuclear sector to develop small modular nuclear reactors. His excellent presentation is on the NFLA website. His presentation asked the question if SMRs are a good idea and he concluded:

- It depends on economies from large scale component manufacture more than paying for loss of scale economies.
- Will scaling down mean the issues of construction cost and time overrun are solved, making nuclear easier to finance?
- For Rolls Royce, this would mean a commitment now for a future government to buy 16 reactors from about 2028-2033. No government could (or should) do this.
- Designs also depend on not being required to incorporate all the safety features a large reactor now needs, like back-up generators.

- Until the designs have been fully worked out and thoroughly assessed by safety regulators, cost forecasts are at best guesses, and history says they are highly optimistic ones.

The NFLA Secretary is cooperating with Professor Thomas, Dr M V Ramana and Dr Paul Dorfman on a major critical study of SMR technology and prospects. This will be published by the NCG (Nuclear Consulting Group) with NFLA being a supporting organisation of the report. It is expected to be published in June. The Steering Committee welcomed 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 -

At the beginning of the year, the UK Government (with the Welsh Government following shortly afterwards) formally launched a new search for a community to host a geological disposal facility for the UK's most hazardous nuclear waste. This included a letter from the Government to all Councils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland seeking them to consider 'expressing an interest' to host such a facility. The letter has created real anger and frustration amongst a lot of Councils, particularly in Wales and Northern Ireland.

The letter to Councils was linked with videos on the Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) website giving generic information on the geology of a nation or a region, suggesting to many Councils that their area could be considered to be 'suitable' to host a repository. As a result over 75 Welsh Councils passed formal resolutions opposing any expression of interest, including larger Councils such as Swansea, Ceredigion, Anglesey, Neath Port Talbot and Wrexham. In Northern Ireland almost all of the 11 main Councils raised public concerns about the letter, as though the policy is formally supported by the Northern Ireland Executive, there has been no Government in place for over two years. Formal resolutions opposing an expression of interest were passed by Newry, Mourne and Down Council, Fermanagh and Omagh Council and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council.

Even in England a number of Councils made it clear that they would not be expressing an interest, such as Hartlepool Borough Council, which has a nuclear reactor in its area. The NFLA Secretariat is keeping a close watching brief as this process develops in 2019.

RWM Consultation on Site Evaluation -

The NFLA has sent in a short submission to RWM on their processes for how they will evaluate sites that are being considered for a deep underground radioactive waste repository. The response is on the NFLA website. The NFLA response focuses on the need to consider transportation and security as core issues that have been ignored in previous processes, and for which NFLA members would be duly concerned. Issues over community engagement and ethics are also raised in the response.

NDA / RWM NGO Forum and NDA Stakeholder Summit –

The NFLA Secretary assisted in the creation of the first meeting of the NDA / RWM NGO Forum, which was held on the 10th May in London. This Forum allowed for discussion on some of the core issues around nuclear decommissioning and radioactive waste management, as well as on the repository issue. The meeting clashed with the NFLA Scotland Forum in Dundee so the NFLA Secretary was unable to attend it. However, feedback from NGO representatives was that it was a useful interface.

Through the support of the ONR, the NFLA Secretary and other NGO representatives are seeking to engage with the Safety Director of BAE Systems and of other sites around a process to discuss a review of the Site Stakeholder Groups and Local Liaison Committees that monitor the work of nuclear sites. This is taking much longer than anticipated to move forward, and so the NFLA Secretary has contacted the Safety Director again, copying in the ONR, to push for more rapid progress.

The 2019 NDA National Stakeholder Summit is taking place at Coleg Menai, near Llangefni in Anglesey on the 9th and 10th July 2019. The NFLA Secretary and NFLA Chair will attend it.

Sellafield update –

Four companies have been chosen as preferred bidders for a 20 year programme to deliver Sellafield's decommissioning programme. The 'Programme and Project Partners' model aims to establish long term relationships at Sellafield. The preferred bidders are Kellogg Brown and Root for integration, Wood Nuclear for design and engineering, Morgan Sindall Construction and Infrastructure for civil construction management, and Doosan Babcock for process construction management. This new approach is aimed at supporting faster, more effective project delivery, stability in design and construction supply chains, greater workforce flexibility and local economic benefit.

In early April, Sellafield Ltd was fined £380,000 after an onsite production worker was contaminated with plutonium. The worker was working within a glovebox (sealed container) on the site, when he felt a pricking sensation on his left hand as he handled a conductivity probe. It was found that one of the legs of the probe had corroded in the acidic environment and had effectively become a dangerously sharp object. Tests later revealed an internal dose of plutonium, which has slightly increased the worker's risk of cancer. There are 670 gloveboxes across the site, and a review has taken place as a result of this incident, finding them to be in 'acceptable' order.

In April the 'Daily Mail' newspaper published a leaked message from the Sellafield Chief Executive that acknowledges a culture of bullying and harassment is evident in parts of the organisation. Whistleblowers have told the Daily Mail that Sellafield has a 'toxic' working culture, with women routinely harassed and propositioned by senior male employees, while allegations were also made that homophobia and racist comments are ignored. In the video message the Chief Executive, Paul Foster, admitted that a survey had found one in 20 of the 10,000 staff were being bullied or harassed. One in four as well said they believed such issues were being tolerated by senior management. Unions and local MPs called for urgent action to be taken. This follows on from the concerns over safety from whistleblowers that was profiled in last year's BBC 'Panorama' programme.

Dounreay, Dalgety Bay and Submarine Dismantling progress -

Six contracts involving almost 30 companies and potentially worth up to £400m have been announced as part of the decommissioning of Dounreay. The new contracts include dealing with the 1950s-built shaft. The newly announced contracts, which are initially for up to four years and could be extended for an additional three years, also cover the demolition of laboratories, waste pits and the silo. The silo is described as being like a swimming pool with a concrete roof. It was also used for the disposing of radioactive waste.

The remediation work contracts for the Dalgety Bay site in Fife have been finally approved by Defence Ministers and work should begin on them next year. The work involves dealing with the effects of radium dials from Second World War planes which were buried underground close to the site. The NFLA Secretariat is liaising closely with Cllr Barratt and officers in Fife Council. This issue is taking much longer than either would have liked to realise, but it is welcome that the work has now been confirmed.

At the last NuLEAF meeting, its Secretary informed the meeting that he had been told by the NDA that it was considering a new public consultation on the Submarine Dismantling Project on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. This would be in reference to the location of intermediate level waste from the reactor pressure vessels of the redundant submarines. Both the NFLA Secretariat and interested journalists queried this change but neither the NDA nor the Ministry of Defence would confirm or deny this matter. Any material change in the plans for this radioactive waste material would go against an extensive and long public engagement process. The NFLA Secretary will follow this matter up at the upcoming NuLEAF meeting to seek further clarification.

Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS –

The LGA's NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum for England and Wales) group met on the 20th March in Manchester. Cllr Newman and the NFLA Secretary attended it. There was considerable discussion on the UK Government's letter to English and Welsh Councils over expressing an interest for a deep underground repository, developments in nuclear decommissioning and at Sellafield, and a discussion of interaction with international networks. The next meeting will be in London on the 12th June. A part of the meeting will be to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair.

COSLA's SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) group met in Paisley on the 25th April. The meeting was largely focused on concerns over the current situation at the Hunterston B site, with two speakers from EDF Energy. Further information on the NFLA's involvement in this particular issue is discussed in Item 9.

Agreed: To note the report.

6. Alternatives to nuclear energy

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

NFLA report on climate emergency resolutions and local low carbon projects –

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 is NFLA's annual assessment of best practice in promoting local decentralised energy, linking into the profusion of Councils passing 'climate emergency' resolutions. This report is on the NFLA website.

Over the past 12 months over 100 Councils have passed resolutions calling for direct action to respond to a 'climate emergency'. Other Councils have passed similar resolutions calling for 'net zero' carbon emissions by a specific date, either the late 2030's or 2050. The resolutions derive from the urgency of the IPCC report on the impacts of global temperature rises on climate change. They also relate to a greater public sense that there is now a full-blown emergency. This partially comes out of the influential David Attenborough narrated BBC documentary on climate change, the school climate change strikes that were initiated by the Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg and have spread around the world, and the recent non-violent direct action by the group 'Extinction Rebellion' which has brought significant disruption to London and other cities.

The Steering Committee warmly welcomed the report and encouraged the Secretariat to disseminate it widely. Presentations on the report and other issues around climate change and local energy has been provided to a meeting of the NFLA Scotland Forum and an upcoming meeting of the NFLA English Forum. It will also be considered in September meetings of the NFLA Welsh and NFLA All Ireland Forums.

UK Committee on Climate Change latest progress report / Irish Government assessment –

The UK independent Committee on Climate Change (CCC) has presented its new assessment report on climate change and the ways to reach the targets expected by the IPCC. The report calls for an upscaling of renewables across the board. Its position on nuclear power initially suggests it remains supportive of new nuclear at Hinkley, Sizewell and perhaps Bradwell, as well as for small modular nuclear, to provide sufficient electricity to allow for transformations from gas heating to electric, and from petrol and diesel powered cars to electric vehicles.

NFLA notes though that Dr David Toke, lecturer in energy policy at Aberdeen University, argues that the CCC has moved away from accepted policy that renewable energy could not, on its own, achieve the UK's long term carbon emission reduction targets. The argument that large quantities of nuclear power are necessary has been quietly side-lined in the report. Rather, Dr Toke argues the evidence presented by the CCC says that not only can renewables do the whole job, along with energy efficiency, on their own, but they can do things much more cheaply than either nuclear power or carbon capture and storage. For the NFLA, as the Steering Committee agreed, the real policy challenge if such reactors were built is that they would crowd out investment in new renewable energy. This is because electricity contracts given to nuclear power give them 'dispatch priority' over renewable energy, causing windfarms and solar farms to be turned off in order to give priority to nuclear power.

The UK Government is expected to announce that it will broadly embrace the recommendations of the CCC. It is also expected to introduce a new target to cut emissions to 'net zero' by 2050. The new target is likely to be announced shortly. In Scotland, the Scottish Government responded to the CCC report by lodging amendments to the Climate Change Bill which will set a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 at the latest. It has accepted the recommendations

of the CCC. Under the new plans Scotland will reduce emissions by 70% by 2030 and 90% by 2040. The CCC's recommended targets for Scotland are contingent on the UK Government adopting a net-zero greenhouse gas emission target for 2050.

In the Republic of Ireland, the Irish Government has now set a target for at least 70% of Ireland's electricity supply to be generated from renewables by 2030, in an announcement made by the new Communications, Climate Action and Environment Minister Richard Bruton. This target represents a step-change in direction from Ireland, which was ranked as the second worst in the EU last year for its ambition and progress towards fighting climate change. At present Ireland is way off meeting its 2020 target of 40% of its electricity coming from renewables by 2020. It has been accepted by the government that no single policy, project or measure will be sufficient to reduce Ireland's emissions and see a shift away from an energy system heavily reliant on fossil fuels to one powered by renewables. So its updated policy is looking at the electrification of transport, including ways to boost the use of electric vehicles, incentivising new energy storage technologies, and supporting the growth of solar, biomass and other renewable solutions, as well as associated innovative business models and services. While onshore wind will remain critical to this wider policy, it is also acknowledged that Ireland needs to bring on board much more offshore wind, with this being a significant part of future low carbon electricity generation.

The Irish Dail followed the UK Parliament's motion to pass its own climate emergency resolution in June. The focus of the next NFLA All Ireland Forum is to advocate for much greater urgency with such policies across the island of Ireland.

Labour's Solar and Grid Plans / cross-party New Green Deal –

The Labour Party has announced a policy that, should it come into government, it would seek to fit solar panels to 1.75m homes living in social housing or low-income households as part of its promised "green industrial revolution". The plan would involve solar panels being fitted to a million social homes as part of scheduled updates to social housing. Labour said this would provide enough power to give them free energy, saving an average of £117 a year on bills. Any spare power would be put into the national grid. Another 750,000 low-income households would have the chance to have the panels fitted through interest-free loans or grants. Labour estimated the policy would create 16,900 jobs and save 7.1m tonnes of CO2 a year, equivalent to taking 4m cars off the roads.

In addition to this plan, Labour also published plans to hand responsibility for the UK's power networks to local communities, decentralising the grid by bringing it under full public control. Such a move would be controversial because shareholders that own the National Grid would be unlikely to be paid the market value for their assets – currently estimated at £64 billion. A National Energy Agency would replace the National Grid with 14 Regional Energy Agencies taking on the functions of existing distribution network operators. Local authorities would be able to set up municipal energy agencies (MEAs) and take over responsibility for ownership and operation of distribution networks from the REAs. In addition, a Labour government would support the establishment of local energy communities (LECs). These would develop small-scale energy generation and engage with distribution at the micro level of housing estates, streets or small villages. LECs would be community-owned and non profit-making.

In the same vein, a cross-party low carbon energy solution has been put forward by former Labour leader Ed Miliband, Green MP Caroline Lucas and Conservative MP Laura Sandys for a 'Green New Deal'. This takes some of its inspiration from similar ideas in the United States, and ideas put forward by the Green New Deal group over the past few years. This is looking to support an Environmental Justice Commission with the support of the think tank, the IPPR.

The Steering Committee welcomed a detailed report from the Institute of Welsh Affairs which looks at ways to create a 100% renewable Wales by 2035. At present the Welsh Government is aiming for 70% of electricity to come from renewable sources by 2030.

The Steering Committee acknowledged that there appears to be a recent step-change in interest in considering the benefits of renewable energy to deal with the urgent problems of climate change mitigation. The Committee welcomed this change, and felt the core action for the NFLA was to link

this in with its concerns that support for new nuclear power could delay or prevent this ‘renewable energy revolution’ from being as comprehensive as it could, and needs, to be,

Fracking update –

Whilst there remains a moratorium on fracking in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the UK Government has been a strong advocate for this potential form of energy generation. In recent months that interest seems to be waning. In April, its fracking ‘tsar’ resigned, just six months after taking up the post. Natascha Engel, a former Labour MP, told the Business Secretary Greg Clark that developing the industry would be ‘an impossible task’ despite its ‘enormous potential’. She argued that the success of the environmental movement was a key factor in the industry not developing. Engel also claimed the safety controls on tremors from the fracking process was set too low, making it difficult to develop. At present a number of companies, principally Ineos and Cuadrilla, were still trying to move forward with fracking developments, but local opposition, including from Councils, remains high.

In Northern Ireland, the fracking company Tamboran has applied for a licence to evaluate the natural gas in the shale and sandstone rocks in the south west of County Fermanagh. The company said any decision about potential commercial extraction is at least five years away. A spokesperson for a local anti-fracking group, supported by Fermanagh and Omagh councillors said the community would unite against its potential return. The Steering Committee requested that the Secretariat consider this issue and get in touch with the local Council.

Agreed: To note the report and disseminate the NFLA briefing on the climate emergency and effective local energy action.

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 May 1st 2019, 7,756 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace. At the international level, a delegation from Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Biograd na Moru, Des Moines and Fremantle represented Mayors for Peace at the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Conference in New York. At the conference, the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki gave a presentation to the conference and put forward a ‘joint appeal for common dialogue’ over their concern around increased division at the conference and the potential for the main review conference in 2020 to unravel. The text of this appeal is part of a detailed Policy Briefing developed by the NFLA Secretary in his role as Mayors for Peace Chapter Secretary, which is on the NFLA website.

The biannual Executive Conference of Mayors for Peace takes place in Hanover, Germany on the 9th – 12th November. Manchester City Council will attend the Conference. The meeting is important in allowing Mayors for Peace to respond to negative currents in the nuclear weapons issue, to clarify further the work in promoting more peaceful cities and on preparing for core events in 2020, the 75th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons.

ICAN Cities Appeal and ‘Don’t Bank on the Bomb’ divestment campaign –

In late 2018, ICAN announced its cooperation with Mayors for Peace to encourage towns and cities in nuclear weapon states and nuclear ‘umbrella’ states to pass resolutions giving their support to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), and sending a message to their own national governments encouraging them to change policy and support it. Manchester and Renfrewshire have passed resolutions. Hebden Royd Town Council in Yorkshire passed a similar resolution in May.

The Cities Appeal is beginning to get real traction in a number of countries, notably Norway, Germany, Australia and the US. Notable cities to pass recent resolutions supporting it are national capital cities Washington DC, Canberra, Oslo, Berlin and Paris. At the NFLA Scotland meeting it was noted by a number of Councils that they were in the process of passing resolutions to support the TPNW, as are some English and Welsh Councils.

In early April the NFLA Scotland Vice Convener from Renfrewshire Council accepted an invitation from the Basel Cantonal and City Government to speak at a conference called ‘Move the Nuclear

Weapons Money'. The conference was organised by the City Government in association with Basel Peace Office and PNND. It considered different ways to encourage divestment from companies that are involved in nuclear weapons or polluting fossil fuel production. Following on from the conference and a NFLA Scotland seminar discussing the matter, a model resolution was developed by the network. It has now been passed by Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils and a number of other NFLA Scotland members are considering it.

UK and Ireland Chapter progress –

The UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter meeting that followed the last Steering Committee on the 8th February was well attended and allowed for some useful discussions on the work of the Chapter, and best practice presentations from the Warrington Peace Centre and Peace Jam on work around peace education. The presentations are on the NFLA website.

The next joint NFLA / Mayors for Peace Chapter meeting will be held on the 13th September in Manchester, probably in the Central Library (this is a change from the original date of 20th September). The meeting will support International Peace Day and coincides with a national tour organised by the Kazakh Embassy and PNND of the artist and nuclear weapons campaigner Karipbek Kuyukov, who was affected by the Soviet nuclear tests and has shrunken arms and legs. The Embassy are also supporting an exhibition of his works that will be in the Westminster Parliament and events there and the Scottish Parliament.

Bike for Peace global tour, February 2019 –

The NFLA Secretary helped to support the launch event of the latest Bike for Peace global tour organised by Norwegian campaigner Tore Naerland with a core of 12 cyclists. The tour started in Westminster and took in France, India, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and the United States. It was dedicated to Mayors for Peace. It concluded at the United Nations with a meeting with the Deputy Chair of the UN Disarmament Office.

The Westminster event on the 27th February was chaired by the NFLA / Chapter Secretary and had short talks from CND General Secretary Kate Hudson, CND Vice-Chair Bruce Kent and Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament Fabian Hamilton MP. A major debate on Brexit precluded Caroline Lucas MP and Douglas Chapman MP, though they sent in messages of support.

Agreed: To note the report. Member Councils are encouraged to pass resolutions supporting the TPNW and divestment from nuclear weapons investments.

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 was very concerned in particular about tensions rising between nuclear-armed states and the potential fragmenting of existing non-proliferation and arms control agreements.

The NFLA Secretariat submitted a detailed response to the Select Committee, which reflected long-held NFLA policy in this area, and can be found on the NFLA website. The final Select Committee report raised its real concerns that the international nuclear non-proliferation regime was under its greatest threat for decades. This is due to a combination of unilateral actions by nuclear weapon states and in the tension created by non-nuclear weapon states in supporting the separate Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) process. The TPNW currently has 70 signatories and 23 state parties – when it reaches 50 state parties it will become a part of international law.

The report was one of the first proper analyses in Parliament of this debate for some time, and from that perspective it is to be welcomed by the NFLA. Its conclusions chime with concerns of the NFLA, Mayors for Peace and ICAN that the international proliferation regime is under great stress.

The future of the INF and START Nuclear Weapon Treaties –

In early February and early March both the Russian and the United States Governments announced they were ‘suspending’ their cooperation over the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The INF Treaty has been the cornerstone of bilateral European nuclear security since it was enacted in 1987, when it aided the removal of nuclear and conventional missiles from much of the continent.

During the NPT Treaty PrepCom it was reported that President Trump had phoned President Putin calling for a nuclear weapons summit to discuss these issues, and also bring China within these discussions.

There are also wider concerns that the START Arms Control Treaty between the United States is under threat. The Treaty has to be reviewed by 2021 and Trump’s ‘hawkish’ National Security Advisor John Bolton has been quoted as suggesting its ‘days are numbered’. These unilateral moves raise the wider concern that nuclear non-proliferation may go into reverse. All the existing nuclear weapon states are pledging vast sums to replace and / or modernise their current stockpiles of weaponry.

The Steering Committee asked the NFLA Secretariat to monitor these matters.

North Korea and Iran nuclear weapons discussions –

At the end of February, a second summit between President Trump and North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un over North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme ended in no agreement. The sticking point appears to have been around North Korea wanting some relief from international sanctions before it would move forward. Since the summit, Kim Jong-un has held bilateral talks with both Russian President Putin and with the Chinese leadership.

Real concern is growing on the delicate relationship between the United States and Iran over the latter’s nuclear programme. In mid-May, Iran announced it would be pulling out of part of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action created between Iran and the EU, US, Russia and China; which President Trump pulled out of last year. The Iranian announcement seeks to put pressure on the EU, Russia and China to provide the type of economic assistance that US sanctions, and threats to companies trading with Iran, is having on its economy. The harsh language between Iran and the United States has grown considerably in recent weeks.

New NIS publication on the risks and rising costs of the UK nuclear weapons programme -

The Reading-based Nuclear Information Service published in late April a detailed consideration of the risks and costs of a Trident replacement programme in a new report launched at Westminster. In particular, the report looked at the problems arising in the UK nuclear weapons programme, the overall total cost of it and the need for policy changes to address a situation that is becoming increasingly unsustainable. A copy of the report’s Executive Summary and key recommendations is available at:

<https://www.nuclearinfo.org/sites/default/files/Trouble%20Ahead%20low%20resolution%20version.pdf>.

The NIS report suggest there is growing evidence that the Trident upgrade projects is experiencing mounting problems, meaning it is unlikely that key aspects of the programme will be delivered on time and to budget. The NIS report uses a new method for estimating the true cost of the UK’s nuclear weapons, including a wider range of elements than previous studies and extrapolating from the MOD’s own figures and historical spending to estimate average costs of each element over time. By using this method, NIS estimates the total cost of the UK’s nuclear weapons programme between 2019 and 2070 to be **£172bn**. This is almost certainly a low estimate, and is **far higher than the government’s prediction of £31bn, plus an additional £10bn contingency for building four new Dreadnought submarines**.

NFLA welcome this report and support its conclusions. The NFLA Secretary has invited the report author Dave Cullen to profile the report at the joint NFLA / Mayors for Peace seminar in September.

Defence diversification progress and Just Transition movement –

A telephone conference of the UK Arms Conversion Defence Diversification (ACDD) Steering Group took place on the 3rd May. The meeting focused on the obvious crossovers between defence

diversification and 'Just Transition', which is growing in interest first in Scotland and now in England and Wales, around a process to reskill fossil fuel workers and transfer them into the green jobs sector. As part of this process, members of the group are talking to both the Scottish and Welsh Governments to consider the possibility of them creating Defence Diversification bodies to complement work on 'Just Transition'.

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 –

For some time now, 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.

This is particularly pressing as it has been reported that over 350 keyway root cracks have now been found on reactor 3, with around 210 for Reactor 4. The NFLA Secretary is aware from the Office for Nuclear Regulation that they have received a safety report from EDF for resumption of Reactor 4, but nothing to date on Reactor 3. This is likely to be due to the difficulty it will be for EDF to comprehensively explain that restarting Reactor 3 will be safe, despite the high level of keyway root cracks. The ONR have confirmed that they will invite the NFLA Secretary and Dr Ian Fairlie for a meeting to explain what their decision will be on the restarting of the reactors, when they are in a position to do so. The Steering Committee reiterated their concern over this matter and encouraged the Secretariat to remain heavily involved on this issue.

UK and US scientists call for statistical significance tests to be dropped in health studies –

The Steering Committee welcomed a new report from independent radiation consultant Dr Ian Fairlie. This highlighted an influential article in the British science journal 'Nature' in which 853 influential scientists had called for statistical significance tests to be dropped on radiation health studies. This could have real importance in considering the health effects of exposure to low levels of radiation. Dr Fairlie's analysis of the report can be downloaded from:

<https://www.ianfairlie.org/news/uk-and-us-scientists-call-for-statistical-significance-tests-to-be-dropped-in-health-studies/>

Fukushima update –

In April, Tepco, the operator of the stricken Fukushima site, reported that it has started to remove nuclear fuel from a storage pool close to Reactor Number 3, one of the most damaged of the reactors. This will take two years to complete. That will then be followed by the much more difficult task of removing the molten nuclear fuel that remains deep inside. The operation to remove the fuel had been delayed by earthquake debris in the building and other technical difficulties. This work is highly sensitive as radioactive cylinders in the storage pool could release radioactive gases if they break or are exposed to air.

The latest stage of the huge clean-up comes weeks after an evacuation order for one of two towns near the plant was lifted, allowing residents back for the first time since the disaster. About 50 people were allowed to return to areas of Okuma, west of the Daiichi plant, after radiation levels were deemed 'safe'. However, it is clear most of the previous residents remain sceptical and the large majority of the town's original inhabitants are unlikely to go back.

Major questions also remain over what to do with the radioactive soil on the site and where to store it, with much reluctance from other parts of Japan to accept any of it. Similarly a major political, environmental and scientific debate is ongoing about what to do with the huge amounts of contaminated water stored in large tanks on the site. The regulator and the government have suggested it can be dumped into the Pacific Ocean, but this is being opposed by local fishermen groups and environmental groups.

Chernobyl update –

As the 33rd anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster passed, new focus on the disaster has come from a Sky Atlantic / HBO drama which forensically looks at what happened in April 1986. The drama has received considerable media coverage and critical acclaim and summarises both the level of error of the explosion, and the bravery of the men and women that sought to bring the fire on the site and the wider disaster under control, many of whom died as a result. The drama also showed the lengths the then Soviet Union authorities took to try and hide the disaster, and the shock and fear its environmental damage created around Europe. NFLA welcomes such scrutiny and focus.

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 -

Due to changes to the European Basic Safety Standard, as a result of learning points from the Fukushima disaster, the UK Government (in conjunction with the Devolved Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) has determined that there needs to be changes to the UK REPIR (Radiation Emergency Planning Public Information) Regulations. This updated legislation started its process through Parliament in March. The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has issued a consultation on the draft approved code of practice for the regulations. ONR are seeking comments on the code of practice by the 5th June, and the NFLA Secretary tabled a draft response for the Steering Committee which was approved. The response to the code of practice will also be adapted into a wider NFLA Policy Briefing.

NFLA nuclear transport briefing and news –

The NFLA Secretary has been developing a detailed briefing considering various aspects of concern around nuclear transports. This has taken a much longer 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. There is also a sparseness of information of relevant information in relation to civil nuclear transports.

In May, the NDA confirmed that the air transports of highly enriched uranium (that have taken place over the past 12 months), transporting them from the Dounreay site to Wick Airport and then RAF Lossiemouth, have now been safely concluded. The NDA media release congratulated staff for concluding them safely. Local MSP John Finnie argued the transports constituted a real and unnecessary risk to the public.

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 13th September 2019.***