

NFLA Policy Briefing No.196



Date: 11th February 2020

Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee and Annual General Meeting, Manchester, 31st January 2020

1. Introductions to the meeting

The NFLA Steering Committee Chair, Councillor David Blackburn, welcomed all to the Royal Exchange Building Conference in Manchester. The Chair was pleased to note that there were representatives from the four NFLA National Forums. The NFLA 2019/20 AGM was to be held after the Steering Committee, after being postponed from December due to the UK general election.

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 Scotland Forum -

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a business meeting and seminar in Dunfermline in September, and a business meeting in Glasgow in November. The Dunfermline meeting included a seminar that consider the next steps after 'climate emergency' resolutions, Fife's low carbon energy work and the Scottish Government's Preparedness Review on the safety of nuclear weapon road convoys. The Glasgow meeting (which had originally been planned for Motherwell) discussed all core areas of NFLA Scotland policy.

The Forum also held a business meeting, AGM and seminar in Glasgow City Chambers on the 24th January. This included the re-election of the Convener and Vice Convener, a discussion on NFLA Scotland policy and a seminar that considered Hunterston B and nuclear emergency planning, Scottish energy policy and divestment issues for Scottish Councils. The presentations will go on the NFLA website.

NFLA English Forum –

The NFLA English Forum held a joint public meeting with the groups Stop Hinkley, Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group and Together Against Sizewell C in Colchester on the 26th October around concerns over new nuclear build in England. Amongst the speakers was the Leader of Colchester Borough Council, who reiterated the Council's opposition to a new nuclear site at Bradwell. Other speakers came from BANNG, TASC and Stop Hinkley, Professor Steve Thomas on the economics of new nuclear, and the NFLA Secretary on the decentralised, renewable alternatives to new nuclear. The presentations and a short video presentation on the meeting can be found on the NFLA website.

A follow-up public meeting, which focuses on the environmental and other issues with a new nuclear reactor at Sizewell, is planned for Saturday 14th March in Saxmundham Market Hall in East Suffolk. This is being organised with TASC, TEAGS, BANNG and Friends of the Earth Suffolk Coastal. A flyer for the meeting is on the NFLA website.

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

C/o Nuclear Policy, Level 5, Town Hall Extension, Manchester, M60 3NY

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

NFLA All Ireland Sustainable Energy Forum -

The first meeting of the relaunched NFLA All Ireland Sustainable Energy Forum was held in Dublin City Hall on the 18th October. The NFLA Secretary introduced the seminar outlining the hopes and plans for the relaunched Forum. NFLA Policy Advisor Pete Roche then presented the findings of the NFLA's recent report on the climate emergency and local authority action in Ireland. Two case studies were then provided by the Tipperary Energy Agency and Energy Cooperatives Ireland. The presentations are on the NFLA website. There was a good attendance with councillors from across Ireland, the majority of whom newly elected Green councillors.

A general election has been called in the Republic of Ireland for February 8th and this will require a delay to the next Forum meeting. Climate change has been one of the main issues in this campaign.

The next Forum meeting is planned to be held in late April in Newry. The Secretariat is also looking to contact Irish councillor associations (LAMA / AILG) to publicise the work of the new Forum.

NFLA Welsh Forum –

The NFLA Welsh Forum is likely to be held in Cardiff, in late March / early April 2020. With new nuclear in Wylfa currently on hold, it makes sense to look at a south Wales meeting. The meeting will focus on the Hinkley Point C issue, Welsh energy policy and encouraging Councils to support the ICAN Cities Appeal and divestment campaign. A programme will be developed for it shortly.

Recruiting Town and Parish Councils –

Recent meetings had seen attendance from a number of Town and Parish Councillors. The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretariat should encourage recruitment from this sector with a flat membership fee of £150.

Co-operation with international partner groupings -

Whilst attending a NGO conference in Vienna, the NFLA Secretary was able to meet with the officers leading the ***Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe*** and the ***Alliance of Regions for the Phasing-Out of Nuclear Power in Europe*** to discuss ongoing cooperation. The NFLA Secretary was also invited to meet with the Austrian Deputy Foreign Minister as part of a delegation meeting Polish Government energy representatives. Vienna City Council works closely with the Austrian Government challenging eastern European states who are supportive of new nuclear programmes. The conference also allowed for informal discussion with NGOs over joint campaigning work.

NFLA has cooperated with its partner KIMO International over issuing a report on Sellafield discharges to the OSPAR Commission as it considers whether states have reached 'close to zero' marine radioactive discharges by the end of 2020. The NFLA Secretary also provided a presentation to the APSE Climate Change and Renewables Policy Group meeting held in Trafford on the 26th November. The NFLA Secretary attends these meetings as a Manchester City Council officer representative.

Agreed: To note the report.

3. UK General Election and implications of the UK leaving the EU on NFLA policy

The UK held a general election on the 12th December, which led to a Conservative majority of 80 seats. The election replicated to some extent the EU referendum vote, with the SNP increasing its vote and seat share in Scotland (campaigning to stay in the EU), and 'remain' parties in Northern Ireland winning seats at the expense of the DUP. In England and Wales, the Conservatives did particularly well in seats which had voted heavily to leave the EU. Labour lost a large number of seats and Jeremy Corbyn announced he would be standing down as leader in the first quarter of 2020. The Liberal Democrats vote went up slightly, but it did not significantly increase the amount of seats, and its leader Jo Swinson lost her seat to the SNP.

The large majority for the Conservatives meant that the UK formally left the EU on the 30th January. It is now in a 'transition' period with the EU, which at present will continue until the end of 2020. This will include the challenging task of a new trade deal between the UK and the EU.

The Conservative Party manifesto said that: “We will support gas for hydrogen production and nuclear energy, including fusion, as important parts of the energy system, alongside increasing our commitment to renewables.” It is likely that this will include pursuing support for the Revenue Asset Base (RAB) financial model to finance new nuclear power stations at Sizewell, and possibly Bradwell. There is also likely to be financial support for developing Small Modular Nuclear Reactors. The Conservative Party manifesto supported the development of a carbon capture and storage facility, ‘market’ investments to encourage two million green jobs, more offshore and floating wind turbines and renewed investment in renewable forms of transport and heating.

On defence policy, the Conservative manifesto pledged to exceed the NATO average of 2% of GDP on defence spending and maintain the Trident nuclear weapons replacement programme. After the election it was reported that the Prime Minister’s Chief of Staff, Dominic Cummings, would lead the ‘most radical review of defence and foreign policy since 1945’. The brief is to look at where Britain will stand post-Brexit, where the country will be in 2030, and what will be required to protect and promote its interests. The inquiry will incorporate the five-yearly defence and security review, which is due in 2020.

The planned transfer of the nuclear safety regime from Euratom inspection to a domestic safeguards programme overseen by the Office for Nuclear Regulation will be put in place this year. A NFLA November briefing on the implications of Brexit raised concerns in a number of areas:

- Environmental legislation and concerns over the levels of regulation post-Brexit.
- Climate targets and concerns over energy prices, particularly for Northern Ireland. (This remains a major issue, even though there was agreement over a ‘border’ down the Irish Sea for customs arrangements.)
- The impact of Brexit for recruiting staff and developing renewable energy policy.
- The post-Euratom regime with the Office of Nuclear Regulation taking on a domestic nuclear safeguards arrangement from the EU.

The NFLA Secretariat will continue to monitor these issues as discussions take place in the transition period.

Agreed: To note the report and to develop a Policy Briefing on 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.

Revenue Asset Base model to finance new nuclear reactors -

In autumn 2019, the UK Government initiated a public consultation on the Revenue Asset Base (RAB) finance model for assisting the funding of new nuclear power stations. This new finance model could mean all UK consumers helping to subsidise the construction of new nuclear reactors. In the Government’s consultation document, the Government said the model is “essential” to attract private investors to financially support the UK’s new nuclear ambitions at a price that is affordable for bill payers. The public purse would compensate nuclear investors if the project was scrapped.

The NFLA responded in detail to this consultation arguing that it could endanger taxpayers / consumers to effectively be paying billions in indirect subsidies for the development of such reactors, and it was therefore an overly risky project. The NFLA response is on its website. The new Government has not indicated its action following the consultation – most responses called for it to reject new nuclear – but it is expected imminently. The re-election of a Conservative Government which supports both nuclear fission and nuclear fusion is likely to see it support some kind of RAB model to assist new nuclear.

Financing Hinkley Point C –

The NFLA has published a study by Professor Steve Thomas on the financing concerns for EDF in funding the new nuclear reactor at Hinkley Point. The report outlines that EDF are under serious financial pressure arising from delays to other EPR reactors – particularly Flamanville in France. This means is not taking up the loan guarantees in its contract for difference with the UK

Government in funding the reactor. As a result, EDF are placing the Hinkley Point investment on its balance sheet, which is depressing its share price. With increased costs to its existing French nuclear reactor programme and in decommissioning older reactors, EDF is awash with serious financial problems that threatens its future development. The report has attracted international media interest, being picked up by Reuters.

The Steering Committee was keen for these issues to be publicised further, along with the environmental issues raised by Stop Hinkley at the recent NFLA English Forum meeting.

Sizewell C progress -

EDF is keen to start a formal Development Consent Order (DCO) process in the spring for the proposed Sizewell C new nuclear site in Suffolk. This is despite considerable criticism in late 2019 in the fourth round of local consultation on the plans for the site. The NFLA responded to this consultation, and its response is on its website. It was noticeable again that Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk District Council remain tepid in their support for the development amidst concern over its impact on sensitive environmental sites adjoining the proposed site.

The NFLA joint meeting with groups opposed to Sizewell C on March 14th will be an opportunity to raise local concerns over impacts to the environment from the proposed reactor site.

Agreed: To note the report and welcome the consultation responses and reports.

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 and Scottish Government policy on managing radioactive waste -

Throughout 2019, the UK Government (with support from the Welsh Government) had started the process to again seek to find volunteer communities / local authorities that may be interested in hosting a deep waste repository. The NFLA Secretariat understands that any expectation of Councils / communities that may put forward an interest in hosting a repository is not likely to be known until late 2020. There is little expectation that many Councils will register an interest.

The alternative Scottish Government policy of 'near site, near surface' waste facilities may be progressed over the year. At the NuLEAF meeting, a presentation is being provided by the NDA around their research on 'near surface' interim storage of waste, which is likely to have an impact on thinking behind the Scottish Government policy.

The RWM response to its Site Evaluation consultation is expected shortly. The report had been delayed by the recent general election and the need to discuss the matter with new ministers. When it is published the NFLA Secretariat will seek to consider it. The NFLA Secretariat will keep a close watching brief on all these matters as the process develops in 2020.

NDA / RWM / Sellafield update -

There has been a considerable amount of personnel change in both the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and Radioactive Waste Management (RWM). The CEO of Sellafield Ltd, Paul Foster is standing down at the end of January 2020, and a recruitment exercise is underway for his successor. Karen Wheeler has been announced as the new Chief Executive of RWM to replace Bruce McKirdy. She was previously the Director-General of the Border Delivery Group, responsible for leading the cross government work to prepare the UK border for Brexit. She has also been a Non-Executive Director on the RWM Board since September 2018. One of her first tasks will be to find a replacement for Ann McCall, who has been leading RWM's stakeholder engagement and strategy for delivering a deep underground repository.

The 2019 UK Radioactive Waste Inventory was published in December. It calculates the following volumes of radioactive waste as presently known:

- 1,500 m3 of total packaged high level waste (with a radioactivity content of around 12,000,000 TBq at 2100 - dominated by shorter-lived radionuclides).

- 500,000 m3 total packaged intermediate level waste (with a radioactivity content of around 1,000,000 TBq at 2100).
- 1,280,000 m3 total packaged low level waste (with a radioactivity content of around 140 TBq at 2100).
- 2,690,000 m3 total reported very low level waste (with a radioactivity content of around 11 TBq at 2100).

In late December, the NDA reported that the full stock of separate plutonium that had been located at Dounreay had now been transported to the Sellafield site. This means that all significant UK stocks of this material are now held at Sellafield – which sees itself as the centre of excellence for plutonium management. There were over 60 rail and a small number of sea transports of these hazardous materials from Dounreay to Sellafield. NFLA opposed the transports due to the risk of an accident with them, so it is a relief that the transports are now over. It should be noted that other radioactive elements jammed into the Dounreay Fast Reactor have not been removed and there is concern that such material will not be transported to Sellafield in time before the closure of the Sellafield Magnox Reprocessing Plant later this year. It is expected such remaining material will have to be packaged into a dry store on the Dounreay site.

Work began in early January 2020 to install the second of three emptying machines at Sellafield's Magnox Swarf Storage Silo. The silo contains an estimated 60,000 items of intermediate level nuclear waste in 22 chambers. It was built in the 1960s without a plan for how it would be emptied. Engineers have been working for decades to design, build, and install three machines to do the job. Retrievals are set to be completed by 2045. The work has come about through considerable cooperation between Sellafield and the Office for Nuclear Regulation, and is part of a welcome move to speed up dealing with the most high-hazard parts of the Sellafield site.

A new concern has come to light in reference to a deep underground radioactive waste repository, reported in the Guardian newspaper. A Manchester University study showed that uranium passes through into a previously unknown chemical form, binding to sulphur atoms that can dissolve as it is immobilised. About 1 to 2% of the uranium passed into solution for a couple of hours during the process. This leads to concern that the uranium could pass from the repository back into the natural environment and contaminate the land. In responding to the research, RWM said this does not mean the radioactive substances would no longer be properly contained. They said they welcomed the clarity provided by the results, and that the newly discovered form passes too briefly to raise their concerns.

Dounreay / Dalgety Bay / Submarine Dismantling -

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has concluded an inquiry into the accidental release of radioactively contaminated dust from the Dounreay site in February 2019. It notes that Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd “contravened multiple” regulatory conditions. The dust was disturbed during the testing of a ventilation system, though its release did not breach existing discharge limits. SEPA has served a regulatory notice to DSRL, which has to be complied with by October 2020.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has claimed that a clean-up operation of radioactive contamination at the Dalgety Bay site in Fife is being held up by local landowners. The MOD told local councillors that landowners like the Dalgety Bay Sailing Club were delaying the project. The Sailing Club responded angrily at what they said were ‘bullying tactics’ by the MOD and said they were not looking to hold up the project. There is concern if the contracts are not signed imminently then clean-up would be delayed again this year. NFLA's Fife Council member has called on the MOD to resolve this delay and get on with the urgent need for clean-up. The NFLA Secretariat are continuing to monitor the issue in liaison with Fife Council.

An analysis of the Dalgety Bay area's cancer statistics by ISD Scotland (part of the NHS) has found “no significant increase in overall cancer risk”. The report did say it is difficult to rule out the risk altogether though, given the likely delay between radiation exposure and cancer onset, and the probability that residents will move in and out of the area over the next few decades. Dr Ian Fairlie commented that the main point of the report is there are cancer increases and ISD should not necessarily be using the term ‘statistically significant’.

The NFLA Secretary joined with the NuLEAF Secretary for a meeting with staff from the MOD to discuss progress with the Submarine Dismantling Project. The meeting confirmed that the ILW from the submarines will still be going by road to Capenhurst in Cheshire. Work on the demonstrator project had taken longer than planned the MOD noted, as it was working close with the NDA to use new forms of waste management. This had identified new ways to isolate more LLW and reduce the amount of ILW. It was expected that once the demonstrator has been completed, the speed of dismantling would be sped up. This information has been passed on to Fife Council, and officers confirmed the ways they were currently engaging with the MOD.

Update on NuLEAF and SCCORS -

The LGA's NuLEAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum for England and Wales) group met on the 29th January in London, after its December meeting was cancelled due to the election. The meeting heard that a consultation on a review of UK radioactive waste policy will be held in the next few months. Its next meeting is on the 11th March in Manchester Central Library.

COSLA's SCCORS (Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances) group is developing further, following Renfrewshire Council taking on the Secretariat. The NFLA Secretary is discussing progress with NFLA Scotland members and one of the two SCCORS Chairs attended the NFLA Scotland seminar on the 24th January.

Agreed: To note the report.

6. Climate change and the renewable energy alternatives to nuclear power -

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 has published two new reports on climate change and local low carbon actions – a pre-election 'manifesto' on how Councils should seek to tackle the climate emergency through detailed policy programmes; while a second report suggests the 'top 10 actions' Councils should undertake following a climate emergency resolution. These are on the NFLA website and have been well received. The Steering Committee encouraged these reports to be sent widely to councillors.

Both reports have come out of requests from member authorities, and the NFLA Secretariat has been providing specific advice to councils developing programmes or special events to inform councillors. These reports are meant to assist council officers and councillors who need to think in a highly ambitious new way in order to reach the targets for zero carbon localities.

A new report is also being developed by the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor to respond to a consultation on how a Scottish Energy Development Agency may assist Scotland in that step change required to deliver zero carbon policies.

The UK Government's record on climate change will be under greater scrutiny this year with Glasgow hosting the Inter-governmental conference on climate change – COP 26 – in November. The independent Committee on Climate Change has written to the re-elected Prime Minister welcoming his decision to chair a Cabinet Committee on Climate Change. It calls for the committee to focus on the following areas:

- Buildings – setting a strategy for the decarbonisation of existing building stock and establishing regulations on all new buildings to be low or zero carbon.
- Transport – rapid progress on a phase-out of diesel and petrol cars, ideally by 2030.
- Electricity – deliver 40 GW of offshore wind by 2030.
- Industry – develop an ongoing mechanism to pay for emissions reductions from industry and prioritising the likes of hydrogen, carbon capture and storage with full capital support.
- Land use and agriculture – institute new Bills to cut emissions from agriculture and set aside 75,000 acres for new tree-planting.

The NFLA Secretariat plans to have a focus at all upcoming Forum meetings on considering the low carbon strategies of the UK, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish and Republic of Ireland Governments. Climate change is a significant issue in the upcoming Irish election campaign. It is

notable that all Irish political parties are taking the issue much more seriously than previously, and the new NFLA All Ireland Sustainable Energy Forum will take up this issue at its next meeting. It will also respond to the re-establishment of the Northern Ireland Government, which will have to respond to the outcomes of the renewable heating incentive overspend inquiry report and refocus on post-Brexit energy issues. Responding to each government strategy through new policy briefings will be considered.

Seeking community consent -

A major issue for central and local government will be to try and get wide public support for what could be quite radical policy change and implementation. The NFLA reports allude to concern that some changes may only benefit parts of the population (those who can afford to make changes) and could antagonise others if they do not feel fairness with low carbon generation. It is noticeable this is being taken up by both branches of government. At the local level, Oxford City Council have just concluded a major citizen's panel consultation to come up with challenging low carbon policies to move forward with. The Leeds Climate Change Panel is reporting shortly, and a number of other Councils around the country have been doing likewise.

At the national level, three Westminster Parliamentary Select Committees have joined together to create a national climate change panel that can put forward recommendations to the UK Government. The Irish Government have also instituted a similar project, as have other EU states.

Agreed: To note the report and disseminate the NFLA briefings 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, Executive Conference and creation of a European Chapter -

As of January 1st 2020, 7,861 towns and cities were members of Mayors for Peace. A core aim of 2020 will be to take membership beyond the 8,000 mark.

The biannual Executive Conference of Mayors for Peace took place in Hanover, Germany on the 10th – 12th November. Manchester City Council was represented in its role as a Vice President and Executive Lead City of Mayors for Peace. The Executive Conference included a ceremonial event and a full consideration of the 2017 – 2020 Action Plan. There was also some discussion about how to promote the 75th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and plans to move forward beyond 2020. A final communique was also agreed.

Following the conclusion of the Executive Conference, European Lead Cities met with Hiroshima and agreed the basic terms to develop a European Mayors for Peace Chapter. This will be funded for 2020 – 2023 with a €300k budget provided by the Provincial Council of Barcelona and Vice President City Granollers. This would fund a Secretary and an Executive Advisor to develop its work. Its priorities for 2020 will be to support the ICAN Cities Appeal, to hold a conference and to develop a structure with a website and action plan. This is a major move forward and gives time to help deepen and strengthen Mayors for Peace in Europe.

Hiroshima will host the 10th General and Executive Conference of Mayors for Peace on August 3rd – 5th 2020, around the 75th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic weapon attacks. It is likely that, budget permitting, Manchester City Council will attend the conference, and the NFLA Scotland Forum decided its Convener will represent it in Hiroshima.

Basel Peace Forum and European Chapter development -

The NFLA Secretary (in his role as a Manchester Mayors for Peace officer) was funded by the Basel Peace Office to attend meetings of the Basel Peace Forum and a joint event with legislators and youth peace group representatives. This took place in Basel on the 9th and 10th January. Also attending were Mayors for Peace representatives from Granollers and Biograd na Moru, allowing a short meeting of the European Mayors for Peace Chapter Officers Working Group. This meeting

discussed the progress with creating a terms of reference for the Chapter, a job description for the Executive Advisor post and an update of general progress.

The Basel Peace Forum is a 2 day conference organised by the NGO Swisspeace. The theme for 2020 was Cities for Peace. The Forum brought together senior figures from local government, the business community, the international NGO community and organisations like the OSCE. The joint meeting organised by the Basel Peace Forum focused on ways to try and connect legislators – MPs, MEPs and councillors – with youth groups involved in both campaigns on climate change and on peace. There was a number of presentations from European youth activist groups and the presentations for a new award – Peace and Climate Action of European Youth (PACEY).

ICAN have invited two officers of the European Lead Cities to speak at the ICAN Campaigners Forum in Paris on the 14th and 15th February.

The Mayor of Granollers has asked Manchester if it would be interested in hosting a conference to launch the European Chapter, and discussions are taking place to link this in to events for the NFLA's 40th anniversary in November. Meanwhile, the Croatian Lead City of Biograd na Moru has attained an audience between Pope Francis and members of European Lead Cities which will be in late April. The Lord Mayor of Manchester and the NFLA Secretary are likely to attend it.

ICAN Cities Appeal and 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' divestment campaign -

Since late 2018, ICAN has cooperated 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). The Cities Appeal has gained real traction in recent months, and now over 200 towns and cities now formally support it. Norwich City Council and East Ayrshire Council have recently passed TPNW resolutions, to join with Manchester, Edinburgh, Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire and Hebden Royd Town Councils. Other NFLA members are strongly encouraged to pass resolutions supporting the TPNW, particularly as this year is the 75th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic weapon attacks. Mention of these could be a part of such resolutions.

Internationally, there are now 34 states who have formally ratified the TPNW and a further 46 states who support it and are in the process of ratification. When 50 states formally ratify the Treaty become a part of UN international law. The Republic of Ireland is very close to formally ratifying the Treaty after legislation passed through both the Dail and the Seanad late last year. It now has to be formally signed by the President and presented to the United Nations. The NFLA Secretariat plans to warmly congratulate Ireland in a media release when the ratification ceremony takes place, and is encouraging ICAN UK to do likewise.

A similar initiative has been developed on seeking resolutions to support Councils divesting pension fund investments out of companies involved in nuclear weapons. This arises from the lobbying of NFLA Scotland members by the 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' Scotland Network. Their analysis had outlined the level of investment from Scottish Council Pension Funds in companies involved in the production of nuclear weapons at currently £184 million. This discussion had included the real difficulties and practicalities of encouraging divestment, including the fiduciary duty of seeking best value for fund members. East Ayrshire is the latest Council to pass a divestment resolution, joining Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire and Midlothian Councils. A meeting with managers of the Strathclyde Pension Fund is being organised.

UK and Ireland Chapter progress -

The next UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter meeting will be held in Manchester Central Library on the 27th March, after the March Steering Committee meeting. The meeting will highlight the major changes in Mayors for Peace, more examples of best practice in peace education projects and an overview of the dangerous global security situation.

Agreed: To note the report.

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

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

New UK Government and Strategic Defence Review -

The newly elected UK Conservative Government has announced an integrated security, defence and foreign policy review which it says will be the most “radical reassessment” of the country’s place in the world since the end of the Cold War. The exact status of the defence review is as yet unclear – although a wider comprehensive spending review (CSR) is due in 2020 after a multi-year round was deferred to allow for the general election. The Cummings intervention may be part of a strategy to encourage the department to seek to get its ‘house in order’ before it can ask for more finance.

Whilst the new government is expected to be an enthusiastic supporter of the Trident replacement programme, there will also remain real concerns within it as to how to tackle the escalating costs of the scheme. A recently published report by the National Audit Office (NAO) calculates that poor management by the MOD has already seen costs of the project rise by £1.35 billion. The report also says the mistakes will mean the production of new submarines, reactors and weapons will be delayed by a further 6 years. The NAO said the MoD has failed to learn from past mistakes while upgrading the UK’s nuclear defence capabilities.

Irish Government to ratify Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons -

In contrast to the policy position of the UK, and as noted in Minute 7 above, the Irish Government is expected to imminently ratify the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The support for the Draft TPNW Bill received unanimous cross-party agreement during its final reading in the autumn in both houses of the Oireachtas. Ireland is only the second major EU state – after Austria – to ratify the Treaty. Ireland has played a leading role with Austria in this process, as befits a long-standing concern over nuclear weapons and its ‘nuclear free’ status within the Irish Constitution.

The NFLA very much welcomes Ireland’s decision, and as a UK and Ireland-based organisation, will publicise its strong support for the ratification when it is formally lodged at the United Nations.

Iran – US tensions dramatically increase -

An alarming increase in tensions between Iran and the United States took place in January after the latter’s military forces killed through a drone attack Major General Qassam Soleimani, a major figure in the Iranian military forces and close to the government’s political and theocratic leadership. This led to retaliatory attacks by Iran on US military bases located in Iraq and a ratcheting up of tension across the Middle East. A core response from Iran was to move further away from its requirements on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that controls its civil nuclear programme.

The most concerning of these in terms of nuclear weapons is that it is now enriching uranium at a greater rate. Under the nuclear deal, Iran agreed to only enrich uranium to a rate of 3.7%. It has now moved enrichment up to 4.5% and stated this would continue to increase. This is still much lower than the 20% before the deal was made, and it requires uranium enrichment of 90% to produce a nuclear weapon. Iran has challenged the UK, France and Germany to find ways to provide trade and economic support in order to keep the nuclear deal operating. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the three governments to do so, due to US pressure and their own trade arrangements with it. This has led the Prime Minister Boris Johnson to call on President Trump to make a new deal with Iran.

The NPT Treaty Review Conference –

The 5-yearly Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) will take place in May at the UN in New York. With the past year seeing the collapse of the INF Treaty and increased tensions between nuclear weapon states – the USA with Russia and China, India and Pakistan over the disputed Kashmir region, Israel’s nuclear weapons programme and Iran, and threats of a new nuclear weapons arms race in the Middle East – this is one of the most inauspicious times to be holding this Review Conference. Indeed, some commentators are concerned the whole regime could break down in May.

There is real concern that attempts to try and find ways to deliver a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone – the issue that broke the 2015 Conference – could destabilise this year’s conference. Further, there is renewed challenge coming from non-nuclear weapon states that has been emphasised through the parallel Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) process. This Treaty will be coming very close to be ratified by May, and whilst its supporters argue it is complimentary of the NPT, the nuclear weapon states and their allies have not been portraying it that way. Within this debate is the growing loss of faith in the sincerity of the nuclear-armed states’ commitment to work constructively on disarmament – a sentiment which will likely be exacerbated by the continued casting of the TPNW as a risk to non-proliferation, by the UK (and other nuclear weapons states).

A Mayors for Peace delegation will attend the meeting led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Mayor of Granollers (representing European members) and Executive Advisors based in the United States. The NFLA Secretariat will liaise with the delegation before and after the conference.

North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme -

The impasse between North Korea and the United States over the North Korean nuclear weapons programme has intensified. The North Korean government has objected to the American demand to curtail its programme completely, rather saying it wishes increased international sanctions relief within an ordered process. Diplomatic talks continue, but at present there remains limited expectation of progress.

In a statement in early January, North Korean Leader Kim Jong-Un declared that North Korea would abandon its moratorium on nuclear and long-range ballistic missile tests and he said his country would soon introduce "a new strategic weapon". But he has left the door open for dialogue, saying the scope of any testing would depend on the US "attitude". The North conducted several smaller weapons tests late in 2019, in what was seen as an attempt to pressure the US into making concessions.

AWE will miss 2020 date to be taken out of ‘special regulatory measures’ -

According to the Office for Nuclear Regulation, the two Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield will both remain in ‘enhanced regulatory attention’ until at least 2021, a year longer than had been expected. The sites have now been under enhanced attention for around six years, rather than the two years that was predicted in 2013 when they were first placed in that category. AWE Burghfield was briefly moved into routine regulatory attention during 2015, but was moved back into enhanced attention in 2016 due to ongoing failures to improve safety performance.

‘Enhanced’ is the second highest of three categories of regulatory attention. The highest category, ‘significantly enhanced regulatory attention’, is applied to the three most hazardous facilities at Sellafield and to site security at Sellafield. Besides AWE, the other five sites under enhanced regulatory attention are the remainder of the Sellafield site, Devonport Royal Dockyard, the former nuclear power station site at Dounreay and the Hunterston B and Dungeness B power stations. The AWE sites were originally put under enhanced attention because of compliance and safety issues, the reliance on ageing facilities and delays to replacement facilities.

Staffing problems for defence nuclear safety -

Staff shortages have prevented the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR) from completing all “essential tasks” to ensure the safety of the UK nuclear weapons programme, according to a previously confidential Ministry of Defence (MoD) report. A short extract from a report by the DNSR – kept secret by the MoD since 2017 – reveals that the nuclear programme was struggling with shortages of “suitably qualified and experienced personnel”.

The brief extract from the 2015-16 report released by the MoD warned that the DNSR only had “sufficient resource to undertake the majority of identified essential tasks”. The regulator had to rely on secondments and said that “a significant and increasing volume of work is being deferred.” There was a “very high level” of activity in the Defence Nuclear Programme (DNP), the report said. “One

of the key challenges to the DNSR, as it is to the wider DNP, is the continued availability of suitably qualified and experienced personnel.” The report also warned that there were “significant succession planning issues” due to “a high turnover of personnel either joining other organisations or retiring”.

Defence diversification progress and Just Transition movement -

A telephone conference of the Arms Conversion Defence Diversification Steering Group Steering Group took place on the 5th December. The result of the UK General Election does not make the likelihood of a DDA being developed, given Conservative policy is to seek an expansion of the defence sector as part of Brexit plans. A face-to-face meeting of the group is planned for the 13th February.

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.

Issues with the 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 reactors 3 and 4. In August, the ONR allowed Reactor 4 to reopen for a short period of time, as they were satisfied that control rods could be safely moved into and out of the reactor. In December though the reactor was again closed, and ONR staff confirmed to the NFLA that the possible future reopening of both reactors were now closely linked. ONR’s published report in summer 2019 noted that, whilst the cracks in the reactor bricks was of concern, the major issue for them was the amount of debris around the reactor, which could block control rods being placed in and out of the reactor. Technical reports note at least 58 fragments and pieces of debris blocking channels for cooling the reactor and causing fuel cladding to melt. ONR warns that it will require “more robust arrangements” from EDF before it agrees to allow the reactors to restart in 2020. There is no timescale on to whether the reactors will reopen at present.

Dr Ian Fairlie and the NFLA Secretary spoke about Hunterston B at the NFLA Scotland seminar on the 24th January. Dr Fairlie provided the seminar with his assessment on the reactors, and his view that they should be closed forthwith. The NFLA Secretary focusing on the nuclear emergency planning issues relating to the Hunterston site, which are outlined in Minute 10.

Fukushima update –

For the past few months, one of the largest and most difficult issues that remains with the clean-up and remediation of the stricken Fukushima Daiichi is what to do with the huge amount of radioactively contaminated water used to cool down the reactors. There are over a million tons of contaminated water on the site in thousands of storage tanks. With the growing lack of space on the site, there are concerns that by 2022 there will not be enough space to maintain this water. An independent panel is advising the Japanese Government to slowly dump this water in the Pacific Ocean, but there remains real division over the matter in the Japanese Government, where the new Environment Minister takes a different view of continuing to find places for on-site storage.

Meanwhile, the local Fukushima Prefecture has announced a \$2.75bn plan to make the area a hub for the development of renewable energy. The local government has announced a plan for 100% renewable energy by 2040, compared to 40% now.

Agreed: To note the report.

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

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

Changes to UK nuclear emergency planning regulations -

The NFLA Secretary is developing a new Policy Briefing on the implementation of the REPPiR regulations for offsite emergency plans at civil and defence nuclear sites.

This will raise a number of concerns, including:

- The DEPZ for a number of sites – e.g. Hunterston, Sizewell – is being slightly reduced on the basis that accident scenarios do not require any extension to the plan. Other sites, e.g. Hinkley Point, Sizewell, are largely staying to the same size of DEPZ.
- While all plans are taking account of a 30kms OPZ, the legislation allows for a ‘reactive’ rather than ‘proactive’ response to publicising to residents in this area how an accident / emergency incident may affect them.
- Pre-distribution of iodine tablets is only being offered to a very small number of residents in the DEPZ. In the OPZ, the norm appears to be to say they will be in publicly unidentified regional stores readily available to the local authority. This has led to a number of local communities raising concern of what would happen in the event of shelter, rather than evacuation in terms of likely human behaviour patterns for a nuclear incident.
- The local authority will take over the role of producing public information for those in the DEPZ, which is welcome. However, the information provided remains rather bland and inoffensive, and there appears no plan to have a wider strategy of dissemination to those in the OPZ or further afield.
- Public emergency messaging appears to be limited again to those in the DEPZ, with no proactive push to encourage the wider population to sign up to such messages.
- It creates a sense that little has actually changed to REPPiR, despite the Fukushima incident and the real problems of dealing with a wider evacuation or having to shelter indoors for some considerable time.
- There also appears very little public consultation is taking place on these changes.

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 27th March 2019.*** It will also include the NFLA AGM and Annual Policy Seminar.

NFLA Annual General Meeting:

Following the Steering Committee, a rescheduled Annual General Meeting took place.

The core actions from this meeting included:

- Councillor David Blackburn was re-elected as NFLA Steering Committee Chair.
- A financial report was approved with affiliation rates rising with the UK and Ireland inflation rates. It was also agreed to institute a flat fee of £150 for parish and town councils.
- Slight changes to the NFLA constitution were made, and the NFLA Service Plan for 2020 was formally approved.
- The AGM recorded thanks to its officers for their dedication to the NFLA – the NFLA Secretary Sean Morris, the NFLA Policy Advisor Pete Roche, the NFLA Scotland Forum Secretary Cathy Birrell and the NFLA All Ireland Forum Secretary Sheena McEldowney. Independent advisors and consultants to the committee were also thanked for providing advice and policy assistance including Dr Paul Dorfman, Professor Stephen Thomas, Dr Ian Fairlie, Tim Deere-Jones and Professor Andrew Blowers.
- There was a long discussion on the NFLA’s plans for the year and its wider future, with specific approval given to commemorate its 40th anniversary on the 5th November.