Hinkley C & Covid-19 – still building despite lockdown

The ongoing and unprecedented national and global lockdown to limit the spread of the covid-19 virus has seen all public meetings and events cancelled, possibly going well into 2020.

One of the anomalies in the UK lockdown is the ongoing permitting of construction projects, subject to 2m ‘social distancing’ rules.

This has allowed EDF to continue construction of the Hinkley Point C site. NGOs & the NFLA have raised real concerns over the public health implications of such actions.

After early photos since the public lockdown have shown a crowded catering area and full queues for buses to the site, numbers of workers have reduced from 4.2k to 2,000.

NGOs and the NFLA have met with the ONR and the UK Government and remain highly concerned that construction is continuing. A joint NGO / NFLA statement is on the NFLA website.

Mayors for Peace August Conference postponed to 2021

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak and lockdown, Mayors for Peace has decided to postpone their plans to hold the 11th Executive and General Conference in Hiroshima this August.

This follows the postponement until early 2021 of the UN Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have issued a joint statement calling on renewed diplomacy to encourage nuclear disarmament, which the NFLA fully supports.

All Mayors for Peace members, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are considering how they will hold local events to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons and the end of the Second World War.

A European Mayors for Peace Working Group is still moving forward with work, including a new website and looking at future events. A Chapter progress report will be published in May.
NFLA media releases, April 2020: (on NFLA website)

- NFLA supports Earth Day statement on climate change, pandemic and nuclear weapons
- Joint NGO / NFLA statement on Hinkley C construction
- NFLA calls for post Covid-19 green stimulus
- NFLA supports EU letter supporting no finance for new nuclear
- NFLA submits response to EDF Hinkley dredging application

NFLA meets ONR to challenge Hunterston B reopening

The NFLA Secretary, Dr Ian Fairlie and Rita Holmes of the North Ayrshire Radiation Monitoring Group met with the Deputy Chief Nuclear Inspector and the Lead Inspector for Hunterston B to discuss the ongoing closure of the two remaining operating reactors and whether they will restart.

The far-reaching meeting looked at issues around the level of keyway route cracks, graphite debris and the potential impact of seismic events on the reactors, should they resume operation.

NFLA Scotland holds meeting to discuss core policy

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a telephone conference to discuss key nuclear policy and energy policy issues.

The meeting included a detailed overview of all core policy matters from the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor. Within this report, which will be published on the NFLA website shortly, was information on the new Periodic Safety Review for the Torness reactor. This will be considered in more detail in the May newsletter.

The NFLA Secretary provided a report on wider issues, as well as outlining the main points that came out of the ICAN Scottish Roundtable meeting looking at nuclear weapons policy.

Councillors decided to hold another business meeting in late June, which may be accompanied with a webinar, that is being looked at for all 4 Forums.

NFLA, CNFE & Alliance support European ‘no’ to new nuclear

The NFLA has joined with its European partners, the Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe and the Alliance of Regions for the Phasing-out of Nuclear Power in Europe, in a joint letter with 53 other groups to the European Commission on energy policy.

The letter, developed by the Nuclear Consulting Group, calls on the Commission to hold its nerve and not allow financial support for new nuclear. Rather it should continue to support renewable energy. The full letter can be found on the NFLA website.
NFLA meets with Strathclyde Pension Fund over divestment

The NFLA held a meeting with the CEO of the Strathclyde Pension Fund over the issue of divesting from investments in various companies involved in nuclear weapons.

A number of NFLA members have passed resolutions calling for such divestment.

In a wide-ranging discussion, the meeting looked at how the Fund seeks to engage with companies involved in the nuclear weapon process and policy commitments it makes at the international level. The Fund is reluctant to get involved in the divestment debate, but agreed to keep this conversation going and respond in writing to the NFLA. It follows a UK Supreme Court ruling that public pension funds can make policy decisions that could involve divestment in issues around UK defence & foreign policy.

International Energy Agency asserts resilience of renewables

A startling report from the International Energy Agency suggests that renewables will be the most resilient energy source after the Covid-19 outbreak is under control.

The IEA report said the outbreak of Covid-19 would wipe out demand for fossil fuels by prompting a collapse in energy demand seven times greater than the 2008 slump caused by the global financial crisis.

The IEA note the outbreak has led to the most severe plunge in energy demand since the Second World War. This has badly damaged the fossil fuel sector, while renewable energy continues to grow.

As a result, renewable energy will play its largest ever role in the global energy system this year, and could help erase a decade’s growth of global carbon emissions. This issue is a focus of the NFLA’s report on Covid-19 out in early May.

Forthcoming meetings of interest to NFLA members

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak and social distancing rules there will be no NFLA public meetings until further notice.

A NFLA Steering Committee telephone conference will be held on the 1st May. Other video and phone conference meetings are also taking place.

The NFLA Secretariat is investigating video & phone conference facilities as a medium term alternative in place of NFLA seminars.