

NFLA Policy Briefing No.213



Date: 18th February 2021

Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee online meeting and Annual General Meeting, 5th February 2021

1. Introduction to the meeting

The NFLA Steering Committee Chair, Councillor David Blackburn, welcomed all to the NFLA Steering Committee and Annual General Meeting for 2020/21. Councillor Blackburn welcomed the good attendance to the meeting from members of all four NFLA National Forums.

2. The covid-19 outbreak and future meetings / ongoing work of the Secretariat

The NFLA Secretary noted that all parts of the UK and Ireland were now experiencing an unprecedented third lockdown created by the Covid-19 pandemic and are all subject to the tightest lockdowns within this public health emergency. Recent weeks has seen the highest levels of infection and deaths, though a vaccination programme may help over time to reduce the virus.

It remains clear that tight social distancing conditions will continue till at least Easter, and it is unlikely that face-to-face meetings will be possible till the summer, or even the autumn / winter. The Steering Committee agreed that **ALL** NFLA meetings in 2021 remain online, with the possible exception of the December Annual General Meeting, should it be by then safe to hold public meetings.

Given this, the Steering Committee agreed to the following:

- Including this meeting today, there will be 5 Steering Committee online meetings in 2021. The other four will be on the **26th March** (with a follow-on UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter meeting), **4th June** (following on from probable Scottish and Welsh Parliament elections, and local elections, though it is possible these may be postponed), **24th September** and **3rd December** (2021/22 AGM).
- NFLA National Forum webinars and business meetings will be set up in February, March and April 2021 as follows – NFLA Scotland on the 11th February, NFLA England on the 5th March, NFLA All Ireland on the 12th March or 16th April and NFLA Wales on the 9th April.
- NFLA should support CNFE, IPPNW and Friends of the Earth Japan events planned close to the Fukushima anniversary, and work to hold a special webinar for the Chernobyl anniversary in late April.

Since the last NFLA Steering Committee the NFLA Secretariat has issued briefings on the green recovery and local energy, a note of the 6th November meeting and 40th anniversary, a report on getting to 100% renewables, a report on Brexit, a report on Beaufort's Dyke and the Irish Sea, responses to the NDA Business Plan and the ONR on its definition of Bulk Quantities, and two Mayors for Peace briefings on the TPNW and its entry into force at the UN. The Steering Committee welcomed these reports.

Action: To approve Steering Committee meetings for 2021 and welcome the efforts of the NFLA Secretariat over the past 3 months.

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

3. NFLA Forums progress and the NFLA's 40th anniversary
NFLA 40th anniversary webinar, 6th November and European Chapter webinar, 5th December -

Following the last Steering Committee meeting, the NFLA Secretariat set up a special webinar to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the organisation. Around 50 people attended this meeting, which was established at short notice. The presentations from it are held now within a special webpage on the 40th anniversary on the NFLA website –

<https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/news/40th-anniversary-of-the-nfla/>

Manchester City Council also formally commemorated the anniversary by sharing a number of social media feeds, including a message from the Mayor of Nagasaki, Chair of NFLA Japan.

The NFLA Secretary has been in touch with his predecessors to try and get more historical background on the creation of the NFLA. The aim will be to try and create a more comprehensive report which can give a more detailed assessment of the multifarious impacts of the NFLA. It is aimed to develop this shortly into a full report.

The 'short notice' in delivering this webinar was due to the NFLA Secretary working with Mayors for Peace and ICAN colleagues on delivering a separate event on the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty and promoting safe and more peaceful cities. This took place in December and had over 230 attendees. The NFLA Secretary moderated it, and Cllr Newman and the Lord Mayor of Manchester were amongst the speakers. NFLA was noted as a core partner of this event and its 40th anniversary reported in media releases around the webinar.

NFLA Scotland business meeting, 11th February -

The NFLA Scotland Forum will hold its next meeting / AGM on the 11th February. The meeting will focus on officer reports and CND Scotland's 'Beyond Nuclear' Conference. A separate short AGM will also need to be organised in March. There is a need to also have some discussion on future plans for 2021 and engaging with NFLA Scotland members.

NFLA English Forum webinar, 5th March -

The NFLA Secretary is looking to organise a NFLA English Forum webinar to focus on a number of relevant issues – these include the issues around a coal mine to be developed in West Cumbria and separate moves by Copeland and Allerdale Councils to consider getting involved in a process to host a deep underground radioactive waste repository, an overview of new nuclear developments in England, particularly Sizewell C, and further progress on the climate emergency. The NFLA Secretary is putting together a programme for publication shortly, following discussion with the NFLA English Forum Chair and Vice Chair.

NFLA All Ireland Forum webinar, 12th March or 16th April -

The NFLA All Ireland Forum Sustainable Energy Forum will hold its next webinar on either the 12th March or the 16th April, depending on speaker availability. The NFLA Secretary has been discussing with Co-Chairs to get presentations on local energy and the climate emergency, the potential for an under the Irish Sea underground waste repository, Beaufort's Dyke and nuclear issues and ways to encourage both Irish Governments to be more expansive in their green recovery plans. The flyer is being prepared and will be issued shortly.

NFLA Welsh Forum webinar, 9th April -

The NFLA Welsh Forum's spring webinar will be on the 9th April. The webinar will include a further update on the Hinkley mud debate, small modular reactors for Wylfa or Trawsfynydd and focus in more detail on local energy and the climate emergency. A flyer will be developed and will be issued shortly.

Agreed: To encourage attendance at these meetings. To successfully process affiliation fee invoices. To be aware of the deep financial problems affecting all Councils and consider what it may mean for the NFLA.

4. New nuclear

The UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's 'Ten Point Plan' for a low carbon future, and a following Energy White Paper and National Infrastructure Strategy reinforced UK Government policy that

it remains strongly supportive of new large, small and nuclear fusion reactors. The UK Government also gave its response to its consultation on using the Revenue Asset Base funding model by suggesting this could be actively used for the part public funding of new projects like Sizewell C and Bradwell B.

A detailed analysis of the White Paper has been developed by the NFLA Policy Advisor and Dr Ian Fairlie and has been placed on the NFLA website - https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/A326_NB212_Energy_White_Paper.pdf

In terms of the Revenue Asset Base consultation, the UK Government responded that it has the potential to reduce the cost of raising private finance for new nuclear projects, thereby reducing consumer bills, while still preserving incentives for the private sector to complete nuclear projects to time and budget. Again though, no justifications are provided for these optimistic statements, given that few external investors appear to be interested in supporting such projects. The Government argue this consultation was at a high-level and so detail on how it could be implemented will be provided in the future.

In terms of the future, the White Paper suggested it would bring at least one future large nuclear reactor to approval point before the end of the next Parliament – presumably Sizewell C, which suggests Bradwell B does not count on as much support.

Therefore, despite a fanfare of support for new nuclear, there remains little detail to the policy. This is like a large part of other government policy, where the intense pressure on the UK Government in responding to coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic and the huge economic challenges that the country faces are obvious to see.

In terms of these issues, the NFLA commented in a media release that it was a ‘missed opportunity’ that focused too much on new nuclear and not enough on sensible renewable energy alternatives that could drive a deeper and fairer green recovery and just transition. The lack of detail on all of these areas of policy is symptomatic of a government that presently has much bigger problems to deal with.

Considering new nuclear projects at present:

- **Hinkley Point C** – EDF has admitted that the costs of this reactor project have increased by a further £500 million to at least £23 billion as a result of delays being caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This also means the expected construction time has been extended to the summer of 2026. NFLA has issued a media release noting this is now 9 years later than it was originally suggested in 2008 and it also expresses concern over where the finance for this project will be found.
- **Sizewell C** – the National Infrastructure Commission has started its consideration of the proposed Sizewell C reactor, and the NFLA has registered as an interested party. EDF has added in some local changes to the project to try and reduce the size of its environmental footprint and improve some of the transportation routes so as to reduce road transports by replacing it with more sea and rail transport. Local groups and Councils remain critical over the lack of detail. The UK Government has confirmed it has started talks with EDF to consider if it can provide financial support for part of the development, but these talks are at an early stage. It is thought possible that the Chinese CGN utility may pull out of the project due to political concerns around Chinese involvement in critical infrastructure. It is expected the planning inquiry will go ahead in the spring. As part of this process, important comments have been made by the Environment Agency and Natural England that design changes made to the proposed £20bn Sizewell C nuclear power plant will be rushed through without adequate time to be evaluated. This may delay the planning inquiry while they consider the proposed changes. A RSPB petition opposing Sizewell C has now attracted over 100,000 signatures. The NFLA is keeping a close eye on this debate and is looking to focus on it through a NFLA English Forum webinar with relevant groups.
- **Bradwell B** – the majority CGN development at Bradwell was granted an electricity licence in December 2020, should it be built. In its January 2021 initial assessment of the HPR-1000 design under the Generic Design Assessment, the Environment Agency have identified six safety issues relating to heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, methods of

disposing of radioactive waste and the inconsistent use of design safety precedents. These need to be rectified in the assessment process before it could give its approval. A National Planning Inspector visited the Bradwell B proposed site in December after Maldon Council rejected land investigations to take place on the site. The developer has appealed the decision by the Council to the Planning Inspectorate.

- **Wylfa B** – in late January Hitachi wrote to the UK Government to say it was formally ending its interest in the site and withdrawing its request for planning approval. Talks with other US utilities on the site do not appear to have satisfied Hitachi, and it remained frustrated over the lack of support from the UK Government. This makes it unlikely the site will ever be developed for a larger nuclear reactor. Supporters of the site for new nuclear appear to be transferring interest in using it for small modular reactors. Shearwater Energy, which describes itself as a ‘UK-based hybrid clean energy company’, is developing a wind-small modular reactor and hydrogen production hybrid energy project for Wylfa and / or Trawsfynydd. Shearwater says it has selected the SMR technology being developed by NuScale and has signed a memorandum of understanding with the US company to further collaborate in advancing the proposed project.
- **Small nuclear reactors** – within the energy statements made by the UK Government was a financial commitment to support the development of the industry with funding of around £525M “to help develop large and smaller-scale nuclear plants, and research and develop new advanced modular reactors”. Analysis by the Energy & Climate Change Intelligence Unit (ECIU) suggest the investment in small modular reactors is considerably less than expected. It suggests at least £2bn is required to get initial support for a small initial fleet of reactors moving forward, and they said it feels a bit like SMRs have been ‘put on the back burner’.

Agreed: To monitor the issue and publish a Policy Briefing on the Energy White Paper and recent UK policy developments. To look at a public meeting webinar on new nuclear matters within the next NFLA English Forum meeting.

5. Radioactive waste

UK & Scottish Government reviews of waste and decommissioning strategies -

At a previous NuLEAF meeting, a speaker from the UK Government confirmed that it was developing a full update of UK Radioactive Waste Management Policy in liaison with the other 3 devolved governments. The continuing challenges for policymakers with Covid-19 workstreams means this has been delayed and may now come out later in March. The NFLA Secretariat will monitor this issue.

Deep waste repository update and RWM Exchange -

Allerdale Council has followed the example of Copeland Council by setting up an initial Working Group to consider taking an interest in a discussion with RWM on looking for sites for a deep underground repository. In both cases, private landowners have come forward to start this process, and the Councils have decided to consider these matters in more detail. Local groups who attended the RWM Exchange – a new stakeholder engagement process between NGOs / NFLA and RWM – raised real concerns that the process seems to be pushed by landowners rather than the Councils.

The Working Groups, which will include the local councils and RWM are supposed to begin engaging with local people to canvass and listen to their views. It will not be making any commitments on the siting of a GDF. If it is found that there is interest to move forward, then a Community Partnership would be established, formalising discussions and starting a more detailed policy engagement process.

At the RWM Exchange meeting, RWM staff said they were in talks with a number of other Councils / landowners in other parts of England, but they would not say where. RWM Exchange is allowing more critical groups to put forward their initial views to RWM. However, all agreed more clarity on its role would be required once a more detailed local policy process begins.

A key issue for the NFLA with a site in West Cumbria would be the possibility of part of the site going deep underground the Irish Sea. NFLA recently commented with concern over the decision

by the UK Communities Minister to not 'call in' a decision to develop a deep underground coal mine in West Cumbria, which local anti-nuclear groups are concerned could be used in the future for a deep-underground radioactive waste structure. The Steering Committee agreed for the NFLA Policy Advisor to produce a briefing to consider the core issues with the coalmine and a part undersea repository.

NDA Business Plan, stakeholder engagement and Sellafield issues –

Following a detailed autumn response to the NDA's draft strategy for 2021-25, the NFLA Secretariat has submitted a response to the NDA's Draft Business Plan for the same period. It can be found on the NFLA website. Notable comments made by the NFLA in the response were focusing on the Public Accounts Committee's recent report on NDA activity. This outlined that the NDA still does not have a full understanding of the condition of its sites, including its 10 closed Magnox stations. Its most recent estimate of the cost of decommissioning its sites is £132bn with the work not being completed for another 120 years. This is an increase of £8bn from last year alone. This was driven by a £5bn increase to the estimated cost of decommissioning the Magnox sites, which is now put at almost £20bn, and a £2.5bn increase in costs at Sellafield, taking the costs at the reprocessing site to £97bn. There was no mention of the PAC report in the Draft Business Plan, which the NFLA commented on was very surprising.

The NFLA Secretary is in an ongoing discussion with the NDA's Stakeholder Engagement Manager about ways the NDA can improve its engagement with NGOs and the NFLA. In a separate development, following a detailed discussion at the ONR NGO Forum on the progress of Site Stakeholder Groups and Local Liaison Committees around nuclear sites, a project is taking place through the Safety Directors Forum to improve their openness, transparency and stakeholder engagement. The NFLA Secretary is cautiously welcoming this project. He will keep fully engaged with it.

At Sellafield, the site operator was fined £320,000 and given an Improvement Notice after a prosecution brought by the ONR over electrical safety at the site. This came after a worker on the site suffered a high voltage electrical shock leading to serious burns.

There also remains some alarm at the site following a number of staff at Sellafield raising concerns over workplace safety during the current pandemic. In this third lockdown the site is continuing core operations and staff have been speaking out over ensuring careful tracking and tracing of staff, the use of face masks and increased numbers of staff testing positive for Covid-19. In mid-January alone 80 staff on site were found to have tested positive and told to self-isolate.

NuLEAF and SCCORS update -

NuLEAF held a business meeting on the 9th December. It included a presentation from Bill Hamilton from Magnox and its progress and interaction with local authorities. It also included an update on the deep waste repository discussion with Copeland and Allerdale Councillors talking about their interest in these issues.

NuLEAF organised a January webinar with the UKAEA to consider the possibility of an experimental nuclear fusion reactor being built at a site in England. NFLA representatives argued it was not necessary for NuLEAF to hold such a meeting given there is a LGA New Nuclear Group, but the majority view allowed it to take place. NFLA representatives did not attend it.

NuLEAF's next business meeting is on the 10th March, when a new NFLA Vice-Chair will be appointed. It was agreed that the NFLA Chair and the NFLA representatives for Manchester and Hull Councils should meet to discuss its nomination to the meeting.

The NFLA Secretary has had a detailed phone discussion with the SCCORS Co-Chairs Councillor Michelle Campbell. Cllr Campbell said she was keen to get its Steering Group operating again and is speaking to the NDA about being provided with a budget to allow it to develop. Cllr Campbell is keen to engage with, and get the support of, NFLA Scotland members in this endeavour.

'Geiger Bay' / Hinkley mud update -

The NFLA Secretary has engaged actively with a new campaign called 'Geiger Bay' which is campaigning against the dumping of as much as 780,000 tonnes of sediment from the Hinkley Point site to the offshore Cardiff Deep Grounds. Early in January, media reports suggested that EDF was considering a second site for dredging at Portishead Bay in Somerset. This would reduce the amount dumped in the Cardiff Deep Grounds. NFLA issued a joint media release with the Geiger Bay and Stop Hinkley campaign groups to call for an independent assessment of both applications and raise the concern of the marine environmental and health impacts of the sediment. Geiger Bay have been speaking with a legal firm over reviewing some of the decisions made by Natural Resources Wales. Effort is also being made to engage with the Welsh Government's expert panel advising it on the potential impacts of dumping such dredged material in the site close to Cardiff Bay. The NFLA is looking to profile these new developments at the next NFLA Welsh Forum webinar.

Dalgety Bay / SEPA cyber-attack concerns / Scottish sites meeting –

In late November the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) confirmed that the remediation work to the Dalgety Bay shoreline, where radioactive particles from the radium dials of dumped military aeroplanes continue to be found, should commence in the spring. The Ministry of Defence contractor Balfour Beatty has applied for a waste licence and applied in December to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) for the necessary radiological licence. This could take as long as 16 weeks to be granted. NFLA's representative Fife Councillor David Barratt welcomed the start date but was wary of the work taking place, given the continuing experience of delays over the past few years.

The NFLA is also particularly concerned over what appears to be a major cyber-attack on SEPA. Starting on Christmas Eve, it appears that SEPA has been subject to a large amount of cyber-attacks which has forced a closure of some key operations. This has continued throughout January. It is understood that hackers have stolen about 1.2 GB of confidential data in an attempt to extort money from the agency. The four thousand files include personal information about SEPA staff, contract and procurement documents, pollution permits, enforcement notices and commercial work with overseas agencies. SEPA have said they will not pay any ransom to the criminals. Much of the data has been published online. It could take considerable time to rectify this issue, which SEPA are working on with the Police and the National Cyber Security Centre. There has to be concern of how this will affect SEPA work over 2021.

The NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor attended a meeting with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Nuclear Sites operators on the 8th January. This meeting confirmed that there are no plans to ask Peel Ports to dismantle submarines at Hunterston, as suggested in the media. It was also confirmed that the Review of Scottish HAW policy will not have any major changes, but it will consider improvements over the last decade in technology.

The Scottish Government have also responded to a NFLA letter about accelerated decommissioning at Hunterston B. It welcomed the 'helpful suggestions' for the Scottish Government to consider as part of its socio-economic and environmental policy responsibilities, though noted that EDF are responsible for engaging and consulting its workforce on planning for the closure and the future decommissioning of the site. The letter will be discussed at the upcoming NFLA Scotland meeting of the 11th February.

Agreed: To note the report. To develop a report on the core issues of a West Cumbria coalmine and a deep waste repository being built partially under the Irish Sea.

6. The UK leaving the EU and impacts on nuclear & energy policy

The UK Government made a detailed agreement with the European Commission just before the end of 2020. On the 1st January 2021 the UK formally left the transition agreement and is now formally separate from the EU. The agreement staved off the real crisis that would have been a 'no deal' Brexit but it is already evident that it has created large areas of new bureaucracy and 'red tape'. There remain real concerns over delays to the import and export of goods, and there are many other uncertainties that may come to the fore over the next few months. The agreement

means that Northern Ireland remains in the EU single market, which creates new challenges but protects issues like the Irish single island electricity market.

The NFLA issued a briefing in early December prior to the agreement being made, which raised a wide range of concerns should a deal not be made (which at that time very much looked a possibility). The briefing can be found on the NFLA website. The domestic nuclear safeguards regime, which used to be monitored by Euratom, is now under the management of the Office for Nuclear Regulation.

The Steering Committee agreed that the NFLA Secretariat continue to monitor these issues.

Suggested action: To note the report and monitor post-Brexit development.

7. Climate change, green stimulus and alternatives to nuclear power

NFLA reports on green recovery and creating a 100% renewable electricity system –

In November, the NFLA published two detailed reports as part of its ongoing support to local government advocating non-nuclear zero carbon policy responses to the climate emergency.

The first of these was a detailed analysis of the prospects for a ‘green recovery’ as part of the policy response to the economic challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. The report considered some of the following issues:

- The global need to tackle the climate emergency and the trillions of pounds that has been pledged by governments around the world to deliver a green recovery as one of the positive responses to a changed world.
- Analysing the concept of ‘Build Back Better’ and an overview of the expected or published responses of the UK, Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Governments in developing green recovery policies, strategies and finance.
- Within this, and reporting in the media in late January, is real concern that the UK’s Green Homes Grants system has already seen a huge series of delays and problems, being called a ‘shambles’ by opposition politicians. This scheme is meant to help householders and local authorities in providing grants to improve the energy efficiency and other low carbon aspects of existing and new homes.
- The report provides strong evidence of the critical role of Local Authorities in promoting a green recovery. It notes that more than 10,000 cities worldwide have committed to some form of climate action. The report goes into detail about pro-active work Councils are doing in this area and advocates stronger support from central government and the private sector to assist them. The report outlines some of the core actions all Councils could develop.
- The report notes it is essential to encourage strong public support for such activity, or risk criticism of such policies, particularly when they are around trying to change public behaviour. The report provides some excellent examples like those in Leeds, Oxford and Edinburgh, and the work of Climate Assembly UK and similar bodies in Ireland.
- A detailed annex provides 37 excellent case studies of Councils across the UK and Ireland excelling in this area. The body of the report outlines other examples as well.

The second report is an analysis of recent expert reports which outline the possibility of creating a 100% renewable electricity system. This seeks to counter the tired accusation of the nuclear and fossil fuel lobbies that they are required due to the intermittency issues of renewable energy.

This report notes that the concept of ‘baseload’ power is now outdated and that there are many ways to balance intermittency from renewable energy – energy efficiency, demand management / smart energy, ever cheaper battery storage, green hydrogen and pumped hydro storage, combined heat and power stations can be used for heat storage, looking at biomass and geothermal to assist, and increasing the amount of energy interconnectors with other countries.

The report also challenges the assertion made that, even if 100% renewables is possible, it will be prohibitively expensive. The report quotes from the Climate Change Committee and the National Infrastructure Commission that the ever-decreasing cost of renewables in general make it much more cost effective, and above all, more easily realisable, to pursue renewables over a

large new nuclear complex for example. Battery storage is exploding the myth that a high level of renewable energy in the system cannot be achieved.

The report concludes on a number of excellent academic reports which comprehensively show a 100% renewable electricity system is possible and preferable in the critical challenge to reduce carbon emissions. The NFLA Secretariat has tried to again disseminate this report far and wide and it is essential for NFLA members to do the same.

The NFLA Secretariat are keen to ensure the momentum created by these excellent reports is maintained in the next couple of months. The Steering Committee agreed that a new report should be developed following on from the green recovery by considering how the UK White Paper and Irish developments could see an enhancement to local energy development.

Agreed: To disseminate reports as wide as possible and commissioning a further update.

8. Mayors for Peace

The NFLA Secretary worked with the European Mayors for Peace Chapter Secretary and the Campaigns Advisor of ICAN on a joint webinar held on the 4th December that supported the ICAN Cities Appeal / TPNW resolutions and the need to promote safe, resilient and peaceful cities. This high-profile event included presentations from the Mayors of Hiroshima, Oslo, Barcelona, Braga, Granollers, Cllr Newman in his role as former Lord Mayor of Manchester, and the current Lord Mayor of Manchester. It also included presentations from the ICAN CEO Beatrice Fihn and the ICAN Campaigns Director Daniel Hogsta, as well as a senior researcher with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. It was moderated by the NFLA Secretary and attended by over 230 people from across Europe, Japan and North America. It can be viewed through a link on the Mayors for Peace and NFLA websites.

The excellent cooperation on this webinar was continued with a joint statement developed and published in January to coincide with the entry into force of the TPNW. This was signed by the Mayors of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, European Lead Cities, the NFLA Chair and the Mayors of Barcelona and Brescia. It also went out in a joint Mayors for Peace / NFLA / ICAN media release and can be found on the NFLA website. In addition, video messages were recorded and disseminated on social media (including Manchester's Twitter pages) from the Mayors of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Barcelona, Granollers and Manchester.

The European Chapter Working Group is meeting prior to the Steering Committee to discuss the legal statues of the Chapter, a date for a first Board Meeting, the Chapter website and further events.

A Chapter recruitment campaign has started. It is first focusing on Irish (north and south) and London local authorities, and will then look at English, Welsh and Scottish Councils. Voluntary invoices are also being sent out shortly. The Irish recruitment campaign has seen Galway County Council and Monaghan County Council joining Mayors for Peace.

Brighton & Hove Council, Leeds City Council and Lancaster City Council are the latest Councils to pass resolutions of support for the TPNW / ICAN Cities Appeal. A media release and Twitter feeds celebrated all three resolutions and thanks go to the councillors involved in them. Other Councils are on board to seek to pass similar resolutions

Agreed: To note the report and welcome the cooperation with ICAN and Mayors for Peace.

9. Nuclear weapons and defence nuclear safety NPT and the TPNW -

On or around January 22nd over 200 events were held around the world to celebrate the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) . In the UK, billboards were placed close to the Scottish Parliament and around Edinburgh and Manchester. A joint letter was issued to the Prime Minister from ICAN UK groups (including the NFLA) and a short letter was also issued to the Guardian.

Cambodia became the 52nd state to ratify the TPNW on the 22nd January. Another 36 states are in the process of ratifying the TPNW. ICAN are working with these states and encouraging others to come forward to move the supporting states to the 100 mark. Austria have offered to host the first States Parties Conference of the TPNW, which is expected around November. The UN will also be putting into place other structures to bring this new treaty into its work programme.

Those opposed to the TPNW were quite vocal in December, with a NATO statement saying the NPT remains the most effective instrument for nuclear disarmament. ICAN showed the statement was full of inaccuracies. A major challenge though will be to find ways to encourage NATO states to engage with the TPNW. The Spanish Parliament passed a resolution calling on the government to focus into it, and it may well be an issue in elections in the likes of Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark and Iceland this year. It also will be interested to see if there are any changes of emphasis to the TPNW from the new US administration.

Due to the ongoing issues with Covid-19, the NPT Review Conference has been moved to 2021 and the aim is for it to take place before August 2021. It remains to be seen whether it can be held given continuing restrictions on travel. If it is not held by then it will be cancelled, and the UN will resume to Preparatory Conferences from 2022 onwards.

A new US President and ongoing international tensions on nuclear weapons -

The new United States administration led by President Biden is likely to seek to reduce some of the tensions that arose from the unilateral actions of the previous Trump administration. An early positive has come in renewing until at least 2026 of the START nuclear weapons reduction treaty between the US and Russia, following a discussion between President Biden and President Putin. Whether other abrogated treaties like the INF Treaty will be restored waits to be seen, and there remains tension between the US, Russia and China which may not necessarily be reduced. All three states (and other states) are developing a new generation of weapons, such as hypersonic weapons, which threaten the disarmament regime. The Biden administration also needs to decide if it will continue with a huge \$1.2 trillion plan on defence inherited from the previous government.

Biden has also to decide how to defuse the tensions over Iran's nuclear weapon programme. According to media reports, the Biden administration is expected to name Robert Malley, a former top adviser in the Obama administration, as its special envoy for Iran. Malley was a key member of former President Barack Obama's team that negotiated the nuclear accord with Iran and world powers, an agreement that Donald Trump abandoned in 2018 in the face of strong opposition from Washington's European allies. It will take real effort to restore the agreement with Iran over its nuclear programme.

Biden will also have to consider how to deal with the North Korea nuclear weapons programme, with no sign that this will be curtailed. There remain ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan and the tensions within the Middle East is another huge challenge to engage with.

Divestment of pension funds from nuclear weapons and fossil fuels –

NFLA has supported a coalition of groups that, following on from the TPNW entering into force, want to challenge banks and pension funds to change their policies and divest from nuclear weapons and fossil fuel investments. NFLA has met previously with the Strathclyde Pension Fund and the NFLA Secretary is currently assisting Manchester City Councillors with regard to the Greater Manchester Pension Fund. Divestment, whether from nuclear weapon producers or fossil fuel producers remains a prescient issue in local government and other public bodies.

The NFLA Secretary will prioritise a Policy Briefing on this matter to be published before the next Steering Committee meeting.

AWE fined £660,000 for electrical near miss accident / Stay in special measures

On 7th January the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) was fined £660,000 for safety failures over a 2019 incident where a contractor narrowly avoided an electrical shock. AWE staff incorrectly indicated on a form that electricity was cut off from a building and gave out keys to a switch room containing a live 415-volt supply to workers carrying out an asbestos survey. The

prosecution was brought by the ONR. It remains symptomatic of concerns over the safe operation of the facilities.

Such issues are part of the reason the ONR are keeping the AWE facilities in special regulatory measures until at least 2022. Aldermaston and Burghfield have been in some form of special measures now for **seven years**. For both AWE sites the most significant failing is a lack of adequate and up-to-date nuclear safety cases, and performance in this area has deteriorated since the previous year. Performance on industrial and fire safety has also deteriorated at both sites, and there have been failings at Burghfield that relate to maintaining and/or modifying existing plant.

Large increase in the MOD budget –

Despite the significant pressures on the UK budget, the Prime Minister announced a huge £16.5 billion increase in the annual budget of the Ministry of Defence. This is partially being used to plug perceived gaps in budget but also be used on new weapons and the Trident nuclear programme. In a blog post on the increase, Dave Cullen of the Nuclear Information Service noted the challenge with the MOD's budget derives from the 2015 Strategic Defence Review which was not adequately funded. A planned Integrated Review to look at the priorities of the MOD, Foreign and International Development Offices has had to be postponed in October 2020, due to the other pressures on the government. Defence analysts have pointed out that the lack of a budgetary framework make it very difficult for the MOD to begin its major new projects, including the new nuclear warhead.

Defence diversification –

The NFLA Secretary has been engaged with the UK Arms Conversion Defence Diversification Steering Group. A sub-group has been held in early January to determine ways to improve its activity and role, and this will be discussed by the wider group in February.

The NFLA Secretary attended a webinar organised by the Nuclear Education Trust to consider defence diversification and 'Just Transition' issues in reference to Scotland. This coincides with the upcoming Scottish Parliament election in May. It included Bill Kidd MSP, Lynn Jamieson of CND Scotland, Andy Brown the Unite Convener for the Faslane site and Ryan Morrison of Friends of the Earth Scotland. The NFLA Secretary will provide a verbal report of this meeting at the Steering Committee meeting.

Agreed: To note the report and continue to monitor the issues.

10. Civil nuclear safety, Fukushima update and key anniversaries

The aging wider AGR fleet -

The NFLA has been concerned for some time about the safety of EDF's aging Advanced Gas Reactor (AGR) fleet. The oldest of them is Hunterston B and Hinkley Point B at over 40 years old. The others are Dungeness, Heysham, Hartlepool and Torness.

The ONR permitted EDF to restart the Hunterston B reactors for another six months. That period of operation will finish at the end of February / early March. EDF are hoping to get a final six months of operation out of the reactors, subject to further approval from the ONR. The reactors though will close for good by the end of the year, followed shortly after by those at Hinkley Point B. EDF have confirmed there are further delays in restarting reactors at Dungeness due to the ongoing complexity of removing corrosion from pipework. The two reactors have been offline since Summer 2018. EDF have said they will restart in May 2021.

As noted above, EDF are in discussions with the UK Government and the NDA over plans for decommissioning the AGRs over the next decade.

Fukushima update -

A draft investigation report into the 2011 Fukushima nuclear meltdown for the Japanese Nuclear Regulatory Commission notes it has detected dangerously high levels of radioactive contamination at two of the three reactors, adding to concerns about the challenges in decommissioning them.

The interim report said that data collected by investigators showed that the sealing plugs sitting atop the No. 2 and 3 reactor containment vessels were as fatally contaminated as nuclear fuel debris that had melted and fell to the bottom of the reactors following the March 2011 tsunami and earthquake.

The report said the bottom of the sealed plug, a triple-layered concrete disc-shaped lid 12 meters (39 feet) in diameter sitting atop the primary containment vessel, is coated with high levels of radioactive Caesium 137. The No. 1 reactor lid was less contaminated, presumably because the plug was slightly knocked out of place and disfigured due to the impact of the hydrogen explosion.

Finding such levels of contamination will complicate the decommissioning of the reactors, which is already expected to take many decades to complete.

In a separate development, a Japanese High Court ordered on the 21st January that the Fukushima operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (Tepeco) should pay damages of (\$1.1 million) to 90 plaintiffs. However, it overturned a lower court ruling that had also acknowledged central government responsibility for the 2011 nuclear disaster.

In terms of the large levels of contaminated water in tanks on the site, there still has not been a final decision from the Japanese Government on whether this will be slowly dumped into the Pacific Ocean. This followed a Greenpeace Japan report that the dumping could damage human health. The decision has been postponed now a number of times and is likely not to be made until after the 10th anniversary of the disaster next month.

Fukushima and Chernobyl anniversaries

The 11th March 2021 will be the tenth anniversary of the Fukushima disaster. NFLA are supporting plans being organised by the Vienna-based Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe, who are planning a 'get together' of members on the 8th February and a public webinar on the 10th March. NFLA are also planning to attend a IPPNW day conference on the 27th February considering all the environmental, scientific, technical and political issues around the stricken sites 10 years on. NFLA members are encouraged to attend these webinars.

The 26th April 2021 will be the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. The NFLA Secretary is involved in a small steering group that is looking at doing a slightly different type of webinar than usual to commemorate it. This may focus on trying to get a speaker from the docu-drama 'Chernobyl' programme to talk about how it impacted on them – the actress Emily Watson and the Executive Producer Jayne Featherstone are being contacted on this. Also being invited are Professor Kate Brown of MIT in the US whose book has highlighted the core impacts of the disaster, as well as Linda Walker from Chernobyl Children's Project talking about their humanitarian projects in Belarus. It is hoped this may be held with the support of Manchester's art centre Home. Further details will follow.

Agreed: To note the report. To participate in events for the Fukushima and Chernobyl disaster.

11. Nuclear emergency planning and transport

The NFLA Secretary has contributed to a joint NGO report to an inquiry of the House of Lords Risk Assessment and Risk Planning Committee. This report looks at the various risks to developing new nuclear reactors, including emergency planning, flooding, climate change as well as corporate and financial risks. It will be published on the NFLA website before the NFLA Steering Committee and emailed to NFLA members.

The NFLA Secretary has made an updated presentation on emergency planning risks to a Beyond Nuclear Conference. This is going to be included in a nuclear emergency planning report the NFLA Secretary has been reworking and will be publishing shortly in reference to these two reports.

The NFLA Secretary has also finishing off a report on the risks of nuclear transports. Additional research has been provided by a student researcher for the NFLA Secretary and is being put into this final report. It also is going to take into account a new Nukewatch report that as many as 22 nuclear warheads were transported from England to Scotland in eight road convoys during 2020 despite coronavirus restrictions. There is also real concern around a convoy being sent recently during a period of severe inclement weather.

Agreed: To note the report.

12. Date of next Steering Committee meeting

This is planned as a web meeting for Friday 26th March from 11am – 12.30pm.

Key points from the NFLA Annual General Meeting:

- The NFLA AGM elected Councillor David Blackburn to be its Chair until its next AGM.
- The NFLA Secretary's Annual Report was approved and thanks were given to all NFLA staff and support staff.
- The NFLA Financial Report was approved with a recommendation for a 0.5% affiliation rate increase to take account of inflation.
- The NFLA Communications report was agreed with continuing support for improving the NFLA website and its social media presence.
- The NFLA Constitution was approved with an acknowledgement that online meetings are now a part of its current working arrangement. A new rate for smaller town and parish councils was agreed.
- Support for increasing the amount of NFLA individual councillor members was agreed.
- The NFLA Service Plan for 2021 was approved. It will be placed on the NFLA website.
- The 2021/22 AGM was set for the 3rd December 2021.