

NFLA Policy Briefing No.214



Date: 9th April 2021

Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee, 26th March

1. Introduction to the meeting

The NFLA Steering Committee Chair, Councillor David Blackburn, welcomed all to the NFLA Steering Committee for spring 2021. He encouraged members to also stay on for the afternoon meeting of the UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter.

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

The NFLA Secretary reported that a slow reversing of the third lockdown in the UK has begun, and will be further relaxed in April and May, with the possibility of a full opening of the economy in the UK around late June. The Irish Government's road out of lockdown is also in a series of stages, with full opening up of the economy planned for early August. This obviously depends on the success of the vaccination programme, whether there is any reoccurrence of the virus as each stage takes place, and if new variants that create new transmissions are avoided. Issues over social distancing will be determined by the rates of transmission. It is clear the virus will not simply go away, and so it will need to be determined what this will mean for the future.

At the last Steering Committee meeting it was agreed that all meetings in 2021 would remain online, with perhaps the possible exception being the NFLA AGM on the 3rd December, which perhaps could be a hybrid face-to-face / online meeting, depending on the situation at this point in the year. This matter will be reviewed as it becomes clearer what Councils do in the future.

The updated NFLA Secretariat work programme is as follows:

- Future Steering Committee online meetings in 2021 will be on the 4th June, 24th September and 3rd December (2021/22 AGM).
- NFLA joined CNFE, the Alliance of Regions and the Mayors for a Nuclear Power Free Japan for a special webinar on the 12th March for the Fukushima 10th anniversary. A special webinar is also being planned for the Chernobyl 35th anniversary on the 25th April. As this meeting is close to local elections it is being run with NGOs, who will moderate it.
- Since the last NFLA Steering Committee and AGM on the 5th February, the NFLA Secretariat has issued a joint NGO / NFLA response to a House of Lords inquiry into risk assessment and emergency planning, an overview of the UK Energy White Paper, a briefing on the 5th February meetings and a detailed briefing on the Cumbria Coalmine and deep underground radioactive waste repository. Much work has been done on other briefings, organising webinars and attending stakeholder meetings.
- The NFLA Secretary is also working on the final touches to new briefings on transport and emergency planning. Plans are also in place to do briefings on the climate emergency and energy policy, NFLA at 40, nuclear policy stakeholder engagement and divestment issues in local government. An overview on the UK Defence review will also be drafted.

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

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3. NFLA Forums progress

NFLA Scotland business meeting, 11th February and AGM, 18th March-

The NFLA Scotland Forum held a well-attended business meeting on the 11th February. The meeting included reports from the NFLA Scotland Policy Advisor and the NFLA Secretary, with an update on its budget position and from CND Scotland. A detailed letter to the Scottish Government on concerns around Hunterston B, the SEPA cyber-attack and nuclear fusion was also agreed upon. With the NFLA Scotland Secretary only returning to work just prior to this meeting, it was agreed to hold a separate AGM which was held on the 18th March. This re-elected Cllr Dalton and Cllr Doig as Convener and Vice Convener, Cllr Butler as Steering Committee Vice Chair (Scotland) and agreed reps to that committee. The NFLA Scotland budget was also approved. There was discussion on NFLA Scotland's position with SCCORS as well.

NFLA English Forum webinar, 5th March -

The NFLA English Forum held a well-attended webinar on the 5th March. The webinar considered two core issues – new nuclear build at Sizewell and Bradwell with contributions from Pete Wilkinson (Together Against Sizewell C), Alison Downes (Stop Sizewell C) and Andy Blowers (Blackwater Against New Nuclear Group); and the Cumbria Coal Mine and Cumbrian Councils process on a deep underground, possibly under sea, radioactive waste repository with Tony Bosworth and Ruth Balogh (Friends of the Earth) and Pete Roche (NFLA). The NFLA Secretary also provided a short overview on green recovery and Councils. There was a good panel discussion and the NFLA Secretary has placed presentations on the NFLA website.

NFLA Welsh Forum webinar, 9th April -

The NFLA Welsh Forum's spring webinar will be held the 9th April. A core aspect of the webinar will consider the prospects of small modular nuclear reactors being built in Wales. Steve Thomas, Professor of Energy Policy at Greenwich University has agreed to speak on this important matter. Tim Deere-Jones has agreed to talk about a major change in EDF's plans on its 'Hinkley mud' dredging plans, whilst Katy Attwater and Allan Jeffrey from Stop Hinkley will speak about the upcoming public inquiry into EDF's Hinkley Point C acoustic fish deterrents plans. The NFLA Secretary will talk about local energy and green recovery as well. Registration is now open for it.

NFLA All Ireland Forum webinar, 16th April -

The NFLA All Ireland Forum Sustainable Energy Forum will hold its spring webinar on the 16th April. It is planned the keynote speaker will be Grattan Healy, the Chair of the Irish Wind Farms Association to outline the potentially important role offshore wind developments can have across the island of Ireland. The NFLA Secretary will also talk on local energy and the climate emergency, Pete Roche on the potential for an undersea underground waste repository and links to the Cumbria coal mine development, and Tim Deere-Jones will talk about Beaufort's Dyke and nuclear / toxic waste issues with the area being considered for a bridge or tunnel link between Northern Ireland and Scotland. Registration is now open for it.

CNFE / NFLA / Alliance of Regions networking meeting, 12th March –

The NFLA Chair, NFLA Secretary, one of the NFLA All Ireland Forum Chairs and Cllr Newman met with Austrian colleagues in the Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe Network and the Alliance of Regions for the Phasing-out of Nuclear Power in Europe. The meeting allowed for a discussion on concerns around nuclear emergency planning across Europe and the need for encouraging a non-nuclear focus in individual European countries. The Alliance of Regions are published a detailed study calling for the abolition of the Euratom Treaty – which gives nuclear power privileged access in the EU. The report will be published on Chernobyl Day, April 26th and will have a special launch event at the European Parliament on May 9th. The three networks will also work on encouraging the EU does not provide any financial support for new nuclear within the European Green Deal.

NFLA affiliation fee invoices and 2021/22 financial situation affecting Councils

The NFLA Secretary is finalising all payments and income to the NFLA budget. This shows that the financial pressures on the NFLA due to a long period of austerity continues and remains challenging. The NFLA Secretary was asked to put forward a report on addressing these challenges at the next NFLA Steering Committee.

Agreed: To encourage attendance at these meetings. The NFLA Secretary to draft a report on financial challenges affecting the organisation.

3. New nuclear

UK Government pro-nuclear policy development –

The NFLA Secretariat has placed an analysis of the UK Energy White Paper on its website. The White Paper, and parallel developments, suggest a strong pro-nuclear policy development which could include the development of Sizewell C and possibly Bradwell B over the next four years, support for small modular nuclear reactors and for an experimental nuclear fusion reactor. There is also consideration being given for developing a funding framework for the Revenue Asset Base to provide central funding support for at least larger reactors.

The nuclear industry has also been lobbying hard for the development of some of these facilities. The Sizewell C planning inquiry will start shortly and take around a year to consider lots of evidence. Rolls Royce has been speaking to many nuclear site councils (as well as through the LGA New Nuclear and NuLEAF networks) seeking their support for its technology on such sites. The UK Atomic Energy Authority has been undertaking similar activity in terms of a site for an experimental nuclear fusion reactor.

Site issues -

- **Hinkley Point C** – With EDF announcing that Hinkley Point B will have to close no later than the 15th July 2022 (earlier than expected), it puts additional pressure on the development of Hinkley Point C, which in January was noted to have increased in cost by another £500 million due to Covid-19 delays. A public inquiry will take place in the summer to consider a request by EDF not to build acoustic fish deterrents at the Hinkley Point C site. EDF claim an independent study has shown that the power station will have negligible impact on the fish populations in the Bristol Channel and beyond, with the two planned fish protection measures in place. EDF also claim installing and maintaining dozens of sound projectors underwater two miles offshore is dangerous and poses risks to divers that are unacceptable to Hinkley Point C. The Environment Agency does not agree, which has led to the inquiry. Stop Hinkley will highlight their views on this matter at the NFLA Welsh Forum webinar on the 9th April. A detailed NFLA media release has been issued on the matter. Issues around the 'Hinkley mud' issue are noted in section 4.
- **Sizewell C** – the National Infrastructure Commission has started its consideration of the proposed Sizewell C reactor, and public meetings are expected to start by the end of March. A RSPB petition opposing Sizewell C reached over 110,000 signatures. The recent NFLA English Forum highlighted a large number of sensitive environmental, climate change and financial pressures for the site. In reference to the financial challenges – and Sizewell C will not go ahead without external financial support – EDF are now in discussion with the UK Government over financing the project, possibly using the Revenue Asset Base model. East Suffolk Council and the Environment Agency has also raised concerns in an updated EDF consultation over the creation of a coastal jetty to bring some of the material for the Sizewell C site. They argue the plans could create some damage to the local coastline and have called for more detailed information.
- **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. The NFLA will submit a short response to this consultation. 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.

Agreed: To monitor the issue and publish presentations on new nuclear from the recent NFLA English Forum webinar.

4. 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. The continuing challenges for policy-makers with Covid-19 workstreams means this has been delayed and may now come out in the summer. The NFLA Secretariat will continue to monitor this issue.

Deep waste repository update and RWM Exchange -

As noted previously, 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. RWM have suggested other Councils may show their interest, but this is likely to be after the local elections. They are thought to be on the east coast of England.

As agreed at the last NFLA Steering Committee, the Secretariat has developed a detailed report considering the issues around either Cumbrian Council moving forward with this process. It particularly focuses on the possibility that such a repository would be partially built under the Irish Sea, raising concerns that retrievability may be impossible, and there could be serious challenges and uncertainties with dumping waste under the Irish Sea. The report also noted similar concerns with a West Cumbrian deep coal mine development, which has raised additional issues over carbon emissions. NFLA has been engaging with local, national and Irish Friends of the Earth groups on this matter from the international concern around it. After considerable pressure the UK Government has decided to 'call in' the development for a full planning inquiry. The report is on the NFLA website, received excellent media coverage and NGO interest and was also considered at the RWM Exchange meeting on the 25th March.

NDA Strategy 4, stakeholder engagement and Sellafield issues -

The NDA have published their response to comments on their Strategy 4 and the final document, which will govern their work from 2021 – 25. This has come out on the day this report is going out, so the NFLA Secretariat will need a little time to digest its core findings. The NDA have also published an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) and Post-Adoption Statement with a Non-Technical Summary. These documents identify the environmental, socio-economic and health impacts of implementing NDA strategy.

In general feedback the NDA comment: "The majority of respondents who provided general feedback were broadly supportive of our strategic themes and considered the approach to strategy development to be appropriate. As such, any changes made to the final Strategy document have mainly involved providing additional detail or language clarification to help understanding and inform our stakeholders."

An early consideration suggests the NDA have taken account of some NFLA concerns, but by no means all of them.

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. The NFLA Secretary is concerned at how long the review is taking place and whether it will lead to any fundamental change.

At Sellafield, a damaging BBC documentary outlined that a "toxic culture" of bullying and harassment at Sellafield could let serious safety concerns go unreported, a number of 'whistleblowers' have told the BBC.

The BBC investigation has found:

- Multiple claims of serious bullying and sexual harassment among its 10,000-strong workforce.
- Allegations of racial abuse outlined in a leaked letter to senior management. 27 racist incidents have been noted.
- Concerns about the working culture at the site and how it could impact nuclear safety.

An internal safety report also seen by the BBC blamed a "deficiency in leadership standards" for a December 2017 accident, where a worker was exposed to plutonium after a bag of nuclear waste was opened in a workshop used to repair contaminated machinery. The report said an alarm meant to measure radioactive contamination levels in the air was triggered, but it had become "custom and practice" to consider the alerts a nuisance by staff. The BBC has seen redacted emails released under the Freedom of Information act, apparently between people involved in the subsequent investigation. A number refer to claims of a cover up and allegations of intimidating and threatening behaviour.

A separate Sellafield Ltd report noted in the Daily Mirror outlines 25 safety breaches in the past two years, including burst pipes, unstable chemicals, radiation leaks, a cooling tower failure and two plant evacuations. The bomb squad was called in last August after chemicals "changed state". The NFLA Secretariat has outlined some of them in previous meetings. Janine Allis-Smith, of the group CORE, was quoted in the Daily Mirror article that campaigners "fear an explosion that would make Chernobyl look like a tea party".

The Steering Committee agreed that a full letter of concern on this matter should be sent to the Chief Executive of the NDA and the CEO of Sellafield Ltd.

NuLEAF and SCCORS update -

NuLEAF held a business meeting and AGM on the 10th March. At the AGM Cllr Sean Chaytor of Hull City Council was elected, replacing Cllr Eddy Newman as NFLA Vice Chair on the group. The business meeting included updates on the underground repository process, the NDA's operations and international developments. There were presentations on the NDA's sustainability plans and adding social value. There was also a presentation from Rolls Royce with an update on its SMR plans.

There was a robust discussion on whether NuLEAF should engage further on the new nuclear issue. The majority view allowed for a paper to be brought to the June NuLEAF meeting. On the request of the Steering Committee, the NFLA Secretariat will develop a letter of concern to the LGA on this matter.

The NFLA Scotland AGM had a brief discussion on the recent lack of activity of the COSLA SCCORS group. Following this meeting, the Co-Chair of SCCORS informed the NFLA that she was looking to establish a business meeting of the group after the Scottish Parliamentary elections.

'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. It was reported that EDF were now looking to dump this sediment in two sites - the offshore Cardiff Deep Grounds close to Cardiff Bay and a second site at Portishead Bay in Somerset. The NFLA has supported a response by Tim Deere-Jones for both groups and Stop Hinkley in terms of the Portishead application. Independent sampling of the area is also taking

place. The report by Tim Deere-Jones will be placed on the NFLA website and issued next week. The matter will also be discussed in detail at the 9th April NFLA Welsh Forum meeting.

Geiger Bay placed a second petition to the Senedd calling for an environmental impact assessment on the dredging application. This was discussed by the Senedd Petitions Committee and keeps the issue prescient amongst members. A legal challenge is also being considered.

In a separate development, the Hinkley Point C stakeholder reference group established by the Welsh Government reported with dismay concern that EDF will not build acoustic fish deterrents to protect fish from being sucked into cooling channels. EDF have appealed against an Environment Agency condition, and a public inquiry on the matter is expected in the summer. The SRG note that this could lead to as much as 182 million fish a year being killed, though EDF suggest their alternative measures would affect around 650,000 fish – still a huge figure. The SRG report also highlights nuclear emergency planning concerns should an incident take place if the reactor is built. This matter will also be considered at the NFLA Welsh Forum webinar.

Dalgety Bay / SEPA cyber-attack concerns / nuclear fusion applications–

In early March a meeting of the South East Fife Area Committee confirmed that the MOD contractor Balfour Beatty had still not sought a licence from SEPA for the remediation of the Dalgety Bay contaminated shoreline. Fife NFLA Councillor David Barratt commented that this could delay work at the site for another year if it is not completed soon. The NFLA have publicised this issue, and it was part of a letter of concern sent to the Scottish Government.

The NFLA Scotland letter to the Scottish Environment Minister also raised concerns over the cyber-attack on SEPA that had compromised some of its regulatory work. The letter also sought to seek a view on nuclear fusion and the waste issues involved in the fusion process and welcomed support for the regeneration of the Hunterston site once it closes for decommissioning in early 2022.

Agreed: To note the report. To develop a report on NFLA and NuLEAF in relation to its stance on new nuclear. To publish a report on the EDF application to dump sediment at Portishead.

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

The early indication of issues with the UK leaving the European Union has focused on a large drop in imports and exports from both sides, suggesting the increased bureaucracy in the post-Brexit regime is having a deep impact on trade. There are particular problems and real concerns in reference to Northern Ireland, which remains a part of the European Single Market.

In terms of the former Euratom regulation of UK nuclear sites, which have now reverted to oversight by the ONR in conjunction with the IAEA, there appears to have been a relatively seamless change from one to the other. The ONR reported at its recent Forum with NGOs that arrangements are working well. NFLA will monitor this issue, as well as other issues like the operation of the Irish single electricity market.

It is likely some of the major effects of the move from Brexit will become more aware once the impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns reduces. One area which has seen real change is in terms of the UK Defence Review and foreign policy, which is considered in Item 8.

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

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

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

The NFLA Secretariat issued detailed responses on these matters in late 2020 and they have been disseminated widely. The NFLA Secretary is profiling these reports at the NFLA English Forum and upcoming NFLA Welsh Forum and NFLA All Ireland Forum meetings. The All Ireland Forum is also considering the positive potential that offshore wind developments could have on reducing carbon emissions across the island of Ireland.

The NFLA Secretariat are in the process of developing a new report that is considering how local authorities can tackle the climate emergency in a post-pandemic era. It will be issued after local elections in May. The Steering Committee welcomed these reports.

The NFLA Secretary attended the APSE Energy Summit which had a wide range of local case studies from across the UK. A presentation from the UK Government's Head of Local Energy welcomed that over 280 Councils had passed climate emergency resolutions. He noted that there was now a local aspect to the Committee on Climate Change's 6th budget which takes account of these positive changes. Funding is being provided to develop a Local Area Energy Programme, to assist the development of green finance and encourage a suite of low carbon strategies in generation, heating and transport.

One area of support that has not gone well is around the Green Homes Grant, which would provide support to householders and Councils for energy efficiency programmes. Due to bureaucratic delays caused by the third-party operator of the scheme, only a fraction of applications have been processed. In March the UK Government informed Parliament that a large amount of the substantial budget would not be carried over to the new financial year.

UK Energy White Paper –

The NFLA has disseminated a report and published on its website an analysis of the UK Energy White Paper by Pete Roche and Ian Fairlie. It outlines strong support for new nuclear, as outlined above, as well as support for offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture and storage. There is no specific support provided to onshore wind, tidal, marine or solar in the White Paper. The NFLA report notes that many policy developments and strategies that are mentioned in the White Paper are still to be published, and so the detail moving forward is to be determined.

Divestment from fossil fuels and nuclear power

A number of Councils across the UK and Ireland are also pushing their Pension Funds for divesting from companies involved with fossil fuels and nuclear power. The NFLA Secretary has particularly been involved in supporting Manchester City Council, with six other Greater Manchester Councils, to call on the Greater Manchester Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels and invest in renewables. A number of other Councils, such as in South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire and across Greater London are also looking at this matter for example. Some of the Funds are robustly resisting these calls, saying it is better to try and influence fossil fuel companies from the inside rather than divestment is more effective. The NFLA Secretary is working on a report on this matter to go out after the local and Parliamentary elections.

Agreed: To disseminate reports as wide as possible and welcome new reports as they are published.

7. Mayors for Peace

Mayors for Peace passed the milestone of 8,000 member cities at the end of 2020, and it is now starting a new campaign to move towards a 10,000 members target. The Covid-19 pandemic though has affected them and the Hiroshima Secretariat has decided to cancel the General Conference of Mayors for Peace in August 2021 (which had previously been planned for August 2020 and the 75th anniversary of the bomb) due to the restrictions on international travel. An online Executive Conference is planned though, at which Manchester plans to be in attendance with. This meeting will set its Action Plan from 2021 – 24 and consider what may replace its former 2020 Vision. An Executive Report on the 2020 Vision is now on the Mayors for Peace website.

Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Tokyo held major events, and additional events or statements were sent out by a wide range of Mayors for Peace national chapters for the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The UK and Ireland Chapter engaged with the European Chapter for a joint statement (also with the NFLA and ICAN) and YouTube video messages were issued from the Mayors of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Manchester, Granollers and Barcelona. A notable event was also held by the Austrian Government, who have been a leading state in the development of the TPNW. The former Head of the Disarmament Office at the Austrian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs, Thomas Hajnocki, has just been

recruited as an Executive Advisor of Mayors for Peace. He will assist with Mayors for Peace engagement in this area, and to assist with support for the European Chapter.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Mayor of Hiroshima made a statement on the UK Government's Defence Review statement and increase in the cap of Trident warheads. Mayor Matsui said the decision goes against the spirit of Article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The NFLA Secretary, as Manchester's Mayors for Peace officer, attended the latest meeting of the European Chapter Working Group. Legal statutes are now broadly agreed and will be approved formally shortly, with the aim of having a first formalised Board meeting in May / June. There will also be a plan to hold some type of meeting of the back of the International Executive Conference in August. On the suggestion of Mr Hajnocki, the Chapter will work with other groups to deliver a web-based conference in November / December prior to the first States Parties TPNW Conference, which will be held in Vienna in January 2022. The European Chapter website will be launched imminently, with a social media presence as well. An Operational Plan for 2021 and then for 2022 – 24 is also being finalised. The NFLA Secretary will talk about this in the afternoon UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter meeting.

The UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter will hold its spring webinar on the afternoon of the 26th March, directly after the NFLA Steering Committee. The meeting will include an overview on the international and European Chapter progress, an overview of the TPNW and related campaigns, a case study from Oldham Council on their ginkgo seed projects and a presentation on a 'Peaceful Schools' initiative.

The NFLA Secretary has given presentations to ICAN UK, Medact, Leeds City Council Peacelink group and shortly to a joint CND / UNA UK event on encouraging activists to encourage their Councils to pass resolutions to support the TPNW. It is hoped to encourage further Councils to join the 14 who have passed resolutions in the UK and a Westminster event is also being considered by ICAN UK to engage councillors with MPs on this matter.

Agreed: To note the report and support the UK & Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace Chapter meeting.

8. Nuclear weapons and defence nuclear safety

UK Defence Review and an increase in the cap of Trident warheads –

The UK Government issued a detailed and controversial Integrated Defence Review on the 16th March, which included an increase in the cap of Trident warheads available for use.

The Royal United Services Institute noted:

“(The Trident decision) reverses the UK's course of consistent post-Cold War nuclear reductions and runs counter to previous assurances that the programme to replace the UK's existing nuclear deterrent would not add to the number of nuclear warheads in service. It is also in apparent contrast to the review's emphasis on UK support for multilateral diplomacy, and it will do much to negate a self-crafted diplomatic image of the UK as the most progressive of the world's nuclear-armed powers.”

As reported at the last meeting, the UK Government has announced a considerable increase in defence spending, by an additional £4 billion a year, each year for four years. This is partially to plug gaps created by cuts to budgets in the past decade, as well as to spend considerable new resource on new military hardware, such as to deal with cyber threats, new warships, combat planes, artificial intelligence and space-based military applications. Robotic warfare applications are also being developed, as the UK Government opposes a new treaty on lethal autonomous weapons.

At its heart, the Integrated Review also promotes the post-Brexit concept of a 'Global Britain', with the UK asserting itself as Western Europe's most heavily armed nation, while championing NATO and the country's role within it. Deploying more forces to other parts of the world – whether it is the Middle East, the Polish-Russian border, or the off the coast of China – is seen as a

core part of this concept. At the same time foreign aid is cut back considerably. A core part of the review as well is to encourage new jobs in the defence sector, seen as one of the country's most successful sectors in a post-Brexit economy.

The controversial decision on Trident warheads has been widely challenged nationally and internationally. Most notable is the UN Secretary General's assessment that it threatens to go against Article 6 of the NPT and negative comments from ministers in Ireland, Germany and Austria. There are also early suggestions other nuclear weapon states might react against it with a potential new arms race. NFLA issued a detailed statement opposing the increase in Trident warheads, and supported ICAN UK and ICAN HQ statements. The Steering Committee requested that the NFLA Secretariat develop a full analysis of the Defence Review.

NPT and the TPNW –

The 2021 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is tentatively scheduled to meet 2–27 August 2021 in New York. This remains tentative, and it is possible, due to the ongoing issues with international travel, it is possible it may be moved to 2022 and be held in UN buildings in Vienna.

It has been suggested that North Korea may conduct an ICBM nuclear weapon test shortly to test the new Biden Presidency. North Korea, the Middle East and the remaining tensions between Pakistan and India also remain within such a conference.

In terms of the TPNW, Cambodia, the Comoros and the Philippines have all recently ratified it, bringing it to 54 States Parties. A further 32 states have signed the treaty and are in the process of ratification. Austria will host the first States Parties Conference in January 2022. Lobbying is taking place by ICAN and other civil society groups, as well as ratifying states to encourage those states who have not supported the TPNW to observe the conference. It has been confirmed that Sweden and Switzerland will observe the conference, and other states that may also observe could include the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Finland and Norway.

ICAN UK met on the 10th March and it agreed that it should look at doing a specific event for Westminster Parliamentarians, whilst supporting hustings at the Scottish and Welsh Parliamentary elections. There are a growing number of Parliamentarians in the three assemblies that support the TPNW. In Ireland, there is strong cross-party support for the TPNW, and it is supporting Austria with the first States Parties Conference. It is considering a response as well to the UK Defence Review and its stance on increasing the Trident warheads cap.

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. Inverclyde Council were the latest Council to pass a resolution supporting such divestment policies, and Fife Council are planning to discuss the matter in June. As noted, the NFLA Secretariat are planning a report on this matter.

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 was discussed by the wider group in February. The new groups will look at political strategy, grass-roots engagement with defence trade unionists and cooperation with climate emergency groups, as well as a research group developing new ideas in this area. The wider group is meeting again in April to confirm this new and hopefully more dynamic structure.

A joint event to go into the COP 26 NGO Conference on these issues is being developed by a network of groups and will be reported on at the April meeting.

Agreed: To note the report. NFLA Secretariat to develop new reports on the Defence Review and divestment.

9. **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 Hunterston B reactors are currently closed while checks are made after a six-month operation. Around 10% of the reactors are being checked to see the state of keyway route cracks and other issues to decide if the reactors can restart for a final 6 months of generation. The ONR has permitted the Hinkley Point B reactors, which are in a similar state to Hunterston B, to restart for a further six months. Hunterston B and Hinkley Point B are both planned to close for decommissioning in 2022.

EDF are still in discussions with the UK Government and the NDA over plans for decommissioning the AGRs over the next decade. No formal decision has yet been made or publicised.

Fukushima 10th anniversary and general update -

Many events were held around the world to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The largest was held in Japan, where environmental and anti-nuclear groups held a large day conference with over 100 speakers. Within this, the NFLA sent a letter to the Japanese Government to not approve the dumping of contaminated water from Fukushima into the Pacific Ocean. At the conference, three previous Prime Ministers of Japan joined together to express their opposition to nuclear power.

NFLA took part in a joint webinar between CNFE, the Alliance of Regions and the Mayors for a Nuclear Power Free Japan Network on March 12th. The keynote speaker was Shaun Burnie of Greenpeace Japan, who highlighted their recent report of the patchy decontamination of the areas where evacuees are being encouraged to resettle. There also remains real concern over the dumping of water into the Pacific Ocean and the huge amount of radioactive waste which do not have a permanent home. There is also real concern over the credibility of the TEPCO plans for decommissioning the site over the next 3 decades.

Speaking for the Japanese Mayors network was the former Mayor of Minamisoma, a town close to the Fukushima Daiichi plant, which was at first stranded before people were asked to evacuate. The former Mayor outlined the real issues of stress that remain for those who have returned to the area, and the push for support renewable energy alternatives. The Chair of the Network noted that public opinion in Japan was still solidly opposed to the restarting of nuclear facilities and to see a much greater increase in renewable energy alternatives.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on nuclear emergency planning, which is discussed in Item 10.

An UNSCEAR report argued that the health of the local population had not been adversely affected 10 years after the accident. Greenpeace Japan challenge this report and independent challenges to the report say there has been an increase in certain types of cancers.

Chernobyl 35th anniversary -

The 26th April 2021 will be the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. The NFLA Secretary is involved in a small group organising an event to commemorate it on the 25th April. Confirmed speakers include Professor Kate Brown of MIT in the US whose book has highlighted the core impacts of the disaster and Irish writer Darrah McKeon talking on his Chernobyl novel. Linda Walker from Chernobyl Children's Project talking about their humanitarian projects in Belarus. A reading will also be given by the actor Maxine Peake of the book 'Voices from Chernobyl' by Svetlana Alexievich, which won her the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Agreed: To note the report.

10. Nuclear emergency planning and transport

The NFLA Secretary and the CNFE Lead Officer, along with Alliance of Regions speakers in Germany, spoke at the Fukushima anniversary webinar on European nuclear emergency planning risks and changes as a result of the disaster. The webinar showed a very different response between a nuclear state like the UK compared to a non-nuclear state like Austria. With the recent presentation on emergency planning risks given by the NFLA Secretary to a Beyond Nuclear Conference, information for an interesting new report is being put together.

A related issue to this came in terms of MOD defence nuclear sites. In February, the High Court rejected an attempt by developers to overturn an enlarged radiation emergency planning zone around the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield in Berkshire. The new zone includes the site of a long-proposed new housing development at Grazeley. The review was brought by three developers who own the site of the proposed development. They had hoped to build a new 'Garden Settlement' of 15,000 homes on the site, a plan originally supported by local councils in West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham. Whilst the Outline Planning Zone for civil sites has been set at 30 kms, the same has not been seen for defence sites, with this zone being 12kms for Aldermaston and Burghfield.

The NFLA Secretary is 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. The NFLA Secretary hopes to table this report at the Steering Committee meeting.

Agreed: To note the report.

11. Date of next Steering Committee meeting

This is planned as a web meeting for Friday 4th June from 11am – 1pm.