

# NFLA Policy Briefing No.216



**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Subject: Summary of key points and actions from the NFLA Steering Committee, 4<sup>th</sup> June**

**1. Introduction to the meeting and tribute to Michael Carr**

The NFLA Steering Committee Chair, Councillor David Blackburn, welcomed all to the NFLA Steering Committee for summer 2021. One minutes' silence was held to remember Michael Carr, the former NFLA All Ireland Forum Co-Chair and a Newry, Mourne and Down councillor.

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

The NFLA Secretary reported that since the last NFLA Steering Committee, the vaccination programme in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has been much more dynamic than perhaps expected. By late-May over 72% of the UK adult population (people from 30 years upwards, as well as those who were shielding due to underlying serious health issues) had received at least one vaccination, and over 42% have now received two vaccinations. Vaccination rates in Ireland, as part of the slower uptake in the EU, is currently lower at around 28% of the adult population having received at least one vaccination, and 10.5% having received two vaccinations.

Plans for completely lifting most restrictions on June 21<sup>st</sup> in the UK could be affected by a recent upsurge of a new variant of the virus that originated in India. 8 areas in England and 2 in Scotland have had a significant increase in infections, particularly amongst young people who have not been vaccinated. Some limited return to the office is starting after June 21<sup>st</sup>.

Given these issues, the Steering Committee agreed to hold its September meeting and Forum meetings in the autumn online. It may be possible to hold the NFLA AGM in December as a hybrid face-to-face / online meeting, but that will depend on progress with overcoming the virus and the reduction in social distancing rules.

The updated NFLA Secretariat work programme over the next few weeks includes:

- Future Steering Committee online meetings in 2021 will be on the 24th September and 3rd December (2021/22 AGM).
- NFLA National Forum webinars were held in March and April, and all presentations from them are on the NFLA website. There are plans for a NFLA Scotland Forum on 25th June, to also include a webinar on recent reports. Other Forums should take place in September and October, to allow the NFLA Secretariat to publish more research papers over the summer.
- It may be possible to look at special public meetings / webinars. One is being considered to look at the situation with EDF's application to dump dredged sediment from the Hinkley Point C site to an area close to the North Somerset coast. Another may be relating to new nuclear issues with Sizewell C.
- The first European Mayors for Peace Chapter Board Meeting will be held on June 10th. The global Mayors for Peace Executive Conference is taking place on July 7th. It is planned to hold a UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter webinar around International Peace Day, which is on the 21st September.

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- Since the last NFLA Steering Committee meeting the NFLA Secretariat has issued a detailed report on how Councils can tackle the climate emergency in a post pandemic era. This report was also adapted into a submission to the Irish Government's climate conversation with additional information. NFLA New Nuclear Monitors were published on small modular reactors, and to respond to the Environment Agency consultation on the proposed nuclear reactor for the Bradwell site in Essex. A NFLA Radioactive Waste Policy Briefing has been published with its detailed joint response to the EDF application for dumping dredged mud from Hinkley Point to a site close to Portishead Bay in North Somerset. A Mayors for Peace Policy Briefing was also published on its most recent Chapter meeting and peace education.
- Future reports are being developed over the summer, including a new analysis on the wide range of nuclear transports that take place and concerns around them, divestment issues in local government, nuclear emergency planning, nuclear policy stakeholder engagement, an overview on the UK Defence review and environmental and radiation safety issues / p

**Action: To note the report**

**3. Future direction of the NFLA**

The NFLA Secretary presented to the Steering Committee a discussion paper looking at its future direction. This took into account serious financial challenges following a further round of cuts to council budgets following the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as considering the wider identity and remit of the NFLA and in its interaction with other organisations.

In the discussion a number of suggested actions were agreed by the Steering Committee:

- To consider expanding the name of the organisation to the NFLA Sustainable Energy Forum. This keeps the NFLA identity whilst highlighting its activity into supporting nuclear free and fossil free energy alternatives.
- To undertake a summer recruitment activity highlighting NFLA work on the climate emergency, nuclear transportation and nuclear safety matters. This should also focus on increased interest in some of these areas from parish and town councils, many of whom have passed climate emergency and nuclear weapon ban resolutions or are interested in opposing new nuclear build developments.
- To look at connections with other groups to bid for additional funding on specific policy areas.
- NFLA member representatives assist the NFLA Secretariat with bilateral contacts with officers and adjoining council / fellow party colleagues.
- To provide an update report at the September meeting.

**Action: For the NFLA Secretariat to follow up these agreed actions and provide an update to the next Steering Committee meeting.**

**4. NFLA Forums progress**

**NFLA Welsh Forum webinar, 9<sup>th</sup> April -**

The NFLA Welsh Forum's spring webinar was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> April. The keynote address was a presentation on small and advanced nuclear reactors and whether they might be developed in Wales by Professor Steve Thomas. This was developed into a detailed update on the wider issues with this technology and placed on the NFLA website. Tim Deere-Jones spoke on a major change in EDF's plans on its 'Hinkley mud' dredging plans with Max Wallis from the 'Geiger Bay' group briefly outlining their work on a proposed application to dump mud into the Cardiff Deep Grounds. Katy Attwater and Allan Jeffrey from Stop Hinkley spoke about the upcoming public inquiry into EDF's Hinkley Point C acoustic fish deterrents plans. The NFLA Secretary concluded the webinar with an overview of local energy and green recovery issues. All the presentations are on the NFLA website - <https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/presentations/nfla-welsh-forum-webinar-9th-april-2021/>

Since the meeting, the NFLA Secretariat has submitted its report on nuclear fusion to councillors in the Vale of Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire after both councils decided to express an interest to host an experimental nuclear fusion reactor. The next Welsh Forum will take place in early September.

### ***NFLA All Ireland Forum webinar, 16<sup>th</sup> April -***

The NFLA All Ireland Forum Sustainable Energy Forum held its spring webinar on the 16<sup>th</sup> April. Speakers included Grattan Healy, the Chair of the Irish Wind Farms Association, who outlined his personal views on progress with the development of the technology across Ireland. Attracta ui Bhroin from the Irish Environment Network outlined its support for offshore wind, provided all sensitive marine environmental sites were protected. Tim Deere-Jones talked about the Beaufort's Dyke area of the Irish Sea and nuclear / toxic waste issues with it. The NFLA Secretary talked about local energy issues and the climate emergency, with Pete Roche talking on the potential for an undersea underground waste repository and links to the Cumbria coal mine development. All the presentations are on the NFLA website – <https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/presentations/nfla-all-ireland-sustainable-energy-forum-energy-policy-spring-2021-webinar/>

Following the meeting, the NFLA Secretariat submitted a detailed response to the Irish Government's Climate Conversation and the Irish Climate Change Advisory Council. In the Steering Committee, two other climate change consultations in Ireland and Northern Ireland were noted and it was agreed that the Secretariat place a similar submission to both of them.

### ***NFLA Scotland Forum meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> June -***

The NFLA Scotland Forum is holding its next business meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> June. The business meeting will allow discussion on recent policy developments, including the welcome decision by Glasgow City Council to pass a resolution supporting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, progress in the closure of the Hunterston B reactor and remediation of the Dalgety Bay site. There will also be time to highlight new NFLA reports on the climate emergency and nuclear transportation, and new developments in fossil fuel and nuclear weapons divestment.

### ***NFLA English Forum progress -***

The NFLA English Forum held a well-attended webinar in early March. Discussions are separately taking place with the Leader of Portishead Town Council and the Climate Emergency Member of North Somerset Council to consider holding a webinar on EDF's application to dump dredged sediment from the cleared Hinkley Point C site into a site close to Portishead Bay. These discussions are also taking place with the Devon and Severn Conservation Authority, who, with the Councils, have sought legal advice on the application. The NFLA Secretary and SC Chair have met with the councillors and the timing of the webinar depends on what may happen with the regulator's decision on the EDF application. A separate webinar is also being looked at on the new nuclear issue, focusing on its impact to sensitive wildlife and natural habitats – Jonathon Porritt, Craig Bennett and a senior speaker from either RSPB or Friends of the Earth have been approached to speak. The event will be co-sponsored by NFLA, Beyond Nuclear and the environmental groups and is likely to be in early October.

### ***CNFE / NFLA / Alliance of Regions meetings for the 35<sup>th</sup> Chernobyl anniversary –***

NFLA members and Secretariat staff attended a number of meetings for the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. One of the most prominent was a full day conference on European nuclear safety hosted by the Alliance of European Regions member, the state government of Baden-Wurttemberg. Amongst the speakers were the former Chief Nuclear Inspectors at the US and German regulatory agencies. The Alliance of Regions also published a detailed report on aging nuclear reactors noted in Item 9. CNFE also hold a joint event with NFLA and the Alliance of Regions with the Mayors for a Nuclear Power Free Japan. These events have all helped solidify an excellent working relationship between the organisations.

***Suggested action: To encourage attendance at these meetings.***

## **5. New nuclear**

The UK Government and the nuclear industry's concerted political push to support new nuclear continues. Councils across England, Scotland and Wales have been courted by both Rolls Royce and the UKAEA over small modular nuclear reactors and a site for an experimental fusion reactor. In terms of larger nuclear reactors focus remains at present with the Sizewell site.

### ***Small modular reactors and advanced modular reactors –***

Professor Stephen Thomas has produced for the NFLA an updated assessment of the challenges for developing either small or advanced modular reactors (SMRs or AMRs). The report is on the NFLA website. It follows presentations he has given to the NFLA, to the Alliance of Regions Conference and to the ONR NGO Forum on this report. In his assessment, the technology on AMRs is still far away and he does not see any real development of them before 2045. The report can be found at:

[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NFLA\\_New\\_Nuclear\\_Monitor\\_No65\\_SMR\\_in\\_the\\_UK.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NFLA_New_Nuclear_Monitor_No65_SMR_in_the_UK.pdf)

In terms of SMRs, the report focuses on two potential developments – the Rolls Royce 470 MW design (which is now twice the size, in terms of generation, than the Trawsfynydd Magnox reactor), and the smaller US NuScale design, which has been put forward by the company Shearwater for use at the Wylfa site, in addition to an offshore wind and hydrogen facility.

The Rolls Royce design is becoming mature enough for the ONR to say it may start going through the Generic Design Assessment in early 2022. Professor Thomas though says it has many technical and particularly financial shortcomings to overcome, which is partially why Rolls Royce are lobbying the UK Government to provide substantial financial support for constructing the first few reactors, as well as giving some sense of financial security to potential private investors. The NuScale reactor is being reworked and may have to get new approval in the United States. Making it cost effective for sites like at Wylfa remains a real challenge. There remains only one definitive order for it in the United States.

NFLA will keep a close eye on this debate, where there is much political push, lots of ‘good news’ stories in the media and some government financial support, but where much more is required to assist this technology in moving forward.

### ***Experimental fusion reactor –***

The NFLA Secretariat sent a copy of its briefing on nuclear fusion to all councillors in the Vale of Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire county councils, after both raised an interest in hosting an experimental nuclear fusion reactor being put forward by the UKAEA. The Vale of Glamorgan are putting forward a site where a decommissioned coal fired power station is being dismantled, whilst the Pembrokeshire option would be close to other industrial sites at the Milford Haven port. In both cases, the lure of possible jobs and finance at a time of financial challenge for all councils appears to be at the heart of their interest. In the Pembrokeshire case, a more detailed additional briefing was provided to the Cabinet member for Planning who opposed the development, but the Cabinet voted in favour of expressing an interest.

At the existing nuclear fusion experimental site at Culham in Oxfordshire researchers have claimed to have developed an exhaust system capable of dealing with the immense temperatures created during the fusion process. The first results from the MAST-U (Mega Amp Spherical Tokamak - Upgrade) nuclear fusion experiment, which were released yesterday, also suggest the technology can reduce the exhaust heat load by ten-fold. There remain many other uncertainties to this type of development, and the UK plans will only be of any real success if the larger international project works. That still remains two – three decades away from success.

### ***Large nuclear site issues -***

- **Hinkley Point C** – EDF have announced they will need to recruit a further 1,700 contractor staff as part of the development of the Hinkley Point C site. Serious delays have been created by the Covid-19 pandemic which has hindered the project and likely to have increased its cost still further. Local concern remains that there is not enough specialist staff available in the area for such work, and EDF have had to extend apprenticeships and other schemes as part of this. A public inquiry will be taking place in mid-June over its attempts to withdraw construction of an acoustic fish deterrent scheme on the cooling pipes to the scheme. An independent committee for the Welsh Government has suggested that, without this, as much as 182 million fish could be sucked into the cooling system each year. NFLA are cooperating with Stop Hinkley on this issue with Pete Roche one of its core advisors.

There is also ongoing concern over an application around moving dredged mud from the site into the Cardiff Deep Grounds and Portishead Bay, as discussed in Item 6 below.

- **Sizewell C** – the National Infrastructure Commission has begun its extensive consideration of the proposed Sizewell C reactor, and public meetings started in late March. One of the most notable interventions so far in the inquiry has come from the local Suffolk County Council. Whilst the Council say they support Sizewell C in principle they noted they have many reservations over the size of the site, its impact on a number of sensitive wildlife sites, on transport routes and other local impacts. Local environmental and pressure groups have made similar concerns. NFLA is liaising closely with these groups and keeping a close eye on a highly detailed inquiry that will last around a year. NFLA is also cooperating with these groups, with Beyond Nuclear and other groups around a special webinar on Sizewell and Bradwell which will focus on the huge damage it could do to sensitive environmental sites. It is hoped to hold this webinar in the late summer / early autumn. The issue over acoustic fish deterrents for Sizewell C has also received significant media interest, with the Guardian reporting a figure of as many as 500 million fish being sucked into the cooling system if they are not built.
- **Bradwell B** – the NFLA has made a response to the Environment Agency’s consultation on its part of the generic design assessment for the Bradwell reactor design. NFLA concluded that the HPR1000 reactor has higher gaseous emissions - far more important than liquid emissions in terms of radiation doses to local people – than other similar reactors. It also concludes that the requirement for ‘Best Available Techniques’ (and clean technology) for producing electricity should rule out building new electricity generating stations which produce such highly dangerous wastes. Especially as less expensive, quicker and safer alternatives are available which do not produce such wastes. As such, the EA should not be promoting the development of new nuclear reactors like the HPR1000. At present, momentum at Bradwell has slowed a little, given opposition from the local council and the ongoing tensions between the UK and China. The response can be found at: [https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NFLA\\_New\\_Nuclear\\_Monitor\\_No64\\_EA\\_GDA\\_Bradwell\\_response.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NFLA_New_Nuclear_Monitor_No64_EA_GDA_Bradwell_response.pdf)

**Agreed: To note the report.**

## 6. **Radioactive waste**

### ***UK & Scottish Government reviews of waste and decommissioning strategies -***

There is still no confirmation of when BEIS will launch the consultation on Nuclear Decommissioning and Managing Radioactive Substances Policy. The aim is to do so before the summer recess (22nd July) but it is understood that the need for further discussions with the Devolved Administrations may delay publication until later in the year.

### ***Deep waste repository update and RWM Exchange -***

Allerdale and Copeland Councils are continuing their early discussion into whether they will move into a more formal Community Partnership and express an interest to host a deep underground waste repository. At the most recent meeting of the RWM Exchange which engages with NFLA and NGOs, RWM commented that there may be two or three other councils who may start the initial part of this process from the eastern side of England later this year. Local Cumbrian groups raised serious concerns over the ease with which this process began from developers rather than the councils, putting sites forward with little scrutiny.

At the same meeting, the NFLA Policy Advisor Pete Roche presented concerns over the Cumbrian coal mine development and the remobilisation of waste close to the Cumbria coast.

### ***NuLEAF and SCCORS update -***

NuLEAF held a business meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Amongst the matters that will be discussed was a paper that considered if NuLEAF should take a more active interest in new nuclear issues. The paper offers a range of opinions from members and offers three options – no change to its existing neutral position, a sharing of back-office functions with the LGA New Nuclear Local Authorities Group or a merging of the two groups. NFLA issued a response to this report arguing that only no change to its existing position should be taken. The meeting narrowly voted to

investigate merging the back-office functions of both groups. The Steering Committee discussed this matter in detail and agreed that the NFLA Secretary should write to the NDA and RWM noting its concern on this decision and the breaking-down of consensus this will mean in local government in England and Wales. A letter will also go to the LGA. It was agreed that it would be untenable for NFLA members to remain in the group if this move within NuLEAF goes ahead.

The SCCORS Co-Chair Councillor Michelle Campbell has recently informed the NFLA Secretary that she is looking at restarting the group now that the Scottish Parliamentary elections have concluded. She has been invited to attend the next NFLA Scotland Forum meeting.

***Portishead Bay and Cardiff Deep Grounds Hinkley mud update / acoustic fish deterrents public inquiry -***

The NFLA Secretary and Steering Committee Chair held a meeting with the Chair of Portishead Town Council and the Climate Emergency Cabinet Member for North Somerset Council, along with Tim Deere-Jones, to support their joint concern over a new EDF application to dump sediment from the Hinkley Point C site to a new site close to Portishead Bay. There is interest in doing a joint webinar on the issues of concern around this (and around the acoustic fish deterrent issue), but at present the Councils are working with the Devon and Severn Fisheries and Conservation Authority over calling for the matter to be called in by government ministers as it is a new application. They have sought legal advice on the matter, and NFLA / Tim Deere-Jones is doing the same via the Environmental Law Foundation. There is real interest from the councils about working with the NFLA on this matter.

The 'Geiger Bay' group received a response on their second petition to the Senedd calling for an environmental impact assessment on the dredging application. The response from Natural Resources Wales claim there is little radiological risk if a second dredge took place off the Cardiff Deep Grounds. The group will follow up these matters now that new Senedd members are in place.

As noted in the last Steering Committee meeting, 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 taking place in mid-June. 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. NFLA are cooperating with the Stop Hinkley group on this issue, and Pete Roche is directly supporting this group. Over 100 environmental and wildlife groups have raised real concerns on this issue. It has also been noted in reference to the Sizewell C public inquiry, when a figure of 500 million fish being affected has been reported.

***Sellafield update –***

Cavendish Nuclear has been awarded a £2.4 million contract to deliver Radiometric Characterisation Services (RCS) to Sellafield Ltd commencing in April 2021. Decommissioning is currently taking place at the Pile Fuel Storage Pond, with around half of the solid waste in the facility being moved. The three-year RCS framework will focus on supporting the post-operational clean out of redundant facilities to ensure that they can transition from operations, to surveillance and maintenance, and eventually decommissioning, in the safest, most effective way.

Sellafield has also unveiled a £9m revamp of its nuclear laboratories which it hopes will “create a platform to invest in younger engineers”. Aquila Nuclear Engineering has been selected to support the design and build of replacement nuclear laboratories. Under a complex, high-precision process of analytical equipment is undertaken in gloveboxes to shielded hot cells as part of the Replacement Analytical Project (RAP).

The ONR have responded to the BBC documentary of allegations of bullying and racism at the Sellafield site, and are investigating the new issues raised on racism in detail with the site operator. They also reported to the ONR NGO Forum that they have found no issues that have

resulted in unsafe activities at the site or evidence which identifies that Sellafield is not complying with the laws under its regulatory responsibility.

***Plutonium policy update –***

NFLA is publishing shortly a NFLA Radioactive Waste Policy Briefing of a report developed by Pete Roche for his 'No2Nuclearpower.org.uk' website. This gives a full and useful update to UK plutonium policy. Reprocessing at Sellafield will conclude later this year and there remain major issues on what to do with the largest stockpile of civil plutonium in the world. The briefing also provides an overview of concerns that radioactive wastes in what is called the Sellafield 'mudpatch' in the Irish Sea may remobilise if deep underground activity takes place. A media release around the report will also be issued. The Steering Committee welcomed the report.

***Dalgety Bay / SEPA cyber-attack concerns –***

After significant long-term pressure from Fife Council, local groups and the NFLA, work finally started in mid-May on the remediation of the Dalgety Bay site, after the MOD contractor Balfour Beatty was given a licence from SEPA for the remediation of the contaminated shoreline. The NFLA Scotland Convener and Fife NFLA Councillor David Barratt welcomed this news, which sees work start some 31 years after the problem was first noted. NFLA comments were covered across the Scottish media. The NFLA will continue to monitor the issue with Fife Council.

SEPA has acknowledged that it has had to spend over £800,000 having to deal with the severe effects of a sophisticated cyber-attack on its core operations, which saw a considerable amount of sensitive data stolen. It has restored the majority of its core services, but it has admitted that it will not be back to full operations until around the end of the year. The NFLA wrote to the Scottish Government on a number of issues prior to the recent election and has been informed it will get a full response to this letter shortly.

***Agreed: To note the report. To write to the NDA and RWM over the outcome of the NuLEAF discussion on new nuclear. To cooperate with Somerset councils over the Portishead Bay dredging application and with groups over concerns on acoustic fish deterrents. To welcome the new report on plutonium policy.***

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

Recent analysis suggests Brexit has led to reduced trading over Irish electricity interconnectors and increased the frequency of extreme prices. With the end of the Brexit transition period, Great Britain left the internal energy market of the European Union (IEM). As part of the Northern Ireland protocol, though, the single electricity market (SEM) of the island of Ireland has remained intact. Brexit has led to a decrease in the use of the SEM's interconnectors with Britain however, with the average utilisation in January falling 150MW.

An analysis by Mondaq notes that Northern Ireland will have a unique place in both the UK and Europe due to the arrangements agreed in the Northern Ireland Protocol and the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and the EU, particularly in relation to its electricity market. Energy policy is a devolved area of government which is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Assembly and at present the Department for the Economy is creating a new Energy Framework for Northern Ireland following on from the 2010 Strategic Energy Framework. In the context of Northern Ireland's work to develop a new energy policy, the Economy Minister Diane Dodds has publicly stated that "the clean energy sector in Northern Ireland, and renewables in particular, continue to be one of our highest priority areas for addressing climate change and delivering green economic recovery". Mondaq argue that Brexit should not impede this objective, but work will be needed to restore the mechanisms to ensure the most efficient use of the interconnectors that connect to the international energy markets. Irish members of the Steering Committee asked the NFLA Secretariat to look at these issues in more detail.

The NFLA Secretariat has not picked up any concerns at the moment with the new ONR regulation of nuclear sites previously done by Euratom inspectors, but it will keep this as a watching brief.

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

## 8. **Climate change, green stimulus and alternatives to nuclear power**

### ***NFLA report on climate emergency in a post pandemic era –***

The NFLA Secretariat has published its latest detailed analysis of how councils can tackle the climate emergency, this time in terms of using the post-pandemic era for progress.

The report focuses on a growing recognition that local authorities are essential to moving to a 'net zero' economy, and they have shown their effectiveness in local delivery in the work they have undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been noted by the UK Committee on Climate Change, who have sought to include the role of councils in the 6<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget. The NFLA Secretary has attended three webinars of the Parliamentary Renewable and Sustainable Energy Group's discussion with the CCC Chair Lord Deben, who argues that central government must develop a stronger relationship with local government to deliver carbon reductions. At the webinar, Polly Billington of the Local Authority Climate Change group UK100 also argued for more resource and powers be decentralised to develop such projects.

The report calls for increased devolution of powers and essentially considerably new resource given the decimation to local government budgets in the past decade. It argues councils understand local needs and are the best vehicle for positive climate mitigation measures. It considers new ideas in the area, particularly around green finance, and outlines the plans of each of the central governments in the UK and Ireland. The report can be found at –

[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/A329\\_NB215\\_Post\\_pandemic\\_and\\_climate\\_emergency.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/A329_NB215_Post_pandemic_and_climate_emergency.pdf)

There is also a focus on the need for greater devolution across Ireland and Northern Ireland, where council powers are considerably less than in England, Scotland or Wales. It profiles the climate change bills in both nations. The report was adapted, with additional information, for a submission to the Irish Government's 'Climate Conversation'. It has also been sent to the expanded Irish Climate Change Advisory Group and to senior energy policy officials in the Irish Government. This submission can be found at –

[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/A329\\_NB215a\\_Irish\\_Government\\_climate\\_conversation.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/A329_NB215a_Irish_Government_climate_conversation.pdf)

The NFLA Secretary has submitted the report to APSE Energy, who have confirmed they will pass it on to all their 115 member councils. It has been sent to climate change officers and member authorities. In feedback, Rochdale's lead climate change officer has said it is one of the best analyses of the local climate change debate he has read, so it is very much worth disseminating. The Steering Committee agreed that the report needed to be disseminated to all relevant member climate change officers and members of climate change committees. The Secretariat will also seek to get this report to central government climate change officials, as well as as many non-member Cabinet Climate Change Councillors as soon as possible.

The report was profiled at the NFLA English Forum, Welsh Forum and All Ireland Sustainable Energy Forum and will be at the June NFLA Scotland Forum webinar. It complements a detailed suite of documents for councillors and council officers, and it is essential for the NFLA's profile to get these reports to the right people.

The climate crisis continues to be profiled as the COP 26 conference comes closer, in Glasgow in November. The NFLA Secretariat sees its next report in this area to consider what the impact of this conference could be, and what role local government should play within it. There is also a need to profile plans the UK Government may launch as part of its Energy White Paper, as well as the new programmes of the Scottish and Welsh Governments and the developments climate change bills in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Steering Committee agreed with this assessment.

### ***Divestment from fossil fuels, nuclear power and nuclear weapons***

As noted in previous meetings, a number of Councils in Scotland have passed resolutions calling on their Joint Council Pension Funds to divest from companies involved in nuclear weapons and the arms industry in general. A similar movement of Councils across the UK and Ireland are also

pushing for divestment from companies involved with fossil fuels and nuclear power. The NFLA Secretary is working on a report on this matter which will be published later in June. It will analyse the debate, look at ways to encourage divestment and getting past the 'fiduciary duty' logjam. There is considerable information on this matter, and the NFLA Secretary has discussed the issues with the 'Don't Bank on the Bomb Scotland' group, 'UK Divest' and the Nuclear Weapons Finance Working Group, who have all done considerable research in the issues of divestment.

Steering Committee members noted the positive decision made following a Glasgow City Council resolution to divest from fossil fuels, which has been taken up and approved by the Strathclyde Pension Fund. A response has been provided to Fermanagh and Omagh Council to their divestment resolution from the Northern Ireland Local Government Superannuation Scheme that they are critically engaging with fossil fuel producers, but the matter has now been raised with the Northern Ireland Assembly All Party Group on Climate Action. The NFLA report, when it is done, will be sent to this group.

***Agreed: To disseminate the new NFLA climate emergency report widely and for the NFLA Secretariat to develop a new report on divestment.***

## 9. **Mayors for Peace**

At the international level, Mayors for Peace are planning for two important online meetings that will help to focus its work over the next three years.

The newly formed European Chapter of Mayors for Peace will hold its first board meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup> to agree its legal statutes, an operational plan, a new website, social media channels and a protocol for issuing statements. Manchester is a core member of the board and the NFLA Secretary (in his role as Mayors for Peace Chapter Secretary) has helped to put together the papers for this meeting. The Provincial Council of Barcelona is assisting with funding this work, and there are clear plans to engage with the European Union, other relevant local government groups who work at the international level, academic contacts and NGOs like NGO.

One of its core actions will be to develop a second joint webinar with ICAN and the NFLA to prepare for the first States Parties Conference of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The webinar is planned for the 21<sup>st</sup> October. This webinar will include again key city mayors, foreign ministers of TPNW states in Europe and ICAN lead staff.

The global Mayors for Peace Executive Conference will be held online on July 7<sup>th</sup> and will discuss its Action Plan for 2021 – 23. Manchester will attend this meeting and is awaiting the papers from the Hiroshima Secretariat. The French, Belgian, German and Catalan Mayors for Peace Chapter have also held recent meetings and conferences, showing again the strength of the organisation in Europe.

The NFLA Secretariat published a detailed UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Briefing which outlined its March Chapter meeting, an update on the TPNW and the UK Defence Review. It particularly focuses providing an overview of the peace education groups that have spoken at Chapter meeting, whilst adding other groups that work in this area. The aim of the report is to encourage member councils to seek engagement with them, as part of developing the Chapter towards the promotion of safe and peaceful cities. The report has been well received by these groups. This report can be found at –

[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/M4P\\_Briefing\\_No\\_33\\_Chapter\\_meeting\\_and\\_progress\\_report.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/M4P_Briefing_No_33_Chapter_meeting_and_progress_report.pdf)

With the pandemic potentially easing, there is more scope for live as well as online events to commemorate the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic weapon attack. NFLA members are encouraged to help organise local events or work with peace groups on them. The next meeting of the UK & Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter is being developed to be on or close to International Peace Day on September 21<sup>st</sup>. Four UK Councils have applied via the NFLA Secretary (in his role as the Mayors for Peace Chapter Secretary) for ginkgo tree seeds – Cornwall, Norwich, Hastings and Winchester – which is welcome. The NFLA Secretary has recently visited Hebden Royd's ginkgo seeds as well, which are growing well.

Manchester's new peace gardens in Lincoln Square in the city centre will be completed in September, with trees planted in the square in November. The memorial to the Manchester Arena attack is also being developed for completion later in the year. A third memorial, to international humanitarian workers who are killed in active service, is also being developed at a site on the Manchester Metropolitan University campus. It is hoped to hold events around this with Mayors for Peace and the NFLA.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

#### **10. 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 16<sup>th</sup> March, which included an increase in the cap of Trident warheads available for use. The NFLA Secretary is in the process of putting together an overview of the review, considering academic and peace / security group reports and the impact on the UK's involvement on international nuclear disarmament talks.

A detailed legal review undertaken for CND has found that the UK's plans are incompatible with its commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This view has also been supported by Lord McDonald, the former permanent secretary at the Foreign Office.

Lord McDonald told the House of Lords: "I understand that a continuous at-sea deterrent needs us to be able to deploy two boats from time to time. The new ceiling allows both boats to be fully armed. But that does not increase deterrence. It is expensive and incompatible with our obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty."

The CND opinion was led by Prof Christine Chinkin, a long-time consultant for the UN, and Dr Louise Arimatsu, a former fellow at the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre. They found the proposed increase constituted a breach of article six of the NPT. CND is now considering seeking a judicial review to declare that the UK's decision set out in the integrated foreign and defence review breaches UK obligations.

The NFLA Secretary will seek to incorporate this interesting development in his new report and hope to publish it shortly.

##### ***NPT and the TPNW / ICAN Cities Appeal –***

It is looking increasingly likely that the 2021 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), scheduled to meet on 2–27 August 2021 in New York, will be moved again. A draft proposal suggests it could take place shortly after the first States Parties TPNW Conference. This will mean both conferences being held in January 2022. ICAN have confirmed that they have been appointed the lead NGO for organising a civil society response to the TPNW conference, and they are keeping Mayors for Peace and NFLA closely aware of developments.

The increased support of councils for the TPNW by passing resolutions welcoming the treaty continues. The NFLA Secretariat is delighted to note that Glasgow City Council has joined this group under the ICAN Cities Appeal, after a resolution put forward by the NFLA Scotland Convener, and supported by the SNP, Labour, Green and Independents groups was passed in mid-May. This follows on from a similar resolution passed by Bangor City Council, who become the first Welsh Council to support the TPNW. Internationally, Helsinki City Council also passed a TPNW resolution, becoming the first Finnish Council to support the TPNW. The NFLA welcomed these developments through media releases and on social media.

##### ***International nuclear weapon discussions -***

President Biden and President Putin are due to hold their first summit on June 16<sup>th</sup> and this will consider the nuclear weapon disarmament agreements between both governments, some of which were abrogated during the term of President Trump.

Whilst this is a positive development, the United States Government have already said they will not discuss a resumption of the Open Skies arms control pact. This agreement previously allowed unarmed surveillance flights over member countries. The Open Skies Treaty was intended to build trust between Russia and the West by allowing the accord's more than three dozen signatories to conduct reconnaissance flights over each other's territories to collect information about military forces and activities. More than 1,500 flights have been conducted under the treaty since it took effect in 2002, aimed at fostering transparency and allowing for the monitoring of arms control and other agreements.

The June meeting is therefore starting from a low base with only one arms control treaty still in operation – the START treaty.

On wider issues, Iran has agreed to a further month's extension to talks with the IAEA and other states over its nuclear programme, amidst concerns it could seek to develop nuclear weapons. The talks in Vienna have been moving slowly and remain fraught. Separately, there remains little progress with the new US Government and North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme. A further test held in January showed North Korea's programme is becoming increasingly sophisticated and could potentially reach American targets.

#### ***Trident submarine replacement delay due to Covid-19 -***

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has told the UK Parliament that the Dreadnought submarine programme has been delayed for one year due to the coronavirus crisis. The delay means Delivery Phase 2 of the project will continue until March 2022, rather than March 2021.

According to the MOD the delay is due to “the high-levels of uncertainty caused by the pandemic, and the short to medium term uncertainty in Industrial Partners and Supply Chains”. It is impossible to know whether the in-service date for HMS Dreadnought, the first submarine, has also been delayed by a year because in recent times the MOD have not made the date public. The update says the submarine is “on track...to enter service in the early 2030s.”

The delay raises the question of whether the current fleet of Vanguard submarines can be kept in service over the time it takes to build the Dreadnought fleet. Reports by both NIS and the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) have raised the possibility that reliability issues may make it difficult for the MOD to permanently keep a nuclear-armed submarine at sea in the early 2030s.

#### ***Work restarts on AWE uranium facility –***

On 10th March the Ministry of Defence approved funding to restart the troubled project to build a new enriched uranium manufacturing facility at AWE Aldermaston. Project Pegasus was a £634m project within the larger Nuclear Warhead Capability Sustainment Programme (NWCSP). Work on the project was paused in 2014 or early 2015 due to mismanagement, delays and cost overruns. The facility will be used to manufacture enriched uranium warhead components and nuclear submarine fuel pellets.

In a MOD letter to the Public Accounts Committee it notes that the project has been split into two phases. The first phase of work involves completing the store part of the facility and assessing the work needed to complete the manufacturing facility. The predicted cost of this phase of the project, which has now been given approval, is £77m. Completing the store was said to be the highest priority within the project. The letter does not give an estimate for the cost of completing the manufacturing facility. However, it says AWE estimates the cost will be more than the £265m that remains from the original £634m Pegasus budget. This implies that £292m was spent on the project prior to it being placed on hold. It is not clear how much of this money was spent on work that can be utilised now that the project has restarted.

The Pegasus facility was planned to replace the A45 uranium facility built at AWE Aldermaston in the 1950s. In 2012 corrosion was discovered in the steel frame of the facility. The original business case for the Pegasus project said the A45 facility was “incapable of meeting future capability and regulatory requirements”. Project Mensa, which involves the construction of a new warhead assembly facility at AWE Burghfield, was approved a month before Pegasus and is

delayed by six years and forecast to cost over £1bn more than its original budget. In November 2020 the Government announced it was taking AWE back into public ownership.

#### ***Defence diversification –***

The NFLA Secretary has been engaged with the UK Arms Conversion Defence Diversification Steering Group. Sub-groups are being established on 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 shortly 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 to bring these matters in the need for a full ‘Just Transition’.

***Agreed: To note the report. The NFLA Secretariat to develop a new report on the Defence Review.***

### **11. 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 have permitted a final six-month resumption of the two Hunterston B reactors after saying checks on the around 10% of the reactors on the state of keyway route cracks and other issues were within permitted safety levels. The Hunterston B site will formally close for defueling on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The similar Hinkley Point B reactor will close shortly after in June 2022.

The Dungeness site, which has been closed for some time now due to extensive corrosion on its pipework, may also close considerably earlier than its original 2025 date. EDF are in talks with the ONR, who remain dissatisfied with the state of the plant. The increasing suggestion is that it may not restart, or if it does, for only a limited time.

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, but it is expected that the NDA will take over the former AGR sites.

#### ***Fukushima update -***

In April the Japanese Government announced that it would permit contaminated water from the many storage tanks on the Fukushima site to be released into the Pacific Ocean, starting in 2023. As much as 1 million tonnes of water will be slowly released into the ocean. The process is likely to take decades.

The decision was criticised by environmental and fishing groups, and public opinion polls also strongly oppose the decision. The Chinese and South Korean Governments also strongly oppose Japan’s decision. The radioactive water from the tanks is treated in a way that removes most of the radioactive elements but some, such as tritium still remain. The IAEA and UNSCEAR argue that tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen, is not harmful to humans or marine wildlife if discharged in small amounts. Independent scientists dispute that and argue this decision is a dangerous scientific experiment. NFLA is engaging with Japanese groups who continue to campaign against this decision.

#### ***Chernobyl 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary events and recent concerns -***

A number of events were held for the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. The NFLA Secretary took part in a webinar that included Professor Kate Brown speaking about her book which highlighted the core impacts of the disaster and Irish writer Darrah McKeon talking on his Chernobyl novel, ‘All That Is Solid Melts Into Air’. Linda Walker from Chernobyl Children’s Project talked about their humanitarian projects in Belarus. An emotional series of readings was also given by the actor Maxine Peake from the book ‘Voices from Chernobyl’ by Svetlana Alexievich, which won her the Nobel Prize in Literature. Over 100 people attended this webinar, which can

be watched on the NFLA website at – [https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/presentations/living-with-  
chernobyl-personal-stories/](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/presentations/living-with-chernobyl-personal-stories/)

The Alliance of Regions for the Phasing-out of Nuclear Power in Europe held a full day conference on April 26<sup>th</sup> to highlight real concerns over the many aging nuclear reactors across Europe and the United States that they argue need to be closed urgently. The meeting was hosted by the State of Baden-Wurttemberg and included a number of influential speakers. A report on this matter was also published and is supported by the NFLA through a media release. It is written in German, but a full English translation is being developed.

Recent reports from scientists monitoring the abandoned Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine have discovered fission reactions erupting within an inaccessible chamber in the ruins of the complex, raising concerns that a further explosion at the site could take place.

Anatolii Doroshenko of the Institute for Safety Problems of Nuclear Power Plants (ISPNNP) in Kiev reported a 40 per cent rise in neutron emissions from the chamber since 2016 during discussions last week about the possibility of dismantling the old reactor, according to Science magazine.

The scientists are now studying the smouldering uranium fuel masses buried within Sub-reactor Room 305/2 to assess whether they are likely to stabilise on their own or whether a dangerous intervention will become necessary to defuse the situation. This might involve drilling into the chamber and spraying it with gadolinium nitrate to soak up the neutrons and choke off the reactions. Nothing like this though has ever been attempted before.

***Agreed: To note the report.***

## **12. 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 now being put together.

The NFLA Secretary has also finished a report on the risks of nuclear transports, but he is making some last-minute changes to the report following comments from independent experts. It is planned to publish this report in early June. The report is a comprehensive consideration of all core nuclear transport issues and concerns. Steering Committee members noted how important it was to publish reports on these issues.

***Suggested discussion and action points: To note the report.***

## **13. Date of next Steering Committee meeting**

This is planned as a web meeting for Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September from 11am – 1pm.