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NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 19th October 2010

NFLA 'hugely disappointed' with no public inquiry for new nuclear build – there is still no need for new nuclear

The UK and Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) has backed a joint letter with other nuclear groups raising its deep concerns over the UK Government's decision to 'justify' under European law the two reactor designs for new nuclear electricity generation.

In his announcement yesterday (1), the Secretary of State Chris Huhne claimed the economic benefits of new nuclear build outweighed any social or health issues.

In its response to the earlier public consultations on justification (2), the NFLA noted that nuclear investment will damage the nascent local energy revolution which local authorities are leading. This could also damage efforts to tackle climate change. It also noted that nuclear power capital costs are out of control and recent international studies have cast 'significant doubt' over the official risk attached to radiation doses received by people living near nuclear reactors. It is still firmly of the belief that only a public inquiry, as called for by many groups and MPs, can ensure these issues are properly resolved.

In September 2010 the NFLA attended, with other nuclear policy non governmental organisations (NGOs), a meeting with the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and discussed this proposed decision on justification of new nuclear reactors. All groups present urged DECC to hold a public inquiry.

Today, the NFLA supports a joint letter (3) which requests DECC provides detailed information relating to the process used by Secretary of State Chris Huhne in arriving at his decision that the EPR and AP 1000 designs bring more benefits than detriments, and are therefore justified under the Basic Safety Standards Directive.

In particular, the joint letter asks DECC to answer the following questions:

- how was the detriment side of the calculation arrived at?
- what price was placed on a life for the purposes of the calculation?
- what price was put on a non-fatal cancer for the purposes of the calculation?
- what price was placed on a genetic deformity for the purposes of the calculation?
- on which data sets was the detriment calculated?
- what figures were used in arriving at the detriment?
- did the Secretary of State use conversion coefficients for risk/dose which have been proposed by those agencies other than the HPA/ICRP?
- did the process take account of emerging information from the European Committee on Radiation Risk, the Low Level Radiation Campaign, the Committee Investigating Radiation Risks of Internal Emitters and the International Commission on Radiological Protection which indicates the types of exposure which challenge the use of "absorbed dose" quantities for calculating radiation detriment, and if so how?
- was the German Government's 'KiKK' study on childhood cancers around nuclear reactors adequately considered and if so, how were its findings assimilated into the calculations?
- how is the justification process to be affected by the COMARE study into KiKK, which will not be available until early next year?
- how were the benefits of new nuclear power stations calculated?

- what aspects of the new build programme were used and how was their superiority to the detriments demonstrated?

The NFLA are also disappointed that DECC publicised both this decision, and the publication of the re-consultation on national energy policy statements, through a media release rather than with a direct statement to Parliament, precluding further debate.

NFLA Chair Bailie George Regan said:

"I am extremely disappointed that the Government are making such a fundamentally important decision as justifying new nuclear reactors without a thorough, open and transparent public inquiry. The Secretary of State is ignoring a proper discussion on fundamental questions over public health, radioactive waste management and public safety by not allowing for such an inquiry. For the NFLA, who put in so much time in responding to this detailed consultation, the lack of acknowledgement of our repeated calls for an inquiry are very disappointing. We will continue to campaign for a rethink of the need for new nuclear build."

Ends

Further information

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Notes to Editors:

- (1) DECC press release, 18th October 2010
- (2) See NFLA website – <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>
- (3) Joint letter sent in by NFLA / NGOs to DECC, 19th October 2010.