

# *An Introduction to the NFLA*



## **Serving the community**

For over four decades, the UK/Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLAs) has been the voice for local authorities opposed to civil nuclear power and in favour of renewables.

The NFLA's aims are identify the impact of national nuclear policy on local communities; increase local accountability over national nuclear policy; work to minimise nuclear hazards and increase public safety; and champion the generation of energy using renewables.

Local government has a responsibility to promote public safety, preserve the environment and inform the public. NFLAs in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland work together to influence national policy on radioactive waste management, new nuclear power stations, nuclear emergency planning, nuclear transportation and other nuclear issues, such as radioactive discharges into the Irish Sea.

NFLAs also promote alternatives to nuclear power, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.

By working together, NFLA members are more able to influence policy on nuclear issues. This enables them to bring about greater openness and transparency in nuclear policy decision making. Membership also allows the NFLA Secretariat to develop original research and it provides an expert consultancy service across nuclear policy, waste management and in proposing renewable energy alternatives to nuclear power.

***Many local authorities find NFLA affiliation a practical and cost-efficient way of demonstrating their 'green' credentials and declaring their position publicly on matters of interest and concern to many members of local communities.***

## **Nuclear developments in the UK**

French-state owned Electricité de France (EDF Energy) operates four AGR (Advanced Gas Cooled reactor) plants and one PWR (Pressurised Water reactor) plant in the UK.

All the AGR plants are scheduled for closure by 2028. The NFLA believes this timeline must be regularly reviewed as there are real worries amongst the nuclear community that the cracking of the graphite core which moderates the reaction in each of these plants is increasingly compromising safety.

As part of its new energy strategy, the UK Government wants to build significant replacement nuclear capacity.

EDF is currently building Hinkley Point C in Somerset, whilst there are plans to develop two further large power stations at Sizewell C in Suffolk and Bradwell in Essex.

Hinkley and Sizewell will be equipped with the EDF-designed EPR (known in Europe as the European Pressurised Reactor and internationally as the Evolutionary Power Reactor), whilst the Bradwell development would incorporate a Chinese designed reactor.

EPR developments in Finland and France have been plagued with technical faults, significant time delays and huge cost overruns. The EPR reactor at Hinkley Point C is currently expected to be commissioned in the summer of 2027 at an estimated current cost of £33 billion<sup>1</sup>. Similar developments in Finland and Normandy were delivered well over-budget and very late.

More worryingly a serious accident at the first EPR-equipped Taishan-1 plant in China in 2021 revealed that all EPRs may have a common fatal flaw that may compromise Hinkley Point C's safety.

Chinese investment in British nuclear developments has also been halted due to a prohibition being imposed by the UK Government and Ministers are struggling to find private investors to finance developments at Sizewell C and Bradwell to replace it.

In addition, the UK Government has pledged political and financial support for the development of new Small Modular Reactors (or SMRs) and for a pilot Fusion Reactor.

SMRs are approximately the same size as the first-phase Magnox reactors (so not small), are unproven (none have yet secured the required approvals from the nuclear regulator), and no working prototypes have been built, and, despite decades of investment, the practical application of fusion has so far proven elusive.

Several sites have been earmarked for possible future SMR developments, including most controversially Bradwell, Trawsfynydd, and Wylfa.

If any of these projects ever come on-line, it will be at huge cost and in the 2030s (SMRs) or 2040s (fusion) [at the earliest]. Far too late to address either our current cost of living crisis or the climate emergency.

To pay for these developments, the UK Government has passed the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Act to off load the cost of building new nuclear reactors onto customers with the imposition of a nuclear levy on electricity bills, and this at a time when UK consumers already face soaring energy bills in the current cost-of-living crisis.

Nuclear also requires enormous public expense once plants become redundant. The decommissioning of Sellafield, Dounreay and the first generation of Magnox reactors is currently costing the UK taxpayer almost £3 billion per year and the work is expected to take until 2125 (over one hundred years) to complete. Costs and the complication will increase as the AGR plants are closed. Academics have estimated that the clean-up could cost taxpayers £260 billion.

Nuclear also leaves an incredible legacy of radioactive waste that is often transported across the UK and which must be treated and managed safely at great cost, often for millennia. The UK Government is currently seeking to establish a nuclear waste dump, or Geological Disposal Facility, in which to bury this highly toxic material and is exploring potential sites in Cumbria and Lincolnshire. It is estimated that such a facility could cost up to £53 billion.

## The NFLA's position

We believe that nuclear is not green, not cheap and not needed. Nuclear is **not** the answer to Britain's energy crisis, nor the solution to arrest climate change – it would simply be delivered too late and at too great a cost to make a difference.

Civil nuclear programmes are notorious for being delivered late with huge cost overruns, and as Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Fukushima and now Taishan-1 demonstrate there are always inherent risks in operating nuclear plants. Furthermore, they leave a toxic legacy of waste that presents a real public danger for millennia.

Consequently, we are opposed to any new nuclear development and seek the early closure of the dangerous AGR reactors. We are also opposed to a Geological Disposal Facility as we do not believe that waste can be stored safely below ground or beneath the sea for centuries. Instead, we seek the safe near-site, near-surface active management of nuclear waste, which would also end the need for the transportation of nuclear fuel and waste by train across the country.

Spending on nuclear is wasteful and unnecessary. The NFLA believes that this funding should be redirected to insulating Britain's homes to reduce energy consumption and reduce fuel bills. Research shows energy saving is **seven** times more effective per pound spent than investment in nuclear.

We also strongly champion the deployment of renewable technologies and energy storage systems as the only sustainable mechanism to generate and store power to meet Britain's current and future energy needs, without the catastrophic damage to our environment and the risks posed to human health by the reckless burning of fossil fuels or the foolhardy dalliance with nuclear power.

## What we do.

The NFLA has considerable influence as a credible stakeholder within the nuclear sector.

With support from industry and environmental specialists, we regularly publish specialist bulletins and issue media releases on a range of nuclear-related topics, in addition to a monthly newsletter to member organisations and supporters. We also maintain a website with our materials accessible to everyone as an invaluable resource for activists and researchers (<https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/>)

In addition, we also look to disseminate information and challenge myths by providing speakers to external events and to organising webinars / in-person events, sometimes in partnership with other campaigning groups.

Highly regarded for our specialist input, in England and Wales we play a leading role in:

- The independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM)
- The Local Government Association's Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (NuLEAF)
- The Radioactive Waste Management Exchange
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) NGO Forum
- The Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) NGO Forum
- The Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) NGO Forum

In Scotland, we contribute to the work of equivalent organisations where they exist.

And in the Republic of Ireland we have an appointee to the body which advises the government on radiological matters and also a direct advisor to the Minister.

NFLAs also regularly actively responds to any consultations from, and makes independent representations to, the nuclear regulators and government.

We also regularly write to Government ministers, from the Prime Minister on down, on a range of topics related to our work.

We also work on issues of common concern with European partners through:

- KIMO International
- Cities for a Nuclear Free Europe
- The Alliance of Regions for the Phasing-out of Nuclear Power in Europe

## **How we work**

The NFLA is a democratically run organisation with an agreed constitution.

Our member organisations form three Forums: one for England and Wales, one for Scotland and one for the island of Ireland. These meet regularly to discuss business.

Each of the Forums sends representatives to a UK and Ireland Steering Committee which meets several times a year. The Steering Committee holds an Annual General Meeting at which the Chair is elected, and Vice-Chairs appointed by each Forum are affirmed.

Manchester City Council hosts the Secretariat and employs the Secretary. Member organisations can access advice and support from the Secretary between meetings.

***Do please come and join us and help make the UK and keep Ireland nuclear-free and secure a sustainable renewable future for our nations.***

## **For more information**

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.cityam.com/edf-inflation-drives-hinkley-point-c-nuclear-power-plant-costs-from-26bn-to-33bn/>