



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA MEDIA ADVISORY – for immediate release, 21st December 2011

NFLA writes to Defence Minister to initiate a policy review on how it deals with at least 15 radioactively contaminated sites

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) has today written to UK Defence Minister Philip Hammond asking that remedial action be taken to deal with a reported 15 sites in the UK that have been radioactively contaminated by military hardware originating from the Second World War. The NFLA has also requested that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) undertakes a complete review of its policy for dealing with its radioactive waste liabilities (1).

The NFLA has been particularly concerned with the growing and reasonable public alarm over radioactive contamination at the Dalgety Bay site in Fife, where the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has placed urgent measures on the MOD to come up with a strategy to clean-up the site by the end of January. Over the last 3 months alone, over 450 radioactive particles have been found on the site, some of which have significant levels of radioactivity. The NFLA has recently written to the Scottish Government over this matter, asking it to be pro-active in putting pressure on the MOD and SEPA to resolve this waste problem.

The NFLA is also concerned about a potentially important SEPA policy change, approved by its board and published in policy statement SEPA 24/11, on dealing with existing contaminated sites and other sites. The policy statement notes:

“...after compliance with the contaminated land regulations has been achieved SEPA encourages further remediation by the responsible person and will work to enable this, provided that this achieves more good than harm and accepting that at **some sites it will not be practical to return the land to a pristine condition**”. (2)

The NFLA has asked the Scottish Environment Minister Richard Lochhead to clarify with SEPA how this new policy statement may affect the Dalgety Bay site, and to intervene in the matter.

The NFLA also notes a recent Guardian article that has outlined a further 14 sites where military hardware from the Second World War have been found to be radioactively contaminated (3). Some of these former sites are accessible to the public or are being considered for new retail or residential development. The NFLA has asked the UK Defence Minister to clarify the risks that exist with the contamination of these sites and to review the overall policy for the management of such sites.

NFLA Chair Councillor Brian Goodall says:

“As a Fife councillor I have been highly concerned with the initial lack of action from the MOD to clean-up the Dalgety Bay site. I now hope they come up with a concerted remediation plan in co-operation with SEPA to return the site to an acceptable level of public safety. To find out that there are another 14 MOD sites which may contain potentially similar risks worries me further. That is why I have written to UK Defence Minister Philip Hammond to seek a thorough review of its policy for managing such sites. I urge the Minister to take a pro-active approach in reassuring the public that the MOD is in full control of the management of such sites.”

Ends

For further information contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 07771 930196.

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Notes for editors:

- (1) The NFLA wrote to the Defence Minister Philip Hammond on the 21st December seeking him to review MOD policy on radioactively contaminated sites.
- (2) SEPA Policy Statement 24/11
See:
www.sepa.org.uk/about_us/sepa_board/agendas_and_papers/idoc.ashx?docid=3a64cb7b-e61c-4741-b2aa-049a445b8a17&version=-1-03-Dec-2011
The NFLA Scotland Chair wrote to the Scottish Environment Minister on radioactive waste matters, including Dalgety Bay, and about this SEPA policy change, on 31st October 2011.
- (3) MOD reveals 15 radioactive UK sites, The Guardian, 20th December 2011,
<http://guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/dec/20/mod-radioactive-world-war-two>

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