

FRANCO BRITISH NUCLEAR FORUM – 29

MARCH 2007

SPEECH BY LORD TRUSCOTT

Introduction

Bonjour, Mesdames et Messieurs.

Welcome to the DTI and to the second meeting of the Franco British Nuclear Forum.

I am delighted to be co-chairing the Forum with my French colleague, Francois Loos for a second time. The first time I stood in front of you, I was only a few days into this job as Energy Minister at the DTI. So it is a pleasure to be back, talking to this high-powered group, this time I hope, with more experience behind me.

The famous comedian Groucho Marx once said: "I don't want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member!" Well, I can tell you that the opposite is true of the Forum – even up to last week, colleagues were continuing to get in touch with us to ask if they might be included in the Forum's membership list. I think that is a great measure of your success to date and I warmly welcome those new members.

I very much enjoyed meeting many of you at last night's dinner, where I heard that there has already been significant progress in many aspects of our collaboration. I know that many of you have met in your Working Groups on both sides of the Channel, making progress on your chosen subject areas. I am grateful to all of you for the enthusiasm with which you have embraced the Forum.

Many of you will now have seen the Forum's website, kindly hosted by our colleagues at the Nuclear Industry Association. It is a comprehensive resource, and holds a large amount of information that has already been shared by our members.

(Decommissioning and Waste)

Outside the Forum, much has been happening here in the UK on nuclear matters.

Today's Forum event is focussed on the themes of decommissioning and disposal - because we recognise the importance of getting to grips with the legacy of past nuclear activities. We also think that the UK and France have much to learn from each other on these issues.

You will recall that in the UK, the Government confirmed last autumn that it supported the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management's recommendation that higher level wastes be disposed of in a deep geological facility. We also wanted to further explore the idea that communities would volunteer to host such a facility. Communities have been invited to discuss with Government how such an approach might operate.

In June we expect to publish a consultation document that will set out some of the key issues, and detail our further thinking since last year.

Building on invaluable advice already provided to the her Majesty's Government, the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management is continuing to offer independent advice to Government on implementation issues.

And on Monday this week, the Government and the devolved administrations announced a new UK policy for managing low level radioactive waste.

The new policy, which follows a public consultation in 2006, puts demonstrable public safety at the forefront of dealing with low level radioactive waste, and sets out a more flexible and pragmatic approach to managing it. It also stresses the need to minimise the amount of waste created, and recognises that we must involve the public in developing our Low Level Waste management plans.

We continue, through the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's excellent work, to decommission power stations that have reached the end of their useful lives. We must also deal with the nuclear legacy that remains from past UK involvement in nuclear generation. NDA has now launched competitions to manage some of its sites, including Sellafield. We hope that this will create a dynamic and competitive market for the provision of clean-up and decommissioning services in the UK.

And looking to the future, we have appointed a senior adviser, Mr Tim Stone, whose role is to advise on the financial arrangement for any potential new nuclear liabilities. You will be hearing from Tim about his new role later this morning.

(Energy Review Progress)

You are familiar with the fact that the Government has been looking carefully at the nuclear issue for sometime, particularly in the context of our wider energy policy. We recognise that there are two major long-term challenges in UK energy policy:

We need to tackle climate change by reducing carbon dioxide emissions; and We need to deliver secure, clean energy at affordable prices, as we move to increasing dependence on imported energy.

A central plank of our strategy for meeting these challenges is a drive towards more low-carbon technologies. Following the outcome of the recent Judicial Review we will be conducting a further consultation to be published alongside the Energy White Paper in May.

At this stage, and subject of course to consultation, we continue to believe there is a case for new nuclear power stations as one of the low-carbon options of our future energy mix. This is because of nuclear's potentially significant contribution to security of supply and reducing emissions.

However, we will make a decision on this, and other aspects of energy policy in the autumn.

(Closing remarks)

In closing, I want to repeat my thanks to everyone involved in the Forum for their considerable input so far.

There is still much that can be done, and we must all – Governments, organisations and individuals – continue to play our part if we are to put ourselves on the path to reducing carbon emissions by 60% by 2050, and to do so with a secure but diverse energy supply.

I hope you will find this morning's programme worthwhile, and I wish you a very successful afternoon's work. I look forward to hearing all about the Forum's progress, today and in the future.