

NUCLEAR SUB PLANNING 'WAGGLES'

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by PETER SALKELD

FURTHER investigations into the decommissioning of nuclear submarines at Devonport naval base were ordered today by the leader of Plymouth City Council.

John Ingham said he was "not completely happy" with the conclusions of Dr Robert Wheaton, the council's own nuclear expert, who insisted last night that the work is safe.

Dr Wheaton, of Edinburgh Radiation Consultants, was submitting the third and final report on his investigation into nuclear submarine decommissioning to the city council's policy and resources committee.

In the report he ruled out the possibility of a serious accident during decommissioning work, which involves removing nuclear fuel from submarine reactors.

But Mr Ingham said: "Our

City leader seeks new pledges

duty is to protect the people of Plymouth, therefore we need to be absolutely convinced the decommissioning work is safe."

Mr Ingham believes the evidence on which Dr Wheaton based some of his conclusions was too vague.

He has put forward a five-step plan for further investigations:

- All three of Dr Wheaton's reports should be made available to the public, who could then give their views to the council.
- Urgent talks should be held with the workers who carry out the decommissioning to ensure that their own confidence

they are well protected against radiation.

- Independent environmental agencies should be invited to carry out their own investigations so that the council has a broader cross-section of views.

- Devonport Management Limited and the Ministry of Defence to be asked to submit their own reports.

- The MoD is to be asked to help fund the City Council's radiation monitoring programme around the naval base and dockyard.

Anti-nuclear pressure group DIG today welcomed the council's decision to seek more opinions on decommissioning work.

DIG chairman Kevin Owen said: "Decommissioning could have very serious consequences for the people of Plymouth. Therefore it is sensible that the council seeks to broaden its canvas. The more options we get the better."

Devonport Management Limited has given full support to Dr Wheaton's verdict on decommissioning.

Spokesman Eain Williams said: "With his conclusions Dr Wheaton confirms DML's very high standard of nuclear safety."