

Council still unhappy about N-subs

THE LABOUR leader of Plymouth City Council has called for more investigations into the effect of decommissioning of nuclear submarines at Devonport dockyard.

After the final report into the environmental aspect of storing defuelled submarines in the city was presented to councillors, John Ingham (Honicknowle) said he was still not happy with the situation.

Retired submarines will be stored for between 25 and 30 years at Devonport dockyard before they are finally disposed of.

Dump

The reactor plants will then most probably be cut up and disposed in the NIREX national dump to be ready by 2005, according to author of the report Dr Robert Wheaton.

Dr Wheaton from the Edinburgh Radiation Consultants has produced three reports on the issue for Plymouth City Council.

In his last he all but ruled out the possibility of a large scale accident happening or affecting the public.

But Cllr Ingham said: "I am not completely happy with this report.

"We have a duty to protect the safety of people living

by SANDRA LAVILLE

around the dockyard and in Plymouth.

"Much of what is in the report comes from defence select committees who have not been involved with decommissioning. We have to be absolutely convinced about the safety to protect the people in Plymouth."

He put forward five recommendations which were accepted by the policy and resources committee yesterday to inquire further into the safety aspects of decommissioning.

They were:

- To put all three reports out for public consultation;
- Hold urgent talks with people who work at the dockyard because the radiation doses cited in the report were vague and DML had not provided information on who received the highest doses;
- Seek more environmental protection reports from other agencies to clarify the issue for the council;
- Ask DML and the MoD to provide an environmental impact study themselves and
- Ask the MoD to provide some of the money for the city council's monitoring of radioactivity outside the dockyard.

Councillor Tom Jones, (Con, Estover) praised Dr Wheaton for criticising the work of the anti-nuclear group DIG. He said: "This report has demolished all their arguments and I hope that from now on the Dump Information Group (DIG) accept that we have been given the very best of scientific investigations."

But Councillor Tudor Evans, (Lab, Ham) was not happy with the way the report all but ruled out a worst case accident.

Criticism

He said: "Dr Wheaton says there is no danger because there is no chance of a fire on board and if there was one we would not be at risk because we would have been evacuated. But we have been told by the MoD that there are no plans to evacuate the city. So where does this leave us?"

Reacting to the criticism of DIG David Riggs from the group said: "If it wasn't for people like us questioning things Dr Wheaton would be out of a job.

"We are not hurt by the criticism. We still believe it is perfectly right to ask questions in a democratic society and we will continue to do so."