

Isles agreed on civil defence job

A proposal to appoint a £15,000 a year emergency planning officer for civil defence was approved yesterday by the policy and resources committee of the Western Isles Council without debate.

A report stated that local authorities had a statutory duty to make such preparations in the event of a hostile attack. Although the council had not taken any steps to implement this statutory duty, they were not alone in that respect. However preparations had to be completed by December 31 this year ready for submission by January 15 next year.

The report added that in addition to its duties in respect of civil defence the council was also empowered to make provision for civil emergencies such as natural disasters and major accidents. Government grants were available.

Councillor Wilfred Leonard said that no matter which government was in power, this would have to be carried out and he moved the recommendation to make the appointment.

Councillor Murdo Afrin said they had delayed it for some time but they had a major responsibility to the community regarding possible gas explosions or air disasters.

Protect cattle with sheets, farmers told

By John Young, Agricultural Correspondent

The Ministry of Agriculture issued farmers yesterday with guidelines on how to deal with the aftermath of nuclear war. The booklet, *Civil Defence and the Farmer*, says:

"If you have not got substantial buildings to house your livestock, any shelter is better than none. . . . Sheeting over them would provide further protection from fallout dust.

"Animals which could not be housed could be given some protection by using bales of hay or straw, which might be more readily available in winter. . . ."

The prospect of a "nuclear winter", the aftermath of a nuclear war during which life might cease to exist on this planet, is comfortably ignored in this extraordinary booklet.

Little changed from an earlier pamphlet published as long ago as 1958, which has been out of print for many years, it sets out to advise farmers how to safeguard food supplies after the holocaust.

Clearly somewhat embarrassed, ministry officials claimed that the booklet had been published in response to many requests from farmers and farming organizations for advice.

The booklet is full of helpful hints.

Milk unfit for human consumption could be fed to pigs or cattle, even if it were possibly contaminated, as the radiation would be unlikely to affect the animals before they reached the age for conventional slaughter.

Consumers, assuming that there are any, should be all right so long as they remember to wash and peel potatoes and hard fruit such as apples and pears. Peas, protected by their pods, should be reasonably safe, but leafy vegetables and soft fruit such as strawberries would be difficult to decontaminate.

Civil Defence and the Farmer (Stationery Office, £1.50).

Nuclear defence plan includes mobilizing fleets of little ships

By Peter Evans, Home Affairs Correspondent

Plans involving the mobilization of fleets of little ships to defend the ports, with squadrons including military and civil aircraft to make reconnaissance flights after a nuclear attack, are contained in revised civil defence plans released yesterday.

The emergency guidance for local authorities, with other government documents, provide the most comprehensive response to the threat of nuclear attack yet provided. They bring together plans discussed before and details disclosed for the first time.

One of the documents, a draft consultation paper from the Department Health and Social Security (DHSS) was said by the British Medical Association to have taken sensible account of the criticisms made by the association in 1983. It had said then that nuclear survival plans were a myth because such an attack would destroy the health service.

The DHSS document admits that at worst the number of casualties in parts of the country could be quite beyond the resources of health services.

It proposes emergency medical centres, below hospital level, with some professional supervision. The centres would become much more important after a nuclear attack, although they would be available if casualties from a conventional attack overwhelmed hospitals.

The Government believes that a blitz directed at the main cities can probably be discounted in the first, conventional warfare, stage of any attack. It also believes it unlikely that any attack would open with a nuclear strike.

Neither is an invasion of Britain considered likely, although some sabotage troops might be landed.

The Government is considering methods of warning and protecting people against chemical weapons, the guidance document says.

The loss of life in a nuclear attack would be very high, but the documents say millions could be left alive, facing

immense immediate difficulties.

If cities, political centres and industry were attacked in addition to military targets, areas of intense radiation could persist for months in the immediate vicinity of explosions. Centres of badly damaged cities could be uninhabitable for a long time.

"No clear assumptions can be made about the survival or recovery of the country in the longer-term following a major nuclear attack." But the Government calls for civil defence effort to provide protection, precautions against radiation effects, and planning to restore essential supplies and services.

Arrangements for the devolution of central government to regions, each under a government minister as regional commissioner, have been reviewed and simplified.

A single level of regional government would cover two zones in each region, with the commissioner's headquarters in one. His deputy's would be in the other so that he could take over if the main one was destroyed. The commissioner would have with him a senior judge.

Greater London and Northern Ireland would each have one zone.

The Government says that small craft, including fishing vessels, would be required by the Royal Navy for the defence of ports and anchorages and air squadrons, to be established in each region, would be used for reconnaissance and communications after nuclear attack, with direct links to regional headquarters.

Civil aircraft could be included. "Selected police and fire officers receive training in air reconnaissance in peacetime."

Mr John Home Robertson, a Labour frontbench spokesman on agriculture, said the documents were "rubbish". It was malicious mischief, he said, to try to persuade people that agriculture or any other essential component of society would survive a nuclear attack.