

OPENING THE GATES

*Raising the standard of community liaison
at the Atomic Weapons Establishment*



Acknowledgements	4
Headline Issues	5
Executive summary	6
1. Introduction	8
2. Background: AWE’s Local Liaison Committee	9
2.1 In the beginning	9
2.2 What the Committee is for	9
2.3 Regulatory expectations	11
2.4 Committee membership	12
2.5 Conduct of meetings	12
3. Methods and Report Framework	13
4. Analysis	14
4.1 Representation	14
4.1.1 Attendance	14
4.1.2 Membership	14
4.1.3 Quality of Engagement	15
4.1.4 Broadening the Committee’s membership	16
4.1.5 The public and the press	17
4.1.6 Representation: Scorecard and suggestions for action	19
4.2 Communication	19
4.2.1 Reporting to the public	20
4.2.2 Seeking views from the public	21
4.2.3 Communication: Scorecard and suggestions for action	22
4.3 Transparency	22
4.3.1 Elected representatives?	23
4.3.2 Access to meetings	24
4.3.3 Transparency: Scorecard and suggestions for action	24
4.4 Governance	25
4.4.1 The committee’s status	25
4.4.2 Organisation of meetings	25
4.4.3 Governance: Scorecard and suggestions for action	26
5. Conclusions	28
5.1 Recommendations	30

Appendix A	31
A.1.1. Terms of Reference for the Atomic Weapons Establishment Local Liaison Committee.	31
A.1.2. Letter from AWE regarding the work of the Local Liaison Committee	34
Appendix B	35
Results of survey of Local Liaison Committee members	35
Appendix C	42
Results of survey of local residents	42
Headline findings	42
Appendix D	44
Performance of AWE Local Liaison Committee in comparison with Nuclear Decommissioning Authority standards for Site Stakeholder Groups	44
Appendix E	47
Local Liaison Committee Member Attendance Record 2009-10	



List of Acronyms

AWE	Atomic Weapons Establishment	NIS	Nuclear Information Service
DNSR	Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator	ONR	Office for Nuclear Regulation
HSE	Health and Safety Executive	REPPiR	Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001
LLC	Local Liaison Committee	SSG	Site Stakeholder Group
MoD	Ministry of Defence	UK	United Kingdom
NAG	Nuclear Awareness Group	WBC	West Berkshire Council
NDA	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority		
NII	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate		

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Headline Issues

- » The nature of AWE's role in manufacturing and maintaining the UK's nuclear weapons mean that openness, transparency, and communication about AWE's work are sensitive issues. However, security issues present no insuperable barriers to community engagement, and residents living in the areas surrounding AWE have the right to expect the company to meet the same standards of dialogue adopted at other nuclear licensed sites.
- » Operations at AWE have the potential for significant local, regional, and national impact. Whilst members of AWE's Local Liaison Committee take their duties seriously and work hard, it is unrealistic to expect them to play a 'mass media' role in communicating with the public on behalf of AWE about site issues.
- » The AWE Local Liaison Committee was established many years ago on a relatively informal basis, and does not operate according to any formal constitution to define its role and guide its activities.
- » Although AWE is in many respects a leader and an innovator in developing best practice in the nuclear sector, the company is being let down by poor efforts to engage with local communities. Far from setting a lead, the company's Local Liaison Committee fails to meet basic standards for community liaison which are taken for granted at most nuclear licensed sites.
- » Two out of three local residents feel that independent local groups, which currently have no voice on the Local Liaison Committee, should be represented on the Committee. Inclusion of such groups would address a notable shortfall in AWE's current community involvement process.
- » Following the Fukushima nuclear accident, the UK's nuclear regulator has emphasised the need for a drive to ensure more open, transparent and trusted communications, and relationships between the nuclear industry and the public and other stakeholders. As part of this drive, the AWE Local Liaison Committee should be reformed to bring it into line with good practice in community engagement.



Executive summary

This report examines the performance of the Atomic Weapons Establishment's (AWE) Local Liaison Committee (LLC) and compares it with standards of transparency and accountability adopted elsewhere in the UK nuclear industry. It is not a critique of AWE or of defence policy, but a review of the standards of accountability and democracy which AWE applies in its dealings with local people.

The importance of open and honest communication between the nuclear industry and the public has become all the more relevant in light of the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan, with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), the regulator of the UK's nuclear industry, recommending that the industry considers ways of enhancing the drive to ensure more open, transparent and trusted communications and relationships with the public and other stakeholders in the aftermath of Fukushima. As the Local Liaison Committee is a key means for communication between AWE and local people, it is important that it operates in a way which meets the ONR's aspirations.

Expectations of the role that the Local Liaison Committee plays differ between AWE's stakeholders and have changed over time. Neither AWE nor the Ministry of Defence (MoD) consider that the Committee has any role to play in scrutinising the work of AWE, and Committee members themselves seem unsure as to whether it should play a role in holding AWE to account. Similar committees at civil nuclear sites act as informal watchdogs on behalf of local people, holding the site operator to account and challenge where necessary.

Elsewhere in the nuclear sector a more pro-active view is taken on community liaison issues. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), responsible for decommissioning and cleaning up civil nuclear sites, places great importance on public and stakeholder engagement and insists that an effective Site Stakeholder Group (SSG) operates at each of the sites for which it is responsible, working in accordance with defined standards of openness and transparency which are outlined in a set of guidelines. Research by Nuclear Information Service presented in this study shows that AWE's Local Liaison Committee falls well short of the standards set by the NDA in a number of respects.

Nuclear Information Service reviewed the effectiveness of the AWE Local Liaison Committee by undertaking interviews and survey work with committee members and residents living in the area around AWE sites and by analysis of key documents relating to the Committee. The results are presented under four headings which represent important elements of the Local Liaison Committee's work:

- » Representation
- » Communication
- » Transparency
- » Governance

For each of these factors the Local Liaison Committee's current performance has been rated against good practice in the sector as represented by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups using a 'traffic light' scorecard. In two of these categories (representation and governance) the committee received a red rating, and in two (communication and transparency) an amber rating.

Although AWE is in many respects a leader and an innovator in developing best practice the nuclear sector, the company is being let down by poor efforts to engage with local communities. Far from

setting a lead, the company's Local Liaison Committee fails to meet basic standards for community liaison which are taken for granted at most nuclear licensed sites.

The report makes suggestions as to how the work of the Local Liaison Committee could be improved in each of the four areas considered in the study, taking the view that Committee members themselves must take a lead in making any improvements. Although the status of the Atomic Weapons Establishment as a defence nuclear site means that security will always be a sensitive issue, security provides no insuperable barriers to increasing the openness of the Local Liaison Committee's work because the Committee has no mandate to consider classified matters.

The following general recommendations are made in support of ONR's drive to ensure more open, transparent and trusted communications and relationships with the public and other stakeholders in the defence nuclear sector in the aftermath of the Fukushima accident:

- » The **Office for Nuclear Regulation** should publish a mandatory code of practice for the conduct of Local Liaison Committees and Site Stakeholder Groups at nuclear licensed sites. These should be modelled on the NDA's existing guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups. Following the introduction of the code of practice, sites which do not meet the specified standards should have a period of one year to introduce the necessary improvements.
- » The **Atomic Weapons Establishment** should clearly indicate that it wishes to adopt best practice in community engagement and that it will adopt standards which are at least as good as the current NDA guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups. An experienced stakeholder engagement consultant should be engaged to review the existing arrangements and to work with AWE, the committee, and other stakeholders to help in meeting these standards. A firm timetable should be set for reform of the Local Liaison Committee.
- » The **Ministry of Defence** should indicate as departmental policy that it expects the highest standards of stakeholder engagement from operators of defence nuclear sites, and that these standards will be at least as good as those in the civil nuclear industry. It should provide funding to support development of the role of local liaison committees at its nuclear sites so that they meet these standards.
- » **Nuclear Information Service** is willing to assist each agency in achieving these recommendations in the light of the knowledge and experience we have gained in undertaking this study and our work on stakeholder engagement in the nuclear industry.

1. Introduction

“Both the UK nuclear industry and ONR should consider ways of enhancing the drive to ensure more open, transparent and trusted communications, and relationships, with the public and other stakeholders”

- Office for Nuclear Regulation, Report into the Fukushima nuclear emergency.¹

For sixty years the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) has been a major institution in West Berkshire, influencing local communities as a neighbour, an employer, and a significant donor to local charities. AWE sites hold stocks of radioactive materials, hazardous chemicals, and explosives, and these substances are regularly transported along local roads. Over the next five to ten years the Establishment will be hosting one of the largest construction programmes in the UK.² AWE’s presence has a significant impact on the lives of local residents and communities, but just how well does AWE do in engaging with local people and seeking their views on the matters that are important to them?

This is an important question, not because it relates to matters such as whether the United Kingdom should possess nuclear weapons or whether AWE should be involved in manufacturing them – the question has no bearing on these matters – but because it touches on much deeper issues such as widely accepted principles of political empowerment, the accountability and transparency of public bodies, and the rights of local residents to know about what is happening in their communities. This report is not, therefore, a critique of AWE or defence policy, but a review of the standards of accountability and democracy which AWE applies in its dealings with local people, particularly through the work of its Local Liaison Committee (LLC).

This report examines the performance of AWE’s Local Liaison Committee and compares it with standards of transparency and accountability adopted elsewhere in the UK nuclear industry. The importance of open and honest communication between the nuclear industry and the public has become all the more relevant in light of the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan, with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), the regulator of the UK’s nuclear industry, recommending that the industry considers ways of enhancing the drive to ensure more open, transparent and trusted communications and relationships with the public and other stakeholders in the aftermath of Fukushima.³ In order to help AWE meet this challenge, the report makes a number of recommendations intended to help AWE’s Local Liaison Committee meet the same standards as at nuclear licensed sites elsewhere in the UK.

¹ ‘Japanese earthquake and tsunami: Implications for the UK Nuclear Industry. Final Report’. HM Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations, September 2011. Page (x), Recommendation IR-4. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/> . Accessed 14 November 2011.

² AWE’s in-house magazine has stated: “At its peak the construction work will make AWE one of the largest construction sites in the UK – similar in scale to the Terminal 5 project at Heathrow”. ‘Major projects get into gear’, ‘AWE Today’, December 2005.

³ ‘Japanese earthquake and tsunami: Implications for the UK Nuclear Industry. Final Report’. HM Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations, September 2011. Page (x), Recommendation IR-4. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/> . Accessed 14 November 2011.

2. Background: AWE's Local Liaison Committee

2.1 In the beginning

AWE's Local Liaison Committee was established in 1993 as a result of concerns expressed by local authorities, principally the former Newbury District Council and Reading Borough Council, about the safety and environmental impacts of AWE's operations. In March 1993 Newbury District Council asked the government to set up an independent inquiry into health and safety at AWE, and in December 1993 Reading Borough Council convened a Community Enquiry to hear and evaluate public concerns about risks or threats in the wider area surrounding the AWE sites.

The inquiry, chaired by Helena Kennedy QC, published its report in 1994,⁴ highlighting a number of problems about communications between AWE and local communities. Among these was a lack of information available to the local community about AWE and its operations, and the report concluded: "In order for people to make informed choices about work, housing and schooling for their children, it is necessary for them to be fully informed. At present the public in and around Reading cannot make such choices in the knowledge that they do so knowing at least most of the facts."⁵

In response to the inquiry's report Reading Borough Council requested more openness and representation from the AWE Local Liaison Committee, which had shortly beforehand been formed with representation from county, district-level, and parish councils.⁶

Formation of the Local Liaison Committee was an important and welcome step at the time, but in the eighteen years since its inception, the bar for standards of openness and transparency has risen considerably. Our research shows that, as understanding of the importance of these issues has developed in the UK nuclear industry, AWE has fallen back and now finds itself lagging well behind current good practice on community engagement.

2.2 What the Committee is for

The Local Liaison Committee's role is set out in its terms of reference as having four interlinked elements:⁷

- » To provide an effective means of liaison between AWE and representatives of the local community in the vicinity of AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield.
- » To keep the local community informed about past, current and future operations of AWE, subject to the demands of security.
- » To be a forum for discussions on matters of interest including the Emergency Plans.
- » To ensure that AWE management is aware of local opinion and to provide an additional forum to respond to questions and issues concerning AWE.

Expectations of the role that the Committee plays differ between AWE's stakeholders and have changed

⁴ Kennedy, Helena: 'Secrecy Versus Safety. The findings of the AWE Aldermaston Community Inquiry'. 1994.

⁵ Kennedy, Helena: 'Secrecy Versus Safety. The findings of the AWE Aldermaston Community Inquiry'. 1994. Page 60, paragraph 113.

⁶ Holyer, Kevin: 'Public Safety Issues for Local Authorities'. Presentation given at Nuclear Free Local Authorities English Forum seminar, Reading, October 2006. Available at: <http://www.nuclearawarenessgroup.org.uk/files/AWE%20Community%20Inquiry.ppt> . Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁷ Terms of Reference. Atomic Weapons Establishment Local Liaison Committee. Reproduced at Appendix A, part 1.

over time. AWE itself considers that the Committee “provides a forum through which members can meet with the Company’s senior management team to build an understanding of AWE’s focus on safe, secure and clean operations”, and that “the diversity of visits and presentations is designed to give local representatives a real insight in to different aspects of AWE’s business”.⁸ Stated in these terms, it appears that AWE sees committee members as community advocates working on its behalf – a role set out by AWE’s former Chief Executive when, in the aftermath of a fire at AWE Aldermaston in August 2010, he stated: “There have been some inaccurate reports about the scale of the incident and it is important that LLC members are in a position to reassure local people.”⁹

The Ministry of Defence (MoD), owner of the AWE site and AWE plc’s main customer, takes a broader view, saying: “The purpose of the LLC is not to scrutinise the work of AWE but to provide an effective means of liaison between AWE plc and representatives of the local community. Its aim is to keep stakeholders informed about AWE, to inform AWE plc of local stakeholder views and to provide a forum to respond to concerns and questions.”¹⁰ MoD does not consider that the Committee has a role in scrutinising activities at AWE, although the terms of reference seem to imply that it has a scrutiny role if liaison and discussions are to be meaningful and questions and issues concerning AWE are to receive adequate responses.

Committee members themselves seem unsure about whether the Committee has a role in holding AWE to account. One member told us: “I think it is a forum for holding them to account”¹¹ whilst another said: “It is not the role of the LLC to hold AWE to account – that’s the regulator’s job”.¹² LLC members seem to prefer to describe the committee as a “communication link”¹³ allowing a flow of information from AWE to the local community and vice versa. According to one Committee member, “two way communication lets AWE know about local issues and lets the parish know what is going on with developments at AWE”, with consultation on safety issues being an important theme of the Committee’s work.¹⁴

Similar committees at civil nuclear sites act as informal watchdogs on behalf of local people, holding the site operator to account and challenge where necessary. This role is expected of stakeholder committees at other nuclear sites¹⁵ - for example, questioning site operators and regulators is seen as a primary objective for stakeholder groups at nuclear sites owned by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA).¹⁶ However, a watchdog role seems to be very much at odds with AWE and MoD’s vision for the AWE Local Liaison Committee, and committee members seem to show a limited appetite for taking this role, even though it is both the norm to which similar bodies at other nuclear sites aspire and the natural consequence of the AWE liaison committee’s own terms of reference.

⁸ AWE Annual Review 2010. Page 49. Available online at: http://www.awe.co.uk/Contents/Publication/0f874d3AWE_Annual_Review_2010_video_web.pdf Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁹ ‘AWE Local Liaison Committee visit site of Aldermaston fire’. AWE Latest News: PR 29.10. Available online at http://www.awe.co.uk/shownews_f691484.html . Accessed 14 November 2011.

¹⁰ Letter from Baroness Ann Taylor, Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, to Robert Wilson MP. 28 November 2007. Reference D/Min(DES)AT MC05994/2007.

¹¹ Interview with informant 2.

¹² Interview with informant 1.

¹³ Interview with informant 1.

¹⁴ Interview with informant 1.

¹⁵ ‘Nuclear watchdog schedules ‘thorough review’’. Lowestoft Journal. 17 September 2010. Available at http://www.lowestoftjournal.co.uk/news/nuclear_watchdog_schedules_thorough_review_1_652374?action=login. Accessed 4 August 2011.

¹⁶ ‘NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups’. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 2.1. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> . Accessed 14 November 2011.

2.3 Regulatory expectations

The lead regulator for nuclear licensed sites, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (currently an agency of the Health and Safety Executive), specifies no formal requirement for a site to establish a liaison committee in its standard licence conditions,¹⁷ although its website states: “Each major licensed nuclear site has a liaison committee or stakeholder group, run by the licensee that includes local authorities, trade unions, interested local groups and members of the public”.¹⁸

The Environment Agency, another key regulator in the nuclear sector, also takes a non-prescriptive approach and has said that it “encourages nuclear site operators to work closely with their local stakeholders” and that “operators need to make sure that they involve stakeholders early in key decisions so people have an opportunity to have their say, rather than simply being informed of the outcome of any decision making.”¹⁹

As the owners of the AWE sites and AWE plc’s main customer, the Ministry of Defence has certain expectations regarding liaison between AWE and community neighbours. Although the contract between AWE Management Limited and the MoD does not include an express condition which requires AWE to have an LLC, there is an expectation for “the AWE contractor to conduct communications, information and public relations programmes, including internal and external communications, community involvement, interactions with the media, businesses and the scientific and technical community and liaison with local and government authorities.”²⁰

Elsewhere in the nuclear sector a more pro-active view is taken on community liaison issues. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), responsible for decommissioning and cleaning up civil nuclear sites, places great importance on public and stakeholder engagement, identifying it as a ‘critical enabler’. NDA sees the effective delivery of stakeholder engagement as essential to fulfilling its strategic objectives, stating: “It is important that NDA decision-making is informed by a diverse range of views and that the rationale for major decisions and the processes by which they are reached is clear. We therefore regard openness, transparency and effective public and stakeholder engagement and communications as key to building the support, confidence and trust necessary for us to deliver our mission.”²¹

The NDA insists that an effective Site Stakeholder Group (SSG) operates at each of the sites for which it is responsible, and in 2009 it published guidance on how it expected Site Stakeholder Groups to function at its nuclear sites across the country.²² The guidelines (which update an earlier document published in 2004 to inform the set-up of SSGs at NDA sites) set out the minimum standards expected by NDA from SSGs, and include a model constitution to aid operation of a Site Stakeholder Group. Research by Nuclear Information Service presented in this study shows that AWE’s Local Liaison Committee falls well short of the standards set by the NDA in a number of respects.

¹⁷ ‘Licence Condition Handbook’ Health and Safety Executive. October 2010. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/silicon.pdf>. Accessed 14 November 2011.

¹⁸ ‘Quarterly Local Liaison Committee / Site Stakeholder group reports’. Office for Nuclear Regulation website. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/llc/> Accessed 3 August 2011.

¹⁹ ‘Nuclear Sector Plan 2008 Performance Report’. Environment Agency. Objective 6, pages 31-32.

²⁰ Letter from Kate Ingram, Defence Equipment and Support Policy Secretariat Subs 2, to Peter Burt. 26 November 2007. Reference 20071106_TO_Burt. Reproduced at Appendix A, Part 1.

²¹ ‘Strategy Effective from April 2011. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Page 67. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/strategy/index.cfm>. Accessed 14 November 2011.

²² ‘NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups’. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf>. Accessed 14 November 2011.

2.4 Committee membership

Membership of the AWE Local Liaison Committee consists solely of representatives from local councils plus the AWE Managing Director,²³ who chairs meetings of the committee, and a Secretary provided by AWE. Twenty eight local councils are listed in the terms of reference as members of the Local Liaison Committee²⁴ and one further parish council, Tidmarsh with Sulham, is also represented on the Committee. Five of these councils are 'upper tier' authorities (Basingstoke and Deane, Hampshire, Reading Borough, West Berkshire, and Wokingham Borough), and the remainder are parish or town councils. Membership of the liaison committee is therefore dominated by representatives from parish councils.

Committee meetings are also regularly attended by representatives from AWE's principal regulators - the Office for Nuclear Regulation (formerly the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate) and the Environment Agency, although these bodies attend as observers rather than full members. Representatives of other government agencies occasionally attend by invitation.

Minutes of recent meetings show that there is always a strong AWE staff presence at Local Liaison Committee meetings. As well as the Chairman and Secretary, there are usually at least two or three other AWE representatives present to report on agenda items. Regular attendees include AWE's Head of Corporate Communications and the Director of Environment, Safety, and Health.

2.5 Conduct of meetings

The agenda of Local Liaison Committee meetings follows a set agenda, although "while the Company sets the agenda, we always endeavour to include any topic requested by LLC members".²⁵ The Chairman's opening remarks, giving an AWE perspective on events of potential interest to the Committee (examples over recent months include the Strategic Defence and Security Review and industrial action by AWE trade unions), are followed by reports on AWE's environment, health, and safety performance and infrastructure construction programme. Committee members have an opportunity to question representatives from the Office for Nuclear Regulation and Environment Agency and the meeting often concludes with a visit to an on-site facility which has been discussed at the meeting.

This agenda format has provided a standard framework for AWE Local Liaison Committee meetings for many years. A review of the minutes of committee meetings shows that the level of detail provided in the minutes has fallen drastically in recent years, with minutes averaging ten pages in length in 2003 but having fallen to four pages for meetings held in 2010. Minutes of meetings held more recently mention in detail AWE's community activities and company awards, but say far less about site operations and developments than in previous years. The public, if not committee members, are currently receiving far less information about AWE through the Local Liaison Committee than in years past.

²³The terms of reference for the Committee specify that meetings will be chaired by the AWE Executive Chairman or his representative, but the role is now taken by AWE's Managing Director.

²⁴Terms of Reference. Atomic Weapons Establishment Local Liaison Committee. Although the Terms of Reference list 29 member councils, a recent press release from AWE states that the committee represents 14 local authorities in Berkshire and Hampshire ('AWE Local Liaison Committee visit site of Aldermaston fire'. AWE Latest News: PR 29.10. Available at: http://www.awe.co.uk/shownews_f691484.html Accessed 14 November 2011.

²⁵Letter from Andrew Jupp, AWE Managing Director, to Peter Burt. Reference MD/13/11. 10 March 2011. Reproduced at Appendix A, Part 2.

3. Methods and Report Framework

Nuclear Information Service undertook the current study to understand how well the AWE Local Liaison Committee was doing as an effective body representing the views of local residents to the company and in comparison with similar committees at other nuclear licensed sites. We obtained our information in the following ways:

- » A questionnaire survey to which local council representatives on the Committee were invited to respond (survey questionnaire and responses shown in Appendix B). Questionnaires were sent out to 21 regularly attending Committee members.
- » Interviews with a selection of committee members and local experts, whose comments have been presented anonymously. We spoke to a parish council representative on the Committee, a higher-tier authority representative, regulators who have attended Committee meetings, and a local journalist, all of whom gave their views in a personal capacity. Representatives of AWE plc were invited to give their views in an interview but declined to do so.²⁶
- » A doorstep survey of residents' opinions in the communities adjacent to AWE sites (survey questionnaire form shown in Appendix C).
- » Analysis of key documents such as minutes of meetings, governance documents, and council websites and newsletters.

We have presented our results under four headings which represent important elements of the Local Liaison Committee's work:

- » Representation
- » Communication
- » Transparency
- » Governance

For each of these categories we have rated the Local Liaison Committee's current performance against good practice in the sector (as represented by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups - see Appendix D for full details) using a 'traffic light' scorecard and made suggestions to help the committee improve its performance. It should be noted that Nuclear Information Service is not necessarily advocating the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's approach as a model which should be adopted by AWE for its Local Liaison Committee in future (our view is that any changes to the format and mode of operation of the Local Liaison Committee should be made in consultation and agreement with a wide range of stakeholders), but, as a published statement of good practice from a government body, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority guidance represents an objective standard for the purposes of comparison.

²⁶ See letter from AWE at Appendix A, part 2.

4. Analysis

4.1 Representation

Who does AWE's Local Liaison Committee really represent? Meetings are not open to ordinary members of the public or news reporters, and local stakeholders such as community groups, environmental groups, and businesses are excluded from the Committee's membership.

Local people with interests or concerns about AWE are therefore dependent upon local council representatives to ask questions and raise issues on their behalf. This places considerable demands on council members who already have a busy workload from their normal council duties.

4.1.1 Attendance

If local councils are to play a meaningful role in representing the public at the Local Liaison Committee, it is clearly important for them to attend meetings. However, attendance records from the minutes of the last two years' meetings²⁷ show that seven out of the 28 authorities represented on the Committee did not attend any meetings over this period.²⁸ Two of the councils which attended no meetings were higher tier authorities – Wokingham Borough Council and Hampshire County Council – which have significant responsibilities in areas such as emergency planning, land use planning, and transport, which are highly relevant to potential impacts resulting from AWE's operations. Burghfield Parish Council, which hosts an AWE site, sent a representative to Committee meetings just once over the two year period.²⁹

It is understandable that councillors sometimes struggle to attend Committee meetings regularly as they have to balance their Council duties with other commitments – often including a full time job. Our survey showed that Committee members take their responsibilities seriously and work hard at their duties, but as one member pointed out “we already have more than enough to do!” without the extra work imposed by attending and feeding back from Local Liaison Committee meetings.³⁰ Liaison committee meetings are held during working hours on a weekday morning, adding to attendance difficulties for members who are in full time employment.

4.1.2 Membership

Committee membership is dominated by representatives from town and parish-level councils (23 out of 28 members) - the lowest tier of local government.

Although there are good reasons to include representatives at this level on the Committee – their involvement at the most local level in community affairs should provide an ideal base for representing the views of local people – the extent to which parish councils with their limited powers dominate membership of the committee is disproportionate. Major urban areas within AWE's catchment area – Reading, Newbury, and Basingstoke – are under-represented on the Liaison Committee.

Many parish level members represent communities which are some distance from AWE sites and

²⁷ Meetings held during the 2009 and 2010 calendar years.

²⁸ Attendance records for the period studied can be found in Appendix E.

²⁹ Representatives from Wokingham Borough and Burghfield Parish Councils have recently started re-attending Local Liaison Committee meetings.

³⁰ Response to questionnaire survey (question 9).

have little connection with AWE, such as Mapledurham Parish and parishes along the length of the ‘Pangbourne Pipeline’ – an outfall for radioactive effluent which drains into the River Thames, now no longer used. This geographical bias may skew the committee’s emphasis towards some issues at the expense of others.

4.1.3 Quality of Engagement

As well as attending Committee meetings, members need to play an active role at meetings if they are to represent the views of their constituents effectively. Our research suggests that the quality of engagement from Committee members is mixed. Although some members are vocal in questioning AWE, the committee also has “lots of fairly wooden members”³¹ who rarely speak at meetings. One member describing the committee said: “Quite a few of the LLC members are, I think its probably fair to say, a bit more passive, i.e. they will attend, they will listen and they may have a discussion afterwards, but they will not tend to say to much during the meeting”.³² This has led to the characterisation of the committee by one attendee as “Fairly tame, in that AWE does a lot of talking and the members don’t”.³³

One reason for the limited engagement may be the technical nature of some of the material AWE presents at meetings. Liaison Committee members come from a diverse background, some with specialised experience and knowledge relevant to the nuclear industry and others with a good understanding of safety and environmental issues, but others with limited expertise in these areas. One councillor felt that they were “not competent to judge”³⁴ when asked if AWE provided sufficient information for Liaison Committee members to make critical judgements about the company’s environmental and safety performance. Another commented: “There is a lot of use of acronyms which can be difficult to follow sometimes when you are not working in that industry the whole time”.³⁵

With the content of meetings often hinging on the presentation of technical information, the ability of councillors with limited knowledge in this field to comment on an informed basis is a challenge. Evidence from the questionnaire survey of Committee members suggests that most councils appoint volunteers or re-appoint incumbent members as their representatives on the Committee, perhaps without much consideration being given to their qualification to take on the role. One of our informants commented on the difficulties in ensuring that relevant information is presented to the Committee by saying: “AWE feed them information, if they don’t react to that information or respond or criticise it, then how is the company supposed to know what else to provide them with?”³⁶

Some members rely heavily on advice from the regulators for help in interpreting technical information, with one member saying: “It is the role of the regulators to judge the information provided by AWE and we have to trust the regulators”.³⁷ However, although regulators observing committee meetings do their best to provide objective and independent advice,³⁸ they nevertheless represent government organisations and work within a specific context and legal framework, making it difficult for them to offer significantly different points of view from those of AWE representatives. One regular attendee

³¹ Interview with informant 1.

³² Interview with informant 2.

³³ Interview with informant 3.

³⁴ Interview with informant 1.

³⁵ Response to Local Liaison Committee members’ questionnaire survey (question 5).

³⁶ Interview with informant 3.

³⁷ Interview with informant 1.

³⁸ Informant 5 told us that regulators spoke independently and were not advocates of AWE’s position. Assistance from the regulators in providing explanation to the committee was not intended to represent support for AWE’s views.

at meetings stated: “In my experience the LLC are more challenging to the regulators than to AWE. Certainly at recent meetings there have been quite a few challenges in the direction of NII in particular. There doesn't seem to be a lot of challenge to the information that AWE informs the meeting.”³⁹ This, together with the obstacles that prevent some Committee members from engaging fully with meetings, raises questions about how effective the Liaison Committee is at challenging and questioning AWE and holding the company to account.

4.1.4 Broadening the Committee's membership

Membership of the AWE Local Liaison Committee is limited exclusively to representatives of local government, and so information given to the committee is not subject to evaluation or questioning by independent voices from outside government bodies. A number of organisations with a legitimate interest in operations at AWE sites have no opportunity to express their views directly at Liaison Committee meetings. Even the government regulators responsible for AWE do not attend liaison committee meetings as participants, but are limited in their role to observers. Other nuclear sites allow regulators to sit alongside the site operator and play a full and active role at meetings.⁴⁰

The Nuclear Awareness Group (NAG), a locally based group which works to promote public awareness of nuclear safety and environmental issues and nuclear policies related to AWE in order to foster an informed debate on these issues,⁴¹ asked to join the AWE Local Liaison Committee in 2007. NAG was formed following Reading Borough Council's Community Inquiry into AWE, with the Council's support and with the aim of continuing discussion on the issues covered by the Inquiry,⁴² and has had a long history of dialogue with AWE and government agencies. In consultation with the Ministry of Defence, AWE plc turned down the request “on the grounds that under current arrangements the Committee is a forum for Local Authority representatives and does not currently go beyond that.”⁴³ Committee members agreed with this decision as “they felt that any local person had the opportunity to raise their concerns with AWE through their local council, whatever those concerns were. To have any single issue group on the LLC would add nothing to the LLC and could compromise its value.”⁴⁴

This is at odds with an expert view from the highly respected Royal Society, which stated in a recent report on the nuclear industry that “the importance of meaningful public and stakeholder engagement (PSE) in nuclear decision making must not be underestimated.”⁴⁵ The Royal Society stresses the importance of taking account of feedback from a wide range of stakeholders and taking an inclusive approach, where a diversity of views are encouraged and aired, to ensure that the institutions which facilitate stakeholder engagement with the nuclear industry command public confidence.

The inclusion of non-statutory stakeholders within the Local Liaison Committee would demonstrate a commitment to good practice community involvement by AWE. Membership of independent groups such as NAG is common among community liaison groups at other nuclear installations, where the

³⁹ Interview with informant 3.

⁴⁰ Interview with informant 3.

⁴¹ Nuclear Awareness Group website. <http://www.nuclearawarenessgroup.org.uk/about>. Accessed 4 August 2011.

⁴² Holyer, Kevin: 'Public Safety Issues for Local Authorities'. Presentation given at Nuclear Free Local Authorities English Forum seminar, Reading, October 2006. Available at: <http://www.nuclearawarenessgroup.org.uk/files/AWE%20Community%20Inquiry.ppt> Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁴³ Minutes of the 50th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting. 6 September 2007. Page 4.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the 50th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting. 6 September 2007. Page 4.

⁴⁵ Royal Society: 'Fuel cycle stewardship in a nuclear renaissance'. October 2011. Royal Society, London. Section 6.3.3, page 50. Available at: http://royalsociety.org/uploadedFiles/Royal_Society_Content/policy/projects/nuclear-non-proliferation/FuelCycleStewardshipNuclearRenaissance.pdf Accessed 28 October 2011. AWE played a prominent role in preparation of this report.

insight and experience they can bring is welcomed. Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority states that members should include local community groups with an interest in the site, including environmental groups.⁴⁶ A survey of local residents⁴⁷ conducted as part of this study showed that 66% of those surveyed felt that independent local organisations, such as residents associations and community groups, should be represented on the AWE Local Liaison Committee as well as local councils, suggesting that there is considerable local support for including independent but representative voices on the Committee.

Other stakeholder groups which have local knowledge, a legitimate interest in AWE's operations, and are in a position to provide valuable advice and a broader perspective to the Local Liaison Committee are also unrepresented. Trade unions, residents' groups, and business groups are represented on the stakeholder group for the Dounreay nuclear licensed site,⁴⁸ and emergency services and health organisations are represented on the Local Liaison Committee for the Devonport Royal Dockyard.⁴⁹ The Devonport committee also has membership from the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR), which plays a major role in regulating health and safety at defence nuclear sites. DNSR has a significant regulatory role at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, yet is absent from meetings of the AWE Local Liaison Committee. Not only does the lack of such voices on the AWE committee mean that their interests go unrepresented, but it also means that the committee does not have the opportunity to consider matters from the perspectives of those organisations.

4.1.5 The public and the press

AWE's Local Liaison Committee currently has no provision to allow members of the public to attend meetings or participate directly in the Committee's business. This is at odds with practice at other nuclear sites. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups states that the public should be able to attend meetings, ask questions, and join discussions with members.⁵⁰ At the Local Liaison Committee for the Devonport Royal Dockyard – like AWE, a defence nuclear site - “members of the public are welcome to attend and individuals can, in advance of the meeting, ask their representatives on the Committee to put particular questions to the Babcock and MoD personnel.”⁵¹ The time and place of meetings is advertised on the dockyard's website.

Members of the AWE committee sometimes defended the lack of access for members of the public with the comment that “anyone who wants questions asked of AWE can go to their local representative.”⁵² However, a survey of local residents showed that over 90% of those surveyed did not know who their representative on the Committee was, so it seems unrealistic to view this as an effective substitute to the right to attend meetings in person.

⁴⁶NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups'. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 4.1. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁴⁷The results of the survey are shown in Appendix C.

⁴⁸Dounreay Stakeholder Group website. <http://www.dounreaystakeholdergroup.org/members/> . Accessed 4 August 2011.

⁴⁹Devonport Local Liaison Committee members list. <http://www.babcock.co.uk/about-us/responsibilities/community/devonport-royal-dockyard/devonport-local-liaison-committee/> Accessed on 14 November 2011.

⁵⁰NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups'. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 4.4. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> . Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁵¹Devonport Royal Dockyard webpage. <http://www.babcock.co.uk/about-us/responsibilities/community/devonport-royal-dockyard/devonport-local-liaison-committee/> Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁵²Interview with informant 3.

Representatives of the press are also not allowed to attend meetings of the AWE Local Liaison Committee. Views differed on the reason for this. One interviewee told us that “AWE might not want to say things in confidence to the LLC members if the press were there - not that they ever have”,⁵³ whilst another was frank enough to state: “AWE is not reported particularly well in the media so I think they would be very reluctant to let press in on the basis they don’t think they would get good press”.⁵⁴

Again, this differs from the norm for most nuclear sites. Journalists can attend stakeholder group meetings at NDA sites and the NDA guidelines say that as well as being able to attend meetings, they should be able to ask questions.⁵⁵ Local newspapers enjoy wide circulation and act as an important source of information for many members of the public, and news reported in local media can be expected to reach a much larger audience than news reported via parish newsletters and through routes available to AWE and Local Liaison Committee members.

As “self appointed representatives of the people”,⁵⁶ local journalists would welcome the opportunity to report on Local Liaison Committee meetings at AWE. The business of stakeholder groups at other nuclear sites is regularly reported in local newspapers.⁵⁷ One local journalist told us: “The press are interested in attending, and since AWE spends public money we should be allowed to have some inkling of how that money is spent.”⁵⁸

This highlights an important point of principle. AWE is operated by a consortium of private companies on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, which retains a controlling interest in AWE’s operations. All AWE’s work is funded by the Ministry of Defence – including the work of the Local Liaison Committee. AWE is operated on behalf of a public body using public money and so it is reasonable for public to have the opportunity to raise questions about the Establishment’s work.

Allowing interested members of the public and the press to attend Liaison Committee meetings and ask questions in person would demonstrate that AWE is willing to engage directly and openly with members of the public and would help in challenging assertions that AWE as an institution is secretive and untrustworthy. Allowing media access would dramatically improve the level and quality of AWE’s communication with local communities and ease the task of Committee members in reporting back to those they represent.

⁵³ Interview with informant 1.

⁵⁴ Interview with informant 3.

⁵⁵ NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups’. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 4.5. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁵⁶ Comments from informant 4.

⁵⁷ For example, ‘Nuclear watchdog schedules ‘thorough review’’. Lowestoft Journal. 17 September 2010. Available at: http://www.lowestoftjournal.co.uk/news/nuclear_watchdog_schedules_thorough_review_1_652374?action=login. Accessed 4 August 2011.

⁵⁸ Comments from informant 4.

4.1.6 Representation: Scorecard and suggestions for action

Representation	
Good practice	Performance of AWE Local Liaison Committee
Members drawn from a diverse range of stakeholders.	Local councils are the only stakeholders represented as members of the committee.
Support to help members fulfil their role properly, including advice from external organisations and induction and capacity building to help guarantee quality of engagement by members.	Regulators attend each meeting as observers and occasional presentations from other government bodies. Induction process for new members.
Public able to attend meetings and ask questions.	Meetings not open to the public.
Press able to attend meetings and ask questions.	Meetings not open to the press.
Overall rating:	Red

AWE's efforts to engage effectively with local people through the Local Liaison Committee is hampered by the narrow range of interests represented on the Committee, the difficulties faced by some members in attending meetings and engaging with the Committee's business, and the practice of excluding members of the public and press from meetings. AWE falls far short of good practice in the nuclear industry in all of these respects and is missing out on the opportunity to benefit from the expertise, insight, and skills of many important stakeholders who do not attend Local Liaison Committee meetings.

Nuclear Information Service suggests the following steps to improve this state of affairs:

Membership of the committee should be opened to a wider range of local stakeholders. Broadening membership to include a range of stakeholders will provide the opportunity for particular groups which have concerns about AWE to discuss the issues which matter to them. AWE will benefit from hearing a wider range of views and being seen to be open and honest, and the committee itself will be seen as a representative and inclusive, rather than exclusive, body.

Meetings should be open to the public. The public would have the opportunity to speak directly to company representatives and receive first-hand information directly from AWE. Some site stakeholder groups, such as the one for the Sizewell nuclear site, hold meetings at a variety of off-site venues to allow the public to attend, and AWE could do likewise.

The press should be allowed to attend meetings. AWE would benefit from improved communication with a wide audience and the public would have easy access to information about important events at AWE sites via news reports.

4.2 Communication

Everyone involved with the AWE Local Liaison Committee agrees that one of its key roles is acting as a channel for communication between AWE and the public. The Committee represents only one element of AWE's company communications strategy, which also includes the 'AWE Connect' magazine which is distributed to local households, press work, booklets explaining emergency protection arrangements, and direct contact with members of the public in response to enquiries. However, it provides the principal route for dialogue – a two way process of question, answer, and discussion between AWE and local communities - giving it a role which is not easily duplicated by other communication channels.

The Committee's role as a two-way "information conduit"⁵⁹ depends almost entirely on the efforts of council representatives on the Committee to represent community views to AWE and feed back news from the company. How well is the Committee doing in this respect?

4.2.1 Reporting to the public

Committee members can feed back to those they represent in a variety of ways. In the internet age, this can be done in an effective way by posting information on a website.

The major local authorities represented on the AWE Local Liaison Committee (Basingstoke and Deane, Hampshire, Reading, West Berkshire, and Wokingham) all have sophisticated websites providing a wealth of information on a wide range of Council affairs. Website searches using the search engine on each of these sites for mentions of the "Atomic Weapons Establishment" and "AWE" generated links to information about planning matters and emergency procedures, but nothing about the AWE Local Liaison Committee.⁶⁰ Further searches indicated no evidence to show that council representatives on the Liaison Committee reported back about the Committee's affairs to any council or committee meetings, although one of Reading Borough Council's representatives on the Liaison Committee regularly provided a detailed account of meetings on his personal blog site.⁶¹

The smaller parish councils, which work at a much more local level, can provide feedback via their meetings or through parish newsletters. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the number of times AWE and the Local Liaison Committee are mentioned in the minutes of parish council meetings which took place during 2010 for a random selection of parishes represented on the Committee.

Parish	AWE mentioned	LLC mentioned	Average public attendance
Aldermaston	11	3	3
Pangbourne	4	2	Not stated
Shinfield	5	5	1
Stratfield Mortimer	5	3	1
Sulhamstead	0	0	Not stated

Table 1. Number of times AWE and the Local Liaison Committee were mentioned in minutes of parish councils during 2010, and numbers of members of the public attending meetings.⁶²

The table shows that, although there appears to have been regular discussion of issues relating to AWE, particularly at Aldermaston Parish Council meetings, the numbers of members of the public attending these meetings was very low. It is unlikely that significant numbers of the public took the trouble to read the minutes of these meetings. Discussion of Liaison Committee matters at parish council meetings is not, therefore, an effective way of providing feedback from the Committee to the public.

Parish newsletters and magazines provide a better opportunity to provide feedback to the local community. The Aldermaston Parish Newsletter provides a summary account of LLC meetings, usually

⁵⁹ Letter from Kate Ingram, Defence Equipment and Support Policy Secretariat Subs 2, to Peter Burt. 26 November 2007. Reference 20071106_TO_Burt. Reproduced at Appendix A, Part 1.

⁶⁰ Searches conducted using the site search engines at www.basingstoke.gov.uk, www.hampshire.gov.uk, www.reading.gov.uk, www.westberks.gov.uk, and www.wokingham.gov.uk on 5 August 2011.

⁶¹ Richard Willis's Blog. See, for example, 'AWE Aldermaston Liaison Committee Meeting – March 2010'. <http://richardwillisuk.wordpress.com/2010/03/26/awe-aldermaston-liaison-committee-meeting-march-2010/> Accessed 5 August 2011.

⁶² Many of the websites for parish councils represented on the AWE Local Liaison Committee do not have full archives of parish minutes. The analysis was therefore limited to those that do.

published a few weeks after a meeting has taken place, and a number of local residents spoke highly of the feedback they received via this route during door-to-door survey work carried out as part of this study. However, it is not clear whether this practice is repeated in other parishes as copies of newsletters are not consistently archived on parish websites.

Most councils seem to rely on AWE to publish minutes of Local Liaison Committee meetings and promote the Committee's work. Minutes of committee meetings are posted on the AWE website, but there is often a considerable delay (around 3 months and sometimes longer) in posting minutes after a meeting has taken place. Minutes are not easy to locate from the AWE website home page, being located in a sub-section of the website on corporate sustainability with no direct signpost from the front page. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority again specifies good practice in this respect, stressing the need for prompt circulation and publication of minutes and preparation of a summary that can be used to help committee members in feeding back,⁶³ and providing Site Stakeholder Groups representing its sites with their own dedicated web page.⁶⁴

AWE does, of course, conduct its own independent communication with local residents, in particular through its community magazine 'AWE Connect'. Encouragingly, the survey of local residents showed that a majority thought that communication between AWE and local residents was adequate (Appendix C). However, the survey also indicated that the Local Liaison Committee, and especially individual members of the committee, had a lower profile. Views of residents on the standard of communication by the Committee itself were not sought.

4.2.2 Seeking views from the public

Half the committee members who responded to our survey said they sought feedback from their constituents to raise at Liaison Committee meetings. Comments made by Committee members suggest that they take this issue seriously, although pressures of time and work mean that, although members are willing to raise matters brought to their attention to the Liaison Committee, it is harder for them to pro-actively seek views from the communities they represent.

⁶³NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups'. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 7.1. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁶⁴See, for example, the website for the Oldbury Power Station Site Stakeholder Group at <http://www.sitestakeholdergroups.org.uk/oldbury/> . Accessed 5 August 2011.

4.2.3 Communication: Scorecard and suggestions for action

Communication	
Good practice	Performance of AWE Local Liaison Committee
Minutes, key points from meetings, and papers circulated and published promptly by secretariat to the group.	Minutes prepared and published on AWE website. Key points and presentations from meetings circulated to members.
Group has its own website.	No independent website.
Overall rating:	Amber

Although many Local Liaison Committee members use traditional council routes for communicating about the Committee's business, these routes do not lend themselves particularly well to communication with a wide audience. It is not always easy for members of the public to find out what has happened at Committee meetings from the minutes.

The following steps would help in making improvements:

Create a dedicated website for the Committee. Nowadays the internet is the preferred route which many people use to find out information about a particular issue. AWE's company website does little to highlight the work of the Local Liaison Committee or AWE's other community engagement work, and what little information that is there is hard to find. Site Stakeholder Groups at other nuclear sites⁶⁵ have their own dedicated websites which explain the Group's role, provide information about members, meetings and governance, and act as a library for minutes of meetings and other documents relating to the group, including reports from regulators.⁶⁶ There are obvious benefits in setting up a similar website for the AWE Local Liaison Committee.

Make minutes of meetings more accessible. Minutes from Committee meetings are not always published in a timely fashion and would be easier to access if they were signposted more clearly on the AWE website and linked from local council websites.

Standardise feedback. It is clear that some Councils do a better job in providing feedback from Committee meetings to local residents than others. Each community represented at the Local Liaison Committee should be able to receive timely, open and accessible feedback on what has been discussed at meetings. AWE can help this process by publishing a short summary of key points from the meeting to the press and in their own local newsletter. Committee members will, of course, be able to supplement this by expressing their own views.

Provide modest resources to support the development of communication work. The additional workload needed to address these suggestions will require additional funding, and a more versatile and comprehensive secretarial service for the Local Liaison Committee may help oil the wheels in developing communication work. The NDA is able to support its site stakeholder groups by providing funding to help them improve their effectiveness, and the Ministry of Defence should provide similar funds to support the development of local liaison committees at its nuclear sites.

4.3 Transparency

AWE's Local Liaison Committee was originally formed following calls to increase the transparency of

⁶⁵ Examples include the website for the Dounreay Stakeholder Group (<http://www.dounreaystakeholdergroup.org/>) and the Hinkley Stakeholder Group (<http://www.sitestakeholdergroups.org.uk/hinkley/>). Websites accessed 5 August 2011.

⁶⁶ See, for example, the Environment Agency report to the Sizewell Site Stakeholder Group for July – September 2011 online at <http://www.sitestakeholdergroups.org.uk/sizewell/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=2737> (Accessed 28 August 2011).

operations at AWE sites, particularly in relation to safety and environmental matters. Over the years the Committee has played an important role and has helped to open up discussion about AWE, but has it kept up with modern demands for increased transparency and openness about its own work?

4.3.1 Elected representatives?

AWE⁶⁷ and the Ministry of Defence⁶⁸ both take pains to stress that the Local Liaison Committee is a forum for “local elected representatives”, and this rationale has been used to prevent other interest groups from joining the Committee (see section 3.1.4 above). However, it is not strictly accurate to describe all members of the Committee as “elected representatives”.

Although members of the five upper tier councils and Tadley Town Council were elected in contested elections, of the 14 parishes in West Berkshire District which are represented on the Local Liaison Committee, only three held contested elections during the last round of local parish elections on 5 May 2011.⁶⁹ Many of the members of these parish councils have not faced competitive elections for several years, if ever.

One of the ‘parish councils’ represented on the Local Liaison Committee, Wasing, is not classed as a parish council by West Berkshire Council,⁷⁰ but merely a parish meeting,⁷¹ which does not have council members elected under the terms of the Local Government Act 1972. Swallowfield Parish Council’s representative on the Local Liaison Committee was not at the time of writing a member of the parish committee.⁷²

The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme, promoted by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association, sets minimum standards for parish and town councils in order to ensure that they are run in a professional way and can claim an electoral mandate.⁷³ Of the 17 parish and town councils which regularly attend the AWE Local Liaison Committee, only two (Tadley Town and Silchester Parish) had been awarded Quality status at the time of writing.⁷⁴

Although members of parish councils play an officially recognised and highly valuable role in managing community affairs, it is erroneous to assume that they are always “elected representatives” of their community. The claim of many parish councils to represent a community is no more or less valid than the claims of properly constituted independent organisations such as residents’ associations and community groups.

⁶⁷ Local Liaison Committee. AWE website. http://www.awe.co.uk/aboutus/Local_Liaison_Committee_b1478.html. Accessed 5 August 2011.

⁶⁸ Letter from Baroness Ann Taylor, Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, to Robert Wilson MP. 28 November 2007. Reference D/Min(DES)AT MC05994/2007.

⁶⁹ Results of elections of Parish Councillors, 5th May 2011. West Berkshire Council. Available at: <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=27612> Accessed 10 August 2011.

⁷⁰ Wasing Parish Meeting webpage on West Berkshire Council website. <http://decisionmaking.westberks.gov.uk/mgParishCouncilDetails.aspx?ID=207&LS=1> Accessed 5 August 2011.

⁷¹ Parish meetings differ from parish councils in that they are not corporate bodies. They exist to discuss the affairs of the local community and do not have the full range of powers of parish councils except where express powers enable them to exercise certain functions. Unlike parish councils, parish meetings do not elect council members under the terms of the Local Government Act 1972.

⁷² Response to questionnaire survey (question 1).

⁷³ ‘Quality Status’. National Association of Local Councils website. http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Toolkits/Quality_Status.aspx Accessed 5 August 2011.

⁷⁴ ‘Quality Town and Parishes as at 29 June 2011.’ Spreadsheet published by National Association of Local Councils. Available at: <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Document/Download.aspx?uid=dfbd1cbc-b6ce-4569-b59f-91a6d1fd23bd> Accessed 10 August 2011.

4.3.2 Access to meetings

Formal meetings of the Local Liaison Committee are always held on one of AWE's two sites in West Berkshire. Both sites have a high security status and access to them is strictly controlled, with Committee members having to receive advance security clearance before being allowed to enter the site. The "sometimes arduous check-in process" does not make it easy for Committee members to attend meetings,⁷⁵ and the arrangements prevent ordinary members of the public from attending and create the impression that Liaison Committee meetings are secretive briefings controlled by AWE, rather than open meetings grounded in the community to which all are welcome. The NDA guidelines on Site Stakeholder Committees state that meetings should be held in places which are easily accessible to members of the public.⁷⁶ For example, the Chapelcross stakeholder group holds its meetings in the local council chambers⁷⁷ whilst the Hunterston group meets in a local hotel.⁷⁸

On-site AWE Local Liaison Committee meetings benefit from the opportunity for members to be shown around facilities at the site, but such visits could still take place if the committee met offsite – for example, at the Oak Ridge nuclear weapons site in the USA secure bus trips have been organised to allow visitors to tour certain parts of the site.⁷⁹

4.3.3 Transparency: Scorecard and suggestions for action

Transparency	
Good practice	Performance of AWE Local Liaison Committee
Meetings should be advertised, accessible, and open to the public.	Meetings not advertised and not open to the public.
Meetings should take place regularly.	Meetings take place four times each year.
Overall rating:	Amber

Holding meetings behind the steel gates and armed police at the AWE sites is not the way to demonstrate that the Local Liaison Committee is an open and transparent forum, and neither is exaggerating the nature of the electoral mandate that the committee has.

The following steps would help in improving the transparency of the committee's work:

Hold meetings offsite. Liaison with local communities would be aided by AWE managers visiting communities and listening to the views of residents at Liaison Committee meetings – and other public engagement meetings – held offsite.

Eliminate security clearance as a condition for attending meetings. As all business of the Local Liaison Committee relates to unclassified matters, there should be no need for members to submit to a security clearance process if meetings are held offsite. If security concerns should ever prove to be a genuine issue, a small number of members could be security cleared to act on behalf of the wider committee in closed discussion on sensitive issues.

⁷⁵ Interview with informant 2.

⁷⁶ NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups'. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 8.1. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁷⁷ Chapelcross Site Stakeholder Group website. <http://www.sitestakeholdergroups.org.uk/chapelcross/>. Accessed 6 August 2011.

⁷⁸ Hunterston Site stakeholder Group website. <http://www.sitestakeholdergroups.org.uk/hunterston/>. Accessed 6 August 2011.

⁷⁹ 'DOE's summer bus tours in Oak Ridge, June 6-Sept. 2'. Frank Munger's Atomic City Underground Blog. 31 May 2011. <http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2011/05/does-summer-bus-tours-in-oak-r.html> Accessed 6 August 2011.

4.4 Governance

Good governance, with decision-making procedures that are seen to be fair and open, is an important factor determining the legitimacy of any organisation. AWE's Local Liaison Committee was established on a relatively informal basis, and operates on the basis of unwritten customs and practices which have evolved slowly over many years. Are these adequate to demonstrate the Committee's independence and its credentials as a representative of local people?

4.4.1 The committee's status

Unlike site stakeholder groups at other UK nuclear sites, AWE's Local Liaison Committee has no formal written constitution or code of conduct for members.⁸⁰ The sole governance document for the Committee is a relatively general set of Terms of Reference which set out the purpose, functions, and membership of the committee (see Appendix A, part 1). In contrast, the NDA has insisted that each of its site stakeholder groups develops and publishes a constitution and code of conduct that reflect both the NDA's needs and the needs of local stakeholders. Before adoption, the constitution for each stakeholder group was submitted to the NDA for scrutiny to ensure that it aligned with NDA guidelines.⁸¹

The loose scope of the Terms of Reference for AWE's Local Liaison Committee are doubtless a factor in the lack of clarity among members about the role of the Committee (section 1.2 above), with some of those with whom we discussed the work of the Committee seemingly unaware that Terms of Reference for the Committee even existed.⁸²

4.4.2 Organisation of meetings

The agenda for Local Liaison Committee meetings is set by AWE staff and follows a standard format, with little information given to members in advance on specific issues that will be raised by the company at meetings, although questionnaire respondents said that AWE was open to adding items to meeting agendas if asked to do so. At NDA Site Stakeholder Group meetings, preparation of an agenda for meetings is the responsibility of the groups' chair, who, unlike the chair of the AWE Local Liaison Committee, is independent from the site operator, formally elected by committee members, and reappointed on a regular basis.⁸³

⁸⁰ Letter from Kate Ingram, Defence Equipment and Support Policy Secretariat Subs 2, to Peter Burt. 26 November 2007. Reference 20071106_TO_Burt. Reproduced at Appendix A, Part 1.

⁸¹ NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups'. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 3.1. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁸² Interview with informant 2.

⁸³ NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups'. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 5.1. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2011.

4.4.3 Governance: Scorecard and suggestions for action

Governance	
Good practice	Performance of AWE Local Liaison Committee
Group has a constitution and code of conduct.	Local Liaison Committee has terms of reference but no constitution or code of conduct.
The Chair of the group should be independent of the site operator and elected by members.	Chair is a representative of the site operator and unelected.
The work of the group should be reviewed at least every five years.	No regular formal review of the Local Liaison Committee's performance.
Secretariat support for administering meetings effectively.	Secretariat support provided by AWE.
Overall rating:	Red

The AWE Local Liaison Committee has been operating for approaching 20 years with no review of its governance arrangements over this period. Now is an appropriate time for the Committee to review these arrangements, address shortfalls, and bring them up-to-date to meet modern standards.

The following steps would help in demonstrating that the Committee is a well governed and appropriately organised body:

Adopt a formal constitution: A formal constitution defining the scope of the Local Liaison Committee's role, providing guidance on how it should be run, and outlining the rights and responsibilities of committee members, the public, and the company would help the Committee establish a clearer sense of purpose, allow the public to gauge its effectiveness, and help ensure consistent representation for communities in the vicinity of AWE sites. For example, the NDA guidance on Site Stakeholder Committees specifies the roles members should play: this includes a responsibility to formally update those they represent after every meeting either verbally or in writing.⁸⁴

Adopt a code of conduct for members: Local councils and community groups in the area close to AWE benefit considerably⁸⁵ from finance provided by AWE through section 106 developer contributions⁸⁶ and corporate donations. A code of conduct, based around the seven principles of public life promoted by the Committee on Standards in Public Life⁸⁷ would help prevent potential conflicts of interest involving Local Liaison Committee members in this and other respects.

⁸⁴ NDA Guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups'. Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Reference LAR3.0, 27 March 2009. Paragraph 4.6. Available at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/documents/upload/LAR3-Guidance-for-Site-Stakeholder-Groups-April-2009.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2011.

⁸⁵ A total of £1,883,895 was paid by AWE to local authorities as section 106 developer contributions over the period 2005-2010 and a total of £12,050 in discretionary payments to Hampshire County Council and West Berkshire council, mainly for local schools. Letter from Mary McKinnell, Information Requests Case Officer, to Steve Hendry, 20 October 2010.

⁸⁶ Section 106 planning obligations were the subject of considerable attention in the Third Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The Committee considered a number of criticisms of arrangements for making planning obligations and concluded that these criticisms were "valid", and made a number of recommendations to improve the transparency of such arrangements. 'Standards in Public Life: Standards of Conduct in Local Government in England, Scotland, and Wales.' Third Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. July 1997. Cm 3702-1. Paragraphs 302 – 320 77-80. Available at http://www.public-standards.org.uk/OurWork/3rd_report.html. Accessed 7 November 2011.

⁸⁷ <http://www.public-standards.org.uk/>. Accessed 21 September 2011.

Elect an independent chair: To help ensure that AWE's role does not extend beyond informing and advising the Committee, the chair should be an independent member of the committee (not a member of AWE staff) elected by members on a regular basis. Agendas for meetings should be set by the chair – perhaps based on a regular format - with members given an opportunity to request adjustments and additions prior to meetings.



5. Conclusions

AWE considers itself to be at the cutting edge of good practice and forward thinking in the UK nuclear industry. A recent edition of AWE's community newsletter, 'Connect', makes much of the company's commitment to quality in its work. One article in the newsletter is headlined 'Total quality is crucial to our strategy', whilst another states that the company aims to continuously improve in its work.⁸⁸

However, when it comes to engagement with the people and communities who are directly or potentially affected by its work, AWE has been marking time since the Local Liaison Committee was established in 1993. The company is now lagging well behind other nuclear site operators in this respect, and is being held back by a Local Liaison Committee which is unsure of its role, unrepresentative of the full range of local stakeholders, and which fails to communicate effectively with many local residents. AWE's weak record on openness and transparency reflects badly on the nuclear sector as a whole and undermines efforts by regulators and industry associations to improve perceptions of the industry. More importantly, by conducting its primary community liaison efforts behind the closed gates of its sites, AWE's management are missing important opportunities to learn from meaningful dialogue with local people. If the company seeks to adopt the highest standards in everything it does except the way it handles its relationships with local communities then it is sending out an unmistakable signal – local people and their views do not matter to us.



Some members of the AWE Local Liaison Committee appear to take the view that the LLC should not be subject to the same standards of openness as corresponding groups at other nuclear sites.⁸⁹ They consider that AWE's military role in developing nuclear weapons means that the site has a different status and role to civil nuclear sites. As a result, site operators at AWE and other military nuclear sites may not be able to be as free with information as the operators of civil nuclear power stations, and there is a risk that the Committee may become a platform for those driven by moral or political interests rather than local interests.

Nuclear Information Service does not share this view. The purpose of the Local Liaison Committee is to allow communication between AWE and its stakeholders. It is in the site operator's interests to do this regardless of the nature of the work that is undertaken at AWE sites. From the perspective of local people, the communities around Aldermaston and Burghfield area do not have any less of a right

⁸⁸ 'Assessors impressed by Burghfield site exercise'. Connect, Issue 9, Summer 2011.

⁸⁹ Comments from informant 1.

to know about issues which may affect their way of life than, for example, people living close to the Hinkley Point or Sizewell nuclear power stations.

In the post 9-11 context, security issues relating to civil nuclear power plants have become as important as those relating to Ministry of Defence nuclear sites, and in any event, the AWE Local Liaison Committee only has a brief to deal with unclassified matters. Matters dealt with by the Committee, such as new building development, traffic nuisance, and environmental monitoring can by no stretch of the imagination be regarded as security sensitive. In other cases, such as emergency planning arrangements, the principal reason for discussing such matters at LLC meetings is to ensure that there is wide understanding about the details and principles underpinning them, and it would be self-defeating to withhold information on such matters.

There is no evidence to support the claim that the work of the Committee would be hijacked by any particular interest group if it took a more open approach. Nuclear power is an issue which is every bit as emotive and controversial as nuclear weapons, yet site stakeholder committees at nuclear power stations include representatives from environmental groups among their members and take questions from campaigners without any impact on their effectiveness. The whole purpose of liaison committees at nuclear sites is to communicate with a range of interest groups and look at matters from a variety of viewpoints, and committees that have worked with those who are sceptical about nuclear issues have, if anything, benefited from the diverse input of opinions and ideas that this brings.

The underlying issue here is whether widely accepted principles of local political empowerment, accountability and transparency of public bodies should apply to the AWE Local Liaison Committee. Those who say that they should are not being hostile to AWE or complacent about security, but pro-democracy and pro-public accountability.

Committee members themselves must take a lead in making any improvements. One attendee who we interviewed told us: "AWE quite often ask the members, ask the question how its performing, whether or not people think it should be changed, whether or not the make up of the group should be changed. There are usually discussions about what this might mean, which we've discussed already, and the members pretty much unanimously always say no, we're happy with the form as it stands now".⁹⁰ By blocking attempts to reform the committee, members are not only holding AWE back from improving its performance but are helping to foster the impression that the Local Liaison Committee is their own exclusive group, rather than an inclusive and open body representing all local interests. This is detrimental to the reputation of AWE, excludes potentially valuable community input, and creates an atmosphere of scepticism by feeding suspicion that the committee's activities do not match the interests of local people.

The Office for Nuclear Regulation has highlighted the problems which arose from poor communication and a lack of trust in the nuclear industry following the Fukushima nuclear accident. Following the accident, the UK government asked Dr Mike Weightman, head of the Office for Nuclear Regulation, to examine the circumstances of the Fukushima accident to see what lessons could be learnt to enhance the safety of the UK nuclear industry. Dr Weightman's report specifically recommended that further steps should be made to increase openness and transparency in the industry, stating: "Both the UK nuclear industry and ONR should consider ways of enhancing the drive to ensure more open, transparent and trusted communications, and relationships, with the public and other stakeholders."⁹¹

⁹⁰ Interview with informant 3.

⁹¹ 'Japanese earthquake and tsunami: Implications for the UK Nuclear Industry. Final Report'. HM Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations, September 2011. Page (x), Recommendation IR-4. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/> Accessed 14 November 2011.

ONR is clear that more open, transparent and trusted communication is needed and that relationships with the public and other stakeholders must be improved. A challenge has been laid down for AWE and its Local Liaison Committee: open the gates and start speaking with local people.

5.1 Recommendations

As well as the specific recommendations listed in each section of the report above, NIS considers that the following broader, high-level actions should be taken by AWE and agencies with a role to play in promoting open and transparent communication within the nuclear industry.

The **Office for Nuclear Regulation** should publish a mandatory code of practice for the conduct of Local Liaison Committees and Site Stakeholder Groups at nuclear licensed sites. These should be modelled on the NDA's existing guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups. Following the introduction of the code of practice, sites which do not meet the specified standards should have a period of one year to introduce the necessary improvements.

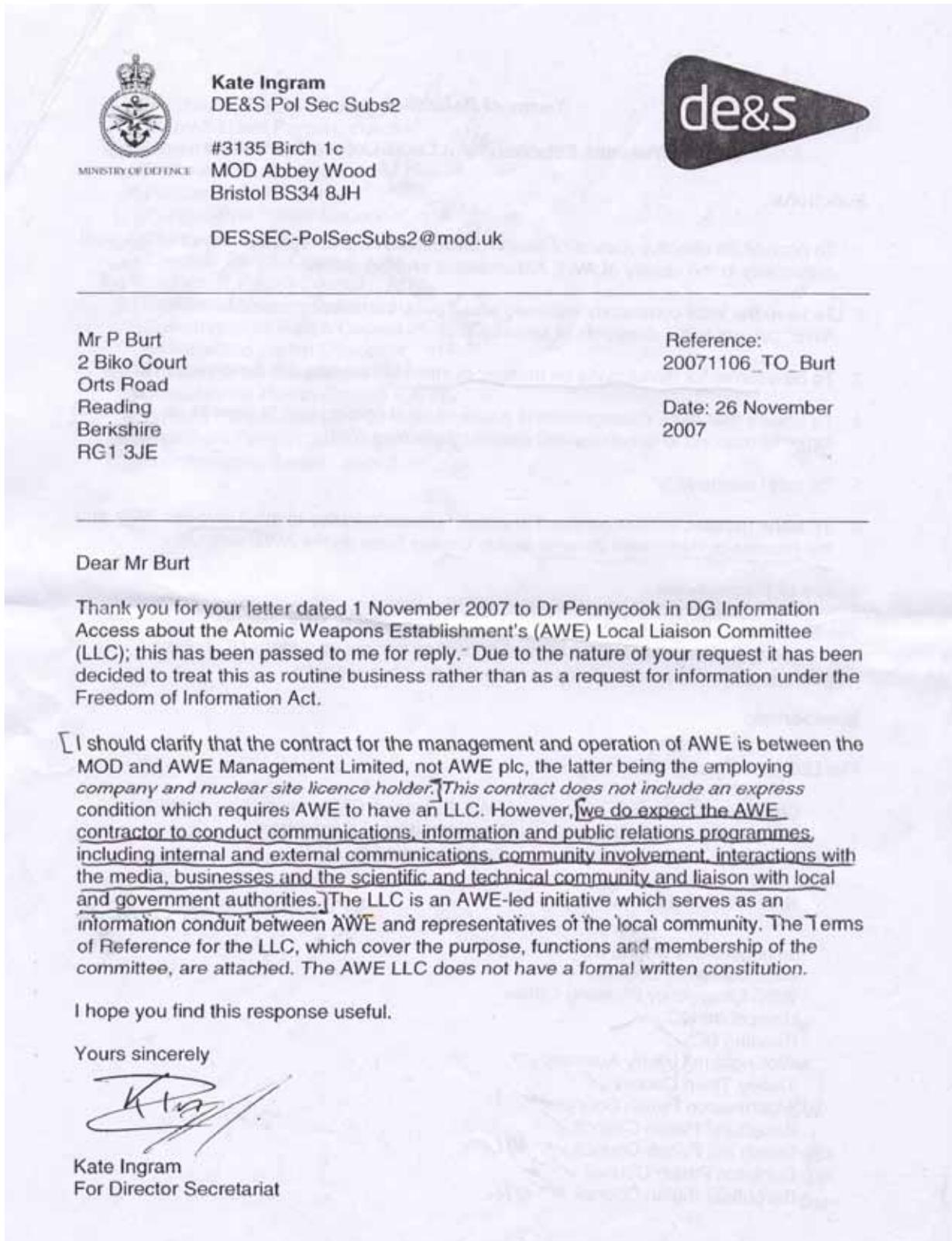
The **Atomic Weapons Establishment** should clearly indicate that it wishes to adopt best practice in community engagement and that it will adopt standards which are at least as good as the current NDA guidance for Site Stakeholder Groups. An experienced stakeholder engagement consultant should be engaged to review the existing arrangements and to work with AWE, the committee, and other stakeholders to help in meeting these standards. A firm timetable should be set for reform of the Local Liaison Committee.

The **Ministry of Defence** should indicate as departmental policy that it expects the highest standards of stakeholder engagement from operators of defence nuclear sites, and that these standards will be at least as good as those in the civil nuclear industry. It should provide funding to support development of the role of local liaison committees at its nuclear sites so that they meet these standards.

Nuclear Information Service is willing to assist each agency in achieving these recommendations in the light of the knowledge and experience we have gained in undertaking this study and our work on stakeholder engagement in the nuclear industry.

Appendix A

A.1.1. Terms of Reference for the Atomic Weapons Establishment Local Liaison Committee.⁹²



⁹²Letter annotations made by Nuclear Information Service

Terms of Reference

Atomic Weapons Establishment Local Liaison Committee

Functions

1. To provide an effective means of liaison between AWE and representatives of the local community in the vicinity of AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield.
2. [To keep the local community informed about past, current and future operations of AWE, subject to the demands of security.]
3. To be a forum for discussions on matters of interest including the Emergency Plans.
4. To ensure that AWE management is aware of local opinion and to provide an additional forum to respond to questions and issues concerning AWE.
5. To meet quarterly.
6. To issue minutes to members and to circulate those minutes to local libraries, MPs and the Houses of Parliament libraries and to display them on the AWE web site.

Scope of Discussions

The Committee shall be free to discuss matters of interest to AWE and the local community. All members shall be entitled to decline to discuss a matter if, in their judgement, issues of confidentiality or national security so require.

Membership

The LLC membership shall comprise:

Chairman:	AWE Executive Chairman or his nominee
Community Liaison Officer:	Nominated by LLC members
Secretary:	To be provided by AWE

Representatives from:

- Basingstoke & Deane BC ✓
- West Berkshire Council ✓ -
- WBC Emergency Planning Officer
- Hampshire CC ✓ -
- Reading BC ✓
- Wokingham Unitary Authority ✓
- Tadley Town Council ✓
- WB Aldermaston Parish Council ✓ 1
- WB Baughurst Parish Council ✓
- WB Beech Hill Parish Council ✓ no n/c
- WB Brimpton Parish Council ✓ 2 n/c
- WB Burghfield Parish Council ✓ 2 n/c

23/

- w/h Holybrook Parish Council no N/C
 - Mapledurham Parish Council ✓
 - B2P Mortimer W.E. Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - w/h Padworth Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - w/h Pamber Parish Council ✓ ~~N/C~~
 - w/h Pangbourne Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - v/h Purley-on-Thames Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - w/h Shinfield Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - B2P Silchester Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - w/h Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council ✓ 3
 - w/h Sulhampstead Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - Swallowfield Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - w/h Theale Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - w/h Upton Nervet Parish Council ✓ N/C
 - Wasing Parish Council ✓
 - v/h Wokefield Parish Council no N/A
 - w/h Woolhampton Parish Council no N/C
- 29



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A.1.2. Letter from AWE regarding the work of the Local Liaison Committee

Reply to: F161.2
Direct Dial: 0118 98 57310
Direct Fax: 0118 982 4500
Ref: MD/13/11



Mr P Burt
Nuclear Information Service
Ibex House
85 Southampton Street
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 2QU

Aldermaston • Reading
Berkshire • RG7 4PR
Tel 0118 981 4111

10 March 2011

Dear Mr Burt

Thank you for your letter of 8 February, and the subsequent follow-up message received yesterday from your colleague Mr Hendry, explaining your project regarding the AWE Local Liaison Committee. I am also aware of the questionnaire you have sent to committee members.

The LLC provides an effective forum through which local authority representatives meet on a regular basis with members of the AWE senior management team. It gives elected representatives an opportunity to monitor the work of AWE, to ask questions and visit some of our projects. Members report back to their councils and local communities. We believe it works well and this view is reflected by LLC members on the regular occasions when we seek their feedback.

Local authorities select their own representatives and AWE provides induction training to help familiarise members with the complex nature of our operations. Meetings are based around comprehensive presentations on AWE topics including planning, construction, environment, and health and safety issues. Unclassified presentations are also given to explain the main areas of our operations in support of the UK deterrent.

While the Company sets the agenda, we always endeavour to include any topic requested by LLC members. We go to great lengths, within the constraints of national security, to answer any questions and show members progress with developments on our sites.

I hope the above information is helpful. While I wish you well with your project, I do not believe an interview would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Jupp
Managing Director

Appendix B

Results of survey of Local Liaison Committee members

A survey questionnaire was sent by email to 21 Local Liaison Committee members either directly or via the Council Clerk at the end of January 2011. One month was allowed for responses to be received, with a follow-up reminder sent two weeks after the questionnaire was sent out. Ten replies were received, representing a response rate of 48%, and the answers given are shown below.

Question 1

How is your AWE Liaison Committee representative selected?

- » A volunteer from the Parish Council.
- » The council is asked if anybody would like to take the role on then it is put to the council for a vote.
- » Volunteer.
- » Historically within our small parish council it has been the Chairman or Vice Chairman who has attended the Committee meetings. I, as Vice Chairman, was selected as to continue in this manner.
- » Best person for Job.
- » At the annual meeting held every year in May the three with the most votes get in.
- » When the vacancy arose I had recently ceased to be a member of the PC. They asked me to volunteer, which I did, and I have represented SPC since 2000.
- » The council members are asked if anyone would like to take on the responsibility of being the local liaison committee member. It is down to who is prepared to volunteer for the job. As I am familiar with the organisation now having been involved for the past 4-5 years, and have the security clearance, I have offered to continue as liaison member at least until May when the parish councillors come up for re-election. I would then suggest that I remain as liaison member whilst a new recruit undergoes the security vetting, which can take some time, and then would be able to take them to their first meeting to show where you go, where you park and introduce them to staff as my replacement. This was not done with me and it was a bit like going in at the deep end.
- » Appointed by Leader of Council.
- » Chiefly to ensure representation of relevant wards.



Question 2

Has AWE provided any guidance or advice on who might be an appropriate council representative on the committee? If yes, please give details.

Yes	0
No	6
Don't know	4

Question 3

Do you consider yourself qualified to pass critical judgement on the information given to you by AWE?
What are the reasons for your answer?

Yes	8
No	0
No response	2

- » Because I am able to judge, after listening to comments from other representatives of Parish Councils, etc at the Liaison meetings.
- » Yes I believe I am qualified to pass judgement on community issues and the impact of AWE on the community, however on AWE specifically then probably not.
- » Yes – I have a degree in Engineering Science with a specialism in Thermodynamics and am a qualified Chartered Accountant. The information we are given is presented in ‘layman’s terms’ and is easily comprehensible.
- » I have 20+ years experience in Nuclear Safety, Construction, Research and Operations and the impacts it has on staff, the environment, processes and procedures.
- » Only on some things they try and bring reports down to a level we all can understand.
- » Yes. Personally I do not have the technical knowledge to challenge AWE management’s technical statements. However, the committee contains some members who do have relevant knowledge, not necessarily at the cutting edge. Further more the meetings are attended by experts from The Environment Agency and The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, who would make any necessary challenges. In addition, the minutes are published and interested members of the public could also challenge anything they wishes to. At a lower technical level we are furnished with regular reports on accidents, emission levels, sickness absence rates etc., from which we would discern any worrying trends. The frequency with which AWE receives safety awards from nationally reputable bodies supports their claim to be very highly respected in the scientific community.
- » Only as a member of the public who lives in the area and represents other residents of that area. I have no qualifications relevant to the Nuclear Industry, but there are issues that concern local residents and I feel that it is my role to pass these concerns on to AWE and also to disseminate any relevant information from AWE back to the residents. We are on the fringe of the area affected by AWE, but have had the Pangbourne Pipeline as an area of concern that affects us locally.
- » Yes. Have undertaken civilian radiological protection training courses in the past, regular Health and Safety training and have 30 years experience as a senior RAF officer. As the Executive Member Environment for West Berkshire Council I was responsible for the Council’s civil contingency and emergency planning.
- » I feel as qualified to pass judgement on planning and related issues concerning AWE as on similar issues relating to other individuals / organisations.

Question 4

Who sets the agenda for the Liaison Committee meetings and to what extent are council representatives involved in the process?

- » AWE plus anything put forward from Liaison.

- » AWE set the agenda but it often contains issues that have been raised in the previous committee meetings by the Liaison reps.
- » The agenda is set by the AWE but they are always happy to add items to the agenda for the next meeting at the request of the Liaison Committee.
- » AWE advise the committee members of the proposed meeting agenda 6+ weeks before the scheduled meeting. Committee members have the opportunity to have items added or deleted from the agenda.
- » AWE but LLC members can and do propose agenda items.
- » Normally it's a straight forward agenda however we can ask for something to be put on it, also items we may discuss at a meeting we can ask for it to be put on a latter agenda.
- » AWE management, with LLC members having the opportunity to raise matters at the draft agenda stage, or during meetings, or to have them investigated and reported on at a subsequent meeting.
- » The agenda would seem to be set by AWE. Having said that they will bring things onto the agenda that have been raised as concerns by members of the committee.
- » Council representatives are free to ask whatever questions they wish during meetings and can request briefings on specific subjects. Regulators are are times present at meetings.
- » The agenda is largely set by AWE but they usually respond positively to request for local issues to be on the agenda.

Question 5

How would you rate the clarity of presentations given by AWE on Health and Safety issues?

Clear	7
Somewhat clear	3
Neither clear nor unclear	0
Somewhat unclear	0
Unclear	0

- » Better now we are going to get some definitions of the abbreviations.
- » Clear
- » Clear YES and we can always ask for clarification.
- » But there is a lot of use of acronyms which can be difficult to follow sometimes when you are not working in that industry the whole time.
- » Briefings are very clear and questions are answered fully.

Question 6

Have any AWE representatives officially visited your council, given public presentations, or been available to answer questions? If so, when was the most recent visit and what issues were discussed?

Yes	5
No	5

Councils for which a 'yes' reply was received were:

- » Pangbourne Parish Council
- » Tadley Town Council
- » Wasing Parish
- » West Berkshire Council (responses received from two members)

Answers included:

- » Not that I know of.
- » They have not visited but have responded very adequately to detailed questions raised by letter in September 2010 relating to the removal of the section of the Pangbourne Pipeline across the Sulham Brook. They have offered to visit if requested.
- » They have not presented at our own council meeting, however they present regularly at local liaison meetings which is attended by at least two of our committee members.
- » Hydrus planning application proposals and impact on the Parish.
- » They have not been asked, but would be very willing to do so. Swallowfield Parish is not an immediate neighbour of AWE: those parishes which have quite frequent contacts.
- » Dr Jupp visited last April to present us with a donation towards some landscaping. I have also had contact with AWE representatives in October last year when part of the Pangbourne Pipeline was being removed. Some of the men who had been working on the site also contacted me subsequently to inform me of some dumped asbestos that they had come across when they were doing a routine check in the area. At our liaison meetings we are often told that members of AWE are available and happy to come and talk to the members of the Parish Council or to residents.
- » In connection with planning applications I do not have exact detail to hand.

Question 7

Does the council take advice from any other body (e.g. NGO, community group, regulator) regarding AWE matters? If yes please give details.

Yes	4
No	6

Councils for which a 'yes' reply was received were:

- » Sulhamstead Parish Council
- » Tadley Town Council
- » West Berkshire Council (responses received from two members)

Answers included:

- » Again not that I know of.

- » We work alongside a number of community groups and shared resources between neighbouring councils. If there was a requirement to seek advice to our parish then we would seek advice from other bodies.
- » YES in the early days from Southampton University.
- » YES as required for example from regulators and Government Agencies on such things as planning matters.
- » HSE in relation to planning issues.

Question 8

Has AWE provided your council with any grants or donations over the past 2 years, or funded infrastructure improvement work on behalf of the community you represent over this period? If so, please provide further information.

Yes	4
No	6

Councils for which a 'yes' reply was received were:

- » Pangbourne Parish Council
- » Tadley Town Council
- » West Berkshire Council (responses received from two members)

Answers included:

- » Not in Silchester itself however the infrastructure around the Aldermaston site has been improved over recent years.
- » We have borrowed a PA system from them over the last 8 years for the Christmas lights.
- » See above. We received £1000 grant from AWE last year towards some landscaping in a communal area. The majority of work has now been completed; we are just waiting for the spring to buy some plants to finish the job properly.
- » YES but only the normal Section 106 payments consequent on planning applications as WBC is the Planning Authority. Planning application determinations are a matter of public record.
- » They have funded highway work through S106 contributions.

Question 9

Do you seek feedback from your constituents on issues they would like you to raise at Liaison Committee meetings?

Yes	5
No	2
Don't Know	2

- » Silchester is very relaxed over AWE. If there is something specific to Silchester or something important then no feed back is required. The Council get the minutes of each meeting for their information. The only issue Silchester seems to be concerned with is the amount of AWE employees / traffic using the village as a cut through / rat run when there is a perfectly good alternative main route to the Aldermaston site.
- » I report to the Parish Council at every meeting and to parishoners at the annual parish meeting. Any issues or concerns raised at these meetings I take back to the Liaison Committee.
- » Two current examples are (1) Pangbourne Pipeline and the (2) WBC's SHLAA (housing plan to 2025) which both impact on the local community and residents.
- » YES very much so.
- » I do not actively seek feedback from parishioners The full minutes are available on the internet. I provide to the PC an AWE précis of matters discussed and I add my own observations when I think they might be helpful.
- » I write occasional reports in our local community magazine on any issue I feel the residents would be interested in. In the past AWE has provided me with photos that I could use when I reported on the removal of the sparge pipes from the Thames; more recently I reported on the fire outbreak that occurred at the site.
- » My name as Liaison Committee member is on our community leaflets and our website. If any residents have any issues that they wish to have raised with AWE, they are able to contact me via email, phone or through the Parish Office. We don't actively seek feedback apart from this as we already have more than enough to do!
- » Raise matters from constituents or Members either during LLC meetings or by contacting AWE staff members directly. Feedback direct to the individual questioner or if it is a public question at Council meeting.
- » Through the Parish Council.

Question 10

Do you think that the Liaison Committee and its meetings could be improved in any way? If so, how?

Yes	1
No	7
Not stated	2

- » I find them very useful, with plenty of information and always people able to add any further information that Liaison Committee members want.
- » Not really but more definition of terms and abbreviations used or a glossary on the agenda maybe.

- » NO – I find the meetings very informative and there is a good dialogue between the AWE and the representatives of the local community.
- » I think there is a good balance between the AWE presented material and the opportunity for the local community to ask questions of AWE of an unclassified nature.
- » I am a founder member and always there is room for improvement.
- » No. AWE puts a lot of effort into the LLC and I think the result is excellent.
- » Not really – I think that they are very good and I have found the staff very helpful if I have had any particular issues. I have learnt a lot whilst I have been on the committee.
- » The meetings are held regularly, they are comprehensive and the flow of information is excellent.
- » Not perfect but pretty good.

Question 11

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

- » I think the current system of the LLC works well and provides very good reassurance to the local community about the operations at AWE.
- » No.
- » No. I question the value of circulating this general questionnaire.

Appendix C

Results of survey of local residents

A door-to-door questionnaire survey of local residents was conducted by NIS volunteers in Aldermaston Village and Aldermaston Wharf, Burghfield Common, and Tadley over the period 13 July 2011 – 1 August 2011. A total of 109 people were asked the following questions. Responses are shown as percentages of this total rounded to the nearest whole number.

Headline findings:

- » Less than half of respondents were aware of the AWE LLC
- » 90% of respondents did not know who their Local Liaison Committee Member was.
- » Of the 10 people who did know, 6 lived in Aldermaston village where the Parish Council LLC representative has a high local profile due to his hard work on the Council.
- » Two out of three of respondents felt that independent local organisations should be represented on the AWE LLC.

Question 1

Have you heard of the AWE at Aldermaston?

Yes	99
No	1
Don't know	0

Question 2

Are you aware of the AWE Local Liaison Committee?

Yes	44
No	56
Don't know	0

Question 3

Do you know who your local representative on the committee is?

Yes	9
No	91
Don't know	0

Can you name them?

Yes	8
No	92
Don't know	0

Question 4

Have you ever had any communication regarding AWE with your local representative?

Yes	11
No	87
Don't know	2

Question 5

Do you think that communication between AWE and local residents is adequate?

Yes	57
No	23
Don't know	20

REPPIR emergency guidelines and the 'AWE Connect' magazine distributed to local households were mentioned by a number of respondents.

Question 6

Do you think independent local organisations, such as residents associations and community groups should be represented on the AWE Local Liaison Committee, as well as local councils?

Yes	66
No	19
Don't know	15

Appendix D

Performance of AWE Local Liaison Committee in comparison with Nuclear Decommissioning Authority standards for Site Stakeholder Groups

The following table explains how the ratings presented in the scorecards shown in the 'Analysis' section of the report have been derived.

Requirement for NDA Site Stakeholder Groups	Performance of AWE Local Liaison Committee	Relevant section of NDA Guidelines
Representation		
Provision to include members from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Elected representatives and politicians at all levels. » Local community groups with an interest in the site, including environmental groups. » Other local interests such as businesses and the voluntary sector. 	Local council representatives. No representation from community groups. No representation from business or voluntary sector.	4.1
Measures to guarantee quality of engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Appointed representatives from relevant organisations such as regulators, unions, emergency and health services to provide advice as needed. » Roles and responsibilities of members specified. » New members should undergo an induction process. » Members should have opportunities to visit the site for general familiarisation. » Capacity building to address information and skills gaps. 	Regulators attend each meeting as observers. Occasional presentations from other government bodies. Roles and responsibilities of members not specified. Induction process for new members. Regular visits to site facilities as part of business of committee meetings. No provision for capacity building.	4.2 4.6 10.1 10.2 10.3
The public should be able to attend meetings, asking questions and join discussions with members when appropriate.	Meetings not open to the public.	4.4

The press should be able to attend meetings and ask questions at least at the end of the meeting.	Meetings not open to the press.	4.5
Communication		
<p>Secretarial support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Drafting and promptly circulating and publishing minutes from meetings to members and wider interested parties. » Preparing an Executive Summary of key bullet points that members can pass on to their constituents. » Circulating papers to members as needed, including communications from external bodies. 	<p>Minutes prepared and usually published on AWE website around three months after the meeting.</p> <p>Bullet point list of key points prepared for members.</p> <p>Presentations from meetings circulated to members with minutes (but not publicly available). No communications from external bodies circulated to members.</p>	7
Each group should have a website.	No independent website. Minimal information about the Local Liaison Committee on the AWE company website.	9.1
Transparency		
<p>Meetings should be advertised and must be held in locations that are easily accessible to members of the public and press, ideally within easy reach of public transport.</p> <p>The timing should be convenient to stakeholders so that as far as possible they are not inhibited or prevented from attending.</p> <p>Location and timing should be varied to allow different members of the public to attend.</p>	<p>Meetings not advertised and not open to the public.</p> <p>Meetings take place during working hours on weekdays.</p> <p>Meetings held in private on one of AWE's two sites.</p>	8.1
Meetings should take place as appropriate (eg 2-4 times a year).	Meetings take place four times each year.	8.4
Governance		
Each group should develop their own constitution and code of conduct.	Local Liaison Committee has terms of reference but no constitution or code of conduct.	3.1

<p>The Chair of the group should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Be independent of the site operator. » Be formally elected by members and be re-appointed at regular intervals. » Consider standing down after 5 years. » Be supported by a similarly elected Deputy Chair. » Be transparent about any conflicts of interest, by declaring them at the start of SSG meetings. » Be accountable to members. 	<p>Chair is a representative of the site operator. Chair is unelected.</p> <p>No limit to term of office of chair. No deputy chair. No requirement for chair or any member to declare conflicts of interest.</p> <p>Indirectly accountable to members.</p>	5.1
<p>To ensure constant evolution and opportunity for improvement, progress should be reviewed at least every five years.</p>	<p>No regular formal review of the Local Liaison Committee's performance.</p>	12.1
<p>Secretariat support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Administering SSG meeting dates, venues and refreshments and expenses. » Budgeting for, administering and paying for all costs involved in the above. 	<p>Secretariat support provided by AWE. Costs of meetings paid for by AWE.</p>	7

Appendix E

Local Liaison Committee Member Attendance Record: Calendar years 2009-10

Representative area	12/03/2009	11/06/2009	02/10/2009	10/12/2009	25/03/2010	03/06/10	30/09/10	16/12/10	Total
Aldermaston Parish Council	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Baughurst Parish Council	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	6
Brimpton Parish Council	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	5
Burghfield Parish Council	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Mapledurham Parish Council	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	7
Mortimer West End Parish Council	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5
Padworth Parish Council	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
Pamber Heath Parish Council	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	6
Pangbourne Parish Council	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	4
Shinfield Parish Council	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Silchester Parish Council	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	6
Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Sulhamstead & Ufton Nivet	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	4
Swallowfield Parish Council	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	7
Theale Parish Council	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	6
Tidmarsh with Sulham	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
Ufton Nivet Parish Council	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Wasing Parish Council	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Basingstoke & Deane Council	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Reading Borough Council	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	6
Tadley Town Council	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
West Berks Council	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	6
Environment Agency	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Food Standards Agency	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
WB Emergency Planning Officer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B&D Environmental Technical Manager	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3

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Our website

<http://nuclearinfo.org>

Contact us

Nuclear Information Service

Ibex House

85 Southampton Street

Reading

RG1 2QU

01189 327 7489

info@nuclearinfo.org

