

Minutes of the 22nd AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Held Thursday 10 August 2000

Present:

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| Dr John Rae | AWE, Chairman | |
| Alan Brandwood | AWE | |
| Adrian Marks | AWE | |
| Frank Winter | AWE | |
| Jonathan Brown | AWE | |
| Graeme Hammond | AWE | |
| Mrs A Burdett | AWE | Secretary |
| Ian Crossan | HSE/NII | |
| Ian Jackson | Environment Agency | |
| W Cane | Mortimer West End PC | Community Liaison Officer |
| DA Leeks | Tadley Town Council | |
| Ms J Slimmin | Tadley Town Council | |
| MR Broad | Tadley Town Council | |
| G Eddy | Hampshire County Council | |
| J Mazillius | Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council | |
| Mrs M Dadswell | Aldermaston Parish Council | |
| A Campbell | Wasing Parish meeting | |
| A Ferguson | West Berkshire Council | |
| Dr Royce Longton | West Berkshire Council | |
| P Hobbs | Sulhamstead Parish Council | |
| MRP Eden | Holybrook Parish Council | |
| D Hoad | Theale Parish Council | |
| PE Taylor | Brimpton Parish Council | |
| Dr AM Roberts | Padworth Parish Council | |
| Mr A Sumner | Wokefield Parish Council | |
| T Whitaker | Mapledurham Parish Council | |
| J Southall | Purley on Thames Parish Council | |
| OR Waite | Shinfield Parish Council | |
| J Moss | Swallowfield Parish Council | |
| A West | Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council | |
| G Traynor | Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council | |
| M Bryant | Wokingham Unitary Authority | |
| T Price | Silchester Parish Council | |
| D Morgan | Reading Borough Council | |

Apologies from:

C Thomson, P Frazer, Mrs P Bale, J Parfitt, F Kirkham, Mrs S Allen, D Mundy

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

John Rae welcomed returning members Dr Royce Longton, representing Burghfield Ward on West Berkshire Council and Dennis Morgan representing Reading Borough Council

Actions from the last meeting

21/1 to have an unclassified version of Steve Gibbs' safety audit report made available to the LLC.

This is likely to be presented at the first LLC of 2001.

21/2 Avril Burdett to arrange for a member of Sellafield LLC to visit AWE.

The invitation has been extended.

21/3 Avril Burdett to arrange for copies of the press cuttings from the Sellafield LLC to be made available.

Copies were supplied at the meeting.

21/4 to arrange a workshop on public alerting techniques.

Arranged for 15th August 2000.

21/5 to arrange a workshop on LLC information needs.

Arranged for 15th September 2000.

21/6 to stage the AWE Environmental Exhibition in Tadley Community Centre.

Should take place in October, date to be advised.

PROGRESS REPORT

The chairman updated members on topics covered in correspondence from AWE since the last meeting.

Sludge Tanks

The pin-hole leak that had been discovered in a sludge storage tank had been dealt with quickly and efficiently. Only a small amount of liquid was involved and measures and analysis undertaken since then had shown that there was no escape of radioactivity to the environment. The tanks were being re-examined using ultrasonic, electronic and other techniques and the results so far gave confidence about the structural integrity of the tanks. Secondary containment was being improved and a strategy for dealing with any possible recurrence was being introduced. AWE remained on course to begin a programme of sludge immobilisation in 2003, which would make these tanks redundant.

Tony Ferguson asked how long this work would take. Jonathan Brown answered that the first overbuilding was expected to be in place by Christmas and that he would write to members to outline the programme.

Action 22/1: To provide LLC members with a programme for the improvements to secondary containment to sludge tanks.

Convoy Support

John Rae reported that preparations for the support of weapons convoys were progressing well. Responsibility for the convoys passes from the Royal Air Force to the Royal Navy in 2001. The Royal Navy has let a contract to AWE for convoy support and AWE will be responsible for providing vehicle support, storage & maintenance facilities and drivers for the convoys. The MoD police will guard the convoys but the Navy will continue to provide a military presence. Recruitment for the specialist staff AWE will need was underway and successful trials had been completed at Aldermaston. A further trial involving the vehicles would take place at Aldermaston over the coming weekend.

Nuclear Awareness Group Conference

AWE had withdrawn its speaker from the Nuclear Awareness Group's Conference on low level radiation. Subsequently NAG had claimed that AWE was reverting to a policy of secrecy and non-communication.

John Rae expressed his disappointment since it had been explained to NAG that there were special circumstances in this case and AWE had made it quite clear that they were prepared to speak on this topic and others of relevance in the future. In fact, AWE had been acting on legal advice that there would be a danger of prejudicing the judicial review of the Environment Agency's process in determining AWE discharge authorisations since the topic to be covered by the speaker was the subject of witness statements to the court and he may have been called to give evidence in court.

John Rae gave his personal assurance that AWE's policy to continue to explain its operations through direct contact with community groups, including the NAG, remained unchanged.

Reports

Members had been sent copies of the NII report on the first quarter of operations under AWEML management; the Southampton University environmental survey report; AWE's second quarter ESH report; and Cllr Mazillius' report on the LLC visit to the Sellafield LLC. The regular NII report on the second quarter of 2000 was given to members at the meeting together with a public information leaflet from Southampton University.

John Rae was very pleased that the NII report on the re-licensing of AWE had been very positive. He said that he had not been surprised, but nevertheless it was pleasing to receive independent recognition of progress on safety issues. He said that he was not complacent, but that it gave a solid baseline and should give grounds for greater public confidence in AWE's activities. He read an excerpt from the Executive Summary : "The review concluded that health and safety have been successfully managed during the change of contractor and licensee. The new licensee has made a good start under the new contract and maintained a good health and safety culture. A number of safety-related issues, many of which are long standing, were re-examined during the review and these will be used to establish a baseline for assessing future performance."

The chairman said he was grateful to John Mazillius for his report and for agreeing to give a presentation on the Sellafield LLC.

CND Demonstration

The CND demonstration on Sunday 6th August had passed off peacefully with around 100 protesters taking part.

Senator

John Rae had been able to pay a visit to the Senator Exercise in Northumbria. This had been held to test the national capability to deal with an accident involving a nuclear weapon. AWE had the responsibility of providing expert assistance. AWE's off-site emergency response team had played a large part in the exercise, both setting up the scenario and playing the exercise through. In the wash up meetings AWE had been praised on their delivery of their parts of the exercise. This was one of a series of exercises in which AWE takes part in order to exercise its capabilities on and off site.

The next major on site exercise will be the Burghfield Level 1 demonstration exercise on Wednesday 27 September. Representatives of HSE, NII, MoD and also Berkshire Fire and Rescue, Berkshire Ambulance Trust and the Royal Berkshire Hospital will observe it. This exercise is also required by NII to comply with Licence condition 11 of AWE's nuclear site licence.

AWE Schools Engineering Challenge

AWE had held a Schools Engineering Challenge competition for the fourth year running. This year it had been organised by a group of AWE's graduate trainees. Twenty local schools had taken part and Kennet School had come first, winning them £1000 for the purchase of scientific equipment. There had been second prizes of £500 and £250. John Rae hoped that by holding such events AWE could promote a more positive image of engineering as an exciting and rewarding career for men and women.

Visits

Since the last meeting MP for Newbury David Rendel had visited.

In addition to the regular updates provided to members between meetings, John Rae had agreed that to give local MPs a quarterly update of events and issues at AWE. Tony Ferguson asked that the LLC members be given a copy at the same time. John Rae replied that although the information in the report would be known to LLC members, they were welcome to a copy.

Action 22/2: To provide copies of quarterly reports to MPs for LLC members.

In answer to a question, the chairman said that the same dialogue had been opened with all local MPs and some had asked for a site visit. AWE was also hosting Martin Salter and Andrew Hunter during the following months.

John Rae went on to say that unfortunately Baroness Symons had had to postpone her visit, a date in September was possible. Members would be advised as soon as a date was known.

Cardiff

The demolition of the Cardiff site was going according to plan and a copy of the recently released public information leaflet was given to members.

Site Tour

At the end of the meeting members were to be taken on a tour of the site. John Rae hoped that this would give members a personal appreciation of the size and scale of the work at AWE.

John Rae said that it would not be possible to accommodate any member who had not formally replied in advance. He therefore stressed that members should make sure that pro formas were returned as quickly as possible in the future.

Action 22/3: To ensure that proformas sent to members are returned within the timescale stated. **All members.**

Independent Article

An article in the Independent had claimed that the Minister of Agriculture had complained that he had not been properly consulted by the Environment Agency during the determination of new radioactive discharge authorisations for AWE and that, therefore, the authorisations were illegal.

At the same time, a judicial review into the Agency's decision-making process in this case had been granted to the Nuclear Awareness Group. The case was due to be heard at the Royal Courts of Justice in September.

As far as AWE was concerned, they had co-operated fully with the Environment Agency during the public consultation that had preceded the issue of new discharge authorisations in April 2000. AWE senior managers had attended public meetings and the Company had produced public information leaflets to explain the background to, and reasons for, the authorisations.

AWE had been very successful in progressively reducing discharges and the new authorisations were significantly lower overall than previous limits.

AWE was now operating under the new authorisations and would continue to do so until or unless they were rescinded. John Rae did not believe that there was anything wrong with the authorisations. It was the Agency's decision-making process that was being challenged.

AWE could not speculate on the decision of the judicial review. John Rae said that the press and others seemed to be confusing the operating licence and the discharge authorisations. He added that AWE would be attending only as an interested party.

Finally he said that there was a document due to the Environment Agency at the end of September, outlining AWE plans for the management of liquid waste after the closure of the Pangbourne Pipeline. He invited members to a presentation on these plans at the end of September.

Terry Price drew attention to paragraphs 15 & 16 of the NII quarterly report. He asked if this impacted on the future use of the new liquid effluent treatment plant and waste stores on site. It was explained that the new liquid effluent treatment plant had been planned and built to support discharges to the Pangbourne Pipeline and was also now out of scale with the reduced amount of liquid effluent produced at AWE. AWE was looking at possible uses for the building in the future and in the mean time no radioactive material was being introduced into the plant so as not to make problems for the future. There was a possibility that in the future sludges from sludge tanks on site would be vitrified and stored in steel drums in dry storage buildings. One new store of that type was nearing completion.

Terry Price asked whether AWE would sue the company who had built the new liquid effluent treatment plant. John Rae answered that this was a matter for MoD and that AWE's role was to maintain the building and study its possible future uses.

John Mazillius drew attention to paragraph 13 of the NII quarterly report on licence condition 36, which required more information, and asked when that information would be provided. Alan Brandwood answered that as this was a new licence condition, AWE was working with NII to agree just what was needed. By the end of April AWE had provided enough information to proceed and the NII was now agreeing with the nuclear industry exactly what was required. Ian Crossan added that NII wanted a baseline across the sites prior to voluntary redundancy beginning. He reminded members that no changes could be made without NII agreement.

2. HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

Alan Brandwood, Director Assurance

Quarterly Report, Qtr 2, 2000:

Alan Brandwood reported that there had been significant progress in the first four months. This had been achieved by a lot of hard work by many people. So far, all ten of the performance indicators for 2000 were on target. One member of staff had been removed from RA work as his dose for the year would have breached the company maximum level had he continued.

He said that in addition to the NII inspection report, the EA had also carried out an inspection and he would receive their report within the next two weeks. He expected it to be balanced with an overall conclusion that progress was satisfactory.

Throughout July AWE had also been reviewing progress with Admiral Scourse, Nuclear Weapons Safety Adviser.

Since the last meeting Steve Gibbs had taken up his appointment as a non-executive AWEML board member with special responsibility for Safety. He had a permanent staff of two to assist him with a review of AWE.

Other successes

- A new set of assurance performance indicators had been agreed, to run parallel with those set by the previous contractor.
- The executive board had agreed a new reorganisation for Assurance which would give more focus to driving improvements, consistency and common standards. It also took into account the issues raised in the NII report on Sellafield.
- Arrangements for managing change had been agreed with NII and EA

Conferences and Seminars

AWE had held a 'Healthy Heart Day' to promote healthy lifestyles, this was one of a series, the next being on back pain and lifting. AWE had taken part in a national conference on Contamination Control and had sponsored and attended one on Safe Systems of Work. Alan Brandwood said that they were good vehicles for learning about best practise from others in the industry and that AWE's systems stood up well against others.

The MoD continuous assessment team had reviewed AWE's quality management system and had recommended the transfer of registration to AWE.

SRIs

There were 33 level two incidents during the reporting period. Of these, 15 had been identified as having involved behaviour as a contributing factor. Four had involved contractors. As an example, there had been one major injury, a broken wrist, which had happened when a contractor had tripped over his undone shoelace. These types of incidents showed how personal behaviour could lead to accidents and pointed to an area which needed to be addressed.

During a routine operation at Burghfield a worker had a finger crushed. This highlighted a potential fault with the equipment being used, work was stopped and the incident fully investigated. As a result new tooling has been manufactured and introduced.

The lady who had fallen from a stack was now recovering. Members had been told of this incident in a letter.

There had been an increase in the level of tritium discharged from the site; it was still at less than 3% of AWE's authorisation limit but was being investigated. During quarter 3 of the year there would be a higher discharge when tanks were emptied on a periodic, routine cycle.

Bill Cane asked about the cadmium discharge, which was running at 80% of the total annual discharge limit. Alan Brandwood said that it had been running at this level for some time, the waste was tankered out of the workshops. The process was now being reviewed in order to try to reduce the discharge.

Dennis Morgan asked how AWE dealt with the safety of contractors. Alan Brandwood answered that they were treated the same as AWE staff. As an example, a plan was in place to raise safety awareness and make improvements among the MoD police. Their performance would be monitored and reviewed. If there were problems then AWE would offer help and support.

John Mazillius asked the ratio of contractors to AWE staff. He was told that there were some office workers, but in the main there were 700 to 1500 contractors according to need, mainly on building work. John Mazillius said that that was a third of the injuries at AWE were to contractors and was therefore disproportionate. Frank Winter pointed out that a large sector of AWE staff were office based whereas a large proportion of contractors worked on manual tasks. Many accidents were therefore trips, slips, bumps, falls and back injuries.

John Mazillius asked for trends in SRIs on contractors to be made available to members.

Action 22/4: To provide information to members on trends in contractor injuries. Alan Brandwood.

John Rae added that it was AWE's policy to reduce the dependency on contractors and that building contracting was probably the most dangerous profession and a national problem. AWE was doing its best to minimise the risk.

In response to a question Alan Brandwood said that the SRI reporting system was identical for contractors and AWE staff.

Tony Ferguson drew attention to paragraph 16 of the NII quarterly report relating to MoD tritium contaminated waste being bought to AWE. Adrian Marks answered that it had been generated as part of the weapons programme. MoD were looking for the best management of the material, and as part of that, whether it could be safely stored at AWE. Mr Ferguson then asked whether there would be a consultation process, he was concerned that this would be the start of AWE becoming a storage facility for other sites' waste. Many of the other members endorsed Mr Ferguson's concerns. Adrian Marks stated that the talks were at a very early stage; that the waste was from the weapons programme. EA and NII approval would be required. He gave a categorical assurance that this did not mean that AWE would become a repository for waste from other sites. This was a specific proposal to deal with specific waste.

John Rae said that it was a matter for AWE to manage operations, but he undertook to keep members informed of the progress of the application. Members passed a resolution asking AWE to express their opposition to the proposal. John Mazillius suggested that members should write to the Minister of State for Defence Procurement expressing their concerns. Subsequently Bill Cane has written to the Minister and the letter has been copied to all members.

Action 22/5: To provide members with details of the decision-making process on the question of the possibility of storing these 3 batches of MoD tritiated waste. Jonathan Brown.

Action 22/6: To inform the MoD of members opposition to the proposal and to forward Mr Cane's letter to the Minister and members. Avril Burdett. **Action complete.**

AWE directors said that it would have to go through AWE safety process; that the NII and the Environment Agency would have to authorise this transfer and storage; that the tritium activity amounted to less than 1% of that from AWE's previously anticipated waste arisings; and that the committee's concerns would be made clear to the MoD. Further concerns were raised on the possible rise in tritium discharge from this waste. They were assured that AWE would not deliberately release any tritium from such waste and that this was a specific request.

3. PRESENTATION ON THE SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY STUDY- YEAR 2 **Dr Andrew Cundy**

Dr Cundy said that the year 2 results had revealed very low levels of Environmental contamination with uranium and plutonium these posed only a very low radiological risk. The results so far show that plutonium contamination in the environment originates from weapons fall out rather than an AWE source.

A copy of the presentation slides is attached.

Tim Whitaker asked whether the riverbed was sampled around the Pangbourne Pipeline outlet. Dr Cundy said he believed that was part of year 3 of the study. He was

then asked if samples were taken from the same place each year and whether there was any difference in the results. He explained that there was no change year on year but there was a great deal of variability in sample results from different places.

4. PRESENTATION ON A VISIT TO SELLAFIELD LLC

John Mazillius

A copy of the presentation slides is attached.

At the start of the presentation John Mazillius made it clear that this was his own view of the Sellafield LLC and did not necessarily reflect the view of others who had attended.

In answer to questions Ian Crossan said that there was some truth in the suggestion that the NII was under-resourced. There had been recruitment difficulties in some areas. He also said that he would prefer the NII to be independent observers at the Local Liaison Committee rather than full members, Ian Jackson agreed.

5. CLOSING REMARKS

John Rae thanked the presenters and remarked that he hoped that members were as reassured as he had been, with the very low levels of uranium around the site and that the plutonium found had been mainly weapons tests fall-out. He reiterated that he would be in touch with members on the issue of MoD tritiated waste.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Terry Price asked for reassurance that if AWE was considering a vitrification plant that waste would not be brought to AWE for processing or storage. Frank Winter said that BNFL dealt with high level waste - Beta and Gamma - whereas AWE dealt only with low level and intermediate level waste - mainly Alpha. Therefore the plant and processes were different. Vitrified waste from Cumbria would not be stored at AWE. Regardless of other considerations AWE was not licensed for high level waste.

David Leeks asked whether an aircraft had breached the restricted airspace on the night of 19 July at 23:50hrs.

Action 22/7: to ascertain whether this aircraft breached the AWE restricted flying space.

Mrs Dadswell asked how far from AWE's boundary was the groundwater being tested and whether West Berkshire Council had been consulted. Alan Brandwood answered that these boreholes belonged to the Environment Agency.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 16th November 2000

The following dates for meetings have also been set:

Thursday 8th February 2001

Thursday 14th June 2001

20 members toured the site.

The meeting ended with a buffet lunch.

Avril Burdett
Secretary
Local Liaison Committee
17 August 2000

ACTIONS FROM THE MEETING:

Action 22/1: To provide LLC members with a programme for the improvements to secondary containment. *Jonathan Brown*

Action 22/2: To provide copies of quarterly reports to MPs for LLC members. *Avril Burdett.*

Action 22/3: To ensure that proformas sent to members are returned within the timescale stated. **All members.**

Action 22/4: To provide information to members on trends in contractors' injuries. *Alan Brandwood.*

Action 22/5: To provide members with details of the decision-making process on the question of the possibility of storing MoD tritiated waste. *Jonathan Brown.*

Action 22/6: To inform the MoD of members' opposition to the proposal and to forward Mr Cane's letter to the Minister and members. *Avril Burdett.* **Action complete.**

Action 22/7: To ascertain whether an aircraft breached the AWE restricted flying space. 19 July at 23:50 hrs. *Graeme Hammond.*