

Minutes of the 24th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Held Thursday 8th February 2001

Present:

| | | |
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| Dr John Rae | AWE, Chairman | |
| Alan Brandwood | AWE | |
| Adrian Marks | AWE | |
| Frank Winter | AWE | |
| Graeme Hammond | AWE | |
| Ken Saint | AWE | |
| Dr Andrew Jupp | AWE | |
| Avril Burdett | AWE | Secretary |
| Dr Donald Bruce | Trident Medical | |
| Mike Jeal | HSE/NI I | |
| Rob Campbell | HSE/NI I | |
| Martin Sayers | HSE/NI I | |
| Gareth Beard | Environment Agency | |
| W Cane | Mortimer West End PC | Community Liaison Officer |
| DA Leeks | Tadley Town Council | |
| MR Broad | Tadley Town Council | |
| G Eddy | Hampshire County Council | |
| Mrs M Dadswell | Aldermaston Parish Council | |
| A Ferguson | West Berkshire Council | |
| Dr R Longton | West Berkshire Council | |
| J Parfitt | West Berkshire Council | |
| R Meredith | 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 | |
| A Sumner | Wokefield Parish Council | |
| T Whitaker | Mapledurham Parish Council | |
| J Southall | Purley on Thames Parish Council | |
| OR Waite | Shinfield Parish Council | |
| Mrs P Bale | Pangbourne Parish Council | |
| M Bryant | Wokingham Unitary Authority | |
| D Mundy | Burghfield Parish Council | |
| A Campbell | Aldermaston Parish Meeting | |
| C Thomson | Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council | |
| G Traynor | Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council | |
| F Kirkham | Woolhampton Parish Council | |
| J Moss | Swallowfield Parish Council | |

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|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| D Morgan | Reading Borough Council |
| R Marks | Reading Borough Council |
| J Mazillius | Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council |
| B Hamilton-Hewett | Silchester Parish Council |

1. CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Apologies for Absence: Chris Bridges, Sheila Allen, Jo Slimin, David Leeks for late attendance.

New members: John Rae welcomed Brian Hamilton-Hewett representing Silchester Parish Council and expressed AWE's thanks to Silchester's former representative, Terry Price.

Actions from the previous meeting:

In his Assurance Report Alan Brandwood covered:

Action 23/1: To provide information on the number of hours lost through accidents at AWE sites.

Action 23/7: To provide quantified information on the risk to the public from contamination via the Aldermaston Stream.

In his Infrastructure Report Frank Winter covered:

Action 23/3: To provide information on the volume of water diverted to the Aldermaston Stream during the October flood);

Action 23/4: To meet with Burghfield and West Berkshire councils to investigate the possibility of a common root cause for sewerage problems during heavy rainfall.

Action 23/5: To investigate the state of watercourses at AWE with a view to dredging and clearing out.

Action 23/6: To give a presentation on the North Ponds Filtration Scheme.

Action 23/2 (Avril Burdett): To provide copies of the Nuclear Industries Families' Study for those members who would like them. Copies were made available at the meeting.

Action 23/8 (Avril Burdett): To arrange a visit to the North Ponds Water Management Complex for Aldermaston villagers. MoD had given their approval and this visit to be arranged as soon as the weather improves, in liaison with Aldermaston representative Mrs Dadswell.

Matters Arising:

Tritiated waste: At the previous meeting it was stated that further information was expected from the MoD about details of the decision making

process concerning the question of MoD-owned tritiated waste. Nothing further had been heard on this issue but Baroness Symons had undertaken to write to Bill Cane about this. John Rae will keep members up to date with developments.

Emergency Alerting: Bill Cane had asked for an update on Emergency Alerting. Ken Saint, Emergency Response Manager, was present to bring members up to date.

Ken Saint: Ken explained that this presentation followed a workshop on Emergency Alerting which had identified three appropriate mechanisms for AWE to alert the public in case of an incident with off-site consequences.

(a) The equipment for a "call in" message system had been ordered and was due to be delivered in March. Installation was anticipated by the end of April.

(b) Investigations into the options for a "call out" system had continued. A national level committee had been formed to investigate the issue nationally for all potentially hazardous plants, but progress was slow. Ken had raised the topic at the NEAF meeting (a meeting of nuclear operators with the NII) and the responses received suggested that the whole nuclear industry was unsure of the best way to proceed.

Some operators already had sirens; others used a phone-out system, but most had nothing. None were content with, or would recommend, their current arrangements as they all had shortcomings and limitations in capability. He had seen a demonstration of the PEWIT system and was due to see a demonstration of the CRITICAL system the following week. (Both "call-out" systems) These two are seen by the industry to be the main leaders in the field and are under consideration by the national level committee.

Several operators felt that a siren system was not a good option and others including one operator who had such a system, but believe they would never use it in anger. The main concerns revolved around these factors: -

The "Three Mile Island syndrome" where in spite of advice to the contrary, a large proportion of the public panicked when sirens were used and three people were killed in the rush. This was in an incident which, in the event, never did present a hazard to anyone outside the facility.

The vulnerability of the systems to unreliability on the day, vandalism etc. Difficulty of focussing the warning to those who may be affected, thus raising fear in a large number who would not be affected.

Ken said that he would continue to investigate the issue. The LLC will be kept informed.

Cllr Moss asked what radius a siren system would serve. Ken said that it would serve the 'PIRER' distance, that is a three-km radius around the Aldermaston site.

Bill Cane asked what provision would be made for people travelling into the area unacquainted with the action to be taken on hearing a siren. Ken said that the police had assured him that they had mechanisms for emergency road closures but he would ask for further details from them.

In answer to further questions Ken said that the call-out system would alert key points within the community such as schools and larger shops. He said that any systems adopted would have to be versatile enough to deal with different situations and needs. He wanted to find a solution which struck a balance between the need for the public to be informed and being the cause of unnecessary panic.

John Parfitt raised a further matter arising from the last meeting:

He felt that the minutes of the 23rd LLC meeting did not reflect the true dialogue on who the public should contact if they had concerns about AWE's practices. This arose from rumours that AWE had polluted the Aldermaston Stream with Plutonium which had been reported to West Berkshire Council. West Berkshire Council's advice was that the public should contact the Regulators, but if they did not know how to contact them then the Council were happy instigate this and/or advise them how to get in touch. Mike Jeal of the NII said that the public could contact them and they would investigate any allegations. John Rae agreed that this was the correct procedure but asked that AWE was also informed.

Chairman's Introductory Remarks

New Year's Honours: Dr Rae announced that two of AWE's employees had received New Year's honours.

Brian Thomas, one of AWE's senior scientists, had been awarded the OBE. He was instrumental in establishing AWE's HELEN laser and is recognised internationally as a leading figure in the plasma physics field.

John Gardner, a very talented inventor, had been awarded the MBE. John has developed a radiation monitor for use in hazardous environments. It has uses not only in the nuclear industry but also in the oil and gas industries and is currently being marketed.

Incident: There had been a small fire in a glove box in a laboratory earlier that week. It had self-extinguished and it was soon confirmed that there had been no release of any material outside of the glovebox. (In fact the glove box was undamaged). No one was injured. As is routine in such incidents the site was put under cover while the incident was being dealt with. The site alarm had sounded and it had all been dealt with quickly and efficiently.

Judicial Review: The judicial review hearing in the High Court of allegations that the Environment Agency acted unlawfully in determining AWE's current radioactive discharge authorisations, was heard on 11, 12, 15 and 16 January.

The Judge, Mr Justice Turner, reserved judgement. It was expected that he would announce his ruling some time in the next few weeks.

If the judgement was that the Environment Agency had been at fault in its decision-making process, he would then hear further legal argument before deciding what, if any, remedial action he should take. Contingency plans had been put in place however, to ensure that AWE would continue to operate, whatever the outcome of the case. The Agency's counsel said in Court that the Ministry of Defence would take AWE back under Crown Immunity.

John Rae stressed that it was important to note that that this action had been taken by the claimants (the Reading-based Nuclear Awareness Group and a private individual), against the Environment Agency, not AWE - although the Company was an interested party in this case.

There had been no complaint against AWE. Indeed, as AWE's counsel, Mr David Wolfe, had told the Court, AWE had acted properly throughout the whole process.

Mr Wolfe said that AWE had been very successful in driving down its radioactive discharges over successive years and the current authorisations represented a significant reduction over previous limits. The radiation dose to the most exposed individual member of the public in a whole year as a result of AWE's total radioactive discharges was similar to that to which the individual would be exposed during a 15 hour visit to Cornwall, where natural radiation levels are higher than those around the AWE sites. He added that AWE fully supported independent regulation of its operations.

AWE and the EA were now awaiting the judgement. In the meantime, AWE would continue to make discharges within current authorised limits.

Tony Ferguson asked what would happen about the regulation of AWE's activities if the judicial review found against the Environment Agency and AWE therefore reverted to the MoD under Crown Immunity. John Rae replied that the Company would continue to monitor and control its discharges against the

existing limits. Mike Jeal (NII) added that the Company would still be regulated under the Health & Safety at Work Act. Gareth Beard (Environment Agency) said that under MoD AWE would be exempt under the Radioactive Substances Act and therefore the EA would have little control. The EA could issue permits or approvals but could not prosecute. Cllr Ferguson asked for clarification, that guidance could be issued rather than control and that the EA would not be in a position to take action under Crown Immunity. Gareth Beard agreed that this was the case.

Rifles: Following members' comments about the manner in which the MoD Police carry their firearms, the issue had been raised with the senior officer and he had brought this to the attention of all his officers. Dr Rae said that the position should now improve.

Krypton 85: AWE had written to the Nuclear Awareness Group to complain about its recent Press Notice which claimed that AWE would be increasing its discharges of krypton-85 by 25,000 per cent. Dr Rae said he had felt unable to allow this inaccurate and alarmist notice to go unchallenged. The basis was a misunderstanding between discharge limits and what was actually discharged.

25-Year Contract: AWE Management Ltd had submitted its proposals for the extension of the contract to manage AWE from the current ten years to 25 years. If successful, this would assure the investment in AWE of £400 million in a public/private partnership arrangement. The proposal was now with the Government.

CTBT Radionuclide Seminar: AWE had been chosen as one of 16 radionuclide laboratories that will support a world-wide Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty monitoring system. In preparation for this, AWE had hosted a workshop for scientists and diplomats from across the world who were involved in setting up this network.

The workshop focused on the use of radionuclides as one of the mechanisms to detect prohibited nuclear weapons tests and was held under the auspices of the Vienna-based Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation. Under discussion were the protocols, logistics and practicalities of the way in which the 16 laboratories will function.

Dr Rae said that AWE was fully committed to this programme. It was a great tribute to AWE's previous contributions to the test ban process and to the international standing of AWE's scientists that they had been asked to be one of the Treaty radionuclide laboratories and to host the workshop.

Richard Aldworth School: A team of young AWE graduate trainees had been working with the Richard Aldworth School in Basingstoke to refurbish a science laboratory to modern standards. The project was funded by AWE and the

Hampshire Education Authority and undertaken by the graduate trainees as a training exercise. The project was now nearing completion.

Partnership Award: AWE had become one of only a handful of British companies to gain endorsement and financial support from the Department of Trade and Industry for its partnership proposals. Partnership, in this context, described the way AWE works between managers, trades unions and employees, where everyone was treated as equal, kept informed and involved in decision making.

AWE had held a series of workshops attended by Company representatives, trades union and professional organisations, it was decided to run a pilot scheme in a major facility. Although still 'early days' there had been some notable successes - better morning break arrangements for 'across the barrier' staff, better mess-room catering, waste minimisation initiatives, enhancement of equipment and significant advancement in communications. The experiences of the pilot scheme would be invaluable in rolling out the partnership initiative across the Company.

2. ALAN BRANDWOOD

Action 23/1: To provide information on the number of hours lost through accidents at AWE sites.

| <u>1998</u> | <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 4,300 | 5,500 | 4,900 |
| 0.06% of the total | 0.08% | 0.07% |

These results were average when compared to an industrial establishment of comparable size.

Action 23/7: To provide quantified information on the risk to the public from contamination via the Aldermaston Stream.

The critical dose (maximum theoretical) arising from water discharges to the Thames from AWE is 0.00002mSv/year. This compares with the Government dose constraint for members of the public of 0.3mSv/year and the average dose from natural radiation to a member of the public of 2.2mSv/year; i.e. the maximum theoretical dose from AWE waterborne discharges is only some 0.006% of the Government's dose constraint and some 0.0009% of the typical dose due to natural radiation. As no enhanced levels of activity were associated with the water released from AWE this autumn and winter, there will be no increase in the critical dose listed above.

Alan Brandwood said that many samples had been taken, providing lots of data which was available in the technical annex to AWE's Annual Reports. He said that the most likely place for concentration would be in Fisherman's Lane. Samples of the silt there in October showed 12 to 27 Bq/Kg of uranium against an average of between 15 to 50 Bq/Kg over the years. Plutonium had been measured at 1 to 6Bq/Kg against an average of 2.7 to 4.8Bq/Kg. These amounts were between 5 and 10% of the limits set by the Environment Agency.

David Leeks asked whether other watercourses were being monitored more frequently during the heavy rain. He was particularly concerned with the seasonal stream at Falcon Fields.

Action 24/1: Alan Brandwood to provide sampling data from the Falcon Fields stream/discharge point.

Highlights of the Assurance Report:

The performance targets for 2000, set by Hunting-BRAE had all been met. This year more targets had been set. These targets were aimed to look at how well AWE was doing as well as looking at achievements. He was looking for 20% improvement in accident rates and a 40% reduction in the collective dose to staff.

Tony Ferguson asked for details of the targets and asked why the LLC members had not received these before the start of 2001. Alan said that these were being given at the first meeting of the year and the process which began in October could not be completed and agreed by the Exec until the figures for 2000 had been analysed.

Action 24/2: To supply members with details of the performance targets for 2001. (Alan Brandwood)

Copies of the presentation slides are attached

Assurance Organisation:

A new structure for the Assurance organisation had come into force on 8th January 2001. This followed a lengthy process looking at what had been put in the bid, what had been learned during the due diligence period from December 1999 to March 31st 2000 and then during the first months of AWEML's contract. The existing structure was felt to be too committee driven, giving rise to overlaps and gaps. One of the Company's aims had been to bring in the Human Resources process looking both at how Assurance and employees need to develop. If this was achieved then output would also improve.

The strengths found at AWE were:

- Enthusiastic people

- The problems were known
- The most open reporting culture that Alan had seen
- Legacy issues being dealt with well.
- Good dose control due to hard work and giving low dose rates

There were areas which needed further development:

- To reduce bureaucracy
 - Too many managers, committees and paperwork
- To learn from mistakes
- To improve co-ordination between areas and eliminate duplication of effort

Central Assurance Area Template

Alan Brandwood said that he wanted Heads to go outside AWE to see what was happening and bring back the best.

- Head of Company Assurance would provide a service to the rest of the Company.
- Head of Revise and Learn would turn reports into actions and follow them through.
- Head of Compliance would simplify the process whilst ensuring compliance
- Head of Business would provide planning support

Alan added that Assurance performance would not improve unless people improved.

Operational Organisation Areas:

- Implementation and Advice covers Security, Quality and Environmental Issues.
- Review, Learn and Improve will drive the whole process.
- Organisational Area Services will provide the resources to write safety cases etc.

The people in these teams will be selected on behaviour, attitude and team-working skills.

Managing & monitoring the change

The associated changes would be carried out carefully to ensure a smooth transition. Each management area would be monitored against the implementation plan.

Assurance would be looking at the number of accidents, events and staff morale and turnover. Monitoring and review would continue into the future.

John Mazillius asked what the management link was with facility managers. Gerry Traynor asked where the link with Staff Representatives was. Alan Brandwood replied that the TU representatives attended the management

meetings and had been involved in the development of the process. The Assurance Service Manager would agree requirements with each Facility Manager. Facility Managers would be able to ask for support which the Assurance Manager would provide or "borrow" from other areas.

Mr Mazillius said he was concerned that Safety Cases would be written by staff outside the facility, Alan Brandwood said that Facility Managers would now have input into the process through the Assurance Managers.

Other Assurance Matters:

- AWE had won a Mars Golden Oak Award for Environmental Management.
- There was a Road Safety campaign planned. (See Frank Winter's presentation).
- There had been good progress on the sludge tanks project.
- AWE had had a visit from a Government Safety Adviser, first indications were favourable but the expected report would give details.
- The NII and the EA were both to carry out team inspections of AWE's performance over the first 12 months of the contract.
- During the quarter there had been 803 abnormal events, most had been level 1, 36 had been level 2 events.

Margaret Dadswell asked whether there had been more monitoring of the stream at Fisherman's Lane during periods of heavy rain. Alan Brandwood said that there had and that the trends could be seen from the results.

Tony Ferguson asked whether there had been any more diversions of run-off water away from North Ponds. Frank Winter told him there had not been any.

Mr Ferguson then asked for clarification of a point in the NII quarterly report on stacking pallets five high. NII said that AWE currently stacks four high and needed NII agreement to take RA material into the new store and also needed NII agreement on the safety case to stack five high. The initial indicators were that it should not be a problem, there were improvements over current operations. NII would assess this and make a decision.

Mr Ferguson queried whether it had been sensible to build a new store at great cost and then make the decision to make this change and suggested that this decision should have been made prior to the build. Frank Winter explained that as much of the testing as possible had been done prior to the build but as the facility had a laser-levelled floor, there had been no similar facility in which the final detailed commissioning trials could be carried out. An NII representative said that they had told AWE that there had been enough information for them to go ahead with construction but they agreed that further trials within the new building would be necessary.

Bill Cane asked whether there had been any reduction in the amount of cadmium waste generated from AWE's plating shop. Alan Brandwood said that although this was close to the limit of AWE's authorisations, it could not be reduced because of the operations carried out in the workshop.

John Mazillius asked for information on trends in contractor injuries.

Action 24/3: Alan Brandwood to provide information on trends in Contractor injuries.

3. PRESENTATION BY DR BRUCE (Nuclear (Industries Families Study))

Copies of the presentation slides are attached.

Dr Bruce said that there would be a fourth report looking at fertility rates amongst workers in the Nuclear Industry.

Peter Taylor asked whether the radiation levels discussed were the permitted levels or some fraction of that. Dr Bruce explained that the levels related to dose received and added that over the years dose rates had reduced substantially, so for the vast majority of those surveyed the dose was only a fraction of that permitted.

Mr Taylor then asked if there was still a risk if a parent received a dose close to the limit. Dr Bruce replied that there was no indication that there was a trend with increased dose. He added that the doses were in any case very small in radiological terms.

Mr Bryant noted that there was a similar issue between mobile phones and brain tumours. Dr Bruce explained that one could not make associations without causality. For example the number of Church of England vicars had fallen over the last 50 years and the number of deaths on the road had also fallen over the same period, but this did not mean that there was a link. Currently it is unlikely that there is a link between mobile phones and brain tumours but it would take a long time to work through the issues. In this case the survey looked at ionising radiation and its effect on cells, much had been learned and was understood about this, mobiles emit non-ionising radiation and it was therefore more difficult to prove a link at cellular level. He added that there was more likely to be a link between road deaths and the use of mobile phones.

John Southall asked if the trends were reflected in the general population and if there was a trend over time, with people in their 50s or 90s. Dr Bruce answered that within the study of 10,000, there were both monitored and non-monitored staff, therefore the control was within the study.

Tim Whitaker asked whether the report looked at gross levels of contamination as from Chernobyl. Dr Bruce said that the best examples were the survivors and second and third generations from the atomic bombs in Japan. There they had found it difficult to distinguish between the health of survivors and the general population. One reason could be that the human female reproduction system is very good at aborting abnormal fetuses, often at a stage too early to be noticed.

4. FRANK WINTER

Action 23/3: To provide information on the volume of water diverted to the Aldermaston Stream during the October flood.

It is estimated that during the October 2000 storm 12,000,000 litres of surface water was passed from centre site directly to the Aldermaston stream.

Action 23/4: To meet with Burghfield and West Berkshire councils to see if there is a common root cause for sewerage problems during heavy rainfall.

Councillor Mundy had asked whether the raw sewage, identified at AWE Burghfield during October 2000 storm, had emanated from Burghfield village via the brook and had been photographed. This would have supported the Burghfield villagers in their discussions with Berkshire Council and Thames Water Utilities on their sewage and drainage systems. AWE was able to confirm to Mr Mundy that the material monitored at AWE Burghfield had been positively identified as AWE sewage.

Action 23/5: To investigate the state of watercourses at AWE with a view to dredging and clearing out.

The only area that may benefit from some clearance is the stream in Fisherman's Lane (into which the Aldermaston stream flows), which leads ultimately to the Kennet. AWE understood this waterway was classified as part of the main drainage network for the area and as such was regulated by the Environment Agency. Clearance of this section of the stream would provide increased capacity and reduce the likelihood of the flooding of Aldermaston village during periods of high rainfall.

It would not however prevent a repeat of the floods seen during last October storm – which were believed to be attributed to a water feature to the rear of one residence and a tree growing in the bed of the stream to the rear of another. (Councillor Roger Brown was aware of the situation).

Any clearance activity concerning main drainage networks needed to be performed in consultation with the Environment Agency, whereas any clearance of local drainage networks should be performed in consultation with the local authority and landowners.

Action 23/6: Presentation on the North Ponds Filtration Scheme.
Dr Andrew Jupp, Head of Site Management & Services.

Copies of the presentation slides are attached.

The design work for the North Ponds filtration plant was on schedule with initial construction activity expected to begin in March. The filters were expected to be installed and functional by December 2001.

Following a technical investigation it was concluded that, considering the volumes of water and flow rates involved, membrane filtration technology would provide the best fit to the company's requirement. Dr Jupp explained that in essence a filter membrane consisted of a sheet of material containing lots of very small holes which, when blocked, could be cleaned and the filter re-used. This technology was more usually employed in the production of drinking water.

PALL Corporation, the company chosen by competitive process to build and install the filtration plant, is recognised as a world leader in this field and is in fact the largest filter manufacturer in the world.

By design the filtration plant and its support systems would

- remove all particles which are greater than 0.1 micrometer (by comparison a human hair is approximately 100 micrometers in diameter);
- handle flow rates up to 100lt (22 gallons) per second for up to 6 hours in any 24, during storm conditions;
- have no adverse effect on the environment;
- not produce excessive secondary waste;
- be capable of detecting a structural failure in any one of the 960,000 separate elements that comprise the primary filter system;
- and would consistently monitor the filter discharge for particulate, tritium, pH and turbidity.

He said that when the water inflow to the North Ponds WMS exceeded 200 lt./second, which it would do under severe storm conditions, the excess flow would be directed to existing holding tanks where it would be stored pending filtration at a later stage.

When installed and operational the filtration plant would in effect increase the current storage capacity of the North Ponds Water Management System by some 7,500,000 lt. This effective increase in capacity was expected to greatly

reduce the number of occasions when excess flow would have to be passed to the Aldermaston stream and thereby assist in reducing the likelihood of flooding.

The project was expected to take nine months to complete and by December 2001 water being discharged from the North Ponds Water Management System would be virtually drinking water quality.

Peter Taylor asked what factor of contamination would be removed, Andrew answered that he did not have detailed figures but that the water would actually meet the standards laid down for drinking water.

Leak from old pond:

Dr Jupp said that early on 29 January the water level in the old 'Pond Two' was seen to have dropped by two feet and the nearby wet well two was overflowing. Contingency arrangements had been put into place and the water pumped into the new water management system. The leak had been stopped with sandbags. Sedimentary samples taken on and off site had been within normal operating parameters.

The Environment Agency and NII had been informed and the EA had carried out independent monitoring. Currently, specialised contractors were looking at the old ponds to characterise them prior to decommissioning.

Andrew Jupp confirmed to Angus Campbell and Margaret Dadswell that this had not led to contamination of the Aldermaston stream.

Frank Winter continued:

Burghfield Flooding: Following the flooding all flood-damaged assets had been removed, cleaned or disposed of as appropriate. Dehumidifiers had been brought in to 'Dry Out' worst effected building and a contract had been placed with civil consultant, Mouchel, to provide option study and recommendations for future flood remediation.

Burghfield Reception Refurbishment: Buildings had been refurbished to a modern standard including installation of a 'State of the Art' fire protection system. Consideration had been given to disabled access and facilities throughout design phase and incorporated into final building design. The Site Post Room and support facilities had moved into the building and an Interview Room and postal x-ray service had been incorporated.

New Fire Appliances: At the beginning of the New Year, AWE Aldermaston Fire Brigade taken delivery of two brand new state-of the-art fire appliances.

Frank Winter said that, complete with all the onboard kit necessary to deal with the majority of emergencies, the appliances were a significant investment by the company in safety, both on and off site. The brigade provides welcome support to the emergency services in the local community and the new vehicles are equipped with invaluable motor vehicle crash rescue equipment.

One of the new appliances had already been in action in support of the community – called out to a fire in Tadley during the previous week. The statistics for 2000 revealed that of the total of 687 incidents attended by the brigades at Aldermaston and Burghfield - including fire calls, medical assistance calls and road traffic accidents - a significant proportion were off site. The Aldermaston brigade had attended 3 fires and 53 road traffic accidents off site and the Burghfield brigade had dealt with 1 fire and 12 road traffic accidents off site.

Frank Winter said that although the figure for on-site call outs may seem high, the number of actual incidents of very small fires was low. AWE received a lot of 'good intent calls', as everyone was encouraged to make an emergency call if they had even the slightest suspicion of something amiss.

Sludge tanks: A pinhole leak in one of 20 tanks used to contain radioactive waste sludge at AWE Aldermaston had been discussed at a previous meeting. A repair had been quickly effected but AWE had given an undertaking to begin decommissioning the tanks in 2003. That work had started.

Some of the sludges in at least three tanks, had been characterised as low level waste and potentially capable of being disposed of to Drigg. Two had been selected and trials had been completed to demonstrate that the sludge could be cemented in a form acceptable to Drigg.

Work had begun on 15 January to cement and dispose of these two tanks. To date more than 40 per cent of one tank had been completed and it was expected that the contents of both tanks would be cemented and consigned by the end of March 2001.

Plastic pallets: The replacement of pallets for holding waste drums which had been identified in 2000 as not meeting AWE's fire safety standards was now complete. These pallets were previously an industry standard. AWE had discovered their inadequacy through it's own independent testing and had alerted the rest of the industry.

Road Safety Programme: A number of road safety and traffic management improvements were being introduced at AWE sites from 5 March. These included. -

- A 20 m.p.h. maximum speed limit at AWE Aldermaston, bringing it in line with existing controls at AWE Burghfield, with a 10 m.p.h. limit in some locally-defined areas. Compliance with the limits would be mandatory and offenders would be liable for disciplinary action.
- Electronic display signs on main highways at both sites to detect and warn drivers travelling at excess speed and to advise of icy road conditions.
- The provision by the Company of suitable helmets for all cyclists on AWE sites.
- A programme of remedial works to roads and paving, scheduled to be completed before the end of March 2001.
- A system of cycle lanes on most primary routes on the Aldermaston site. (A risk assessment of cycling on the Burghfield site revealed no requirement for a similar system to be installed).
- A review of traffic light sequencing and motion detection override to prevent potentially dangerous incidents caused by drivers anticipating the lights changing to green and to lessen delays to road users at traffic lights.
- Changes to on-site car parking arrangements and restrictions. This was intended to maximise car-parking availability by removing unnecessary restrictions and utilising every appropriate area.
- Finally, discussions were planned with the Local Highways Authority for speed restrictions on public roads in the vicinity of AWE's main gates.

Together these proposals formed part of a new AWE Highways Standard designed to address both the physical aspects and the management of AWE's highway systems as well as improving the general level of road safety and ease of travel on AWE sites.

On the subject of roads, David Leeks asked that AWE look at providing dropped kerbs to facilitate use of wheelchairs on site. He also thanked AWE for Fire Service support in the Tadley area and asked that staff were told by MDP when they had defective lights on their vehicles. Frank Winter said that the police did this but he would remind them and AWE staff to be vigilant.

Malcolm Bryant asked if AWE supported car sharing. Frank answered that AWE did support car sharing using a web site and went further by providing bikes for use on site, and providing cycle helmets for staff who cycled to work.

John Mazillius asked whether the eddy current technology used in sludge tanks on site could also be used in oil tanks on site. Frank Winter said that the system

was mobile and would be deployed as appropriate on site. In answer to a further question he said that the tanks would continue to be inspected regularly.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mike Broad asked what was the status regarding the AWE Assisted Travel scheme. Frank Winter replied that the Assisted Travel Scheme would end on 3 March. The scheme was no longer viable. The numbers regularly using the service fell from 241 in 1994 to only 59 (plus 14 casual users) at the end of 2000 and there was a poor employee response to Company initiatives to find ways of increasing usage. When the decision to end the scheme was taken the average number of passengers on each bus was only six, with two buses carrying only one passenger.

Even during the recent fuel crisis the extra take-up had been disappointingly small, in spite of encouragement given by the Company.

As the scheme covered such a wide geographic area and with under utilisation of buses, the bus companies would be able to use their vehicles and drivers to greater effect on other routes. Indeed, one of the bus companies involved had informed AWE that it would not be bidding for a renewed contract after Christmas 2000 because of a shortage of drivers.

AWE had been discussing alternatives with individuals. Twenty-four had withdrawn from the scheme, having found alternative forms of transport or had left the Company. Nineteen had organised a joint arrangement and ten, who had a declared disability, had applications for assistance being processed through the Employment Service 'Access to Work' scheme.

AWE was continuing to assist others through internal communications. A joint working group of managers, Human Resource and Trades Unions representatives was meeting regularly to review progress.

John Parfitt thanked AWE for their prompt notification of incidents.

Murray Roberts asked when the LLC would be able to learn of Steve Gibbs' Safety Audit Report on AWE. John Rae answered that he hoped it would be finalised in time for the next LLC meeting in June.

Doug Mundy said that there were still rumours that the Ministry of Defence Police would patrol Burghfield Village in the evenings. John Rae said that there was a Bill going through Parliament to extend the use of the Ministry of Defence Police and he thought that this was the basis of the rumours.

6. CLOSING REMARKS

John Rae said that members would be given a copy of the AWE Key Performance Indicators for 2001. He also said that he felt that Frank Winter was being

modest when he had told members about the progress on emptying the old sludge tanks and that progress so far had been beyond expectation and that to have achieved so much two years ahead of schedule was excellent. He invited members to visit the AWE Historical collection which, he explained was a collection of products and memorabilia of the fifty years of AW(R)E.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 14 June 2001.

8. VISIT TO THE AWE HISTORIC COLLECTION

The meeting ended with a buffet lunch.