

**Minutes of the 26th AWE
Local Liaison Committee Meeting**

held Thursday 13 September 2001

Present:

Dr John Rae	AWE	Chairman
Malcolm Hutchinson	AWEML	
Bill Haight	AWEML	
Alan Brandwood	AWE	
Frank Winter	AWE	
Graeme Hammond	AWE	
Paula Newman	AWE	(Deputy Secretary)
Jonathan Brown	AWE	
Angela Jenkins	AWEML	
Mike Jeal	HSE/NII	
Martin Sayers	HSE/NII	
Gareth Beard	EA	
Darren Baker	EA	
W Cane	Mortimer West End Community Liaison Officer	
MR Broad	Tadley Town Council	
T Faulkner	Tadley Town Council	
P Hobbs	Sulhamstead Parish	
MRP Eden	Holybrook Parish Council	
CJS Bridges	Beech Hill Parish Council	
D Hoad	Theale Parish Council	
PE Taylor	Brimpton Parish Council	
Dr AM Roberts	Padworth Parish Council	
A Sumner	Wokefield Parish Council	
J Mazillius	Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council	
T Whitaker	Mapledurham Parish Council	
Mrs P Bale	Pangbourne Parish Council	
M Bryant	Wokingham District	
R Meredith	West Berkshire	
D Mundy	Burghfield Parish Council	
A Campbell	Wasing Parish Meeting	
J Moss	Swallowfield Parish Council	
B Hamilton-Hewitt	Silchester Parish Council	
D Dymond	Reading Borough Council	
P Beard	Reading Borough Council	
G Eddy	Hampshire County	
J Gates	Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	
C Thomson	Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	

1. CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Apologies for absence: Chris Goss and Avril Burdett.

New members: John Rae welcomed Councillors Peter Beard and David Dymond, new LLC representatives of Reading Borough Council, and Jon Gates, new Emergency Planning Officer for Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

John extended his thanks to former members Councillors Dennis Morgan, Jonny Morris and Kevin Holyer for their support to the LLC and good wishes to Tony West on his retirement.

Chairman's Opening Remarks

Dr Rae commented on the heightened security measures in force at AWE following the terrorist activities in the United States. He said that, in common with other Ministry of Defence establishments, AWE is on a higher alert state. He confirmed this did not imply any additional or specific risk to AWE or the community but was simply a sensible precaution being taken as part of the UK's national response to the situation.

John Rae was unable to give specific details for reasons of security, except to say that all vehicles entering the site were being searched individually. He realised these activities may impact on local road traffic and AWE had been in touch with Thames Valley Police concerning road safety.

AWE plc Management Changes

Dr Rae reminded the members that he had recently written to the Committee about changes being made to the AWE plc Board. He then introduced Bill Haight, former director of AWE Management Ltd who has now taken on the role of Managing Director of AWE plc.

Dr Rae explained his new role as Vice Chairman of AWE plc and confirmed he would continue as Chairman of the LLC.

Bill Haight spoke briefly on his role at AWE and stated that he would have day to day responsibility of the management team and workforce. His background has been with Senior Management at Lockheed Martin and he also has an extensive background in science and technology and worked for fifteen years in the US government.

John Rae then introduced Malcolm Hutchinson, the Chairman of AWE Management Ltd and the new Executive Chairman of AWE plc. Malcolm said that he recognised the increasing challenges at AWE and would adopt the classic Company Chairman role. He said he would be assisting Bill Haight and ensuring the whole team worked together at AWE.

25-year Contract

Dr Rae explained that the 25-year contract to manage and operate AWE was not something new. It was an option open to all bidders in the original bid for the second contract. It is dependent on satisfactory arrangements for Public/Private Partnership. However, this had taken longer to finalise than anticipated. Originally the deal was due to be completed by the end of March, but owing to various factors including the recent elections, this had slipped. Dr Rae said he has hopeful of completing this by the end of September. He explained that borrowing money did not mean gaining more money; it just proves more flexible as capital can be obtained when it is required. He confirmed that the total budget in the current 10 year contract was in the region of £2.5 billion.

Actions from the last meeting:

25/1 John Rae: To pass on LLC members' condolences to the families of John Gardener and John Cross. **Action complete.**

25/2 Graeme Hammond: To provide members with a personal copy of the Food Standards Agency report. **Action complete.** Subsequently another document has been received from the Food Standards Agency about dose assessment. **Action 26/1 Graeme Hammond:** To provide copies to LLC members.

25/3 LLC members: To feed back comments of the new style AWE Quarterly Report to Avril Burdett by 17 August 2001. **Action complete.**

25/4 Alan Brandwood: To provide AWE's baseline EFQM Score at the next meeting. **Action complete.** This has been included in the latest quarterly report.

25/5 Avril Burdett: To send copies of the AWE Annual Report 2000 to members. **Action complete.**

25/6 Frank Winter: To find out rules governing the use of sirens by the MDP on escort duties. **Action complete.** Avril has written to members with the response to this. The MDP have confirmed they would not normally use their sirens when escorting convoys unless they believed that it would aid the safety of a situation. They did stress this would be a rare occurrence.

Action 25/7 Avril Burdett: To ask all members opinions on the venue of future meetings. **Action complete.** 33 replies out of a possible 35 were received. 29 members confirmed they would prefer the meetings to continue to be held at AWE. 3 replies stated they would like the meetings to be held at venues closer to them. 2 replies would like meetings to be held at venues of local councils in rotation and 1 reply felt that a mixture of all three options would be appropriate.

John Parfitt has offered to host a meeting at the West Berkshire Council offices in Newbury.

Action 26/2 Avril Burdett: Possibility of holding November meeting at West Berkshire Council. Avril to check suitable parking arrangements are available at this venue and look into the creation of a small exhibition stand for the next meeting.

Independent safety report on AWE

John Rae confirmed he was able to close out another action from an earlier meeting, to provide a presentation on the Independent Safety Review carried out by Steve Gibbs. Angela Jenkins, a member of Steve's independent Safety Advisory Team, would be giving a presentation on this report later on in the meeting.

Sitex Burghfield

Dr Rae stated that the Site Exercise scheduled for AWE Burghfield on Wednesday 12 September had been postponed in view of the increased security state. It would be rescheduled for later in the year.

MOD Tritiated Waste

John Rae explained that Bill Cane had circulated the latest in the exchange of letters between LLC members and the Ministry of Defence on the subject of tritiated waste. As far as AWE was concerned, there had been no further developments on this issue and Dr Rae assured members that Dr Moonie (Parliamentary Under Secretary for Defence, Minister for Veterans) had given an undertaking that members would be kept informed of any further significant developments.

North Ponds Visit

Dr Rae told members that an invitation had recently been extended to residents of Aldermaston village to come and see AWE's Water Management facility. A small group of people took up the offer and were given a tour of the complex by the Facility Manager. John Rae said AWE would be happy to repeat this invitation if any other residents wished to visit the North Ponds.

Red dye in the Thames

Dr Rae told the Committee that since the last meeting, two attempts had been made to repeat the red dye experiments in the River Thames at Pangbourne. The EA are conducting a review of its capability to assess the impact of authorised discharges from nuclear sites. It had recently identified a need to refine the capability to predict the fate of radionuclides discharged to rivers, and in particular, short duration discharges. The purpose of the current project was to develop a model for assessing the impact of short duration discharges from three nuclear sites into the Thames: Aldermaston, Harwell and Amersham.

Dr Rae said that the EA's current regulation of radionuclide discharges to rivers assumes that discharges occur at a continuous, relatively uniform rate throughout the year. The experiments would study the influence of seasonal factors, local flow and radionuclide concentrations.

West Berkshire Civic Day

Dr Rae told the Committee that he was pleased that AWE had been asked to set up a visit as part of West Berkshire's Civic Day. One of the aims of the event was to show leaders of neighbouring councils some highlights of West Berkshire. It was hoped to give the visitors an overview of AWE and to include a visit to the Historic Collection. John Rae said that Bill Cane had been invited to represent the LLC during the visit.

Dr Rae added that visits to the Historic Collection could be arranged for small groups from time to time and any interested members should approach Graeme Hammond.

Improvements at the Falcon Gate

Dr Rae said that landscaping improvements were currently underway on the MOD land outside the Falcon Gate. He added that these changes had been taken up as an issue in some of the local papers following complaints from anti-nuclear protestors who camped on this land. John Rae said that whilst the right to protest was respected it should not be forgotten that this land is not a peace camp, it does belong to the MOD. It is situated very near to one of AWE's busiest entrance gates and there was a genuine concern that the activities of the protestors could prejudice the safety of staff and the public themselves. It was also part of an ongoing project to improve the appearance of the site.

Site Development Plan

Dr Rae told the Committee that we were nearing completion of the site development plan which details what AWE expects to do on the site over the next few years. He said that he aimed to give members a briefing on the proposals and to make a presentation to the planning authority as soon as possible.

Schools Liaison

Dr Rae told the Committee that AWE's graduate team had been involved in a number of projects to benefit the local community, and in particular schools. The latest project had been to design sets of large scale scientific equipment suitable for primary and junior school children. The equipment will be built by AWE apprentices and will be unveiled shortly.

Schools Engineering Challenge

Dr Rae told the Committee that the Schools Engineering Challenge was held in July at the Basingstoke College of Technology. This is the fifth year the event has been organised and sponsored by AWE.

Sixteen teams from Hampshire and Berkshire schools took part and this year's challenge was designed and organised by a team of AWE graduate trainees. The winners from Slough Grammar School received £1000 to buy equipment, with the Kennet School taking second place and the Vyne School in third.

Planning Application for 159 houses opposite AWE Aldermaston

John Rae told members that when the Tesco development, on the former Boundary Hall site, was first suggested the NII wished to be satisfied that the development would not prejudice AWE's emergency response capability. John told the Committee that AWE were able to demonstrate that our procedures were sufficiently robust to cope with this.

AWE has since been asked to make a similar assessment for a new planning application for a housing development opposite the Aldermaston site. Discussions have already taken place with local police.

Bill Cane informed the Committee of a planning application by West Berkshire Council to build six office blocks in Valentine Wood, near to the Aldermaston site.

Action 26/3 John Rae: To consult West Berkshire Council for more information.

Media Reports

Requested by Bill Cane, John Rae had been asked to comment on several alarmist headlines which had recently appeared in the local press. Dr Rae went on to say that over the past year the majority of local media had generally reported on AWE's activities fairly and accurately. However, one newspaper, which declined an invitation to attend a briefing on the Annual Report, misinterpreted the sliding scale of points for abnormal events reporting as "breaches of safety".

John said that this type of reporting was disappointing but it would not deter use from our policy of providing the media with full and frank information about AWE's activities.

Bill Cane said he was disturbed by alarmist reports that were inaccurate and the effect they had on the local population and it reflected badly on the members here. John replied that if you responded to every negative article you read it would take up a great deal of time! His view was that if it did not have serious repercussions on AWE then it should be ignored, action should only be taken when it seriously affected AWE.

Terry Faulkner informed the Committee of a hotline that the Basingstoke Gazette had recently set up which encouraged readers to inform them of any inaccuracies that it had reported in its paper.

Terry Faulkner also added that the Tesco site in Tadley has been approved by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council but has to be called in by the Secretary of State. However, the Budgens site proposal by Sainsburys in Tadley, has not been reviewed by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

AWE Cardiff

Dr Rae told the Committee that AWE was on schedule for completing decommissioning work at Cardiff and the site would soon be handed over to the Defence Land Agents.

Managing Director's attendance at LLC

Murray Roberts asked if Bill Haight would be attending all future LLC meetings. Bill confirmed that he would attend if the Committee wished him to. Murray asked if a new Senior Management diagram could be circulated to the Committee.

Sellafield LLC

John Mazillius asked if, subsequent to his visit to the Sellafield LLC about a year ago, and reporting back to the LLC, were there any changes the Committee wished to make to the format of the meeting. Members reported they were happy as things stood at the moment.

Action 26/4 John Rae: To provide an updated senior management organisational chart.

2. ASSURANCE ISSUES

NII Report

Alan Brandwood told the Committee that the NII Report on AWE's performance in the first year under new management had confirmed that AWE's performance was satisfactory and that it had successfully managed Health and Safety. Some problem areas were highlighted in the report and Alan said he was confident they could be met. In total 13 recommendations were made, all of which were being dealt with already.

ISO 14001 Progress

Alan Brandwood confirmed that, following an audit, AWE was confident that its ISO 14001 certification would be renewed. Some areas remained to be addressed and these would be reassessed shortly.

Alan also told the Committee that a team of Executive members visited Sellafield recently to talk about common problems and learn how they deal with them there.

Assurance Conference

Alan Brandwood told members that an Assurance Conference had been held last week at AWE entitled Improving Through Learning. A number of high profile speakers had attended including those from the TUC, Health and Safety Commission and Scottish Power. The Conference was a success and a video of the day was going to be cascaded down to staff throughout the site.

Quarterly Report

Alan Brandwood presented the latest AWE Quarterly Report. He thanked the Committee for their comments on the new style of the Report, the majority of which were complimentary. Improvements had been made with the graphs to show monthly and yearly performance and also contractor performance.

Alan said AWE were committed to making improvements on all targets, however one or two targets would certainly improve, but may not be hit.

Alan Brandwood went on to discuss abnormal events, two areas in particular. Firstly with regard to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) had failed in a minor way and some PPE has been embargoed as a result. Discussions are currently underway with the manufacturers of the equipment. The other area had been robustness of radioactive sources. A management system was in place for a detailed audit and review to take place. AWE were aiming to learn from other similar establishments who have been faced with this problem.

Peter Taylor asked the significance of hazards to the public and in particular which hazards had been looked at. Alan Brandwood responded that the risks to the public were radioactive materials, volume of traffic and discharges from normal operations. The discharge authorisations themselves were set at levels that proved no risk to the public. Safety cases also ensured a minimal risk to the public with the NII going through the cases. Alan suggested this subject may be discussed at greater length in a future meeting.

Peter Taylor asked whether there was a report on all chemical emissions. Alan responded that mercury is the main chemical to be monitored and any anything Level 2 or above was also reported. Alan told the Committee that discharges are set at a very low rate at the moment, however decommissioning may increase this figure.

John Rae told the members that owing to the infinite list of materials used at AWE, there was a problem in deciding which to report on. Therefore, only those that are deemed significant are identified and reported.

Tim Whitaker asked the Chairman that in light of the recent terrorists activities in the United States what procedures did AWE have in place to deal with a similar incident. Alan Brandwood told members that as many parts of the plant were built in the 1950's and 1980's, AWE had previously considered the impact of a plane crash and after discussions with MOD and Security an exclusion zone, a height and distance restriction on aircraft, had been implemented around the site. However, with the actions of terrorists it was virtually impossible to design plans to prevent this.

John Rae posed a much asked question to the Committee that if someone hijacked a plane which then landed on the AWE site, would there be a nuclear explosion? John told members that no this would not be the case. Without explaining in detail due to classification, John said that a nuclear warhead had safety features which must be overridden in a precise way, and these would not occur as a result of an crash or fire.

David Dymond said that some aircraft use depleted uranium as ballast and would this have any effect in an explosion. John Rae told members there was no risk of any explosion from depleted uranium.

Tim Whitaker stated that with regard to the exclusion zone imposed on AWE he did not have any faith in this procedure. Alan Brandwood replied that if there is a terrorist intent no exclusion zone procedure would be effective, but John Rae added that another reason this zone was implemented was because from the air the AWE site looks like an airfield and could confuse pilots.

John Parfitt, at a previous meeting, had brought up the subject of parking at Sellafield and the fact it should be off site. Should AWE make parking off site altogether. John Rae responded that random searches of cars was an ongoing feature upon entry into AWE.

Malcolm Bryant asked the Committee if security checks were still made on new members of staff. It was confirmed that security checks were made 4-6 months before the employee started at AWE and medical checks were performed also to identify any substance abuse etc.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

Role and Responsibilities

Frank Winter told the Committee about the appointment of Ian Berry, Engineering Director, and Frank's own revised responsibilities within AWE.

Tritium

Frank explained that a strategy was being finalised to deal with past, current and future tritium uses, covering operations, waste management, decommissioning and legacy issues. He explained that Jonathan Brown would be given a presentation later on in the meeting to explain in more detail.

Meeting with West Berkshire District Council

Frank told the Committee that further to the publication of the Environmental Stewardship Public Information brochure a meeting had been held with representatives of West Berkshire District Council to discuss plans and a programme for dealing with legacy contamination on the Aldermaston site. Frank explained that due to confidentiality he was unable to give specific details relating to other people's property, although this was reported to the regulator. He was confident that there had been a minimal impact on adjacent land.

Frank said he was pleased that the plant which had been installed to clean up legacy organic solvents on the site was now in operation. AWE were confident they had stopped any further egress of the material off site.

Tadley Treacle Fair

Frank told the Committee that three members of AWE's fire service had received commendations from the Managing Director for the care they provided to a lady who had suffered a heart attack at the Fair. Their prompt action undoubtedly gave the lady the best chance of surviving this emergency.

Action 26/5 Avril Burdett: To pass on the Committee's thanks to the firemen and firewoman concerned.

Public Alerting System

Frank told members of the continuing efforts to achieve an effective public alerting system. He reminded the Committee that for various reasons a siren system had been discounted. However, electronic call-out systems were being assessed, particularly BT's PEWIT.

Unfortunately, it had recently been learnt that under the current OFTEL regulations AWE would be unable to automatically dial up households and businesses in the area, unless they had previously agreed to this. This would mean sending a mailshot advising neighbours of this service and their entitlement to free subscription to the service. Only if they agreed would they receive any alerts that were sent out.

Bill Cane urged the Committee that this issue should be resolved once and for all. Doug Mundy agreed and said that the old type sirens were the best solution. Bill Cane said there were problems attached to this, including wind direction and not being able to restrict the sirens to given areas only. John Rae also said that there were many disadvantages linked to sirens which included their maintenance and the regular testing they would require, and he thought the better solution would be the automatic dialling system.

Bill Cane said that if the regulations with regard to automatic dial-ups could be changed it would be of benefit. Terry Faulkner agreed and suggested that maybe Town Councils would like to assist with this issue. David Dymond asked what procedures were used at Sellafield, it was confirmed that sirens are used but explained that Sellafield is a different community set up and more suited to siren use.

John Rae concluded that they would try and pursue the automatic dialling system and keep the Committee informed of its progress.

Bill Cane suggested that John Rae write to him outlining points to be made for the PEWIT system which could be raised at member's council meetings.

Action 26/6 John Rae.

4. TRITIUM STRATEGY

Jonathan Brown gave a presentation to the Committee on AWE's Tritium Strategy.

After the presentation Bill Cane confirmed that AWE wanted the LLC to become involved in this subject and provide support. He felt this was a unique opportunity to assist AWE, in a workshop style environment. Terry Faulkner agreed to support the project. Peter Taylor asked if the Tritium situation was perceived as a hazard, which it was not, and stated he was therefore unconcerned at present. Malcolm Bryant asked what the members could contribute to this and John Rae replied that it was an emotive subject, and suggested that members bring a list of questions they would like answered. Tim Whitaker asked if the final decision would be made by the EA, Jonathan Brown replied that it was up to AWE to put forward proposals for the best approach for tritium issues.

John Mazillius agreed it would give the Committee a chance to be proactive rather than reactive and supported the Workshop. Mike Broad, Murray Roberts and Alan Sumner also agreed the workshop would help in understanding more of AWE's work and enhance the LLC's reputation. A vote was held and the majority agreed to hold a workshop.

Action 26/7 Bill Cane: To write to LLC members with suggested dates and times for the workshop.

Mike Jeal asked if the members had any objections to NII observers being present at the workshop, none were made.

5. AWEML SAFETY REVIEW

Malcolm Hutchinson told the Committee that when AWEML were asked to take over the contract it was proposed to the Board that an independent Safety Director be employed. The Board agreed and Steve Gibbs and Angela Jenkins were approached.

Dr Angela Jenkins gave a presentation on the Independent Safety Review.

After the presentation, Malcolm again explained the reasoning behind the Safety Review and told the Committee that AWEML could not be responsible for the contract without looking at safety which is always paramount.

Peter Taylor agreed that it was important to have plans in place and what particular improvements were going to be implemented. Angela responded that examples included reducing the number of incidents happening and increasing abnormal events reporting. Targets have been set and it looks to be a challenging time for AWE.

Murray Roberts asked that as a result of the review it had come light that there were an insufficient number of safety people, whilst the Committee had previously been told it was the quality of staff that mattered and not numbers. Angela replied that this was a long term target in terms of ensuring people were effectively "waiting in the wings" and able to step into a position should a current member of staff move on. Unfortunately, this problem has become a national shortage in some areas.

Alan Brandwood told members that at the moment there was a problem with retaining specialist skills staff and in fact AWE had lost 3 safety case writers. John Rae highlighted the fact that if there were a shortage of safety staff it would mean work getting delayed etc, thus not actually proving a safety issue, corners were not cut etc.

John Mazillius asked that due to staff reductions, some quite drastic, lowering of morale amongst staff must be an important issue for AWE. Angela agreed and said that was why it was important to have reviews regularly, so that processes were changed and people could adjust. John Rae added that the work AWEML did provide for the MOD over the next 10 or 25 years would change, and would involve budget cuts and cutting staff numbers down over several years. He added that after the Chevaline dismantling, it would mean only one weapon system remained, rather than several.

However, Alan Brandwood added that the Assurance Directorate were actively recruiting on site at the moment.

Action 26/8 Angela Jenkins: To provide hard copies of vufoil presentation.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

John Mazillius thanked the LLC members for their sponsorship of the AWE cycle team who raised over £2,000 in total for the St Michael's Hospice.

Action 26/9 Avril Burdett: To ensure that LLC members have table microphones at next meeting.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 29 November 2001.

ACTIONS FROM THE 26TH MEETING OF THE LLC

Action 26/1 Graeme Hammond: Copies of Food Standards Agency report on dose assessment to be circulated to LLC members.

Action 26/2 Avril Burdett: To check parking arrangements at West Berkshire Council for possible next meeting. Also look into the creation of a small exhibition stand.

Action 26/3 John Rae: To consult West Berkshire Council for more information on Valentine Wood development.

Action 26/4 John Rae: To provide an updated senior management organisational chart.

Action 26/5 Avril Burdett: To pass on the Committee's thanks to the firemen/women concerned with assisting the lady at the Tadley Treacle Fair.

Action 26/6 John Rae: To write to Bill Cane outlining points to be made for the PEWIT system which could be raised at member's council meetings.

Action 26/7 Bill Cane: To write to LLC members with suggested dates and times for the Tritium Strategy Workshop.

Action 26/8 Angela Jenkins: To provide hard copies of AWEML Safety Review presentation.

Action 26/9 Avril Burdett: To ensure that LLC members have table microphones at next meeting.