

Minutes of the 29th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Held Tuesday 11th June 2002

Present:

Malcolm Hutchinson	AWE	Chairman
Frank Winter	AWE	
Alan Brandwood	AWE	
Graeme Hammond	AWE	
Avril Burdett	AWE	Secretary
Pamela Bale	Pangbourne Parish Council	
Mike Broad	Tadley Town Council	
Malcolm Bryant	Wokingham District Council	
Bill Cane	Mortimer West End Parish Council	
Chrissie Clemson	Aldermaston Parish Council	
Margaret Dadswell	Aldermaston Parish Council	
Geoff Eddy	Hampshire County Council	
Maurice Eden	Holybrook Parish Council	
Peter Hobbs	Sulhamstead Parish Council	
Philip Kingston	Pamber Heath Parish Council	
David Leeks	Tadley Town Council	
John Mazillius	Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council	
Ron Meredith	West Berkshire Council	
Jeff Moss	Swallowfield Parish Council	
Terry Price	Silchester Parish Council	
John Priest	West Berkshire Council	
Alan Sumner	Wokefield Parish Council	
Peter Taylor	Brimpton Parish Council	
Tim Whitaker	Mapledurham Parish Council	

Observers:

Darren Baker	Environment Agency
Martin Sayers	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Malcolm Hutchinson, Executive Chairman of AWE, introduced himself as the new chairman to the Local Liaison Committee.

1. Apologies

Bill Haight; Gerry Traynor; Terry Faulkner; Doug Mundy; John Parfitt; Tony Ferguson; Peter Beard; Angus Campbell; Peter Frazer; Des Hoad; Chris Bridges; John Southall; Murray Roberts and Roy Waite.

Jon Gates from Basingstoke & Deane, Brian Hamilton-Hewett from Silchester Parish Council and Fred Kirkham from Brimpton Parish Council had left the LLC, the Chairman thanked them for all they had done in the past. Terry Price was welcomed as the returning member for Silchester Parish Council.

2. Actions from the last meeting

27/9: To try to arrange a visit to the tritium facility at the JET Laboratory, Culham. Unfortunately, in common with other establishments, tighter security measures mean that a visit is not possible at present.

28/1 To provide an updated Senior Management organisation chart. **Action complete.**

28/2 To write to members giving details of the MIT process. **Action complete.**

28/3 To look again at the 2002 KPIs in the light of Cllr Ferguson's objections. Alan Brandwood started by saying that AWE had again reviewed the KPIs. The KPIs which had consistently recorded zero or near zero, were not useful for monitoring the Company's performance. The Company's KPIs were an important management tool which AWE shared with the LLC and the public. The performance against these targets is reviewed quarterly and at the year-end. This year, five KPIs which had been consistently zero or near zero had been dropped and 2 new ones added, in line with AWE's philosophy of continuing improvement. Finally Alan again gave a commitment to report any event which would have contributed to one of the dropped KPIs. In fact, page 14 of the Q1/2002 report recorded such an event.

28/4 Provide an explanation as to why the 2002 target for tritium discharge was 10% less than the 2001 target but actual discharge in 2001 compared with the target for 2002 was 9 times more. **Action Complete.**

28/5 LLC members to inform Bill Cane if they wanted a more detailed layman's guide to the 'Nature' article. No requests had been received. **Action Complete.**

28/6 Richard Lucking to investigate whether it would be possible to summarise the safety cases in order to provide Mr Taylor with the information he is seeking.

Alan Brandwood told members that Safety Cases contained large amounts of information and hence were very weighty documents. To distil the information into an unclassified and understandable document would be a huge undertaking and the Company did not have the resources to do this. He was however happy to answer specific questions on processes or buildings. There followed a discussion on the feasibility of the provision of a numerical index of risk to the public, similar to that provided for risks from radioactivity.

Action 29/1: Alan Brandwood to investigate a means of providing a numerical indication of risks to the public from AWE.

28/7 To provide a list of the 16 consented chemical discharges together with the actual discharges. **Action Complete.**

28/8 Frank Winter to provide information on where and how the conventional explosives from the Chevaline warheads had been destroyed. The explosives were transferred to the Ministry of Defence for disposal. If members wanted this information, they were advised to apply to the MoD. **Action complete.**

28/9 To provide Mrs Dadswell with information on which local planning applications had been sent to MoD for comment. **Action complete.**

28/10 To give a presentation on the Future Site Development Plan if possible. Confidential briefing given at the meeting. **Action Complete.** A public information booklet on the plan will be published shortly.

28/11 To look at the possibility of giving members a tour of the Burghfield site. It was planned to give a presentation on AWE Burghfield followed by a windshield tour of the site at the 30th meeting of the LLC. Members were told that they would not be allowed into the area of the licensed site.

3. Chairman's remarks

Anti-nuclear demonstration

The Company had received notification that Anti-nuclear protesters intended to hold a demonstration at AWE's sites from 13th to 18th June. Their intention was to hold a peaceful and non-violent protest. Their agenda included passing out leaflets to local people on the Thursday, holding a carnival and march through Reading on the Saturday and a service at the Aldermaston site on the Sunday. On Monday they intended to have a picnic and tour of the Burghfield site. The Ministry of Defence Police were working together with Thames Valley Police to ensure the safety of the public, AWE staff and operations.

Sir George Earle Trophy

Malcolm Hutchinson thanked Bill Cane and John Mazillius for their letters of congratulation. He said that he had also received a letter of congratulation from Newbury MP, David Rendel. The Sir George Earle trophy, which was on display in the meeting room, is the highest national award for safety. Malcolm said that this was a reflection of a great deal of hard work on the part of AWE's staff but he stressed that the Company would not become complacent. More on the award at agenda item (4).

Executive Staff changes

Since the last meeting there had been changes to AWE's Senior Management. Members were provided with a new organisation chart. Finance Director Graham Dyer had left on promotion to Serco to work on public/private finance initiatives. David Cooke had joined as new Finance Director from Serco. Alan Brandwood temporarily had a dual role, together with his deputy he was still managing the Assurance division, but had also taken over Human Resources until the new Director Human Resources joins the Company.

The Chairman was also pleased announce that AWE staff member, Rita Burgess had been made Mayor of Basingstoke. He congratulated Gerry Traynor on becoming Deputy Mayor, (in his absence) and wished both of them well in their year of office.

25 year contract update

The Company was still awaiting the announcement of the 25-year contract which was now expected at the end of June. Malcolm Hutchinson had been assured by Sir Robert Walmsley, Chief of Defence Procurement that everything was in place and the announcement would be made in Parliament in due course.

Speed Limits on roads around the AWE Aldermaston site

Company representatives had been speaking to West Berkshire Council about several issues concerning the Aldermaston site. This had included:

- a reduction of the speed limit past the Main Gate from the Soke Rd roundabout to the Heath End roundabout from 60mph to 40mph.
- The siting of signs on either side of the carriageway leading to Winkworth Lane indicating a crossing point.
- The installation of a shared cycle/footpath from the cycle lay-by to AWE Main Gate.
- WBC had agreed to study all the traffic routes adjacent to the site to produce a road safety improvement program for the next 3 - 5 years. The council may be looking for a partnership agreement to implement the improvements.

An option study was being prepared and would be available in the next 2 - 3 weeks.

AWE was also working with West Berkshire Council to stop fly tipping at the Paice's Hill re-cycling facility. The facility opens Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays and the rest of the week rubbish had been dumped in the entrance. Despite AWE's considerable efforts in housekeeping on site, rubbish from across the road stuck to the fences and blew onto the site.

Members from the neighbouring councils asked to be involved with the discussion.

Action 29/2: Avril Burdett to pass on the request for councils with a direct interest in changes on the roads around the Aldermaston site to be included in the discussions. **In hand.**

Paper on the dose assessment to the public from tritium

A few weeks previously a paper on the assessment of dose to the public from tritium had been published. The Chairman said that he understood that the Nuclear Awareness Group had written to some local councils about this.

He said that this was an interesting academic paper, but he stressed that AWE's radiation doses, both to its workforce and members of the public, were very low.

He said that the dose to members of the public from tritium were so low that they could not be measured but had to be computer modelled. Using pessimistic assumptions, the radiation doses to those members of the public who received the highest possible doses from AWE's discharges were below 0.25 μSv , compared to the recommended NRPB limit of 300 μSv , from any one site. The Chairman pointed out that this was a ratio of 1:1,200 difference. If the conclusions of this report were accepted, and this small dose was multiplied by a factor of 2 (or 4) as suggested in the paper, then overall doses received by members of the public from AWE's tritium discharges would still be very low.

Although the paper raised some interesting issues, it had not yet been considered by the International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP). [ICRP reviews all the scientific data for radiological protection, using panels of recognised experts, and then makes recommendations for change, where needed]. The ICRP would arrive at a considered conclusion following a review of all the published data. This process was likely to take 1 to 2 years. Until the ICRP had considered all this data it was unlikely that the EEC and the UK Government would make any changes to the legislation.

AWE Charities Exhibition

On Wednesday 12th June AWE was to hold a Charities Exhibition. Around 30 local charities supported by AWE staff would be exhibiting. The aim was to demonstrate how staff could help and gave the charities an opportunity to recruit volunteers to help with fund-raising or to give up some of their free time.

Schools Engineering Challenge

For the sixth year running AWE would be holding an engineering challenge for teams from 20 local secondary schools.

Apprentice Recruitment

This year 22 apprentices had been recruited, the same number as last year. This reinforced the Company's investment in and commitment to the future of AWE. Malcolm Hutchinson that he had been impressed by the calibre of the apprentices some had chosen an AWE Apprenticeship over going to university, and the record of performance of apprentices at AWE was very good. A large percentage of them chose to take up posts at AWE once qualified.

Bulk Ammonia Storage

A few years previously there had been a major exercise which had brought the offsite plan into play. The scenario was a major leak of ammonia from a storage tank at AWE, close to the A340. The chairman was pleased to report that the use of ammonia in this area had ceased and the storage tanks had been decommissioned. There was therefore no longer a risk of this type of accident.

Visits

Since the last meeting the Nuclear Safety Advisory Committee had visited AWE, (more about this at agenda item 5) and Laurence Williams, Chief Inspector, Nuclear Installations had also visited, he was particularly interested in continuous improvement and was pleased that AWE now had a Continuous Improvement Directorate under Angela Jenkins. Mr Williams planned further visits to look at specific issues.

4. Assurance Issues

Alan Brandwood, Director Assurance

NuSAC Visit

Sub-group 5 of the Nuclear Safety Committee (NuSAC), who advise the Government on nuclear safety, visited AWE on the 20th May. It was generally a successful and productive visit. Discussion focused on the NII 12-month team inspection response, Fissile material accounting and Criticality issues. Initial feedback shows that they were generally pleased with what they had seen, particularly with AWE's training, commitment and supervision.

Sir George Earle Trophy

This year AWE had become the first nuclear organisation to win the prestigious Sir George Earle Trophy, the top award for Health and Safety in the country. The selection process had been an arduous one but AWE had been chosen from amongst the 1010 entrants (of which 60 were foreign/multinational; 30 from the US others from EU, Malaysia, Russia and China). The extensive submission had been reviewed and selected as sector winner for defence. Following this, AWE had been subjected to a two-day audit by RoSPA's top auditor. The audit confirmed the veracity of the submission and gathered background information on the Company. The selection was completed by a competitive judgement of presentations given by the finalists at RoSPA's Birmingham headquarters. The trophy, a silver Victorian inkstand donated to RoSPA by Sir George Earle in 1956, was awarded to the Director of Assurance and Senior Trade Union Representative at an awards ceremony and dinner. The success had been celebrated by distributing a home safety device to each employee. Alan Brandwood said that AWE would not become complacent following this award, but would build on the success.

The citation read: "After an extremely challenging round of judging by RoSPA's Awards Panel, the Atomic Weapons Establishment was chosen as this year's Sir George Earle Trophy winners in the light of its exceptionally comprehensive approach to health and safety management.

"The Panel was particularly impressed by the high level of commitment of AWE's senior managers to the achievement of ever higher levels of health and safety performance, their approach to securing full and effective involvement of all staff and their representatives in health and safety decision making.

"Other features of AWE's approach which influenced the Panel in its decision included: its comprehensive approach to target setting; its approach to training and occupational health issues; its management of contractors; its commitment to learning from accidents and incidents; and the wider role which it plays in helping to strengthen safety and environmental initiatives in the local community."

Jeff Moss asked whether the award was for absolute performance or improvement. Alan explained that the award was for AWE's overall approach to safety management of which sustained improvement over the previous five years was a part. He added that this confirmed that AWE was on the right track but did not mean that there was no more need for improvement.

Climate Survey

The Corporate Climate Review is an HSE tool for measuring and improving safety attitude and behaviour. AWE's study had been completed between April 15th and May 17th. A returns rate of over 50% was achieved in the company over all, very high for unsupervised returns. The company level overview was expected within a few days. After approval this would be followed by directorate and team level responses. Already, the automated collation process, which aligned the output of this HSE-based tool with HSG 65, had brought up a number of outstanding issues in people's perceptions. Identified strengths included: staff fully aware of the safety responsibilities of their job; Management would not expect/ask people to breach safety rules; people clear where responsibility for health and safety lies. Alan Brandwood said that he would give more details of the results of the survey at a future meeting.

Traffic problems

The enhanced security precautions following 11 September had initially caused traffic problems in the area. The Ministry of Defence Police had now devised a scheme to manage the inmuster more effectively and this had improved the flow of traffic off-site.

Quarterly Report – error

Page 5 of the AWE Quarterly Report said that AWE was on course to meet the target on Senior Manager plant visits, as the target was 100% this was obviously not so. The current figure was approximately 70%.

Bill Cane congratulated AWE on behalf of members on winning the Sir George Earle Trophy. He then said that AWE appeared to be performing well against some of the EA Authorisations, e.g. total alpha in liquid waste discharge was currently 2.6 MBq against an authorisation of 100MBq. He asked whether this would rise if AWE started to make more warheads, he pointed out that if the same principle was applied to a 30 mph speed limit, cars would be permitted to drive through at in excess of 1000mph. Alan explained that the authorisations were set every 4-5 years. This meant that the EA and the Company had to look at the planned work over that period and negotiate a limit which allowed the work to proceed but at the same time kept discharges down to the lowest possible. This was particularly true with decommissioning work. The system allowed the Company to set its own more rigorous targets year on year. The need for the authorisation limits set would become apparent as the decommissioning programme peaked.

Darren Baker (Environment Agency) assured members that it was very unusual for the EA to increase an overall site limit but at the same time the EA was keen that decommissioning and any other improvements such as the new effluent treatment plant be allowed to proceed to programme. Therefore the forward plan for AWE had to be taken into account when setting the authorisations. As authorisations were typically extant for 4 or 5 years they may appear high, compared to actual discharges, in the early years but as, for example, the decommissioning programme accelerates the gap was likely to close in the later years.

Bill Cane asked whether the same principle would apply at Sellafield. Darren Baker said that each site was judged on its own merits and needs.

Terry Price asked if there was a specific reason for the 25% increase in lost time working due to sickness. Alan Brandwood said that quarter 1 was always higher due to seasonal colds and influenza. However, Trident Medical Services were reviewing their records for trends and were now proactively working to reduce problems with back pain, both in treatment and prevention. Nurses were now being allocated to management areas so that there was a better understanding of working practices and appropriate advice could be given.

Annual Regulators Meeting

The annual regulators safety review meeting was held on 28 May. The meeting was attended by all regulators from NII, FOD, CHID and EA having responsibility for AWE activities. The meeting provided an opportunity for AWE to provide an overview of past 12 months performance and to outline future strategies where there would be a regulatory interest. In responding to AWE reports the NII commented favourably on the Baseline document; they requested greater accuracy in forecasting when documentation would be submitted for regulatory permissions noting that due allowance needed to be made in project programmes.

Warning Letters Changes

AWE has expanded the definition of "warning letter" to include that of the Environment Agency, following the revision of their prosecution policy. This does not affect the scoring of the year two performance measures when AWE used its own definition.

John Mazillius asked what the situation was on criticality breaches and Criticality Control Certificates. Alan Brandwood said that NuSaC had been to AWE specifically to look at that issue. He said that there was very little consequence from this but it was being reviewed. The main problem stemmed from the very complex technical documents; these documents were now being put into a more user-friendly style. He added that NII was watching the process.

5. Infrastructure Report

Frank Winter, Director Infrastructure

Pangbourne Pipeline Withdrawal

Frank Winter reported that there had been good progress towards the closure of the pipeline on 1 April 2005. The primary safety report on the new treatment facility had been accepted by NII. The volume of liquid RA waste had already been reduced from 8,200m³ to 5,900m³, by process changes, closure of on-site pipelines and modifications to operational plant. There would be even more changes in the coming 12 months. A key action was stopping discharges from individual facilities into common pipework systems and instead modifying the plant so that waste could be collected by tanker. This allowed more detailed characterisation of the aqueous discharges from specific plants. This had already shown that discharges from some plants did not require treatment.

Public Alerting

AWE was now in the process of procuring a system to phone out an alerting message to the public in the event of an accident with off-site consequences. The timescale was expected to be July/August completion. AWE had also obtained information from a supplier about a database of telephone numbers. The database did not include ex-directory numbers, so there would still be a need for a returns slip to be sent out with the REPPIR leaflet. AWE was hoping for an 80-90% complete list of local telephone numbers.

In answer to questions, Frank Winter added that the system was from 'Voice Integrated Products', it would be backed up by broadcasts on radio, TV and directly from the Police. This system would solve the problems which the OfTel regulations posed.

Aldermaston Level 1 Site Exercise

This level 1 exercise for 2002 will take place on 8th July. The scenario will be very challenging and will involve representatives from Berkshire Ambulance, West Berkshire Fire and rescue and the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Nuclear weapons convoy operations

As of the 25th March 2002, AWE now garages and maintains convoy vehicles.

Fire certification

Under crown immunity AWE did not have to comply with fire certification regulations, but under Ministry of Defence, AWE freely complied. There was an ongoing project to bring AWE up to current standards and staff were working with the HSE and NI I on this. There were special issues associated with the ventilation systems and was expected to take between three and five years to complete the project. This could prompt the closure of some facilities where it would be too costly to upgrade.

6. Closing Remarks

Malcolm Hutchinson thanked members for attending and looked forward to working with the LLC in the future. He and extended an invitation to members to attend the Schools Engineering Challenge at BCOT on 4th July.

7. Date of Next Meetings:

12 September 2002

14 November 2002

The meeting ended with a buffet lunch.