

Minutes of the 34th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Held Thursday 4th September 2003

Present:

Malcolm Hutchinson	Executive Chairman, AWE	Chairman LLC
Bill Haight	Managing Director, AWE	
Alan Brandwood	Assurance Director, AWE	
Frank Winter	Director Infrastructure, AWE	
Alan Price	Corporate Communications, AWE	
Avril Burdett	Public Affairs Manager,	AWE Secretary LLC
Mike Broad	Tadley Town Council	
Malcolm Bryant	Wokingham Unitary Authority	
Angus Campbell	Wasing Parish Meeting	
Bill Cane	Mortimer West End Parish Council	Community Liaison Rep.
Margaret Dadswell	Aldermaston Parish Council	
Geoff Eddy	Hampshire County Council	
Maurice Eden	Holybrook Parish Council	
David Leeks	Tadley Town Council	
Michael Lochrie	Burghfield Parish Council	
Martin Maynard	Pangbourne Parish Council	
John Mazillius	Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council	
Irene Neill	West Berkshire Council	
Tom Payne	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council	
Murray Roberts	Padworth Parish Council	
John Southall	Purley-on-Thames Parish Council	
Alan Sumner	Wokefield Parish Council	
Graham Ward	Woolhampton Parish Council	
Tim Whitaker	Mapledurham Parish Council	

Observers:

Darren Baker Environment Agency
Chris Kemp Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

1. Apologies & Introductions

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Irene Neill, West Berkshire Council to the meeting. Cllr Price had resigned from the LLC and the Chairman thanked him for his many years of service to the committee.

Apologies received from:

Cllr Brown; Cllr Charlesworth; Cllr Dymond; Cllr Faulkner; Cllr Fish; Sabine Furlong; Cllr Hobbs; Cllr Longton; Cllr Mundy; John Parfitt; Colin Thomson

2. Current and Outstanding Actions

Action 30/3: Report back on the expansion of the web site

The AWE web site will be relaunched with a Content Management System (CMS) in the next few weeks. The new system will comply with the IT requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

A facility for on-line recruitment has been developed and a search engine fitted. Initial testing was successful. The next stage of development will be to review and develop the content.

Action ongoing.

Action 31/3: Provide copies of AWE's traffic studies to neighbouring councils: The full report had been received from the traffic surveyors and they had been tasked with pulling together information relevant to local councils. This should be given to those councils before the next meeting. **Action ongoing.**

Action 33/1: Avril Burdett to circulate Bill Cane's contact details to members. **Action complete.**

Action 33/2: Circulate details of the roll out of the AWE environment exhibition to LLC members. This exhibition was taken to a local school fair, but because it had originally been targeted towards internal issues, it did not prove to be as interesting to the public.

Action 33/3: Avril Burdett to collect e-mail addresses from members. **Action complete.**

3. Minutes of the 33rd Meeting

David Leeks had been listed as representing Tadley Parish Council, it should have read Tadley Town Council. Apologies had been received from Cllr Beard but this was not minuted.

4. Chairman's remarks: Malcolm Hutchinson, Executive Chairman

LLC members' feedback to councils & communities

In order to assist members with feeding back information from LLC meetings to their councils and the public, a note sheet was supplied to members. It listed the main topics of the meeting with a brief outline.

Action 34/1: Members please feed back any comments on this system to the Secretary.

Pangbourne Pipeline replacement facility

Following receipt of West Berkshire Council's endorsement for a notice of proposed development for the new low level waste treatment plant, work has begun on the site.

Trident Ploughshares Demonstration

The demonstration in June passed off with very little impact, as did a demonstration by a group calling themselves "Reclaim the Bases" over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

New Recruitment Centre

In support of AWE's recruitment programme to ensure that the capability to support Britain's nuclear deterrent is retained as current staff reach retirement, a new recruitment facility was opened at Portland House. This will provide a more suitable venue to meet and interview applicants.

Education Business Partnership Employer Award – Schools support

AWE was recognised by schools in West Berkshire as the leading organisation in the area for promoting the teaching of engineering, science and technology. AWE has been awarded the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths award, known as the STEM Award - one of 15 awards handed out by the West Berkshire Education Business Partnership.

A registered charity, the Partnership works closely with schools and businesses in the area to introduce young people to the world of work. AWE was nominated by a school on the Company's Schools' Liaison Committee.

AWE Schools Ambassadors

Seventy-five members of staff at AWE have become science and engineering ambassadors as part of a national scheme to address the shortage of young people taking up the subjects as potential careers. Ambassadors are professional people with specialist skills who offer practical assistance to schools in teaching these subjects to children. The initiative also gives ambassadors an opportunity to get involved in the local community and to share their enthusiasm for the work that they do.

The scheme was launched by the Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematics Network, known as SETNET. They hope that by involving science-based companies they can highlight the opportunities that a career in these disciplines has to offer school children. In particular, children can get a practical understanding of subjects they might otherwise see as irrelevant to their everyday lives.

Schools Engineering Challenge - 1 July

Seventeen schools from Hampshire and Berkshire took part in AWE's 7th annual Schools' Engineering Challenge on July 1. The competition was planned and organised by a group of AWE's graduates to provide them with experience of project management and working in a team aimed at encouraging young people to take an active interest in all aspects of engineering and design.

Teams of six pupils from Year Ten designed, built and tested a land yacht using limited materials purchased from their budget in competition for a trophy and a first prize of £1,000 to buy scientific or technical equipment. Second and third place teams received £500 and £250 respectively. Slough Grammar School won the competition with Fort Hill and The Hurst Community schools finishing second and third.

MBE for Mike Dunning

Mike Dunning, Head of Technical and Craft Training, who runs AWE's Apprentice School was awarded an MBE in the Queens Birthday Honours List. Mike was awarded his MBE for his long-standing services to the defence industry, and his community involvement with young people.

MP David Rendel visit

Early in the year AWE invited all local MPs to visit AWE. Andrew Hunter has visited and David Rendel will visit in October.

Rec-Soc Alcohol Licence

The MoD had announced that the Rec-Soc bar will not be allowed to continue selling alcohol beyond the end of the year. The Chairman said the facility is on MoD property and they have that choice. MoD had taken the view that the sale of alcohol on MOD land in such close proximity to a licensed nuclear site was inappropriate.

AWE plc remain fully committed to the provision of modern health & fitness facilities at AWE. The Company would continue to work with the Rec-Soc and the MoD to develop a plan for upgrading current facilities, subject to the availability of funding.

There had been a number of alarmist stories in the local media about community access to sports pitches and plans to close the William Penney Theatre. These were unfounded and had nothing to do with the withdrawal of the alcohol licence. The Rec-Soc was already working on converting the bar into a café environment.

He said that he sincerely hoped that people affected by this policy decision would continue to work together to make the new structure of the Rec-Soc a success.

Cllr Leeks said that though he welcomed the facility improvement, he felt strongly that to abolish the alcohol license was unnecessary; that it was perfectly normal after games such as rugby, cricket etc. for the teams to enjoy a beer and coffee was not a substitute and that the closure of the largest supermarket in Tadley for six months, coupled with this proposal, was a blow to the local community.

Senior Staff Changes

David Cooke, Finance Director returns to Serco and the Finance Directorate will be combined with the Commercial Directorate under Jason Smith. Frank Winter returns to BNFL, and Jonathan Brown will be acting Director Infrastructure until a permanent successor has been appointed. Members thanked Frank Winter for his support and wished him well in his new challenge.

Steven Rose secondment

Dr Steven Rose, AWE's current Head of Plasma Physics will be seconded to Oxford University in the New Year. He will take up the prestigious appointment of William Penney Professor of Plasma Physics. This appointment reflects his and AWE's international standing in the field of laser physics.

Whilst at AWE he has been involved with Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in the development of plans for a new, more powerful laser facility which it is hoped will be commissioned at AWE in 2007.

Ministerial Visit

AWE recently hosted a visit by Lord Bach, the Minister for Defence Procurement, who assumed responsibility for AWE in the recent Government reshuffle. The Minister was shown around the Hydrodynamics area and visited the Helen laser. He received a series of briefings from members of the Executive. Lord Bach was keenly interested in AWE's activities and particularly impressed by the expertise and enthusiasm of staff.

Chemical Weapons Inspection Exercise

AWE Burghfield recently hosted a Chemical Weapons Challenge Inspection exercise at the request of the MoD. AWE is not involved in the production, use or storage of chemical weapons but under the 1997 international agreement; any site can be inspected to verify this.

The aims of the exercise were to validate both the MoD's procedures for the management of an inspection at a nuclear site, and AWE's plans for the reception of such an inspection. The MoD will use lessons learned from this exercise to refine the National Arrangements. Overall the Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Secretariat of MoD said that the exercise had been productive and gave them confidence of AWE's compliance in a key arms control environment.

National Local Liaison Committee Conference - Avril Burdett, Public Affairs Manager

This conference in July was put together by BNFL to look at the way forward for LLCs in the commercial nuclear industry. This followed the recent publication of the Government White Paper "Managing the Nuclear Legacy" ahead of the creation of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). Although AWE will not be governed by the NDA, it was an excellent opportunity to compare the way AWE's LLC works with many others.

The NDA may make LLCs a statutory requirement and issue guidelines on how they should be set up and run. The aim of the conference, a two-day workshop, was to work towards setting draft guidelines agreed with the LLCs, which the NDA could then consider.

It was apparent that currently every LLC is different but many of the issues are similar. Some issues raised were the difficulty members had in understanding the more technical information, and the lack of knowledge of the business of LLCs in the community. Members had been particularly interested in AWE's experience of decommissioning AWE Cardiff. Avril Burdett will follow the progress of this initiative and brief on anything of interest to this LLC.

5. Health, Safety & Environmental Issues: Alan Brandwood, Assurance Director

LLC members had now received two monthly reports which replaced the previous quarterly reports. There had been no issues raised by members from the June and July reports; the August report would be issued in the near future. Any queries should be raised in the first instance with the Secretary.

Chubb Civilian Security Officers (CSOs) Update

Chubb Security had been selected to support the MDP in entry arrangements at both sites. All Civilian Security Officers (CSOs) have now completed the required training course run by MDP, achieving high marks. As of Monday 1st September CSOs have been deployed at the site gates at both Aldermaston and Burghfield. They will not be responsible for guarding the gates at AWE, but will take on the tasks of checking personal and vehicle passes, undertaking vehicle searches and other similar tasks. The MDP, whose complement remains unchanged, will continue to guard the site and there will always be an armed MDP presence at the site gates. The introduction of the CSOs has resulted in improved security.

Environment Week

In June AWE held an Environment Exhibition at both sites to improve awareness on Environmental initiatives and ecological aspects of the sites. There were also displays from Hampshire Wildlife Trust, West Berkshire Council, Southampton University and the MoD Conservation Group. The exhibitions were well received and attended by both AWE personnel and many on-site contractors. The exhibition was taken to a local school fair but less than 20 people attended, AWE therefore decided not to take it out more widely to the community.

John Southall commented that the fact that the exhibition was there to be seen was as important as the content. Alan Brandwood said that his staff were looking at ways of communicating with the local community on environmental issues which were more relevant to their needs.

Slips, Trips & Falls Toolbox Talks

Performance on Accidents and Lost Time Accidents (LTAs) still gives cause for concern. A new Toolbox Talk on 'Slips, Trips and Falls' has been developed with a comprehensive toolbox talk pack that has been delivered across the Company. The pack includes information from Health and Safety Executive, Health and Safety Commission and Trade Unions; Manager / Supervisor briefing notes including key messages, causes at AWE and legal and company requirements; copies of the toolbox talk slides, feedback sheets including ideas for improvement and awareness leaflets for attendees. This was all part of the drive to reduce minor accidents at AWE.

Variations to discharge authorisations

AWE has applied to the Environment Agency for minor variations to its existing RSA Authorisation. The Company is not applying for an increase in discharges to the local environment, but an increase in the disposal of waste to existing disposal sites. The receiving sites will not be required to increase their authorised limits to accommodate this increase.

The EA has now produced an Explanatory Document and Draft Variation and are expected to start their consultation process (including the AWE LLC) shortly. The EA will then produce a Decision Document detailing their conclusions and it is anticipated that any new authorisation would come into effect in the Spring of 2004.

Darren Baker of the Environment Agency said that he would be sending LLC members a package containing details of how they could comment during the 2-month consultation period 1st October to 1st December.

Lloyds Register Quality Assurance (LRQA) ISO 14001/9001 Audits

The first audit to integrate ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 took place in July and a final report from LRQA on their findings was due. From the closing meeting with LRQA, AWE is aware that two Improvement Notes will be raised on ISO 9001:1994; one on 'Procurement and the Periodic Evaluation of Suppliers' and the other on 'Document Control'.

Against the ISO 9001:2000 standard, 19 issues were outstanding. Provisionally, 11 issues are expected to be awarded and the remaining 8 to be re-visited in September for the final transition audit. The ISO 14001 audit did not produce any additional Improvement Notes, the first time this has occurred during such an audit. Also fewer Observations (20) than in previous audits were raised by LRQA. Of the outstanding Improvement Notes, one was closed and the other four will either be closed during the next audit in October or later in 2004.

Schools Safety Inspections

As part of AWE's programme to provide support to the local community, the AWE Schools Liaison Committee offers local schools the opportunity of having a Safety Inspection conducted by AWE auditors. The Company Audit Team conducted a Safety Inspection of Tadley Junior School in July 2003. A report on the team's findings was given to the school and the headmaster was very appreciative AWE's help. OFSTED Inspectors were also impressed by the professionalism of AWE's assessments. AWE has offered to follow up any issues relating to the inspection with the school and as a result will assist with a Display Screen Equipment assessment, which ensures that equipment is set up in the best way to prevent strain on the back, neck, shoulders, wrists and eyes. AWE will also provide a further inspection next year if required.

Key Performance Indicators

Since the 33rd LLC meeting, no enforcement notices had been served on AWE, dose rates had all been well within Company target limits and all operations had been conducted within their safe operation envelopes. Injury and accident rate figures were still giving cause for concern. Copies of the KPI performance table attached for those not present at the meeting.

Glossary

A draft glossary of terms was given to members for comment.

Action 34/2: Members please feed back comments on the glossary to Avril Burdett.

6. Infrastructure Issues: Frank Winter, Director Infrastructure

MOD Land, open spaces and garage areas to London Quadrant Housing Association

Responsibility for the open spaces and garages on what were the Ministry of Defence Housing Estates has passed to London Quadrant Housing Association. This means that AWE no longer has the responsibility for maintaining these areas. Any problems in future should be passed to London Quadrant to resolve. London Quadrant can be contacted on 01344 382200.

Notice of Sitex (B) 30th September

Burghfield site will be holding their annual site exercise on the morning of Tuesday 30th September. This will be a demonstration to the NII of AWE's ability to manage a major emergency situation as required under NII's Nuclear Site Licence conditions.

During the exercise the site alarm will be sounded and the site gates will be closed. It is expected that the exercise will be concluded by lunchtime.

Sitex (A) Report

The annual Aldermaston Site Exercise took place on Wednesday 2nd July and involved participation by the Local Authority Fire Service and some Ambulance Service. This tested communications and support between AWE and local authority services.

Despite some good individual performances, a number of learning points have been taken on board. A repeat of the some elements of the exercise will take place early next year, concentrating on areas where, as agreed with NII, there needs to be some improvements made.

Decommissioned Sludge Tanks

Three legacy Sludge Tanks had been successfully emptied and removed from the Waste Management area for decommissioning. The removal of sludges from these ageing tanks represents a significant reduction in risk (there was a small leak from one of the tanks in July 2000).

Three new replacement tanks and associated access platforms have been successfully installed. These tanks will be used to hold sludges prior to treatment using a cementation rig which is currently being installed in one of the waste management buildings. Cementation operations are due to start later this year. Regulation requirements state that this process should be complete by 2008, AWE is well ahead of that programme.

PASCALEA Response Update

A set of plans have been drafted to address the issues highlighted by the PASCALEA Report. Comprehensive actions have been agreed and deadlines set. Some of these issues will need feedback from the LLC and members will be contacted between meetings. The Chairman said that he hoped he could count on the continued support of the LLC to the actions arising from the Report.

New Waste Treatment Plant

Ground works to allow construction of the Waste Treatment Plant commenced on 3 August. The facility will come on line by 1 April 2005, allowing the decommissioning of the Pangbourne Pipeline.

As part of that programme, effluent volumes collected at AWE continue to fall. AWE is now discharging less than 3500 cubic metres per year down the pipeline, from a starting point of over 8000 cubic metres in December 2000. This has been achieved by repairing parts of the system where rainwater enters the pipes and so has to be treated as radioactive waste by default.

Perimeter Tree Planting

An LLC member asked why trees planted earlier in the year around the Aldermaston site perimeter had been allowed to die. Trees were planted in the normal planting season but this year has seen exceptional conditions with unseasonably prolonged dry spells and high temperatures. A recent inspection had shown that, in spite of watering, a significant quantity of trees had become dormant. This is a normal reaction in such hot, dry weather and experience shows that recovery is extremely good in the following season. Some young seedlings had died or were struggling and will be replaced where necessary in the autumn.

Apprentice School visit

AWE has had an apprentice school for over 50 years. Unlike some companies AWE kept the apprenticeship scheme, even when they went out of fashion. The modern apprentice scheme offers a chance for young men and women to learn practical skills and gain the educational qualifications which underwrite them whilst earning a wage. The facility was a key resource for providing the skills AWE needed. Members would be given a tour of the apprentice school at the December meeting.

Cllr Broad asked whether local school children were allowed to visit the Apprentice School. He was told that AWE Apprentices acted as ambassadors for the scheme, going out to schools to talk to their peers. Those who expressed a particular interest in joining the scheme could be invited to the facility.

Car Parking

Members complained at the lack of car parking space at the AWE Main Gate entrance on the day of the LLC meeting. Cllr Leeks suggested that if the six designated disabled parking bays were under-used, then possibly some of the disabled spaces could be re-designated as standard parking bays. It was also suggested that a motorcycle bay be provided. Frank Winter said that a car parking survey had been carried out and the issue was being considered.

7. Any other business

Margaret Dadswell asked that Aldermaston Parish Council be kept informed about traffic problems around the Aldermaston site.

8. Site Tour

Frank Winter reminded members that 18 months previously they had been briefed on the site development strategy and this tour was to provide an update. Plans needed to be flexible to accommodate changes, such as the decision not to close the Burghfield site, which had a major impact on the development of both sites. The Local Planning Authority was to be briefed prior to notices of intended development being submitted.

The aim of the site development was to produce a modern site to fit AWE's business requirements. Twelve buildings had been demolished and the rubble crushed and stored on site for use in the construction of the new facilities. This had reduced lorry movements off site and reduced costs.

9. Date of next meeting

Thursday 4th December 2003

Avril Burdett
Secretary
AWE Local Liaison Committee
01189 825602