

Minutes of the 39th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Thursday 2nd December 2004

Present:

Malcolm Hutchinson	Executive Chairman, AWE	Chairman LLC
Bill Haight	Managing Director, AWE	
Jonathan Brown	Director Infrastructure, AWE	
Angela Jenkins	Director Assurance, AWE	
Avril Burdett	Corporate Communications, AWE	Secretary LLC
Lindsey Appleton	Corporate Communications, AWE	
Gareth Beard	Head of Environment, AWE	
Steve Burdett	Manager Emergency Response & Training, AWE (B)	
Cllr Mike Broad	Tadley Town Council	
Cllr Malcolm Bryant	Wokingham Unitary	
Mr Angus Campbell	Chairman Wasing PM	
Cllr Bill Cane	Mortimer West End PC	LLC Community Liaison Rep.
Cllr Margaret Dadswell	Aldermaston PC	
Mr Geoff Eddy	Hampshire County Council	
Cllr Maurice Eden	Holybrook PC	
Cllr Fish	Silchester PC	
Cllr Pat Garrett	Baughurst PC	
Cllr Peter Hobbs	Sulhamstead PC	
Cllr David Leeks	Tadley Town Council	
Cllr Jeff Moss	Swallowfield PC	
Cllr Irene Neill	West Berkshire Council	
Cllr Dr Murray Roberts	Padworth PC	
Cllr David Shirt	Aldermaston PC	
Cllr Alan Sumner	Wokefield PC	
Mr Bill Taylor	Stratfield Mortimer PC	
Cllr Graham Ward	Woolhampton PC	
Cllr Tim Whitaker	Mapledurham PC	
Cllr Pennie Williams	Purley-on-Thames PC	
Cllr David Wood	Theale PC	

Observers:

Mike Jeal	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (Presenter)
Andrew Lindley	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Craig Reiersen	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies from: Ms Roz Baxter; Cllr Peter Beard, Cllr Glynn Charlesworth; Cllr Terry Faulkner; Mr Phil Gowan; Cllr Michael Lochrie; Cllr Dr Royce Longton; Cllr Martin Maynard; Cllr Doug Mundy; Mr Tom Payne and Cllr Roy Waite. Darren Baker, EA.

2. Actions from the last Meeting

Action 38/1: Jonathan Brown to show details of stack upgrade programme. Details shown on slide attached to these minutes.

Action 38/2: To arrange a presentation on Emergency Exercises at the next meeting. Steve Burdett – Manager Emergency Response and Training (Burghfield) gave a presentation on the Burghfield Sitex at item 8 on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

4. Chairman's Remarks – Malcolm Hutchinson, Executive Chairman

At the last meeting, Mike Jeal of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate offered to speak to the LLC about the NII. He gave a presentation at this meeting (see item 7).

Employee Opinion Survey

Compared to the 2002 survey, there has been improvement in employees' perceptions in all categories except Partnership, which has remained stable. This year there was a 72% response against 68% in 2002. The same categories were used to give confidence in the results. The Executive Board has set strategic priorities, senior managers have been briefed and staff will shortly receive full details of the results. Managers are now and making plans in their own areas to focus on areas for improvement.

Community Link/REPPPIR re-distribution

We have recently sent out the latest edition of AWE Community Link. The distribution covers some 21,000 homes and businesses. We also re-distributed the REPPPIR leaflet which tells our neighbours what to do in the unlikely event of an accident which has consequences beyond our boundary. With any large distribution there are always a few addresses which get missed, and new houses are being built all the time so the leaflets have been re-issued.

Demolition at the West End of the Aldermaston Site

A programme is being devised for the next phase of demolition at the West End of the Aldermaston site. This is likely to start shortly to make way for new buildings in the future. A large area has already been cleared.

Celebrate Success – Gold Award winners

All winners of the Celebrate Success Silver Awards for outstanding performance and their partners were recently invited to a party where the Gold Award winners were announced. The team gold award went to Steve Harris and Steve Burbary who each won £3000 for developing an improved production process. The new process, once fully approved will make a considerable improvement in efficiency. The individual award, with a cheque for £4000 went to Norman Walker for promoting standards of excellence in all aspects of thermography. Norman has written a book called 'Infrared Thermography Principles and Practice' which is set to become the bible for training in this field. This technology is used to locate bodies after earthquakes but AWE is interested in some of its other applications such as to show surface heat variations in industrial plant.

AWE Today Award

AWE Today, the in-house newspaper has won a major accolade in this year's prestigious British Association of Communicators in Business (CIB) Awards. The editor, Mark Glover, won first place in the New Editor's class of the Business Communication Strategy Awards. They also praised AWE photographer, Andy Cox, commenting that the photography was a particularly strong point with well above-average pictures for a house journal.

SET Awards

Some of our top scientists have won awards in the in the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) fields. These new company awards, in three categories, recognise the achievements of exceptional employees who work to meet AWE's vision of international recognition for its science and engineering excellence. Sir Keith O'Nions, Director General of the UK's seven research councils and former Chief Scientific Advisor to the MoD, made the presentations at a prize-giving ceremony held at AWE on 28 September.

AWE scientist, Dr Ron Winter, won the John Challens Medal, so named after the prominent AWE scientist and former director. Dr Winter has worked here for almost 30 years, has shaped and steered hydrodynamics (the science of forces acting on or exerted by fluids) research

programmes at AWE and helped raise its profile both nationally and internationally. He has also done much to guide and stimulate the next generation of scientists.

The Discovery Award went to chemist, Dr Paul Roussel. Dr Roussel is one of very few scientists in the world involved in the study of surface science (the physical and chemical interaction of gases with solid surfaces). He has discovered important new data relating to the electronic properties of plutonium and its oxides. His findings have been reported internationally, and he has presented his work at conferences in the UK, USA and Germany.

The JC (Charlie) Martin Award winners were Dr Alan Dawes for best external publication category and Eugene Clark, Mike Dunne, David Hoarty, Colin Smith and Mark Taylor for best internal publication category. These awards recognise the highest quality publications produced by AWE staff in the SET field.

AWE Apprentices Rewarded

The outstanding achievements of AWE apprentices in engineering were recognised at a prize-giving ceremony held on November 18th. The Learning and Skills Council voted AWE the best large employer in the south east this year for developing young people through modern apprenticeships in their Modern Apprenticeship Awards initiative.

Seventeen apprentices received awards this year, with the prestigious Dolphin Cup and Gold Spanner Award for Best Apprentice of the Year going to Simon Woodman (22) of Baughurst.

AWE's engineering apprenticeships provide the training and practical experience needed for young people to become qualified crafts persons or technicians, specialising in mechanical, electrical or electronic engineering. AWE currently has some 90 apprentices on its books and there are some 400 ex-apprentices retained by the company today – about 10% of the work force. No one else delivers apprenticeships on the size and scale we do – underpinning this is our achievement and retention rate which among the best. We are currently recruiting for next year's apprentice intake.

Loddon School Homelands Appeal

AWE has donated £2,000 to the Loddon School Homelands Appeal Fund. The school in Sherfield-on-Loddon provides care and education for 27 children with the most serious disabilities associated with autism. Homelands is a bungalow near to the school which is being redeveloped to provide a transitional home where four of the older school children can experience living in an ordinary house before moving to one of 18 houses in the community.

A level Science Challenge

Young scientists and engineers recently took up AWE's A levels schools' science challenge to design and build a model glider. The event was held at the Northcroft Leisure Centre in Newbury, attracting teams of up to four students from six local schools. The event was planned and organised by a group of 11 AWE graduates to encourage young people to take an active interest in all aspects of science and engineering.

Students were asked to produce designs and build their gliders, with each prototype being subjected to a series of tests to determine which could fly the farthest and land safely on a target area.

St Gabriel's School in Newbury won the top prize of £1,000 to spend on science equipment with a second place cheque of £500 going to St Bartholomew's School, Newbury. Park House School, Newbury, collected £250 for third place.

AWE Emergency Services Assistance with the Ufton Noret Rail Crash.

We received a letter of thanks from Bill Cane for the support AWE gave to the community on the night of the Ufton Noret rail crash. AWE emergency crews provided support to Royal Berkshire emergency services in assisting victims. Two of our ambulances, carrying fully trained technicians, responded to calls for assistance by the Royal Berkshire Ambulance Trust.

One of the AWE ambulance crews participated in front line work directly at the scene of the accident helping evacuate people from the carriages and rendering immediate aid prior to casualties being transferred to the on-site recovery centre before despatch to hospital. The other AWE ambulance was used to take injured casualties to hospital.

Emergency cover at both the AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield sites was maintained at all times, and both ambulances were back at station by 11 o'clock on Saturday night.

AWE's fire appliances were also made available to provide local community emergency cover, due to the drastically reduced fire cover caused by the accident. During the aftermath of the rail crash, one of the AWE Burghfield fire appliances was dispatched to deal with an incident in Burghfield Village.

5. Health, Safety and Environmental Report – Dr Angela Jenkins, Director Assurance

Dr Jenkins explained that at AWE assurance covered matters relating to Safety, Quality, Environment, Security and Health (sometimes referred to as SQESH issues).

Trident Medical Services and Firefighter Ambulance Training

In order to enhance emergency response capability, all relevant Trident Medical Services staff (TMS) have recently undertaken a course designed and run by the Royal Berkshire Ambulance NHS Trust in Advanced Ambulance Aid. The training is similar to that provided for AWE Fire Brigade staff who man the AWE ambulances, and will enhance team working between TMS and the Fire Brigade. The course also emphasised modern management of spinal injuries.

Another group of AWE firefighters have achieved the AWE Ambulance Technician standard. All AWE firefighters are trained in first aid and basic ambulance aid, but some volunteer for this additional training. The intensive training qualification, run by the Royal Berkshire Ambulance NHS Trust is tailored to meet AWE's requirements. The three week course includes both theory and practical uses of aspirators, resuscitators, blood-pressure equipment, fracture packs and defibrillators as well as covering anatomy and physiology.

Health and Safety Executive Inspections

Our approach on two areas of work, Asbestos Management and Construction Safety were reviewed by one of our local HSE inspectors on the 14 September. We arranged for the inspector to be made aware of the Company arrangements and to view these in operation. We believe the inspector left confident that these two areas are being managed properly. He was very positive that our accredited asbestos sampling facility can deliver a result to us in two hours, compared with other companies which would normally wait two weeks for a result.

Follow up to Lost Time Accidents (LTAs)

Until recently, the AWE Executive Board required all Line Managers of those involved in LTA's to come to the Board meetings to discuss the circumstances and the lessons learned. This is part of our continuing focus to drive down the number of Lost Time Accidents. We have now changed this approach so that Board members go the workplace, meet the affected person and their Line Managers to discuss the events. The Managing Director, the Director Stockpile Management and the Director Assurance carried out the first of these visits on 28 September 2004.

Alarms

During the morning of 20 October, site emergency staff were called to attend a road traffic accident at Paices Hill, our staff stayed on the scene until relieved by the county emergency services. On the same afternoon, the site undercover alarm was sounded in response to a local criticality alarm received from one of our facilities currently undergoing decommissioning. It was relatively quickly established to be a false alarm. Although the site under cover was lifted as

soon as possible afterwards, movement within the central site area remained restricted for a slightly extended period to allow emergency personnel to respond to a fire alarm in a different facility within the central site area (this again proved to be a false alarm). On certain rare occasions a combination of climatic conditions can alter the humidity within facilities which our extremely sensitive safety systems can detect as a false alarm. All alarms are subject to a predetermined response which may include temporary closure of the site access gates, which will in some cases cause a little inconvenience to our local community. Please be reminded that you do not need to respond to alarms or announcements overheard from our sites. If there was an incident which required our neighbours to take shelter, you would be informed by our Telephone alerting system.

Building in Safety Campaign

Three Focus Lunches were held recently to mark the European Week of Safety & Health at Work. Each of these sessions was attended by approximately 100 staff and contractors and the message of 'building in safety' was well received. The presentations were designed to focus on key construction issues from the differing perspectives of the Client, Contractors and the Regulator.

A number of common themes arose, including the need for Client leadership in health and safety; designing out hazards for future construction, operation and maintenance; selection of Contractors with a demonstrable commitment to health and safety and the need to build long-term relationships with Contractors based on continuity of workload. These areas form part of AWE's construction health and safety improvement programme.

Conservation Evening

The Ecology evening recently held at the William Penney Theatre and attended by an audience of local wildlife enthusiasts featured a talk by Guy Hagg, Head of MoD's Conservation Office DE Environmental Support Team. This addressed the wildlife challenges on some of the MoD sites, including ways of reducing damage from essential activities and encouraging biodiversity. Derek Pears from AWE spoke about the manner in which the company deals with the ecological challenges it faces on Aldermaston site, which mirror, albeit on a smaller scale, those that confront DE Conservation, i.e. balancing the demands of biodiversity with the day to day management of a large organisation. We received favourable comments that the evening was a great success and that AWE was clearly doing a great deal in protecting the natural heritage of the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites.

Tritium on the Site Tip

In April 2000 the Environment Agency included within the radioactive waste discharge authorisation granted to Aldermaston the following Improvement Requirement: 'The Operator shall cease direct discharge of radioactive waste, containing levels of tritium above the natural background concentration of tritium in local groundwater, into the Aldermaston Stream'. This related to the fact that groundwater under the Site Tip, contributing to discharges from the North Ponds, contained tritium at levels that were low and of negligible health consequence, but which were nevertheless clearly above background.

A considerable amount of effort and expenditure has been devoted by AWE to attempt to locate the precise source of the tritium contamination, but with only partial success. The LLC has been informed of these efforts and their results; this included a workshop on the subject in 2003. By 2003 it had become clear that there was a diminishing trend to the groundwater contamination. The concentration of tritium in discharges from North Ponds had for at least 2 years been consistently below the level (20 Bq/litre) agreed by the Environment Agency to be appropriate as a background concentration in local groundwater. In August 2003 AWE submitted a summary of the position to the Environment Agency and requested acknowledgement that AWE had satisfied the Improvement Requirement. AWE is pleased to report that the Agency has now written to acknowledge that AWE has indeed satisfied the Improvement Requirement.

This is the 10th of the original 12 Improvement Requirements to have been completed on time (or early). The remaining two are the Pangbourne Pipeline (due at the end of March 2005) and a cessation of radioactive discharges into the sewer (due in 2010).

Performance against Key Performance Indicators

Slides attached

Bill Cane asked why there was a high number of accidents amongst the comparatively small number of Ministry of Defence Police. Dr Jenkins said that there had been good results from MDP but this was declining. There is a safety committee which interfaces with MDP on safety issues but some of the incidents were related to training exercises where, due to the physical nature of some police work, there was a higher likelihood of injury. This did not imply that AWE or MDP was complacent.

Cllr Fish asked whether the personal monitoring was carried out on all staff. It was explained that the monitoring was carried out on all staff working permanently, or for much of their time in RA facilities, and by a different method on staff entering RA facilities on a less regular basis. The dosimeter figures were a rolling result of all persons monitored. Members asked that the results should reflect any change in head count. This target was becoming very tight as the limits set by the Company got lower.

In response to a question on external audit of environmental monitoring, it was explained that the figures were presented to the EA who can challenge and check them, NRPB also verify the samples. Checks have shown that the AWE and EA figures match.

There was concern that there was a large gap between the RSA Authorisation Limits and the AWE performance figures. This is because the Authorisation limits are set every 4 years or so. At that time AWE has to project the limits required against the work planned. The limits are set to take into account the maximum discharge allowed whilst pressing the Company into good practice and allowing necessary work to take place. AWE targets are set lower to minimise further the amount discharged. Discharges were currently close to background, this had been driven down by the Company setting its own targets each year. Bill Cane said that those members who had attended the workshop on the RSA Discharge Authorisations had seen that the Company had achieved significant reductions.

Members asked whether AWE discharged the most RA material. Dr Jenkins said no and she would bring comparative data to the next meeting.

Action 39/1: Dr Jenkins - To show comparative data on discharges from other nuclear establishments at the next meeting.

Dr Jenkins said that the Food Standards Agency would be presenting the findings from their monitoring of food and the environment for 2003 at the next LLC meeting.

7. Infrastructure Report – Jonathan Brown, Director Infrastructure

Pangbourne Pipeline Leak

On 4th September the alarm system on the Pangbourne Pipeline signalled a leak. The leak was traced to a 1m section of pipe located in the AWE compound at Pangbourne, between a valve chamber and the wall of the pump house. Following excavation, the pinhole was repaired using a proprietary clamp seal and put back into service.

As a result of reviewing the response to the 2003 event, we have significantly improved the speed of finding leak. As a precaution the adjacent borehole in the compound was sampled and showed no elevated groundwater results.

Pangbourne Pipeline Closure/New plant

Work on the construction of the new plant is progressing well. Process equipment is now being tested, supplies and services are being energised and system testing is on programme to commence in January 2005. There had been no Reportable Injuries in well over 100,000hrs construction.

The Future of Paice's Hill

Aldermaston Parish Council held a forum on the Future of Paice's Hill. This was a meeting of landowners and business holders on Paice's Hill looking at how the area might be allowed to develop in the future and whether such development could bring in sufficient funds to enable an Aldermaston Village relief road to be built. This arose from serious concerns about the damage to houses in the (conservation) village from the large numbers of heavy vehicles passing through and the number of accidents, including several fatal ones on Paice's Hill. Jonathan Brown and Avril Burdett had attended.

Wind Turbines

Cllr Leeks asked whether AWE had seriously considered having wind turbines on the sites. Jonathan Brown reported that the Company has looked at this, but currently it is not viable, the Aldermaston site has the wrong sort of wind! The right wind for turbines is strong and consistent.

A study was completed in 2002 which looked at the use of Wind Turbines on the Aldermaston site. We looked at the viability of a 1.5 MW generator which would have a 66 metre diameter and a 67 metre high tower. The site base requirement is about 10 MW with an annual consumption of 81 GWh (1 GWh = 1,000 MWh). The Burghfield site has a base requirement of 1.2MW and an annual consumption of 11 GWh. (Note AWE A&B are roughly equivalent to 16,000 houses in terms of electrical usage)

The large wind turbines only start generating electricity at wind speeds above 4 metres per second (albeit very inefficiently i.e. less than 2%) and speeds in excess of 11 m/s are required for it to generate at 75% of max output or greater. The annual average wind speed for the site is only 4.2 m/s most of the time between 1 and 7 m/s.

It was calculated that 16 turbines would be required to generate 15% of annual consumption (over 100 turbines for 100%). The turbines have a design life of 25 years and would cost in the order of over £1 Million each to install at AWE. It would take over 40 years to recover the turbine installation costs alone. We are committed to the Environment, Sustainability and being a good neighbour – but wind turbines, given the current technology, are not a sound approach.

However, technology is developing and improving and we are keeping an eye on the developments. In the immediate future there is more scope for the use of both small wind and solar powered systems to support remote monitoring stations across the Aldermaston, Burghfield and off site locations. Additionally we are working on a company energy strategy document that we hope will set out a company policy on the use of sustainable technology.

CoRWM

Some LLC members had been invited to take part in a national stakeholder consultation on the future of nuclear waste. The independent committee, known as CoRWM [*pronounced quorum*], the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, was appointed by UK Government Ministers to review the options for managing the UK's solid radioactive waste and recommend an option or series of options for Ministers to begin reviewing in Summer 2006. The recommendations must be for a long-term solution which protects people and the environment. They are looking at the future of nuclear waste beyond our lifetimes and thousands of years into the future and are concentrating on intermediate and high level waste. As AWE has no high level waste, this only applies to intermediate level waste which is currently stored on Aldermaston site.

Utilities Management Contract

AWE has awarded a new water services contract to United Utilities. It is a 5-year contract (with terms that allow an extension to 20 years) to manage and operate the on-site water supplies and waste water networks at both sites. The contract does not include the radioactive discharges which remain under AWE's direct management.

This is an important contract with one of the UK's leading utility companies providing AWE with the expertise to improve the efficiency of water and wastewater systems, reducing leakage and further improving environmental performance.

8. The Role of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Presentation by NII Inspector, Mike Jeal

Slides attached

9. Emergency Exercises

Presentation by Steve Burdett, Manager Emergency Response and Training, Burghfield

Slides attached

10. Any Other Business

Food Standards Agency Presentation – as last year, a representative of FSA has asked to be allowed to present to the LLC. That will take place at our meeting in March next year.

11. Date of next meetings

Thursday 17th March 2005

Thursday 9th June 2005

Thursday 15th September 2005

Thursday 1st December 2005

Avril Burdett
Secretary to the AWE Local Liaison Committee