

Minutes of the 40th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Thursday 17th March 2005

Present:

Malcolm Hutchinson	Executive Chairman, AWE	Chairman LLC
Bill Haight	Managing Director, AWE	
Jonathan Brown	Director Infrastructure, AWE	
Peter Marshall	Seismology, AWE	
Mike Mortimer	Assurance, AWE	
Alan Price	Corporate Communications, AWE	
Avril Burdett	Corporate Communications, AWE	Secretary LLC
Lindsey Appleton	Corporate Communications, AWE	
Gareth Beard	Head of Environment, AWE	
Cllr Mike Broad	Tadley Town Council	
Mr Angus Campbell	Chairman Wasing PM	
Cllr Bill Cane	Mortimer West End PC	LLC Community Liaison Rep.
Cllr Dennis Cowdery	Brimpton PC	
Cllr Margaret Dadswell	Aldermaston PC	
Mr Geoff Eddy	Hampshire County Council	
Cllr Maurice Eden	Holybrook PC	
Cllr Terry Faulkner	Tadley Town Council	
Cllr Pat Garrett	Baughurst PC	
Cllr Phil Gowen	West Berkshire Council	
Cllr Royce Longton	West Berkshire Council	
Cllr Martin Maynard	Pangbourne PC	
Cllr Jeff Moss	Swallowfield PC	
Cllr Irene Neill	West Berkshire Council	
Cllr Dr Murray Roberts	Padworth PC	
Cllr David Shirt	Aldermaston PC	
Mr Bill Taylor	Stratfield Mortimer PC	
Cllr Graham Ward	Woolhampton PC	
Cllr Tim Whitaker	Mapledurham PC	
Cllr Pennie Williams	Purley-on-Thames PC	

Observers:

Mike Jeal	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (Presenter)
Steve Lewis	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Martin Sayers	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Darren Baker	Environment Agency
Dave Griffiths	Environment Agency

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies from: Roz Baxter; Cllr Peter Beard; Cllr Malcolm Bryant; Cllr Graham Charlesworth, but Cllr Dennis Cowdery is here in his place; Cllr Chris Goss; Cllr Peter Hobbs; Cllr Doug Mundy; Cllr Alan Sumner; Tom Payne; Cllr Gerry Traynor; Cllr David Wood. Also, apologies from Dr Angela Jenkins, but Mike Mortimer, head of the AWE Assurance Strategy Group reported on Assurance matters.

Colin Thomson of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council had retired since the last meeting his replacement Alan Craft will attend in June. The Chairman offered thanks and good wishes to Geoff Eddy of Hampshire County Council, one of the founder members of the AWE LLC who retires shortly.

2. Actions from the last Meeting

Action 39/1: Angela Jenkins to provide comparative information on discharges from UK nuclear licensed sites. *This information was sent to members on 10th March 2005. Action closed.*

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

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

Pangbourne Pipeline Closure

On Wednesday 16th March, Sir John Harman, Chairman of the Environment Agency, had attended AWE to officially close the Pangbourne Pipeline. The event was both a significant environmental achievement and an important piece of history in the making.

For more than 50 years the Pangbourne Pipeline formed part of AWE's liquid waste management system. Since 1952 the pipeline carried waste from AWE Aldermaston to be discharged from outlets on the bed of the River Thames between Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames. These discharges were regulated by the Environment Agency.

The pipeline served AWE well as a safe and effective disposal route throughout its lifetime. Repeated assessments and surveys demonstrated its environmental impact to be minimal. Jonathan Brown, Director Infrastructure gave details.

He said that when the commitment to close the pipeline was made, AWE was discharging 8,000 cubic metres of liquid effluent down the pipeline annually. On investigation it was found that a large proportion of the total was water ingressing into the system, both as groundwater and rainwater. A new effluent collection system and a programme to minimise waste at source has resulted in a reduction of over 75% to less than 2000m³ per year.

More than 60 buildings generated low level liquid waste, in 2005 that number was reduced to less than 20. The water was mainly from hand and floor washings, as AWE has no 'wet' processes. Effluent is now collected in road tankers and small containers. This system has enabled a check of exactly what waste each facility produces and the 2000m³ per annum is still reducing as facilities continue to minimise the effluent generated.

The new Waste Treatment Plant (WTP) process equipment was largely fabricated as 'skids', - elements constructed off-site, tested, brought into the facility, bolted into place and joined to the other sections. The project started in the summer of 2000 with a Best Practicable Environmental Options (BPEO) study in consultation with the LLC and other stakeholders. It has been constructed to time with commissioning tests currently ongoing. The Pangbourne Pipeline was closed ahead of schedule.

Cllr Bill Cane congratulated AWE on behalf of the LLC saying that the pipeline had been a concern locally for many years and praising those involved on meeting the target and on an excellent safety record on the construction of the new facility.

Cllr Mike Broad asked if publicity had been given to the event, he was told that a press release had been sent out which had been picked up by the local press, radio and Meridian TV. Members expressed an interest in seeing press releases.

Action 40/1: Secretary to supply copies of press releases to members on a monthly basis.

Cllr Pat Garrett asked whether any contamination had leaked from the system on site. Jonathan Brown said that over the years the system had been in service, routine surveys had not revealed any contamination issues in the ground. As equipment and services are removed, clean up will be carried out as appropriate.

Dennis Cowdery asked about the future of the pipeline, he was told that the BPEO prepared in 2001 had shown that cleaning and grouting the pipeline was the best option. This BPEO is currently being reviewed to check that nothing has changed which could affect the findings. As the PPL

consisted of twin pipes it should be possible to flush the system through to clean it. AWE and the EA were looking into the precise definition of 'clean' as related to the PPL. Cllr Martin Maynard asked whether the section from the pump house, including the sparges would be removed. Jonathan Brown said that he was looking at the details of that proposal and would let the LLC know when that decision had been made.

Exercise Aldex

On March 2nd a group of AWE staff took part in the Level 2 AWE exercise 'Aldex'. The exercise covered 2 areas of the AWE Off-site Emergency Plan, Strategic Command at Thames Valley Police Headquarters and media handling at Portland House. The accident scenario was centred on a fictional building handling explosives and radioactive material.

There were representatives of every agency who would be involved in a real incident, including councils, MoD, Health Authorities, Emergency Services, Food Standards Agency, NRPB, NII and EA to name but a few. The media centre was well tested by some 15 students playing reporters and film crews, whilst at Gold Command, the impacts of the exercise incident were played very realistically. Representatives from the same groups looked at the impact on the community as far as sheltering, giving information, bringing the emergency under control and planning clean-up operations. The NII felt that it had been a satisfactory demonstration of the capability of all agencies concerned.

Einstein Year

In September AWE is celebrating Einstein Year and the 2005 International year of Physics with an exhibition and lectures. Attendance will be by invitation and is aimed at UK scientists, engineers, research councils and professional institutions as well as local science teachers and pupils, AWE staff and their families.

Grims Bank

There is a scheduled ancient monument on the Aldermaston site known as Grims Bank. It is variously described as 4th, 5th or 6th century, possibly a pre-historic feature or somehow linked to the outer defences of roman Silchester. This year, AWE Environmental Projects, Atkins Heritage and English Heritage will be working together to try to find out more about Grims Bank. This will start with core sampling during the winter months to look at what the climate and vegetation was like when the ditch and bank was constructed. Once the dry summer weather arrives an archaeological examination of a small section of the bank is planned. AWE hopes to be able to produce information from this investigation for local schools, historical societies and the Reading University team working at Silchester's Calleva Atrebatum.

Travel Survey

AWE is currently revisiting the Company Travel and Transport Strategy with a staff survey. This is not about traffic on the roads in general, but about how our staff and contractors travel to work, their route and mode of transport. The survey is made up of three different parts: an in and out muster count will look at gate usage and the different methods of accessing the AWE sites by counting the numbers and types of vehicles, and the number of pedestrians and cyclists. A questionnaire will be sent to all staff, its aim is to capture baseline data to help determine future travel and transport plans. Finally the survey will be looking at how the current car parks are being utilised. This will help to identify where and when parking is required.

VIP Visits

AWE had a visit, arranged by the MOD's Chief Scientific Adviser, of directors of the Russian Nuclear Weapons Laboratories. The meeting explored opportunities for future technical exchanges and scientific co-operation. The visiting directors outlined the capabilities of their establishments and then visited some of AWE's facilities. It is hoped that this will lead to participation in unclassified scientific talks and conferences in Russia.

AWE also hosted visits from Sir Peter Spencer, Chief of Defence Procurement and from Professor Roy Anderson, MoD Chief Scientific Adviser.

Radionuclides Laboratory certified by the CTBO

AWE's radionuclide laboratory has been formally certified by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation in Vienna to contribute to its international monitoring system which verifies compliance with the treaty. This laboratory becomes only the fifth in the world to be formally certified. This highlights the fact that AWE has internationally recognised capabilities and competence.

Graduates devise computer software for Hurst School

Ten AWE graduates recently delivered software to the Hurst School which they had devised to help children with special needs or those who have missed time at school through illness, understand and enjoy science. The graduates found it challenging to return to the mindset of 11 year-olds, so they went back to school and sat in on science classes. The programme is largely physics based and has fun graphics to make it easier to understand.

Tsunami quake recorded at AWE

The earthquake in the Indian Ocean was recorded at the AWE Blacknest site and AWE expert Peter Marshall was in demand as the world's press explored the possibility of an early warning system. Peter Marshall was able to point out that although it is possible to predict where earthquakes will happen, the when and how big are still not predictable. What may be possible in the future is a system for the early warning of Tsunamis following earthquakes, using the CTBT global network of monitoring stations. Peter Marshall gave more details at item 9 in the programme.

George Sallit – member of the International Committee of the Society of Radiological Protection.

George Sallit, AWE's Head of Radiological Protection was invited to join the International Committee of the Society of Radiological Protection as a UK delegate. This gives the Company, as a user of the standards laid down by the committee, a voice at international level. Posts at this level are very rare and this accolade reflects George and AWE's expertise.

New Staff Restaurant - Heather Young, Site Support Services.

Ms Young outlined plans to refurbish the staff restaurant at the Aldermaston site. She explained that the current name did not reflect the interior of the facility which was more like a canteen. Her team had listened to staff to find out what they wanted and the resulting major refurbishment would be completed by the end of June. She showed plans of the new restaurant which had improved lighting, artwork heating. The old fashioned image would be replaced by a coffee bar area and meeting areas which would be open all day, together with areas for small or large groups to sit and eat. The food would also be changed with food being cooked in front of customers and a more diverse menu. Cllr David Shirt asked whether the directors used the staff restaurant and was told they did.

5. Health, Safety and Environmental Report – Mike Mortimer, AssuranceBehavioural Safety

Two new approaches to the implementation of Behavioural Safety have been delivered at AWE during January.

A group of volunteers from an office environment received a single training course from external consultants. This was a compressed version of what had been offered previously and if successful it will be rolled out to all office staff. Similar training has been delivered to mobile waste management teams. This was the first time that managers and workers had been trained together. Other mobile teams will be trained in the same way in the future.

Visit to Devonport Royal Dockyards Limited

AWE and MoD Integrated Project Team staff visited the DRDL for a briefing on their experience of managing the interface with regulators. The key message was a need for clear lines of communication and a defined hierarchy of meetings with regulators. It is proposed to develop similar arrangements for AWE in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

2005 Company Audit Programme

The company audit team has completed the compilation of the 2005 company audit programme. The programme comprises 10 audit objectives which will be subject to assessment throughout the

year. They were selected based on risk or status and importance and were agreed at an audit strategy workshop. The exercise has taken into account a number of learning opportunities identified by reviews of the audit process carried out in 2004 including Lloyds Surveillance Assessments and the internal regulation team inspection programme.

Environmentally Sensitive Equipment

In order to better demonstrate our compliance with the maintenance conditions within our Radiological Substances Act 1993 authorisations, facilities and projects have been asked to assess those items of equipment which can be regarded as environmentally sensitive. This includes any equipment used to control, mitigate or monitor the release of radioactive material into the environment which would generate radioactive waste. This process is to assure that maintenance, testing and inspection is carried out in accordance with company guidelines.

Arklone P

Under the Montreal Protocol (EC Regulation 2037/2000 on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer) the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) was banned from 2000. Since that date AWE has held a special permission which allowed the use of limited amounts of the CFC Arklone P for Strategic Defence purposes. This permission ended on 1st January 2005 and we have taken action to ensure that facilities holding any residual stocks of this material dispose of it via waste management to an approved disposal route.

Los Alamos National Laboratory Nuclear Criticality Safety Committee

AWE has been invited to provide an independent member for the annual meeting of the LANL Nuclear Criticality Safety Committee. This is a positive reflection of the expertise available in the AWE the criticality safety team.

Performance against Key Performance Indicators

Slides attached

Cllr Pennie Williams asked why the 2004 target for tritium releases had gone up. Dr Mortimer explained that the discharges related to a tritium facility under decommissioning and resulted from planned work.

Cllr Martin Maynard asked how current dose to staff compared with historic rates. Dr Mortimer said that dose rates were decreasing and offered to show comparative data.

Action 40/2: Secretary to provide comparative historic data on staff dose.

Information attached to minutes. Action closed.

Phil Gowen asked whether AWE was still gathering information on 'near misses'. Dr Mortimer said that he did and that this information was very important. It enabled the company to spot potential problems before they became real ones

7. Infrastructure Report – Jonathan Brown, Director Infrastructure

Portland House

AWE has been using Portland House for a number of years as a training and development centre. The Company has now extended the lease arrangements and will be using the building for conferences, meetings and to house project teams in an open plan environment.

Cllr David Shirt expressed concerns about the impact on Aldermaston Village and its residents. Jonathan Brown assured him that he did not intend to change any of the current arrangements.

Notices of Planned Development (NOPDs)

Two NOPDs have been submitted recently for a modular accommodation block and two buildings to house the servers for staff computer networks. Comments were raised at the planning meeting about AWE submitting an Environmental Impact Statement for the whole site development plan. We are looking at this, and the traffic implications of any developments. The report on internal transport issues will be issued in the next 12 months and a summary will be given to LLC members.

Cllr Terry Faulkner asked whether AWE was also consulting with Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council on the traffic issues. Jonathan Brown confirmed that he was and said that this travel survey was an update of the one carried out 2 years ago.

PASCALEA

One of the commitments under PASCALEA was that each year AWE would provide an update on performance on the environmental projects. There will be a new brochure published in April. LLC members will be sent copies.

Demolition

The demolition programme at the west end of site is continuing. This area is being cleared for the new accommodation buildings. There are two large concrete towers still standing, and the demolition will commence in the next few weeks. Specialist equipment which will 'nibble' the tower down, starting at the top, is being set up in place. Old office complexes in the area have already been demolished.

8. Presentation – Food Standards Agency Report, Nick Woods FSA

Copy of the presentation handout attached.

9. Presentation – AWE's Role in Global Seismology, Peter Marshall

In the early days of forensic seismology a 20 kilo ton underground nuclear test could be detected but nuclear tests could be carried out below this level of detection. Since then, AWE's Seismologists have been developing more sensitive detection systems. These systems need to detect both where and how big a test was. The current Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) array is very sensitive and has picked up the disturbance from the collapse of the twin towers on 11 September and the explosions on the Russian submarine, Kursk. The seismometers are backed by an efficient two-way communications network which reports to Vienna. They can detect an explosion of as little as a 10 ton event and some 500,000 events are detected each year.

AWE uses the CTBT seismic array, with monitors all over the world and so also picks up all earthquakes. On Boxing Day last year the sea floor under the Indian Ocean lifted by 10metres, this displaced billions of tons of water. Ironically, the previous week there was a magnitude 8 earthquake in the sea off New Zealand which did not cause a Tsunami, the difference being that the Indian Ocean earthquake caused a vertical shear and the New Zealand one was horizontal. The Boxing Day earthquake caused the whole of the British Isles to lift 15mm, but because of the distance from the epicentre, the whole land mass moved at once and we felt nothing.

The array of seismometers used by AWE includes hydrophones which pick up the sounds from earthquakes, when this sound is detected, it should be possible to warn countries at risk of the possibility of a Tsunami, however that message needs to get to everyone on every beach and coastal area at risk. The Boxing Day tsunami travelled at 600km/hr until it slowed down as it reached the shallower coastal waters.

10. Any Other Business

Darren Baker of the Environment Agency explained that 3 to 4 years previously he had involved the LLC members in a consultation on AWE's authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act. He asked if members were happy for the Secretary to give Mr Baker the LLC contact details so that he could involve them in the next consultation for revised authorisations. Members were happy for their details to be supplied to Mr Baker.

Action 40/3: Secretary to supply names and addresses of members to Darren Baker. Action complete

Councillor Bill Cane thanked AWE for the invitation to attend the ceremony to mark the closure of the Pangbourne Pipeline. Mike Broad thanked AWE for their contribution to Tadley Youth, explaining

that Tadley was very short of facilities for young people. This contribution from AWE would assist in setting up two youth clubs. He also asked that AWE publicise this and other good community projects in the local papers. Cllr Broad also commented on the recruitment and training of apprentices and AWE's excellent record. He also felt that this should be published more.

Cllr Martin Maynard asked for a presentation at a future meeting on staff issues.

Action 40/4: Secretary to arrange a presentation on Staff Issues.

Cllr Shirt reported that results from the questionnaires circulated for the Aldermaston Parish Plan were now in. Many residents were in favour of a road to by-pass the Aldermaston site; 27% thought there was an increased risk at AWE, 45% thought AWE was a low risk; 34% thought AWE posed a risk to the community. Cllr Shirt felt that the perception of risk was related to vehicle convoys rather than the site itself.

11. Date of next meetings

Thursday 9th June 2005
Thursday 15th September 2005
Thursday 1st December 2005

Avril Burdett
Secretary to the AWE Local Liaison Committee

✍