

Minutes of the 44th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Thursday 16th March 2006

Present:

Bill Haight	Managing Director, AWE	Chairman LLC
Jonathan Brown	Director Infrastructure, AWE	
Dr Andrew Jupp	Director Assurance, AWE	
Alan Price	Head Corporate Communications, AWE	
Avril Burdett	Public Affairs Manager, AWE	Secretary LLC
Gareth Beard	Head of Environment, AWE	
Cllr Mike Broad	Tadley Town Council	
Cllr Malcolm Bryant	Woking Unitary Authority	
Cllr Dennis Cowdery	Brimpton PC	
Cllr Val Frost	Tadley Town Council	
Cllr John Heggadon	Shinfield Parish Council	
Cllr David Leeks	Tadley Town Council	
Ian Lindsay	Wasing Parish Meeting	
Cllr Royce Longton	West Berkshire Council	
Martin Maynard	Pangbourne Parish Council	
Cllr Jeff Moss	Swallowfield Parish Council	
Cllr Doug Mundy	Burghfield Parish Council	
Cllr Irene Neill	West Berkshire Council	
Cllr David Shirt	Aldermaston Parish Council	
Cllr John Southall	Purley-on-Thames Parish Council	
Mr Bill Taylor	Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council	
Cllr Graham Ward	Woolhampton Parish Council	
Cllr Tim Whitaker	Mapledurham Parish Council	
Cllr David Wood	Theale Parish Council	

Observers:

Martin Sayers	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Steve Lewis	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Andrew Lindley	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Lee Ash	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Mark Bassett	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Darren Baker	Environment Agency

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies from: Cllr Peter Beard; Cllr Bill Cane; Alan Craft; Cllr Margaret Dadswell; Cllr Pat Garrett; Cllr Chris Goss; Cllr Claire Hutchins; Cllr Peter Hobbs; Julie James; Cllr Michael Lochrie; Tom Payne; Barry Richards; Cllr Dr Murray Roberts; Cllr Alan Sumner and Cllr Gerry Traynor.

2. Actions from the last Meeting

Action 42/3: Jonathan Brown to look at the issue of complaints from neighbours and establish a process at an appropriate level.

Jonathan said he was putting together an AWE Code of Construction Conduct, part of which would address the issue of complaints. As part of that there will be a 24/7 contact, but until that time, Avril Burdett was available by calling the AWE Main Switchboard. [0118 981 4111].

Action 43/1: Secretary to inform LLC members on Apprentice Recruitment

A one-page document in members' packs describes the process (copy attached to minutes).

Action 43/2: members asked for a visit to the newly refurbished Apprentice Academy in 2006 – Secretary to arrange, probably in September.

Action 43/3: Report on the stakeholder survey at a future meeting. Secretary to arrange.

Action 43/4: LLC members to send comments on the RSA Authorisations to Bill Cane. Bill Haight thanked members for their comments and said that this was very valuable feedback for AWE.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

There was one correction to make to the minutes:

Item 8, the Food Standards Agency report; a figure of 4,000,000,000,000 units was given as representing 4 GBq, the correct figure is 4,000,000,000.

The minutes were then accepted as a true record.

4. Chairman's Remarks – Bill Haight, Managing Director.

Don Cook to be AWE Managing Director

Don Cook will succeed Bill Haight as Managing Director on his retirement from the role on 27th March 2006. He is already on site, meeting directors and senior managers and familiarising himself with AWE sites and issues. He will also be spending time with British Nuclear Group and Serco as part of his induction. He had hoped to attend the LLC meeting, but was unable to do so.

Bill Haight will remain as Chairman of AWE plc until at least the end of June and possibly for some months beyond that date and during that time will continue as Chairman of the Local Liaison Committee.

Krakatau

An AWE experiment called Krakatau was performed successfully in the United States recently. This was a sub-critical plutonium experiment designed to provide key weapon performance data and also important information associated with the aging process of the nuclear warheads. The experiment involved a very small amount of plutonium and was planned not to involve a chain reaction and did not cause one.

It represents the culmination of a major cross-company effort and a four year planning and development period. This experiment was the most heavily instrumented sub-critical experiment undertaken, and the preliminary indications are that very high quality data were obtained.

The entire team involved in this work did an excellent job. The interactions with US colleagues have been superb, and this work has been a real example of a successful UK-US collaboration. The AWE team have been working almost continuously in the US for the last nine months in a difficult working environment, with the Krakatau trial being far more challenging, complicated and novel than any previous sub-critical experiment.

Experiments of this kind are vital and help AWE to underwrite the safety and security of Trident in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) era, where weapons cannot be tested.

Orion – construction starts

Mr Haight said that he was pleased to have Bill Cane present when he cut the first ground for the Orion project on 1st February. This followed the decision by West Berkshire Planning Authority to give the go ahead for the project. The new laser will be built on a cleared area on the northwest of the site and will be fully commissioned in 2010.

Orion is a significant improvement on AWE's current capability. It will be 10 times more powerful than our current laser HELEN and will be used in vital research to support Trident and for academic research in partnership with the Rutherford Appleton Laboratories. HELEN has enabled AWE to stay at the forefront of laser physics and Orion will help to keep us there.

Graduates' trip to Sri Lanka

Six AWE graduates are going out to Sri Lanka in the near future with a charity called "Habitat for Humanity". Their task will be to build a house for a family made homeless by the tsunami

and to raise £500 each to fund the next house. Their air fares and living costs will be funded by AWE and the challenge will form part of their personal development.

Buncefield disaster and staff pay.

The fire at the Buncefield fuel depot could have had serious repercussions for our staff, but business continuity plans both at AWE and at our staff payroll service provider meant that staff were paid on time before Christmas. The fire caused serious damage to Northgate Information Solutions premises, but their contingency plans meant that they had back-up data files stored elsewhere. Even when problems arose getting the back-up data onto a new server, AWE payroll staff came to the rescue by going to the NIS offices and inputting data directly onto the NIS system.

AWE also looked at other aspects of the Buncefield fire; Mr Brown gave an update at item 6.

Sunday Times Articles - Comments to LLC in response to member's question

Bill Haight had been asked to comment on the increasing public focus on the future of the UK nuclear deterrent.

He said that on Tuesday 14th March, the House of Commons Defence Select Committee began hearing evidence on Britain's nuclear capability. This followed rather dramatic coverage in The Sunday Times claiming that the UK has been 'secretly' designing a new nuclear warhead.

He could not, of course, comment on Government policy. Nor would he speculate about the Government's timetable for a decision on the UK's future deterrent arrangements. He was, however, clear about the role of AWE plc.

"As we have consistently made clear - and very public - AWE's role is to support and maintain the warheads for Trident, the UK's sole nuclear deterrent. We are also required to maintain a capability to produce a successor system should the Government ever require one in the future. That means having the people, the know-how and the facilities to do the job if called upon. That is very different from actually producing a new warhead. There is currently no programme at AWE to develop a new warhead.

"In a Government Written Ministerial Statement in July last year, The Secretary of State for Defence re-emphasised the Government's commitment to maintaining the effectiveness of the nuclear deterrent. He announced a programme of investment designed to sustain key skills and facilities at AWE. This investment will ensure that the existing Trident warhead stockpile can be maintained safely and effectively throughout its intended in-service life.

"Trident does of course have a finite life, and the Government has indicated that decisions on its `timing are however a matter for Government and not for AWE plc.

AWE plc will continue to discharge its responsibilities under the 25-year contract we have to manage and operate AWE, delivering our mission as specified by the Ministry of Defence."

Corporate Communications Team wins awards

The AWE Corporate Communications team had been short-listed for three prestigious communication awards by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations. At a recent ceremony they won three awards, a silver award for the "Now We're Talking" campaign for best use of internal communication; a second silver award for AWE Today as one of the region's best newsletters and finally the team's work to promote the activities of our schools' liaison committee - along with its 74 members – won a gold award for the best relationship management programme.

5. Health, Safety and Environmental Report – Dr Andrew Jupp, Director Assurance

Presentation slides attached

Improvement Notices

Dr Jupp reported that all work relating to the Improvement Notice on low hanging cables had been completed and these arrangements had been inspected by the Health and Safety Executive Inspector. The Improvement Notice has now been formally closed by HSE. Dr Jupp also reported that the Improvement Notice issued by EA relating to the event previously reported with regard to the ESSPH had also been formally closed out by the EA. The reviews have been completed and an agreed programme was in place and was being progressed and monitored by EA.

Radioactive Substances Act 1993 submissions

AWE's application under the RSA 93 to modify and reduce our discharge limits has now been received and agreed by the Environment Agency and is expected to go out to public consultation in Mid- April 2006. This has been delayed slightly as the public consultations for British Energy are taking place in March. We have made two minor variations in agreement with the Environment Agency to cover a very small discharge of Argon 41 for future Orion requirements and some more specific detail in a discharge of iodine to Drigg. **Secretary's note:** the public consultation is now expected to commence on 20th April 2006.

Environment Exhibition

The AWE Environment Week Exhibition will be held during the week beginning 5th June, which is World Environment Day. The exhibition is held to raise awareness on environmental issues and what everyone can do to protect the environment at home and at work. **NB:** *The exhibition will be open for LLC members only after the June 8th Local Liaison Committee meeting.*

Learning from External Events

AWE's Review, Learn and Improve process is used to help understand and identify improvements from events related to AWE and also for accidents and incidents throughout industry. An incident at BNFL's Thorp facility was one example. Dr Roger Coates, Director of Safety gave a presentation to key staff at AWE on the background to the event and their initial findings. We have built these findings into our own programmes and plans.

Target Zero (no injury, no ill health)

Target Zero is AWE's approach to ensure the desire for an incident and injury free workplace becomes the leading behaviour of our entire workforce - regardless of the work they do or their position in the company. We have had two recent campaigns to support this programme. The first was related to Slips, Trips and Falls. This campaign encouraged all at AWE to adopt 5 simple steps – including not taking short cuts, holding on to hand rails, reporting or removing obstacles in passageways. Encouragingly, there are signs that the campaign is beginning to have an impact. The second was associated with Personal Protection Equipment. This campaign raised awareness of the correct selection and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The roll-out included a series of roadshows incorporating a portable trailer, allowing a wide range of PPE to be demonstrated, including hand and eye protection, Toolbox talks, Awareness Posters and leaflets etc.

Future campaigns are being developed which will target Manual Handling, COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health), Security, Machinery and Transport.

As part of Target Zero appropriate Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets have been set at zero. This is a change in philosophy for AWE, but it is the right thing to do for business on a number of levels. In particular it underpins the Target Zero ethos and it is a clear statement of our commitment. Dr Jupp explained this was a long term focus and commitment and was key in setting the right mindset and behaviour.

AWE will always seek to demonstrate ongoing performance improvement, and so in future the emphasis of our approach will be to show AWE performance in context of year on year improvement and benchmarked with other nuclear operators, industries and relevant industry sectors

Injury performance.

There has been a small increase in staff and contractor injuries in recent months. The injury accidents in October and November relate primarily to back injuries, injuries sustained as a result of slips, trips and falls, and minor hand injuries. There is no clear pattern or reason for the increase that has been identified.

Injury performance trends against previous years.

Injury performance shows a general downward trend since 2000, although an increase in injury accidents in October and November has skewed the otherwise good performance towards the end of this year. The last two years are clearly an improvement on past performances overall.

In contract year seven we have set ourselves the Key Performance target of Zero Injury accidents, as our philosophy is that it is unacceptable for any of our staff or contractors to be injured whilst at work. We will strive to get as close to this target as possible. Target Zero campaigns previously described underpin the desire to reach this target.

Lost Time Accident performance

A Lost Time Accident RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) is one that results in greater than three days incapacity or certain types of reportable injury.

In October there were four reportable injuries. A fall down the stairs, a trip on a traffic cone stud, a fall which resulted in a contractor breaking his arm (this a RIDDOR major injury as well as greater than three days absence) and a back strain whilst cleaning a work area in a laboratory; this was a recurrence of a previous back injury. In November there were two reportable injuries. A fall on the stairs, and a contractor back injury, sustained whilst laying floor tiles. In each a detailed investigation was undertaken and corrective actions put in place to prevent recurrence.

There were no reportable injuries in December. Despite the accidents in November and December, the recent general trend is downward, and 2005 we achieved the least Lost Time Accidents since 2000.

OSHA Total Recordable Injury Rate

In order to provide finer detail, we have recently adopted the OSHA system. This was originally developed by the American Occupational Health and Safety Agency, but has been adopted by a large number of UK operators. All RIDDOR reportable injuries and illnesses are included in this measure, together with days away cases, restricted work cases, and anything requiring professional medical treatment.

The rate is calculated by multiplying the number of OSHA Recordable Staff and Contractor Injuries by 200,000, and dividing by the number of hours worked. We took a retrospective view of our performance in 2004 which indicated that our performance was approximately 1.6. We therefore set a target of 0.8. Dr Jupp reported there have been 12 OSHA cases in the Quarter, which break down as

- 8 Days Away Cases
- 2 Restricted Work Cases
- 2 Medical Treatment Cases
-

In each case corrective actions have been put into place to prevent recurrence as part of the Target Zero philosophy.

We have been reviewing our understanding of the definitions and have been working with colleagues outside AWE. It appears we may have taken a lower threshold than appropriate. We are reviewing our data and reports and expect to reassess and amend to be consistent with other industries using the OSHA system.

Non-attendance

Performance in 2005 overall is equivalent to that in 2004. Performance is comparable to CBI non-attendance data which indicates a typical loss of 3.2% of time through absence.

In order to try and improve our performance further, the Company procedures for management of attendance have recently been updated and re-issued to all line managers. Training has also been made available to line managers to ensure that non-attendance is managed as effectively as possible.

Radiation doses are expressed in terms of energy deposited in the body by radiation. They are measured in units called milli-Sieverts (mSv). 1mSv is approximately the radiation dose from five modern medical x-rays, or that received from 100 three hour flights. The average annual radiation dose for a person living in the UK is 2.6 mSv, although due to Radon from granite in Cornwall the average total dose rate is 7.8 mSv. Around Aldermaston the dose rate is lower than the national average at 2.2 mSv a year due to the sedimentary rocks and river derived soils.

Doses received by our workers are directly related to the work they undertake, and we have recently brought forward our enhanced decommissioning program. As our decommissioning work continues it is likely to continue to be the case that maximum individual exposure will necessarily be above the 2005 2.8mSv target, but well within legal and authorised limits and will in all cases be justified using the as reasonably practicable philosophy.

Highest Maximum Individual Dose

In 2005 the highest maximum individual dose was 3.6 mSv. Dr Jupp explained the background to this one individual who had exceeded the target. This was due to a pressurised breathing air suit operative whose work was related to size reduction of legacy glove boxes as part of the AWE decommissioning programme.

Collective Dose

This is the sum of all RA doses received by all personnel at AWE. The total exposure across the company is only 15 times higher than the maximum legal individual dose. The doses received by our workers are directly related to the work they undertake. The Collective Dose received in 2005 was 298 mSv and Dr Jupp explained that this is dominated by the work undertaken on the AWE decommissioning programme.

Public Dose Assessment

Results confirm that there is no significant hazard to members of the public from radioactive discharges from AWE's sites.

Security Index Rate

Unfortunately, we are not yet meeting our target. Security breaches contributing to this are very minor, and relate to things like office windows being left open or failure to secure hard drives from computers before leaving the office. It also includes bringing items like mobile phones with inbuilt cameras onto site etc.

We have recently increased the number of visits made by our internal security guarding around our offices., so the number of incidents detected has naturally increased. A Target Zero campaign on security has been started to address improved performance in this area

Office Waste Recycling

This is calculated by the proportion of the total weight of office waste recycled as a percentage of the total weight of Office Waste. We did not achieving the Office waste target in the quarter. This was low due to the closure of the facility which sorts and segregates the wastes. The facility is now fully operational again.

Assets Waste Recycling

This includes recycling of redundant machinery, scrap metal, recyclable concrete for aggregates etc.

This is also calculated as a percentage of the total assets waste. The asset recycling performance was just below target. This was due to the Recovery and Disposals section now using half height skips instead of full height skips, following a review by the Facility Manager. This is affecting the timeliness of disposal. We are working to complete the risk assessments to enable further improvements to be made.

We use the local authorities performance on recycling of general refuse as a benchmark. AWE is currently performing well but there is potential for the Company to improve.

Liquid Discharges of Radioactive waste

Closure of the Pangbourne Pipeline has greatly reduced our liquid discharges. Figures on the slides represent discharges of treated effluents made to trade effluent sewers. Targets are based on authorisation limits and planned programmes of work agreed under the Radioactive Substances Act. Current performance meets the Company targets and is well below the authorisation limits, which are already very low.

Airborne Discharges

Targets for discharges are based on our Authorisation Limits granted by the Environment Agency under the Radioactive Substance Act. These limits are being reviewed as technological and infrastructure improvements have greatly reduced the amount of radioactivity we discharge to the atmosphere. We remain well within our authorisation limits.

In answer to a question from Cllr Jeff Moss:

High levels of uranium detected on monitoring equipment in Prospect Park. Darren Baker of the Environment Agency wrote the following in his quarterly report on AWE:

“Many of you will have been concerned by the reports in the media concerning this issue.

I am disappointed that a scientist should cause such alarm by releasing a report based on opinion and not fact. Therefore I hope to alleviate your concerns by sharing with you all the current facts.

Nuclear sites have a number of air samplers around them to confirm their discharges are not adversely affecting the environment and local population. These air samplers filter the air collecting solid particles on a filter for analysis, very similar to a large vacuum cleaner. One of these air samplers is in Prospect Park to monitor discharges potentially associated with the AWE sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield.

In April 2003 AWE plc notified me that this sampler had detected background uranium at higher levels than usual. There were a few samples that were higher than usual, in March and in April 2003.

I started an investigation immediately. My first priority was to determine any health implications from this uranium and then to determine where it may have come from. There are several different types of uranium: enriched; depleted and natural. AWE use both highly enriched and depleted uranium in their processes. Natural uranium is present in the environment, and has been around since the world was created. As its name suggests, it occurs naturally, in materials such as rock, sand, coal and soil.

Laboratory analysis of the Prospect Park samples confirmed that the elevated readings were due to natural uranium. The readings were not due to the use of depleted uranium, either in Iraq or at AWE. Interestingly, the levels were normal for the amount of solid collected on the filters. The more dust, sand, grits etc you collect on the filter, the more uranium will be naturally present. The reason the uranium samples were higher than expected is that the samplers had collected more solids than would usually be expected. This was very probably linked to activities such as construction, leading to high levels of dust, sand raised into the air in the local area. I also noted in my investigation that there was only 10mm of rain in the area

during March and April 2003. These very dry conditions may well have contributed to increases in airborne dust, and therefore of natural uranium in the samples.

Please let me assure you that:

- At no time did radiation levels in Prospect Park vary from natural background.
- No depleted uranium from the Iraq conflict has been detected in Prospect Park.
- No uranium from AWE was detected either.
- These higher than expected natural uranium results in the samples did not increase the risks to health of the residents of Reading or the surrounding area.
- If the uranium had been at levels that cause health concerns or associated with an industrial process regulated by us then the public would have been informed.
- All results since April 2003 have shown expected solid and uranium values.”

Cllr Moss asked whether these results had been replicated on other monitoring stations. Mr Baker told him that there had been some increase at other sites around Reading, but the same reasons for it applied. The amount of uranium measured was normal for the amount of dust collected.

Cllr David Leeks asked whether the uranium found had anything to do with the hospital formerly on the site. He was told that it did not; the substance detected was uranium, not medical isotopes.

6. Infrastructure Report – Jonathan Brown, Director Infrastructure

Public Consultation on AWE (A) By-laws

MOD took the decision to refresh the Byelaws across the MOD estate and Aldermaston (including Blacknest). The consultation process will be :-

(MOD) Defence Estates to write to local authorities and other public bodies outlining programme

Signage will be put up including byelaws and maps

Consultation period for the submission of public comments and objections

MOD response to public comments and objections

If agreed implementation of the byelaws

Improvement Notice – Tritium source opened in a non-licensed laboratory.

Jonathan Brown showed photographs of the facility concerned at the time of the incident, during clean up and afterwards.

Bollards external to the site

Bollards have been installed to prevent vehicle access to MOD land surrounding Bluebell Wood and land along the south-western edge of the site including the old gardeners' club site. This is to prevent damage to the land which causes a pedestrian hazard, and the subsequent costs to fill in the deep ruts which are easily made when the ground is soft. The hard-standing at the gardener's club site is not maintained for use as a car park and so should not be used as such. Telescopic bollards at each area allow the entry of authorised vehicles such as emergency services.

Excavation at Burghfield

BT is planning to construct a telecommunications duct in the public highway along the east boundary of the Burghfield site. BT will be responsible for obtaining and complying with all statutory instruments required.

Drainage

AWE has been asked (by the Environment Agency) to verify that an external drainage pipe to the main sewer is good condition. It has been agreed that the most appropriate method to confirm the integrity of the drain is by a CCTV survey. The work originally planned 7 March did not proceed as AWE did not consider the traffic management system provided created a safe working environment.

Traffic and Transport Update

AWE has undertaken an intensive review of traffic movements both on and off site in line with the submission of planning applications. Further studies of staff and contractor traffic movements will take place in the near future. A Traffic and Transportation Plan has been produced to support of the Site Context Plan, already submitted to West Berkshire. The plan is to install or investigate measures to better manage the traffic both onsite and in close proximity to the AWE site, movements covering:-

- Improved cycle and walkways.
- Improve passenger transportation.
- Car sharing – positive incentives
- Gate management
- Construction traffic movements

Already implemented:-

- Main car park will soon only be used for visitors.
- Park and Ride schemes have been introduced.
- AWE staff have been discouraged from using the lay-by outside the main car park and West Berkshire Highways have been approached to consider more permanent measures.

Buncefield- lessons learnt

The Joint Regulator Team issued a guidance note following the Buncefield depot incident at Hemel Hempstead.

AWE have reviewed facilities for the use of stored fuels and demonstrated compliance with all statutory regulations. The only fuel oils stored in modest quantities at Aldermaston and Burghfield are light diesel fuel oil and heavy fuel oil. These fuels have high flashpoints and require direct heating to generate enough vapour to form a flammable atmosphere, unlike the petrol and aviation fuel stored at Buncefield.

Both the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites have a dedicated Fire Service in attendance on sites 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with Facility Emergency Response Plans (FERPs) in place.

Cllr Tim Whitaker asked for details on the decommissioning strategy for the Pangbourne Pipeline. (See action 44/2). He also asked whether, with the Target Zero for accidents, AWE had sufficient medical cover to cope with the planned infrastructure projects. Jonathan Brown replied that this issue had been addressed and that currently cover was sufficient, a watching brief will be kept on the situation.

Members were shown a time-lapse video of the demolition of the two concrete towers at the west end of the Aldermaston site. The work had taken some 9 months which included surveys to characterise the materials in the buildings, sampling, demolition and segregation of waste. The land had been cleared to accommodate new office buildings, which will be the subject of AWE's next application to West Berkshire Planning Authority.

Wind Power

Jonathan Brown had previously reported to the LLC that Wind Power was not a viable option for AWE. Recent improvements in technology suggest that this may change and he was keeping options open. LLC members offered assistance.

Cycle safety

David Leeks said that he was concerned for the safety of AWE staff crossing the road at the junction between Winkworth Lane and the main Burghfield road. The speed limit at that point is currently 60mph. Mr Brown said that he had discussed this matter with West Berkshire Highways department and they agreed that a 40mph limit was probably more appropriate.

Cllr Doug Mundy said that he was concerned that traffic calming measures around the Aldermaston site would push drivers to use other local roads as 'rat-runs'. Jonathan said that they were looking at that issue as part of the travel and transport strategy. Bill Haight added that the philosophy was to strive to reduce traffic.

Action 44/1: Jonathan Brown to give presentation on Sites Development

Action: 44/2: Jonathan Brown to update members on the future of the Pangbourne Pipeline.

7. Presentation: Herald Decommissioning – Meenu Gangahar [Slides attached]

Meenu had been responsible for this project from its start to its successful completion. The reactor known as HERALD (**H**ighly **E**nriched **R**eactor **AL**dermaston) had been closed since 1988 and had now been demolished apart from the building housing the reactor vessel. The vessel had been put into a safe, dry, passive state to allow the activity to decrease. Once the activity had decreased to a state where the work could be carried out safely by hand, the reactor would be decommissioned and the remaining facility demolished. Cllr Wood asked the cost of the project, which was around £5M.

Martin Maynard asked if there was containment for the reactor vessel in its current state. He was assured that the vessel was sealed and shielded and had a ventilation system and the building itself also provided a further layer of containment. The facility had originally been designed this way to provide containment during its operational life.

Steve Lewis, Nuclear Installations Inspector added that the early Magnox reactors had originally been built without containment, and Herald was better. He said that he did not feel that there would have been any risk during the time it was in use.

Cllr Shirt asked whether AWE had any other reactors. He was told that the only other one was the small Viper reactor, which was a totally different type, being a pulsed power reactor operating in very shorts bursts. Viper is used for research purposes.

8. Presentation: Supercomputing – David Ball & David Chambers [Slides attached]

The presenters explained that supercomputing was used to support studies on the safety and aging of the Trident warhead. Data from past underground tests, (before the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), together with data from experiments on HELEN laser, in materials science, hydrodynamics and other areas, enabled them to visualise what might happen in an accident or as the warhead aged. It is similar to the concept of testing cars for safety and aging without crashing any cars or using crash test dummies.

The 'Blue Oak' computer was the first step to 3-D modelling and visualisation, but is mainly used for two dimensional modelling (rotation around a single axis of symmetry). Larch, AWE's next generation supercomputer, will improve the 3D capability. Larch will be 30 times faster than Blue Oak.

Members were shown a visualisation of what might happen if there was an impact or explosion on a warhead, and the presenters explained how the computers had helped scientists and engineers to design safe, reliable warheads.

Cllr Moss observed that the Government had put large amounts of money into the NHS computer system, and it had not worked, he asked how AWE could be confident that Larch would work. He was told that AWE staff had been very clear on their requirements and this was a step up, not a revolutionary new project. The NHS system had been required to do many things for many users in many locations, so it was not comparable.

John Southall commented that £20M sounded like a lot of money, but compared with processing power/£ in the 1950s, it represented very good value for money.

9. Any Other Business

Cllr Frost asked what would happen to AWE's radiological waste when Drigg closed. Jonathan Brown told her that there were long term issues which were being looked at by a Government-appointed body 'CoRWM', which was looking at the right solution for long-term storage of intermediate and low-level waste. In the short term, Drigg was still available for use and this would continue for the next few years.

10. Date of next meetings

Thursday 8th June
Thursday 14th September
Thursday 30th November

Avril Burdett
Secretary to the AWE Local Liaison Committee

Distribution:

LLC members
AWE Internet site [www.awe.co.uk]
House of Commons Library
Local MPs

Apprentice Training Recruitment

Our recruitment starts in the November before an August intake.

The timeline is as follows:

November

Business areas surrender requests for apprentices in November. This is based on headcount requirement predictions 4 years in advance (succession planning, growth, etc.)

Advertising begins. This typically includes adverts in the local press (Slough, Oxford and Reading regions), on local radio and on the AWE website.

AWE Recruitment department send posters and leaflets to approximately 40 schools across Berkshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire.

Connexions (previously the 'careers service') also receive posters, advertise the positions on their website and their officers have a presence in schools and will pass the information on directly to pupils.

Advertising continues through December and into January. Closing date for applications is usually last day of January.

January

Psychometric testing takes place during the last two weeks of January and into mid-February. This uses the SHL technical test battery.

Separate test days are used to cater for those with additional learning needs e.g. dyslexia.

Candidates achieving an average of 40th percentile are invited back for interview.

February

Interviewing takes place. Each interview lasts approx. 40 minutes.

April

Suitable candidates are invited in for medical.

A final review takes place to identify which of the suitable candidates are offered an apprenticeship place. Those who do not pass this sift are kept as reserves.

Security clearance process begins after medicals are passed

August

New intake start in the first week of August.

During the year we have a presence at as many careers fairs and schools events as we can physically manage, this keeps apprentice trainings profile visible during the year. Details of interested individuals taken at these events are then passed to the recruitment department to be contacted when recruitment begins each year.

Some figures for this year are:

Over 300 applications and subsequent invitations to Psychometric testing.

128 Interviews

74 suitable candidates identified

We have 50 apprenticeship places to fill.