

Minutes of the 46th AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Thursday 14th September 2006

Present:

Don Cook	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
Cllr Peter Beard	Reading Borough Council	
Cllr Mike Broad	Tadley Town Council	
Cllr Malcolm Bryant	Woking Unitary Authority	
Cllr Bill Cane	Mortimer West End Parish Council	LLC Liaison Officer
Cllr Margaret Dadswell	Aldermaston Parish Council	
Cllr Terry Faulkner	Tadley Town Council	
Cllr John Heggadon	Shinfield Parish Council	
Cllr Peter Hobbs	Sulhamstead Parish Council	
Cllr Kay Lacey	Pangbourne Parish Council	
Cllr David Leeks	Tadley Town Council	
Cllr Jeff Moss	Swallowfield Parish Council	
Cllr Irene Neill	West Berkshire Council	
Barry Richards	Hampshire County Council	
Cllr Murray Roberts	Padworth Parish Council	
Cllr John Southall	Purley-on-Thames Parish Council	
Cllr Alan Sumner	Wokefield Parish Council	
Mr Bill Taylor	Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council	
Cllr Graham Ward	Woolhampton Parish Council	
Cllr David Wood	Theale Parish Council	

Observers:

Charles Temple	Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Darren Baker	Environment Agency
Stuart Parr	Environment Agency

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies from: Alan Craft; Cllr Pat Garrett; Julie James; Cllr Royce Longton; Tom Payne; Cllr David Shirt; Cllr Michael Lochrie; Cllr Maureen Eden; Cllr Tim Whitaker.

We welcome Barry Richards to his first LLC meeting; Mr Richards represents Hampshire County Council Emergency Planning Department.

2. Actions from previous Meetings

Action 42/3: Jonathan Brown to look at the issue of complaints from neighbours and establish a process at an appropriate level. *Ongoing, Avril Burdett is the current contact.*

Action 43/2: members asked for a visit to the newly refurbished Apprentice Academy in 2006 – *This visit will take place today.*

Action 43/3: Report on the stakeholder survey at a future meeting. *Presentation at the December meeting*

Action 44/1: Jonathan Brown to give presentation on Sites Development. *A half-day workshop took place on 6th July. Feedback from Jonathan Brown today.*

Action 45/1: Gareth Beard to look at the feasibility of putting together a quarterly environmental report.

Members were given copies of the AWE 2006 Environment Report. Mr Beard said that he felt that putting together a quarterly report would be very labour intensive, but he hoped the annual report would meet LLC requirements. The aim of the report was to inform internal and external stakeholders about AWE's environmental plans and performance. He asked members to feed back their views on the report.

Action 46/1: LLC members to feed back comments on the Environment Report to the Secretary.

3. Minutes of the 45th Meeting

Cllr Moss was listed as present at the meeting but had given his apologies. Item 10 recorded comments made on compliance with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Ministry of Defence have asked AWE to make clear that this is a matter of Government Policy, and not a matter on which it is appropriate for AWE plc to comment. Opinions expressed by AWE staff were personal opinions. The minutes were then accepted.

4. Chairman's remarks – Dr Don Cook, Managing Director, AWE plc

Investor in People Accreditation

AWE has been awarded accreditation to the new, significantly tougher, 2005 Investor in People Standard, in recognition of the Company's work in supporting and developing employees. Between 60 and 70 per cent of UK companies are currently failing to achieve the new standard at the first attempt.

Sale of the British Nuclear Group

The Government have announced their decision to allow the sale of BNG to go ahead. A statement issued on behalf of the BNFL Board recently said they have concluded that best value can be delivered for their shareholder (the Government) by selling parts of that business in four elements – one of which is the AWE shareholding - separately.

- BNFL is one of the three equal shareholders in AWE Management Ltd (AWE ML), the consortium which holds a 25 year contract for the operation and management of (AWE).
- Responsibility for discharging the AWE ML contract is delegated to AWE plc, who run the AWE sites on a day to day basis and employ the local management and workforce.
- BNFL is currently in consultation to sell British Nuclear Group, the subsidiary in which its AWE shareholding is held.
- The proposed change of one of the parent company shareholders will not affect the safe operation and management of AWE or security of employment for staff.

AWE to be listed in top employer publication

AWE is to be listed in the 2007 issue of 'Britain's Top Employer' which is sponsored by a national broadsheet newspaper. Research into the performance of companies listed is conducted independently by the Corporate Research Foundation. AWE has been ranked 24th among the 100 top employers accepted for listing.

Progress on Redwood supercomputer

Work on AWE's new Cray supercomputer is progressing well with its recent installation into a refurbished dust-free facility. Known as 'Redwood', it will gradually replace the existing Blue Oak computer once information has been transferred across.

Chain Reaction Challenge

Children from eight local primary schools took up AWE's annual Chain Reaction Challenge in late June, as part of our 'AWESome Science Campaign'. It is designed to encourage interest in science and engineering at a young age.

Organised by AWE graduates, the event challenges final year pupils at primary to design and build a chain reaction machine from ordinary materials found in the home or classroom. The Cedars School, Aldermaston, won the first prize of £300; Spurcroft Primary School, Thatcham, came second scooping a cheque for £200 and the remaining six competing schools all received a prize of £100.

Schools Engineering Challenge

Twelve local schools competed in the tenth annual Schools Engineering Challenge in July which encourages young people to take an active interest in all aspects of engineering and design.

Year 10 pupils were tasked with designing, building and testing a self-propelled vehicle using ordinary household materials supplied on the day to each of the teams. The Challenge demonstrated the importance of teamwork, material selection and sound planning - all vital aspects of any career in engineering or science.

The teams competed for the Beam Engine Trophy and a first prize of £1,000 to buy scientific or technical equipment for their school. Second and third place teams received £500 and £250 respectively.

Kennet School in Thatcham, Newbury, won the competition with Brighton Hill Community College in Basingstoke taking second place and the Robert Mays School in Odham, near Basingstoke scooping third prize.

Don Cook congratulated Aldermaston Parish Council on winning the Calor Berkshire Village of the Year competition and wished them luck with the regional heats in October.

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

(Presentation slides attached)

Environment Exhibition

This year's Environment Exhibition was attended by 65% of AWE staff and contractors. The contents of the exhibition have been distilled into the 2006 AWE Environment Report.

Site Emergency Exercises

Dr Jupp referred back to a presentation by Steve Burdett at an earlier meeting. AWE carries out these exercises for many reasons:

- AWE has a duty of care to staff and the public.
- To ensure that we have an appropriate response to a reasonably foreseeable incident.
- To demonstrate the capability of equipment, staff and facilities.
- To learn and improve.
- To comply with legislation – it is one of AWE's Nuclear Site Licence conditions.

The Aldermaston exercise in June was a challenging scenario agreed with the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) which combined nuclear radiography and explosives operations. It tested the facilities, all staff and contractors and all aspects of emergency response. The exercise was scrutinised by representatives of NII, MoD, Trades Unions, emergency response staff and others and was deemed by NII to be a satisfactory demonstration. The annual Burghfield site exercise will take place in October.

RSA re-authorisation

The public consultation phase of AWE's application for updated authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act went live on 15th May 2006. The Environment Agency (EA) held surgeries in Reading and Tadley. These were not well attended. Public consultation was completed 7th August 2006, apart from on one issue.

An application to dispose of waste at a Qinetiq site, near Foulness had attracted some interest, including from a local MP. In the past this waste was transferred under an MoD authorisation to the Foulness site. The new proposal is for direct transfer from AWE to Qinetiq. This section of the consultation has been extended to allow a fully informed local debate to be sought once requested information has been provided. The final decision document is expected early in 2007.

Members asked whether the drop-in sessions had been sufficiently advertised and were assured that they had. Cllr Bryant noted that he rarely had questions now about AWE and public perception of AWE had improved.

Lost Time Accident (LTA) performance. A Lost Time Accident is defined under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) as one that results in greater than three days incapacity.

The number of months without lost time accidents is increasing. Although the injuries were minor they prevented the persons from undertaking their normal work activities for more than three days.

Lost time accident rate: The rate is a little over one lost time accident per one million hours worked. Several directorates have reached the significant milestones of 2 million hours without a lost time accident.

OSHA Days Away cases: This is a new measure at AWE. In each case corrective actions have been put into place to prevent recurrence. Although the end of year performance was marginally higher than the target, it compares favourably with industry as a whole and is a 40% improvement on the previous year.

Injuries: Most injuries are very minor in nature and require little treatment – small cuts, sprains etc. Mandatory wearing of gloves has prevented many small hand injuries, cuts etc. Injury may still occur but suitable precautions can lessen the severity. The result is still very encouraging given the extent of construction and other related activities on the sites in the past year.

Non-attendance

Performance in 2005 overall is equivalent to that in 2004, it compares favourably to CBI non-attendance data which indicates a loss of 3.2% of time. The Company procedures for management of attendance have recently been updated and re-issued to all line managers. In addition training has also been made available to line managers to ensure that non-attendance is managed as effectively as possible.

Maximum Individual dose limit: AWE sets low dose limits targets – often less than 20% of legal limit - even though our current decommissioning programme makes it challenging to achieve.

Collective Dose

This is the sum of all doses received at AWE which demonstrates that we are managing the total exposure for the Company. The Collective Dose received in CY7 so far is dominated by workers undertaking decommissioning work.

Public Dose Assessment

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

Liquid Discharges

Current performance meets the Company targets and is well below the authorisation limits.

Airborne Discharges

Alpha and Beta discharges generally show only background levels of radiation – these figures therefore represent largely a function of the volume of gas discharged rather than any real radioactive releases. Current performance meets the Company targets and is well below the authorisation limits.

Recycling

Both Office and Assets waste recycling rates have improved considerably. [Assets are any items of equipment on the Ministry of Defence assets register]

Cllr Lacey asked the significance of the 'heightened alert' status of AWE. Dr Jupp explained that the Ministry of Defence assessed the threat level from all intelligence sources and set the appropriate alert level. In the current climate, some extra vigilance was necessary.

6. Infrastructure Report – Jonathan Brown, Director Infrastructure

Traffic & Travel Update

The AWE Travel Plan was presented to the Local Authorities on 24 August 2006. A review of existing transport connections to the sites has identified that public transport links are generally limited and infrequent and that cycle / pedestrian facilities are poor.

The objectives of the Travel Plan are to:

- Promote more sustainable transport choices for existing and future staff, contractors and visitors and where feasible, construction workers;
- Promote accessibility to the AWE sites by walking, cycling, gate management, passenger transport and car sharing;
- Reduce the need to travel, especially alone by car;
- Better management of construction traffic, goods and service vehicles.

AWE recognises the benefits that will accrue from implementation of the Travel Plan, particularly in reducing the impact of off-site travel on the surrounding transport network.

To support this, AWE will:

- Enhance passenger transport connections to and from the sites;
- Help to create a network of safe cycle and pedestrian routes to the Aldermaston site through the provision of contributions to foot / cycleways and controlled crossing facilities;
- Implement alternative working techniques where feasible and maintain relevant site facilities to reduce the need to travel;
- Investigate the potential to provide specific construction logistics initiatives.

A public information leaflet will be supplied to members shortly.

Park and Ride Bus Service

As part of the strategy for reducing traffic around the AWE sites, AWE have implemented Park and Ride bus services between AWE sites. During August the park and ride bus service between Aldermaston and Portland House carried 6,356 passengers and the buses travelled 6,062 miles. This is estimated to have saved over 30,000 miles that would have been travelled by cars with single occupancy in the same period. This has the additional benefit of making a significant reduction in road traffic around the sites.

Falcon Bus Stop

The Falcon Bus Stop was replaced on 22 June.

New Office Accommodation (NOA)

The plans for construction of new office accommodation at AWE Aldermaston are proceeding. Planning permission will shortly be sought for the construction of two new buildings to be located at the west end of the Site. These buildings will provide a contemporary working environment for our staff in primarily open plan accommodation. Subject to receipt of planning permission, AWE intends to start construction next year.

Feedback on Workshop

Mr Brown thanked the many LLC members who had attended the workshop on Site Development. He said that the input from members would be very helpful as future plans are developed.

Public consultation on AWE (A) By-laws

MOD has taken the decision to refresh the by-laws across the MOD estates and Aldermaston (including Blacknest) was the first MOD site to have the new by-laws put through public consultation. The comments raised during the public consultation period earlier in 2006 are being considered at a senior level within MOD. Once approval has been given, the new boundary markers and signs will be installed. For information, the by-laws can be found on the Defence Estate's website

www.defence-estate.mod.gov.uk/byelaws/Internet/Intro.html.

Energy Strategy

Mr Brown thanked John Heggadon and Ian Lindsay for their input on sustainable energy. He said that A public information leaflet would be produced to outline AWE's Energy Strategy and would be copied to members. Cllr Leeks asked about the progress of the wind turbine survey, it was explained that the survey will take a year, as data is collected on wind speeds and directions over a 12 month period.

Removal of PPL Sarge Pipes

Following the closure of the Pangbourne Pipeline last year, work to remove the sparge or outlet pipes from the bed of the River Thames is due to take place in October. The work is scheduled to take three weeks.

The Environment Agency has been consulted and great care will be taken to cause minimal damage to the river environment. Silt will be removed from the river bed at the start of the operation and will be put into degradable bags and replaced afterwards. This solution was agreed with the EA as providing the fastest way for the area to recover.

John Southall asked how far inland the removal would go. He was told that this exercise was to remove the sparge pipes only from the riverbed.

Cllr Wood asked whether the whole of the pipeline would be removed, he was told that work was still ongoing to decide the Best Practicable Environmental Option for the disused pipeline.

Legionella

Following the recent prolonged period of hot weather, routine monitoring of AWE domestic and process water tanks has shown a rise in the stored water temperature. This resulted in the AWE Technical Authority (Legionella) recommending the introduction of additional bacterial sampling on some systems. Typically these were systems with low usage or those systems feeding showering facilities. These systems were taken out of service, fully cleaned and disinfected before being returned to service.

Small Fire

A small fire occurred during decommissioning operations in an old process building that resulted in the implementation of the Site Emergency Arrangements to make the area safe and to provide decontamination support for staff. NII, EA and the MoD were notified of the incident. No contamination was released outside the decontamination area or outside the facility. Cleanup operations are still ongoing and stakeholders are being kept informed of progress. The NII are pleased with the way the incident was handled and with the progress being made.

Tritium Facility

The decommissioning of the D7 facility is now drawing to a close with the successful and safe removal of both ventilation stacks. The main stack was 33m high and access was challenging due to the close proximity of other buildings. It was used as a tritium handling facility from the 1950's until operations ceased in 2001.

7. Any Other Business

8. Dates of next meetings

Thursday 30th November 2006

Proposed dates for 2007 meetings

Thursday 8th March

Thursday 7th June

Thursday 6th September

Thursday 13th December

9. Visit to the AWE Apprentice Academy

10. Actions from this meeting:

Action 46/1: LLC members to feed back comments on the Environment Report to the Secretary

11. Lunch

Distribution:

LLC members

AWE Internet site [www.awe.co.uk]

House of Commons Library

Local MPs