



Nuclear Information Service 2009 Annual Report

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CHAIR'S REPORT

2009 was a year of changes for NIS. The hand-over of the Project Directorship from Di McDonald to Peter Burt took place over the summer alongside the physical removal of the office equipment from Southampton to our new office in Reading. Di's retirement was celebrated at the House of Commons on 14 July, and the official opening of the new office took place on 30 July. On both occasions we were delighted to welcome NIS's many friends.

All this has involved a lot of work, and the Board is very grateful to everyone who helped this major step forward to happen. In particular we thank Di, who remains with us in her capacity as a Director, and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for providing financial stability throughout.

Since then we have appointed and trained a new Administrator, Steve Hendry, to help with office work and research.

The dust has now settled, and work continues. Major replacements of infrastructure and nuclear weapons manufacturing facilities at both AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield are in the pipeline. As and when planning applications have come before West Berkshire Council planners, we have examined them and found that the environmental impact information is inadequate to enable anyone living locally to find out what impact the development will have.

The reason given is the needs of national security. The majority of West Berkshire's Planning Committee have unfortunately not shared the unease which many local people feel about this lack of transparency.

In addition to this, our core work over the year has included a range of requests under the Freedom of Information Act, responding to public consultations, briefing MPs, the media, and our supporters on key issues relating to the UK nuclear weapons programme, and supporting our partner organisations. Our website has been reorganised to improve its accessibility and make it more user-friendly.

The Board is happy that NIS's work continues to meet our expectations. We plan to strengthen the Board further, to instigate a comprehensive Health and Safety review, and support our workers.

Evelyn Parker - NIS Chair

Nuclear Information Service is supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.



WATCHING THE ATOMIC WEAPONS ESTABLISHMENT

EMERGENCY PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS UNDER SCRUTINY

The emergency plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) published in September 2009 gives a chilling insight into the grim consequences of a major accident at an AWE site. The plan shows that a radiation release from an AWE site would have a massive local impact, and would result in a regional, if not national, mobilisation of resources in response.

NIS prepared a special briefing summarising the contents of the 245 page emergency plan and wrote to West Berkshire Council to give feedback on the plan. We also asked AWE to provide more information about anticipated releases of radioactivity following an emergency at AWE.

NORMAL OPERATING RECOMMENCES AT AWE BURGHFIELD

After two years under 'special measures', the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate gave AWE permission to recommence normal operations at AWE Burghfield. Because of AWE's slow progress in addressing a large number of safety shortfalls at Burghfield, NII placed the site under a permissioning regime which required AWE to apply for an individual nuclear license for each warhead process. AWE now has permission to continue operations at Burghfield until 2016, on the understanding that the new warhead assembly / disassembly facility at Burghfield will be in operation by December 2015.

Analysis of licensing data for the Burghfield site by NIS over the period of special measures revealed that just one new or refurbished warhead was processed at the site in 2008, and four taken apart.

DIALOGUE WITH THE NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS INSPECTORATE

In December NIS arranged to meet with staff from the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate responsible for regulating the AWE sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield. A very constructive discussion took place and the NII staff were happy to answer questions about regulation and safety at the two sites. We are optimistic that dialogue will continue over the months ahead.

NIS also responded to government consultation on plans to restructure the NII, and on plans for the future management of plutonium.

WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS

SCANS - SUBMARINE VISITS COMPROMISE PUBLIC SAFETY

During the summer NIS's partner organisation SCANS (Solent Coalition Against Nuclear Ships) learnt that the Royal Navy and Southampton City Council planned to reduce the size of the emergency countermeasures zone surrounding the operational berth for nuclear submarines at Southampton Docks. Subsequent investigations showed that emergency zones were to be reduced in size at all submarine berths nationwide.

NIS prepared a formal response on behalf of SCANS to Southampton City Council objecting to reducing the safety zone. SCANS has now engaged consultant nuclear engineer John Large to undertake research into the risks of reducing the size of the emergency zones.

NUKEWATCH - TRACKING NUCLEAR CONVOYS

In 2009 Nukewatch tracked nuclear warhead convoy movements in January, July, September, and November / December. A number of training convoys were also observed. NIS assisted Nukewatch in monitoring convoy movements; preparing Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests; and drafting a submission on warhead convoy safety for the Scottish Government's Working Group on Scotland Without Nuclear Weapons.

NAG - TAKING ON AWE PLANNING APPLICATIONS

At the end of 2008 the Ministry of Defence submitted a planning application to West Berkshire Council for construction of 'Project Mensa' - a new warhead assembly / disassembly facility at AWE Burghfield. The application was heard by the Council's Eastern Area Planning Applications Committee in February. The Reading-based Nuclear Awareness Group (NAG) spearheaded opposition to the application, which received a record 967 objections.

NIS prepared a detailed 16 page technical objection to the planning application on behalf of NAG, highlighting flood risk and public safety concerns about the development, which will be built just five miles from the centre of the Reading urban area. The objections were dismissed by the planning committee, and NIS subsequently helped NAG in raising concerns about the handling of the planning application by West Berkshire.



JUDICIAL REVIEW ON TRIDENT REPLACEMENT

In 2008 NIS launched a legal challenge on the legality of the Government's decision to replace the Trident nuclear weapons system, and the case reached its final stage in January 2009.

In the High Court Lord Justice Scott Baker refused NIS permission to appeal against an earlier court decision not to allow a Judicial Review of the Government's 2006 Defence White Paper and its decision to renew Trident.

Our barrister, Michael Fordham QC, argued that the issue of nuclear weapons is not forbidden territory for the courts simply because it involves international law in the area of defence policy. The fact that the White Paper relies on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on The Legality of the Threat and Use of Nuclear Weapons creates a foothold in domestic law for the court to consider the legal question of whether the Government has properly understood its obligations under those two instruments.

However, permission to appeal was not granted, and nor was leave to appeal to the House of Lords, and so the case is closed. But NIS and our lawyers are satisfied that the government has not proved that its policy is legal and we will remain vigilant to any further opportunity to challenge the renewal of Trident. We are grateful to our many supporters who enabled the case to be heard by donating to our legal fees.

THE HIGH COSTS OF REPLACING TRIDENT



At the beginning of the year we undertook a major piece of research work into whether the UK will be able to afford to replace Trident nuclear weapons as the country enters the uncharted economic waters of what looks likely to be the most severe recession in living memory.

Using data from the respected Institute of Fiscal Studies, we concluded that cash shortages caused by the credit crunch will force the next government to choose between replacing the Trident nuclear weapons system or meeting flagship goals to halve child poverty, raise the state pension in line with earnings, and keep education spending growing.

We presented the findings of our research at the annual conference of the Green Economics Institute in Oxford, and published a paper on the affordability of new nuclear weapons in the international Journal of Green Economics. Our work contributed to a further study on the costs of replacing Trident, 'In The Firing Line', which was published by Greenpeace UK later in the year.

NIS SAYS GOODBYE TO DI ...

In July NIS founder and Project Director Di McDonald retired after seventeen years at the helm of NIS and its predecessor organisation, the Network Information Project.

Di's retirement was marked with an event at the House of Commons hosted and chaired by Mike Hancock MP. The centrepiece of the event was 'Anniversary - an Act of Memory' – a recital from memory of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights by artist Monica Ross.

Di will be rejoining NIS as a Board member in 2010 and the role of Project Director has now been taken up by Peter Burt. During the year Steven Hendry took over from Joe Hudson as office administrator, and Joe remains with us as IT consultant.



Artist Monica Ross performing 'Anniversary - an Act of Memory'

... AND MOVES TO NEW PREMISES

In the summer the NIS office moved from Southampton to new premises in Reading. The new office is conveniently situated for site work relating to Aldermason and Burghfield and is within easy travelling distance of London and the South Coast.

The new office provides us with meeting and storage space and has allowed us to develop a local presence in Reading and make connections with other not-for-profit organisations.

We are grateful to Mr Zafar Iqbal, our new landlord, for his hospitality and assistance during our move, and to Ian Hunt Associates Ltd and Reading Credit Union for donation of furniture for the new office.

The Nuclear Information Service (NIS) is a not-for-profit, independent information service which works to promote public awareness and debate on nuclear weapons and related safety and environmental issues. Our core costs are met by grant funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, but we rely on donations for project work and legal costs. If you would like to help support NIS you can donate online via our PayPal account at <http://nuclearinfo.org>.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2009

NIS's finances remained in good health over the year thanks largely to the grant funding we received from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Over the next financial year we plan to reduce our reserves slightly and apply for funding for a further three year period from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

Income and Expenditure Account

	£ Unrestricted Funds	£ Restricted funds	£ 2009	£ 2008
<i>Incoming resources</i>				
Grant from JRCT		41,929	41,929	29,926
Donations	601		601	14,488
Payments for services	1,178		1,178	4,699
	<u>1,779</u>	<u>41,929</u>	<u>43,708</u>	<u>49,113</u>
<i>Resources expended</i>				
Staff costs	180	25,749	25,929	29,145
Projects		10,615	10,615	15,236
Other	1,522	7,118	8,640	9,037
	<u>1,702</u>	<u>43,482</u>	<u>45,184</u>	<u>53,418</u>
Investment income	84		84	1,286
Taxation	(18)		(18)	(267)
Net Movement in funds	143	(1,553)	(1,410)	(3,286)
Balances b/f at 1 January	(602)	38,691	38,089	41,375
Balances c/f at 31 December	(459)	37,138	36,679	38,089

Balance Sheet

	£ 2009	£ 2008
<i>Current assets</i>		
Bank accounts		
current	11,541	3,274
deposit	<u>25,156</u>	<u>36,861</u>
	36,697	40,135
<i>Current Liabilities</i>		
Creditors	<u>(18)</u>	<u>(2,046)</u>
Net current assets	36,679	38,089
<i>Funds</i>		
Unrestricted funds	(459)	(602)
Restricted funds	<u>37,138</u>	<u>38,691</u>
Total funds	36,679	38,089

NOTE: Restricted funds support NIS's public efforts and are supported through grant funding. Unrestricted funds are spent on broader campaign work.