

The active commissioning phase will demonstrate to the Regulators that the Facilities safety systems function. Initially active material will be transferred from the old facility and placed in a secure store with Gas Clean Up Plant protection. The facility is equipped to carry out this task but in the future more process equipment will be installed to deal with the processing of legacy wastes and arisings for and from the Trident program. The existing tritium building will now be decommissioned.

7. National Ignition Facility

The previous week, Bill Richardson, from the US Department of Energy had opened the first stage of the US National Ignition Facility. The UK Ministry of Defence had announced it was investing in this Facility at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. In return, AWE physicists will be guaranteed access for their experiments and tests in support of UK stockpile stewardship activities. Work was expected to commence in the near future to increase the shot rate to accommodate the UK programme. The National Ignition Facility, when built will be the world's most powerful laser.

These facilities are so prohibitively expensive that the UK MoD decided it would be more cost-effective to use existing facilities and go into partnership with the US facility. This joint venture is expected to further cement the very close and productive relationships that the United Kingdom and the United States have already enjoyed in nuclear defence matters for over 40 years. It will also be a boost for AWE's academic links, providing an exciting area of work.

AWE's HELEN laser was the first laser in the world to be used for this type of experiment. During the last 20 years AWE has set the way for research in this area. The NIF will be 600 times more powerful than HELEN. The French are also building a similar facility, though not as powerful as the US facility. HELEN will continue to be used for smaller scale experiments.

This is one of the areas of research vital for underwriting the nuclear deterrent in the absence of nuclear testing.

8. SWOT Analysis

At the last meeting of the LLC there had been a presentation of the survey conducted for Hunting-BRAE by Stuart Hislop Associates. Some members had expressed concern that there were important omissions in the list of those interviewed.

Mr Bradley said that he had reviewed the data again and believed that the way the survey had been handled was adequate for his purposes. It was impossible to speak to everyone but he was satisfied that the interviewers had used a representative sample.