

Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)

Site Report for

AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield

Report for period 1 February 2021 to 31 May 2021

Foreword

This report is issued as part of ONR's commitment to make information about inspection and regulatory activities relating to the above site available to the public. Reports are distributed to members for the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites and are also available on the ONR website (<http://www.onr.org.uk/llc/>).

Site inspectors from ONR usually attend Aldermaston and Burghfield meetings where these reports are presented and will respond to any questions raised there. Any person wishing to inquire about matters covered by this report should contact ONR. The AWE Local Liaison Committee meeting has now moved to a four month frequency. This ONR report (period 1st February 2021 – 31st May 2021) covers a four month period in order to reflect the frequency of AWE LLC meetings.

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1. Inspections

1.1. Dates of Inspection

ONR inspectors carried out inspections on the following dates during the period:

- February 9-11
- March 9, 11-12, 30-31
- April 28-29
- May 6, 11-13, 16-19, 24-26

2. Routine Matters

2.1. Inspections

Inspections are undertaken as part of the process for monitoring compliance with:

- the conditions attached by ONR to the nuclear site licence granted under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 (NIA65) (as amended);
- the Energy Act 2013;
- the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA74); and
- regulations made under HSWA74, for example the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999 (IRR99) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR99).

The inspections entail monitoring licensee's actions on the site in relation to incidents, operations, maintenance, projects, modifications, safety case changes and any other matters that may affect safety. The licensee is required to make and implement adequate arrangements under 36 conditions attached to the nuclear site licence in order to ensure legal compliance. Inspectors seek to judge both the adequacy of these arrangements and their implementation.

In this period, routine inspections at Aldermaston and Burghfield covered the following Licence Conditions (LC):

- LC10 Training
- LC12 Duly authorised and other suitable qualified and experienced persons
- LC26 Control and supervision of operations
- LC27 Safety mechanisms, devices and circuits
- LC28 Examination, inspection, maintenance and testing
- LC36 Organisational capability

Also inspected:

- Conventional Health and Safety Inspection covering the Health and Safety at Work Act.

ONR judged the arrangements made and implemented by AWE in response to safety requirements to be adequate in the majority of areas inspected. However, ONR did assign an amber rating to the inspection covering LC36. A regulatory issue has been raised, which will be tracked to completion via normal regulatory business. This relates to AWE providing evidence of implementation of AWE's training arrangements for new AWE plc board members.

2.2. Other Work

ONR is continuing to engage with AWE regarding its Holistic Strategic Approach (HSA). This is a wide-ranging programme of improvement initiatives that will help demonstrate AWE's future readiness to move each site from enhanced to routine

regulatory attention. ONR holds monthly interventions to monitor progress and uses wider interventions across both sites to further inform ONR's view. Progress at the last formal review in the second part of 2020 aligned with ONR's expectations and further reviews will take place in 2021 to assess AWE's continuing progress.

3. Non-Routine Matters

Licensees are required to have arrangements to respond to non-routine matters and events. ONR inspectors judge the adequacy of the licensee's response, including actions taken to implement any necessary improvements.

ONR has performed more onsite inspections and interventions during the reporting period compared to the previous period. This increase will continue in the upcoming period as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. The engagements undertaken have complied with the current Covid-19 restrictions and have enabled ONR to continue to monitor performance, progress and delivery of key pieces of work. As part of the onsite inspections and interventions, ONR has taken cognisance of the measures AWE has implemented in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and, from the areas observed, ONR has no concerns with these arrangements.

ONR issued an Enforcement Letter against LC15 (Periodic Review) on 15 February. The letter recognised further non-compliance in the delivery of the current round of periodic reviews and sets out a number of actions that ONR expects to be addressed by August 2021. To date, progress towards these actions is satisfactory.

ONR also issued an Enforcement Letter against LC32 (Accumulation of Radioactive Waste) on 26 February. The letter followed a contamination event in a decommissioning facility. Actions in the letter cover the provision of evidence of adequate arrangements and the undertaking of a thorough learning review. These actions are due for completion by end of June 2021. Progress to date has been adequate and ONR will assess the overall response during July 2021.

AWE's response to the Enforcement Letter regarding asbestos management has continued to be encouraging. Whilst planned work remains ONR has sufficient confidence in delivery that asbestos work will be included into a wider intervention on Conventional Health and Safety rather than a specific intervention, as has been the case to date.

4. Regulatory Activity

ONR inspectors may issue formal documents to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. Under nuclear site Licence conditions, ONR issues regulatory documents, which either permit an activity or require some form of action to be taken; these are usually collectively termed licence instruments (LIs) but can take other forms. In addition, inspectors may issue enforcement notices to secure improvements to safety.

During the period two Licence Instruments were issued:

- LI 540 (Aldermaston): LC11(3): Approval of the AWE Aldermaston Site Emergency Plan.
- LI 541 (Burghfield): LC11(3): Approval of the AWE Burghfield Site Emergency Plan.

The previous LLC report explained that ONR had issued two Improvement Notices (one for each AWE site) against LC36 (Organisational Capability) to remedy shortfalls in AWE's arrangements under LC36(2), specifically relating to the way AWE undertakes risk assessments for organisational changes that may affect safety. ONR has continued to monitor AWE's progress in seeking to address these two Improvement Notices and will formally assess progress of the Notices against a revised closure date of 17 December 2021. ONR will continue to report on this during future LLC reports.

Reports detailing the above regulatory decisions can be found on the ONR website at <http://www.onr.org.uk/pars/>.

5. News from ONR

We are continuing to obtain assurance that nuclear site licensees and other dutyholders are adequately resourced to continue to safely and securely carry out their activities. We remain satisfied with industry's response at this time and there has been no significant change to dutyholders' safety and security resilience. As COVID-19 restrictions change, our focus is on the preparedness for the weeks and months ahead and maintaining safe and secure operations. Our latest position can be found on our website.

Enforcement Action

In January, we agreed to extend two Improvement Notices served on the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), recognising the good progress made so far. The Notices, which were served in June 2019, relate to the way the company controls changes to organisational structure and resources which may affect safety.

In January, we served an Improvement Notice on Sellafield Ltd following a number of electrical safety incidents across the site. While we are satisfied that Sellafield Ltd is currently meeting the high standards expected with regards to nuclear safety, as a regulator we require sustained improvements in the area of electrical safety.

In February, we served an Improvement Notice on Morgan Sindall Construction and Infrastructure Ltd after workers came close to striking a live high voltage electric cable during excavation work at the Sellafield site. Nobody was harmed in the incident on 7 October 2020, and there was no impact on the public or the environment. However, the incident posed a serious risk to workers who were operating within one metre of the 11kV cable.

Regulatory Updates

In March, we published a response on our website to a BBC report relating to Sellafield. We were naturally concerned to hear the claims, particularly any suggestion that staff have been subjected to racist abuse of any kind. As a regulator, if we had any concerns or evidence that bullying and harassment was impacting safety at the site, we would take robust action to ensure this is addressed as a matter of urgency.

In March, we published an article about how we responded to the serious nuclear accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant in 2011 to mark the 10th anniversary.

In March, we gave EDF permission for Reactors 3 and 4 at Hinkley Point B power station to return to service for a limited period of operation. Permission for Reactor 3 will allow it to operate to a core utilisation of 17.55 terawatt days, while permission for Reactor 4 is to operate to a core utilisation of 17.3 terawatt days, which equates to two periods of approximately six months operation for each reactor.

Stakeholder Engagement

In February, we encouraged interested parties to take part in a Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) survey about building and maintaining trust between nuclear safety regulators and the stakeholders they engage with.

In February, we provided an update about the leadership structural changes we initially announced in December 2020. Under existing contractual arrangements, current Chief Executive Adrienne Kelbie CBE was always expected to step down as her extended term of office comes to an end in January 2022. Mark Foy will step into the new combined role on 1 June 2021, when the new leadership structure will come into full effect.

In February, we announced that we had appointed Donald Urquhart to the newly-created role of Executive Director of Operations, which will form part of our new leadership structure. As Executive Director of Operations, Donald will be responsible for leading our regulatory work.

In March, we announced that as part of our new leadership arrangements, we had appointed three new deputy chief nuclear inspectors (DCIs) to our regulatory and senior leadership teams: Jane Bowie, Paul Dicks and Steve Vinton, currently all senior superintending inspectors at ONR. All three new DCIs have a strong track record of delivering regulation across the organisation, and will help us maintain a focus on our Strategy 2020-25.

For the latest news and information from the Office for Nuclear Regulation, please read and subscribe to our regular email newsletter 'ONR News' at www.onr.org.uk/onrnews

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