Developments at the Atomic Weapons Establishment: The local impact of Trident replacement

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nuclearinfo.org
What we will talk about:

• Role of the Atomic Weapons Establishment.
• The Nuclear Weapons Capability Sustainment Programme.
• AWE's Site Development Strategy.
• Campaign agenda and role for local authorities.
A new UK nuclear warhead?

“The current warhead design is likely to last into the 2020s, although we do not yet have sufficient information to judge precisely how long we can retain it in-service.

Decisions on whether and how we may need to refurbish or replace this warhead are likely to be necessary in the next Parliament.”

- 2006 White Paper
AWE is responsible for designing and building Britain's arsenal of Trident nuclear warheads.
Work at AWE covers the entire life cycle of nuclear warheads:

- Initial concept, assessment and design.
- Manufacture and assembly.
- In-service support.
- Decommissioning and disposal.
The Nuclear Warhead Cycle

Coulport / Faslane

Aldermaston / Burghfield
AWE's current role

• Just under 200 W-76 Mk4 warheads produced for Trident: production ended in 1999.
• AWE operational role currently mainly maintenance and surveillance.
• Research and development work also underway to upgrade current warheads and prepare for development of a successor to current warhead.
Agreement has been reached with AWE Management Ltd. (AWE ML) to take forward a programme of investment in sustaining key skills and facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment. This will include the provision of necessary extra supporting infrastructure.

“The purpose of this investment of some £350 million over each of the next three years is to ensure that we can maintain the existing Trident warhead stockpile throughout its intended in-service life.”

- John Reid, Written Statement, 19 July 2005
Nuclear Weapons Capability Sustainment Project

- Life extension and upgrade of warheads to W-76 Mk4A design: wider range of targeting options.
- Allow joint research work with USA to continue and ensure AWE is able to develop and build a new warhead if asked to.
- Investment in new facilities at AWE.
- Recruit and train scientists to retain key skills.
Rebuild facilities at Aldermaston and Burghfield.

Lack of investment at AWE in 1980s and 1990s.

Key facilities do not meet modern building and safety standards.

Large, complex, facilities which can typically take ten years to design, build, and commission.
At its peak the construction work will make AWE one of the largest construction sites in the UK – similar in scale to the Terminal 5 project at Heathrow”

- ‘AWE Today’
December 2005
Annual expenditure at AWE

To put this in context ...
Projects already commenced: 'Orion' nuclear test laser
Projects already commenced: New IT buildings
Projects already commenced: 'Gemini' office complex
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
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<th>Planning Application</th>
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<tr>
<td>Small Scale Components Facility</td>
<td>Burghfield</td>
<td>September 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Explosives Fabrication Facility</td>
<td>Aldermaston</td>
<td>November 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conventional Manufacturing Facility</td>
<td>Aldermaston</td>
<td>June 2008</td>
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Planning Permission granted:
'Mensa' Assembly / Disassembly Facility
Planning Permission granted:
'Pegasus' Enriched Uranium Facility
Coming soon:
'Hydrus' Hydrodynamics Facility
## Planning permission beyond 2010:

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<td>Systems Engineering Facility</td>
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<td>Small Scale Formulations</td>
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<td>Chemical Processing</td>
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<td>Emergency Response Capability Facility</td>
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<td>Training Extension</td>
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<td>Combined Non Metallurgy and Material Science</td>
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<td>High Performance Computer</td>
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<td>New Office Accommodation Phase 3</td>
<td>Aldermaston</td>
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Campaign agenda

• Rethink Trident: defer for five years.
• Review the need for Trident replacement in the Strategic Defence Review.
• No new warhead or upgrade programme.
• Cancel facilities aimed at cheating the CTBT.
• Increase verification and decommissioning work.
The role for local authorities

- Look at diversification opportunities for AWE.
- Encourage West Berkshire Council to treat AWE planning applications objectively.
- Highlight Trident costs and the sacrifice for local services.
- Push publicly for disarmament.
Thank you, friends ... 

happy campaigning!

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