



MRS S C GOULTY
FINANCE & SECRETARIAT (NUCLEAR)1

D/DGSM/CSSE/Sec(Nuc) 5/143

Mr R Evans
6 Birtwhistle House
150 Parnell Road
LONDON
E3 2JY

DPA

Defence Procurement Agency

DGSM/CSSE
Defence Procurement Agency,
Ministry of Defence
Rowan 1a, #164
MOD Abbey Wood
Bristol, BS34 8JH

Switchboard: 0117 91 3000

16 June 1999

Dear Mr Evans

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTS - PQ 84348

The documents you requested in your letter of 30 May are enclosed. I have had to use two boxes, and have enclosed a copy of this letter in each box. This is Box One of Two.

If you wish to make a complaint that your request for information has not been properly dealt with, you should appeal to The Ministry of Defence, OMD 14, Rm 617, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP. You may at any time register a complaint with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman) through your Member of Parliament, but the Ombudsman will expect you to have exhausted the internal Ministry of Defence complaints procedure first.

*Yours sincerely
S C Goult*

S C GOULTY



MRS S C GOULTY
FINANCE & SECRETARIAT (NUCLEAR)1

D/DGSM/CSSE/Sec(Nuc) 5/143

Mr R Evans
6 Birtwhistle House
150 Parnell Road
LONDON
E3 2JY

DPA

Defence Procurement Agency

DGSM/CSSE
Defence Procurement Agency,
Ministry of Defence
Rowan 1a, #164
MOD Abbey Wood
Bristol, BS34 8JH

Switchboard: 0117 91 3000

16 June 1999

Dear Mr Evans,

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTS - PQ 84348

The documents you requested in your letter of 30 May are enclosed. I have had to use two boxes, and have enclosed a copy of this letter in each box. This is Box Two of Two.

If you wish to make a complaint that your request for information has not been properly dealt with, you should appeal to The Ministry of Defence, OMD 14, Rm 617, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP. You may at any time register a complaint with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman) through your Member of Parliament, but the Ombudsman will expect you to have exhausted the internal Ministry of Defence complaints procedure first.

*Yours sincerely
S C Goulty*

S C GOULTY

Building: F6.1
Ref: CE/AWE/160/06/99/063
Date: 8 March 1999

Dear Sir or Madam

There have been a number of media stories and a considerable amount of comment over the past few weeks about operations at AWE.

I should like to put these matters in context and reassure you about our environment, safety and health performance.

Over the past five years, under Hunting-BRAE's management, AWE has moved forward rapidly in improving safety management at Aldermaston and Burghfield. We have undertaken bold initiatives to deal with the fifty-year legacy of the sites. We have followed a policy of openness and honesty and have developed new and more effective methods of communicating with the public. We also publish an Environment, Safety and Health Report each year and set demanding targets for the following year.

All of the current so-called "revelations" about our discharges are contained in those reports, including the discharges of tritium via the Aldermaston stream. Nothing has changed in the content of this water. It remains only a fraction of the level required by the European Commission, even for drinking water.

The construction of the North Ponds project, which is part of our water management system at AWE Aldermaston, is a significant achievement. It will alleviate the effects of flooding in severe weather and I hope this will give comfort for the residents of Aldermaston village. However, now that we can control discharges via this route, the Environment Agency believes we should have a formal authorisation and we are happy to comply. Why all the fuss then? We thought we had adequately consulted the Environment Agency. They, clearly, do not and we await the findings of their investigation.

Turning to the Sunday newspaper article on 21 February, this gave a misleading impression of one of our Safety, Quality, Environment, Security and Health internal audits. These reports are not intended as commentaries on poor performance but, as with any modern progressive company, they highlight areas for improvement. They are intended to motivate our own workforce and are therefore written in deliberately harsh language. Other internal reports, which we may make public in future, in the spirit of openness, may be open to similar misinterpretation. However, you can be assured that if there are any issues, past, present or future, which affect health, safety, or environment concerns, then we, or our regulators, are bound to publicise them.

With regard to the Pangbourne Pipeline, none of us view this as an ideal solution but, for the present, our environment is safer with it than without it. We are aware that some radioactive materials can become trapped in the scale in the pipeline and can be released at a later date. This de-scaling effect is not a new issue. It is taken into account in our management of discharges. In fact, we discharge at only 10 to 15 per cent of our authorised limits – including the amounts attributable to de-scaling – and the figures are published in our annual Environment, Safety and Health Reports. Our permitted limits are set well below any level that could have any discernible effect on health or the environment.

We have been considering already other methods of dealing with this water and an evaporator or ultra-filtration unit may have some advantages – although not for all substances. We and our regulator will need to be satisfied that any alternative does in fact offer real environmental advantage.

Like many other industries, most of our discharges, small as they are, are the result of 50 years of operations, not our current activities. Therefore, in conjunction with local authorities, we have funded an independent radiological survey of the surrounding countryside to reassure our neighbours. These results will be published and made widely available. The Environment Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who conduct their own sampling, verify our own extensive monitoring. All of this has shown that our impact on health and the environment is negligible.

I accept that AWE's operations will always be newsworthy and subject to sensational interpretation. It is my regret that this can cause unnecessary concern amongst our neighbouring communities.

However, this will not prevent me from continuing to be open and honest with the community. I can assure you also that we will continue to do our best to reduce discharges and seek new and better solutions for the future. Safety will remain at the top of our priorities.

Finally, I should like to point out that the majority of our managers, our 5,000 workforce and I live and work in the local area and many of us consume water from the Thames. We therefore have a personal interest, as well as a professional one, in ensuring that AWE remains a good and safe neighbour.

Should you have any lingering concerns or wish to have more information about any of these issues, we are planning to hold a public meeting in Aldermaston Village Hall on 25 March at 7:00 for 7:30 pm, at which we will be pleased to answer any questions.

Yours faithfully

R A BRADLEY
Chief Executive