

4 April IAG Meeting - Transcript of Extracts Referring to John Large

Note: ‘...’ is used to identify those parts of the recording that we have been unable to transcribe.

Sound File: April Extract 1

Paul Dorfman – University of Warwick

Let me get this straight, so this is in terms of the ISOLUS outline programme, this is data that's coming in, this is nothing to do with contract or contract proposals, this is data that's coming in now, Yeah, in terms of data that is coming in now and with reference to our last discussions which were re-minuted about half an hour ago and also in the context of, the idea, Jane's discussion on peer and pre-review, the discussion about peer more than pre-view, now clearly there are commercial and confidential problems, there are security problems. My problem and I suppose a lot of people, potentially from the NGO, is that we're not nuclear submarine engineers, now to have a discussion about what's going on, one needs to know what one is talking about, this context I put a proposal for independent advice, internal monitoring and future management of Royal Navy submarine nuclear propulsion plants ...by second...2008...outlining..... by John Large, and I wondered if it would be potentially possible given. The reason why I raised it, is what normally happens is that the Greens normally tend to want a second opinion, what is going on here, now it's not a question of mistrust, I think everyone trusts the MoD, but in terms of this discussion which is a deliberative discussion, it would be very interesting and very important to have recourse to, as it were, independent advice, not simply for the Green advice but peer review, you know, across the board. I am just raising that and hoping you can do that.

Sound File: April Extract 2

Chris Hargraves – ISOLUS Deputy Project Manager

I'd have thought there would be more than enough to discuss a single issue hence it would be more of a workshop, and less of an IAG. It would immediately, it will bring up the peer preview, review, independence, the John Large, is it John Large, is it somebody else, who chooses, those issues. I am well aware we will have to come to that issue.

18 June IAG Meeting - Transcript of Extracts Referring to John Large

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Sound File: June Extract 1

Paul Dorfman – University of Warwick

Can I put my tuppence; it's the I think potentially that ISOLUS will be a hostage to fortune if the independent peer reviewer was closely linked to MOD or industry in this context. The reason is because MOD have selected their primary contractor, which is so we, basically we have got Industry and MOD coming together; in terms of independent review, what would be good not only for ISOLUS but also what will happen later, in terms of the acceptance of ISOLUS in the context of the general public, what would be, what would seem to be even more independent review, and in this context I would recommend John Large. He is a Consultant who is well known, has done a lot of work certainly in terms of how to put forward, and I recommend that this would be seriously considered.

David Collier - Independent Specialist

I just wanted to make sure that, we just get a little bit more information on who you might invite to the workshops before you think, and how they might contribute; and somebody totally independent might contribute to that, before you think about who might be involved in the peer review. Because, as you say, once you are in the peer review team you can't contribute to the review or to the scoring or any thing else on the technical issues. So I wondered if.

Steve Lewis - Health & Safety Executive (HSE) - Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII)

I wouldn't want to say that, we are looking for in the peer reviewing is an independent, and that's "independent" from, and I hear what Paul is saying, independent from the organisation that wants the work doing and independent from this group, who has to make a judgement after that has been done, so it is not about somebody in this group that can or can't be.

David Collier

Well, that's right, you know, but, I wouldn't want to sterilize, if you like, a particular view or particular individual within a peer review role, if they were one of a very small pool of people you might call upon to participate in one of the workshops.

[brief interjection]

Jane Hunt – University of Lancaster

I take that point. My own view at this stage, is we can address John Large quite simply by saying do we want him as a peer reviewer, do we want him in the Review Team or do we not want him at all, I second Paul's proposal emphatically I think that this now is the role for the, yes this is an important piece of work and it needs to be seen to be credible, and he is the person that gives that stamp of credibility or not. It is also an important piece of

work and it therefore needs to be..... as fairly as possible, because then it will be a stronger piece of work.

Paul Dorfman

He has a forthcoming paper, a classic forensic analysis of techniques deployed on the nuclear powered submarines: KURSK and TIRELESS.....a paper to the Institute of Civil Engineers. One knows of his background, one knows of the various bits and bobs associated with it. I mean, although the way I'm speaking is not particularly friendly, the way I have run, you know, these discussions a bit so aggressively, but I suppose the point about all of this is that my understanding of how these things work is that this is the sort of an upstream group and as long as we can open up kinds of issues as early as possible that will be a "Win-Win" for everybody. So the more that there's a kind of element of up fronting things now could save a lot of time, a lot of money later ... and that's one of the reasons why I am putting him forward.

Bob Pirrett – Rosyth Local Liaison Committee

I have a problem with John Large being independent, I think he represents one faction of this organisation, that is my personal view. I would like to see somebody who we all agree who is totally independent. Even if it is another company.....

Paul Dorfman

Independent of what? of the Industry? Independent of MOD? That is the point. We are not talking about, my point, and again I am being bullish, so I apologise. What is independence? at the end of the day, we all have allegiance, at the end of the day we all have views, at the end of the day we all have histories.

Steve Lewis

What I would like to suggest is what we want in this particular role is not somebody who will find it very difficult not to contribute to the process. What we are looking is, somebody who has objectivity and if we can guarantee a level of integrity, is they can take that personal view. That is why I would not like to be part of this, I am a regulator I have to have a view, as a regulator, and you as an operator have got a view and you as the MOD have to have a view but we are looking for somebody who will take a look at the process and say the things have gone through, have actually delivered what were asked of it, without having to be contaminated by wanting to be involved in the decision that is being made. Personally, don't think John Large can do that. I might be wrong Paul but my personal view is I find that difficult to believe he could do. Equally, I find it difficult to believe that Tony Coverdale, can you know, they are two extremes but they both got the same problem – they've too much vested interest or belonging to the process. And I come back to what we probably would want, are two independents, who have no knowledge of this process but can make object judgement about the process which Frazer Nash will go through, to deliver the end product.

Sound File: June Extract 2

Peter Lanyon – Nuclear Submarine Forum

I am afraid I haven't been able to hear all the points raised but I would like to contribute here because this need for an independent expert goes back to the first consultation, the Front End Consultation, when the public asked for independent experts and for them to be paid to contribute to the ISOLUS project and that was seven years ago. And at that time the MOD was very cagey about it and I heard Peter say they hedged their bets well they hedged their bets like mad. If they are still doing it 7 years later then we really do need some experts whom the public will respect, therefore it is satisfactory. When I became interested after the front-end consultation in this whole process, we spoke about John Large and seven years later I know of no one else as suitable, and during that time I came to know of him so to speak and last year I had to get involved in considerable depth in a contribution he made at sitewhere he was called in by the Shut-down Sizewell campaign, to advise on the Fed Waste coming out of Sizewell A...disposal.... On that occasion, his information was extremely useful and the consultation..... his contribution at that time, convinced me that he had a sharp enough edge to be valuable in an operation where a large weight of the nuclear industry were likely to be opposed to this. I think that's essential and I think seven years after this was first proposed it is high time that the ISOLUS project forgot about the dangers of adversarial contact. Maggie and I had one this morning. You survived and we went downstairs together to the loo.[Jane Hunt and Maggie Taylor interject on the comment]I am sure it's healthy and we must welcome it. I know of no one suitable and I really have been in this business and if there were I am sure I would have heard.

Andy Stevenson – NBC(Clyde)

I would also object to John Large. I can see the other side of the fence to the objection of the former Submarine Commander but it won't be difficult to get..... should use the regulators.....who I see as a policeman.....why not get them to prescribe.....

Tub Aves – British Nuclear Energy Society

At the risk of further polarising the discussion I think the use of John Large, I have had dealings with him in the past from BNES and INucE point of view, seriously damage the integrity of this process because his integrity outside the fence is in question and think if you went that way, you would do a great disservice to the ISOLUS programme.

Paul Dorfman

Hang on, this was the man who made the safety case to raise the KURSK, MOD has seconded him [David Whitworth interjects "I would question that"; Andy Stevenson interjects "I would question that one as well."] Well MOD seconded too advise.....

David Whitworth – Institute of Nuclear Engineers

He was part of the team and he did not write the safety case..... [Tub Aves interjects "he was on the..... Safety Committee"] You have to be very careful with that one, [Paul Dorfman interjects: "I am not sure about this, I have seen".] I know the person that was working with John..... and he wouldn't quite.....

Paul Dorfman

.....He made a significant contribution to the raising of the KURSK who MOD seconded too..... So curious also that BNES are actually pointing the finger at in terms of his integrity, that's problematic in a public place. My feeling is quite clearly, I feel very strongly about this, is that you, its, a ... poacher/gamekeeper here on something that is going to be, one of, the defining study and you are going to throw the whole process into disarray.

Bob Pirrett

Surely, I have no difficulty with John Large as a person. As I have said to you before, however I would say, as an observation here, some of us will probably vote for John and some of us will not, so can we come up and find somebody we are reasonably content with rather than have a situation where we are fighting over A or B. What was wrong with the proposal we started with, Coverdale and the other one, at the end of the day.....

David Collier

.....Can I go back to the original question? Alright make it specific. How would you propose maybe involving John Large in this process through the workshops whatever?The sense I get is that people would really value his perspective somehow into this process, and there are different ways of doing it and, what, how might that work through the workshop.

Les Netherton – IAG Chairman

As a chair, I have a problem with that approach in as much we are talking about one individual. If we want talk about who will be sitting on the workshops and I think that this is an issue that we need to explore but I am bound to de-personalise this debate to some extent. But I would repeat something that Peter said earlier, about different perspectives on how people are viewed and then it is applied to people on this side of the fence and that rule applies the other way around as well, is what I would say about anybody in this line of activity and that has been my experience. You talk to them about somebody and you get a different view and there are suspicions and issues wherever you go on that side of the fence. I think we have to try and give the MOD at least a range of options and some clear ideas if we are not happy with any one particular approach, of another option that they can explore, and I think that's what IAG should try and do at this stage about the Peer Review Team. We have heard of Tony Coverdale, we have heard of John Large, there are other issues that have been raised. Is there any one particular recommendation that IAG could make to the MOD for consideration, another option they can explore.

Sound File: June Extract 3

David Senior - NII-HSE

Just to try and bring this together, I think it is a pivotal decision this for the IAG, it's important for the IAG to come up with some sound advice today for the MOD in relation to whose view we should be, we have obviously got very strong, in fact very high depth, strength of feelings about the basis of these proposals which are at both ends of the spectrum and having Paul put forward and articulating John Large is independent, it is quite clear from the comment around the table that some don't see John Large as

independent, there has got to be some middle ground and I think it is important the IAG offer that advice to the MOD. I would perhaps propose, taking my regulatory hat off, somebody in academia quite clearly somebody who fulfils this role with nuclear expertise and have the...background.....

Sound File: June Extract 4

Steve Lewis

Can I ask, quite clearly too actually look at populating that in this group would be impossible.....fair enough, but picking up on David's point from earlier about understanding the types of people, the grouping that would be invited to actually make another judgement about what you would then need in a peer review group, can we just share a bit of thought process here. You know, are you going to go outside of this group into elements that are known, existing known challenge capability, one might use the example from earlier of John Large who has got experience and has demonstrated that ability to challenge the system. Would you be open to that sort of group of people or would you not be encouraging that involvement?

Chris Hargraves – ISOLUS Deputy Project Manager

We are going to be fairly open at this point because some of the areas, the criteria will be technical and will need certain knowledge, but I don't believe we should be excluding the type of challenge which you mentioned, so that is not excluded...

Sound File: June Extract 5

Steve Lewis

Mr Chairman, I mean, I will take what you just said Bob, and just stand over there for a minute, and say looking back to this group. There were a number of this group who would probably be happy with either alternative but there was a significant number who were unhappy with either one or the other, of two suggestions. One which was Tony Coverdale and one which was John Large, and in a group like this, picking up Paul's point, what you have actually got to get is a group that can actually make a group recommendation at the end of the process, for me the simple answer is to take both of those options off the table and to see what you have got left in the suggestions and see whether or not there is some middle ground solution to the problem, that doesn't excite either one end of the group or the other, as a way forward and I think Maggie tried to suggest that a little earlier on and we may have missed it. But I do not believe this group will come to a positive decision on either one of those two extreme representations, which comes back to why isn't the original proposal from Frazer Nash acceptable, there is an element in there, which a significant element of this group had difficulty with.

Sound File: June Extract 6

Peter Lanyon

I fear that we have been simplistic if we think we can solve this, we can't, it is hard as Jane just said, all we can do is manage it. The whole issue of nuclear waste is insoluble and we can't even manage ,that's one thing. The other thing is this, that as a member of the advisory group I think I need to warn us, that out there, there are going to be NGOs who if and when they hear that John Large has been turned down because he is too aggressive or too something, they will be very deeply suspicious of the process and they may call upon the Nuclear Submarine Forum to withdraw from this point. So please be extremely careful, that is not a threat, it is just a warning and that is where we come from. Now third point, we are only an advisory group and when we give our advice or fail to give advice, the MOD must go away and own responsibility for this whole project, now it may be that that's what we are going to have to do if we can't come to a decision on this, but if they are going to do, then I very much urge them to go right to the top of their organising body because the Minister last month, and I have it here, it talks about us the IAG and our job is to provide independent scrutiny of the project, now surely goodness independent scrutiny means a process, which invites aggressive debate and aggressive input and challenge, constructive challenge. Now NGOs know a lot about John Large but inevitably they have seen some things being done and they know he is a difficult man but they believe that, I am sure they would, that if his contribution here were ignored because we were frightened of him, that would imply the scrutiny we were proposing to use, was flawed, it's frightening . So please go to the Minister and ask him what he meant by "Independent Scrutiny".

Les Netherton

I think that as chair, my immediate reaction to that is that we have had quite an aggressive debate here. We need to find some way forward if we can. It seems to me that the sticking point is about finding a median route where all parties can at least sign up to something.