



Position Specification

AWE plc
Chief Executive

AWE plc

The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE plc) plays a crucial role in nuclear defence, providing the warheads for the UK's nuclear deterrent. The role of the UK's nuclear warheads and the Continuous at Sea Deterrent is to deter the most extreme threats our nation might face not just now, but that might emerge in the decades to come.

A team of world-renowned specialists at AWE work at the extremes of science and engineering to understand the performance of nuclear warheads, and assess the safety, security and effectiveness of the stockpile in the absence of live testing. They undertake critical work, providing and maintaining warheads for Royal Navy Vanguard submarines, and the Dreadnought replacements expected to enter service in the early 2030s. AWE's experts provide science, engineering and technical support across the lifecycle of a warhead: from initial concept and design, manufacturing and production, to final decommissioning and disposal.

With unique nuclear skills and expertise, AWE also provides a vital contribution to the UK's national security as the heart of our defence against radiological and nuclear acts of terrorism. Utilising AWE's advanced computational and experimental capabilities, its specialists design and test novel techniques to provide intelligence and support to the Government to counter the most serious threats faced by the UK and combat and nuclear proliferation. There are unique and advanced experimental facilities at the main site at Aldermaston with major facilities at Burghfield, Blacknest, and Royal Navy Armaments Depot Coulport. With a team of around 6,500 people who are some of the best in their respective fields, the skills of AWE's people are considered an important national asset.

DRIVEN BY A CLEAR MISSION, VALUES & CULTURE

Together, delivering solutions for a safe and secure future.

For more than 70 years, AWE has protected the UK by supporting the Government's nuclear defence strategy. Its foundations are built on a proud heritage and team of remarkable people. Its culture is underpinned by its [code of ethics](#) and set of core behaviours:

We keep our promises *We are safe and secure*
We connect with respect *We embrace simplicity*



Click the image to learn about AWE's unique mission

AWE's vision is to become a high performing, streamlined business delivering extraordinary products and capabilities. In 2020, Government announced its intention to replace the UK's sovereign nuclear warhead with a successor warhead. AWE will build the highly skilled teams, facilities and capabilities needed to deliver the replacement warhead programmes, while also sustaining the current in-service warhead until it is withdrawn from service. Developing the capabilities to manufacture, test, and support the next generation of warheads – all while maintaining the current generation and continuing to produce critical security services – requires one of the most significant and complex infrastructure investment programmes ever seen in the UK.

A multi-billion pound investment programme to transform the infrastructure and develop new leading-edge research testing, and production facilities is underway. This includes a design and construction of a new nuclear infrastructure complex covering fissile materials processing and manufacture.

To achieve the vision of being a high performing organisation, an ambitious transformation programme has been launched to tackle the biggest issues and accelerate delivery. The scale of this undertaking has never been attempted before by the organisation, the plan intends to modernise delivery, forge closer relationships with partners across the country and internationally, continue the ability to attract and retain the best people and improve facilities whilst working closely with the Defence Nuclear Enterprise. There are early successes being delivered however the scale of the ambition requires sustained focus and drive over the next 2-3 years.

Governance & Board

In order to strengthen collaboration, simplify the operating relationships, and improve value for money, in July 2021 AWE plc became an arm's length Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) wholly owned by the Ministry of Defence, working in close collaboration with the Defence Nuclear Organisation (DNO). AWE plc is responsible under contract with the MOD for delivering a safe, effective and efficient nuclear warhead programme. Its Board is responsible for setting the strategy of the business and providing appropriate support and challenge to the Chief Executive and Executive Committee, who are responsible for the day-to-day running of AWE's business and operations.

The Board comprises of the Chair, Sir John Manzoni, six independent non-executive directors, one NED appointed by the MOD as a shareholder, and two executive directors, including the Chief Executive. More information about the Board and AWE's governance can be found in the [AWE Framework Document and on the AWE website](#).

For more information on AWE plc, its business model, strategy and critical mission, please [visit its website here](#).

The Role

AWE is undergoing a period of unprecedented transformation, driven by the need to deliver the next generation of warheads, and by a bold vision for the future which will require pivoting to a new operating model and modernising its culture and ways of working. The Board is looking to appoint a Chief Executive with excellent strategic acumen who can both define and execute the next phase of AWE's transformation.

The business is seeking to significantly accelerate the pace of transformation and to enhance its world-leading engineering, science and production capabilities, so the next Chief Executive – by virtue of both their track record and their clear plan for AWE – must rapidly give the Board, stakeholders, industry partners and employees confidence about the future direction of the organisation. The role will require a considered approach to balance the necessary production and engineering acceleration with the preservation and development of the high science and remarkable technical capability required for this endeavour. The business must continue to be trusted by all parties for its reliability in delivering on its crucial role in the UK's national security and nuclear defence.

Key accountabilities for the Chief Executive include:

- Understand rapidly the dynamics of how AWE works closely with the DNO, supporting the broader submarine programme.
- Understand rapidly the dynamics of the business, where it has come from, present strategy and the expectations of AWE's diverse stakeholder group.
- Refine as appropriate and clearly articulate the strategic plan for the business, gaining a deep understanding of its customers, stakeholders, and its essential roles in UK national security.
- Ensure AWE delivers on its commitments including full lifecycle support of the existing warhead programme (through to obsolescence and decommissioning), developing and delivering the next generation replacement, and continuing to provide the critical services to combat nuclear proliferation and protect against radiological and nuclear terrorism.
- Ensure AWE continuously improves as a mature, independent nuclear licensee. Provide personal accountability for ensuring the conventional and nuclear safety of all facilities, plant and processes; the safety of employees and those who may be affected by AWE's activities; the safety of the products; compliance with industry standards in safety, quality, project delivery, environmental, nuclear commissioning and decommissioning.
- Lead and maintain effective partnering with Managing Director Warhead, DNO, to ensure alignment across the broader submarine programme.
- Execute the duties and obligations underpinning the nuclear licences.
- Develop and execute the business plan which encompasses ca. £1.5 - £2bn spend annually, including the transformation ambition to deliver world-class manufacturing and technical capabilities, while maintaining the high standards of operations on site.

- Deploying commercial and financial acumen, continuously assess the business' performance in a data-rich environment, spotting and rapidly identifying any issues. Work closely with the executive team on the performance management framework.
- Build strong relationships at all levels of the organisation; be known as a highly visible leader who will be out in the business, visiting sites and motivating teams.
- Attract and recruit top talent, motivate and inspire the team, delegate effectively, celebrate diversity within the team, and manage performance; widely viewed as a strong developer of others.
- Ensure a strong focus on ESG and social value runs through the organisation. Create a sense of purpose/meaning for the team that generates followership beyond his/her own personality and engages others to the greater purpose for the organisation as a whole.

Direct reports: ten roles

Key stakeholders include: Director General, Defence Nuclear Organisation (DNO); Managing Director Warhead, DNO; Permanent Under Secretary of Ministry of Defence (MOD); Minister for Defence Procurement; Regulators, including Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), and Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR); UK Government Investments (UKGI); AWE's recognised Trade Unions (Unite and Prospect), US military and federal leadership including the Department of Energy, national laboratories and the national defence naval leadership.

Candidate Profile

As the business undergoes a significant phase of investment that will enable it to deliver the next generation of manufacturing, scientific and engineering capabilities, the Chief Executive will lead AWE through an essential transformation that will underpin the UK's future security and aligns to mission success. As such, the role requires an individual who will lead with pace and vigour, accelerating both production and delivery. The Chief Executive also plays a pivotal role in ensuring the maintenance of the highly capable workforce with exceptional science and technical skills offering unrivalled expertise in support of the national nuclear endeavour. They will relentlessly focus on performance improvement; role model the desired mindsets; champion capability development initiatives and make deliver an ambitious, complex transformation agenda.

Individuals are likely to offer a range of the following characteristics:

- Proven experience of delivering significant transformational change, operational improvement, and growth in a business of comparable size and complexity to AWE.
- Prior experience as a senior executive or board member in a complex industrial business with significant scientific/engineering/manufacturing content and where high levels of operational rigour, performance improvement, R&D investment, and safety are critical to success.
- Proven ability to identify, quantify and manage risk, particularly in light of potential wider programme impacts.
- A high level of emotional intelligence, with the demonstrated ability to form and lead trust-based, collaborative teams that achieve high levels of sustained performance. Coupled with a desire to connect with individuals at all levels of the organisation and in all professions.
- Knowledge of defence, nuclear, advanced manufacturing, engineering, and capital intensive industries would be preferred.
- Familiarity with the nuclear sector, or similarly complex, high-hazard and regulated sector as an executive or board member would be an advantage.
- Experience of international environments, and at leading partnerships, co-investments and collaboration with industry, academic, regulator and government partners particularly in the UK.

Personal Qualities

- Leads by example; holds self and others accountable.
- A highly collaborative leader, adept at managing multiple internal and external stakeholders; comfortable working in ambiguous contexts with HM Government as a client; however prior experience of working with/for Government is not essential.
- Able to operate at high levels of national sensitivity and security.
- Passionate, ambitious and driven, with energy and charisma to achieve goals fast and get things done while balancing the need to do so safely, securely and by bringing stakeholders with them.
- A creative thinker who is strategically and analytically astute.
- High aspiration level for the business, its growth and its essential mission.
- A good listener, with a willingness to challenge others and to be challenged.
- Values-driven, with the highest standards of personal and professional integrity and ethics.
- Outstanding people leadership skills with a positive, constructive and open approach that will nurture and enhance the culture of the business.

Location

The role is based in Aldermaston but will require attendance at meetings in London and some national and international travel (France and US mainly).

Eligibility

- This post is reserved for UK Nationals only.
- The successful candidate must hold or be willing to obtain security clearance to Developed Vetting clearance level. Further information is available [here](#). They will also, as a public servant, be subject to the Nolan principles ([The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))
- Candidates must note the requirement to declare any interests that they have that might cause questions to be raised about their approach to the business of AWE, including any relevant business interests, shareholdings, positions of authority, retainers, consultancy arrangements or other connections with commercial, public or voluntary bodies, both for themselves and for their spouses/partners.

To apply

If you would like to express interest in this role, please send your CV to responses@russellreynolds.com, together with the reference number **2304-020L** and role title in the subject line of your email.