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## **HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE**

### **THE HSE BOARD**

#### **Report of the HSE/HA Benchmark Exercise**

**Paper by David Ashton**

**Adviser**

**John Ives**

**Cleared by**

**Justin McCracken on 19 December 02**

#### **Issue**

To report to the Board on the outcome of the Benchmarking exercise with the Highways Agency (HA) on health and safety and to agree the proposals for taking forward the issues raised.

#### **Timing**

Subject to the Boards agreement, Personnel will place the report on the intranet and (with HA's agreement) the HSE Web site in Feb 03.

#### **Recommendations and Decisions**

The Board is invited to discuss the report at Annex 1 and note its comments on HSE's internal health and safety management arrangements and agree the action plan at Annex 2 for dealing with the issues raised.

#### **Background**

In July 2001 the High Level Forum (HLF) circulated the Ministerial Checklist and asked Departments and agencies to self-audit against it. The CHSC expressed the view that HSE should be open about our performance and that an external element should be introduced into the exercise. It was agreed we should benchmark against another DTLR agency and that HA would be a suitable partner as they have certain

similarities to HSE (mixture of office based and visiting staff working on hazardous sites).

The Revitalising team also thought that such an exercise would help the work of the HLF by demonstrating positive use of the Checklist. It was also expected that it would encourage similar action within DTLR. David Eves (Chair of the CHSC) invited HA to join in the exercise. On discussing the detail it was found that HA were already committed to a benchmark on health and safety in 2002/3 so their Business Improvement Unit took the lead on carrying out the interviews and preparing the report. This gave an even greater degree of independence into the exercise.

### **Argument**

The benchmarking team found that the Ministerial Checklist gave a positive structure to the exercise and enabled them to easily identify the key recommendations. Although the report demonstrates that there is a high degree of H&S awareness in HSE, it identifies a number of areas where improvements can be made. A number of these were already in hand (e.g. retender of the occupational health contract, purchasing policy) but further actions are required.

The report was discussed at the November CHSC and was welcomed as an open and honest assessment of HSE's performance. A draft action plan was agreed to take forward the recommendations.

HA report that they found the exercise very helpful in concentrating their thinking on the management structure and I understand that they have already agreed the new structures in principle.

### **Consultation**

The report was discussed with the HSE TUs at the November meeting of the CHSC.

### **Presentation**

The Board is asked to resolve that (subject to HA agreement) the report should be placed on the Internet.

### **Costs and Benefits**

Not applicable

### **Financial/Resource implications for HSE**

Not Applicable

## **Environmental implications**

None

## **Other implications**

A copy of the report has been given to the Joint Secretary of the HLF to consider how it should be used. Due to changes in the machinery of Government, the DTLR aspect is no longer strictly relevant but the H&S advisor to ODP (Chris Batten) has been advised of the outcome with the offer to discuss further.

## **Action**

The Board is asked to agree the action plan for implementing the recommendations of the report and for the report to be placed on the intranet and the HSE web site.