

# Partnership on Health And Safety in Scotland

## Proposals for the future of PHASS

### Issue

1. At the December meeting members agreed to initiate a review of PHASS.
2. A discussion paper setting out PHASS's original remit and its evolution was presented at the meeting on 25 March.
3. Informal consultation has taken place with the STUC, POOSH Scotland, the Scottish Government, SCHWL, FSB and SCoEH.
4. This paper presents proposals for the future of PHASS.

### Action

5. Members are invited to discuss the proposals set out at paragraph 18 and, if agreed, to discuss their implementation (paragraph 19).
6. The outcome of this review will be reported to the HSE Board for endorsement; the Board is meeting in Scotland in Edinburgh on 29 September 2010.

### Background

#### Some givens

7. Any proposals need to be predicated upon:
  - the existence of the new health and safety strategy for Great Britain as a framework for action - which was widely consulted on and has broad support;
  - the likelihood of significant reductions in resources within HSE and no doubt other PHASS member-organisations especially those in the public sector; and
  - the Government's views on increasing engagement between public services and the communities they serve.

#### Observations and analysis

8. What we now perceive as 'PHASS' was originally intended to be a steering committee to co-ordinate and galvanise the wider health and safety system in Scotland. Although PHASS has triggered and facilitated networks and partnership projects (as showcased at IOSH 2010 in March), there is scope for PHASS itself to be much more outward-looking and facing.
9. Important parts of Scotland's economy are in the north and remoter areas of Scotland, yet PHASS has met exclusively in the central belt and, lately, only at HSE premises.

10. PHASS comprises members from representative bodies; it includes some direct representation of duty-holders in the public and voluntary sectors but not those actually responsible for compliance in the private sector. It includes members from bodies which seek to influence behavioural change in others but is not directly representative of practitioners with shop floor responsibility.

11. Seeking to change or augment PHASS's membership would not however be likely to address these gaps as businesses and practitioners are either too busy or already have other forums in which to meet (eg SCOS and Local Safety Groups, POOSH etc) to commit to PHASS meetings as well.

12. PHASS meetings follow quite a traditional model. Papers and presentations are given by a few contributors, mainly to report on HSE activity and other bilateral partnership projects. HSE requests agenda items but tends to set the agenda by default. Discussion ensues usually around what HSE or SCHWL have been up to or should be doing. Clearly members have their own distinctive roles in promoting health and safety improvement and we need to return to the original principle of a genuine partnership of equal participation.

13. HSE has limited scope for proactive work. Much of HSE's operational resource this year is already earmarked for LPG pipeline inspection; and, as usual, inspectors are coping with a significant reactive workload in response to serious incidents which meet the criteria for investigation and enforcement. It is even more important therefore for HSE to maximise the value of its partnership work by increasing proactive contacts with those who are responsible for Scotland's health and safety performance.

14. The aim should be therefore to enhance the value of PHASS's commitment - in coming together as a valuable gathering of people and organisations with influence – by taking PHASS out and about to engage with a wider audience.

15. One other relevant development is that last year HSE introduced a revamped Scotland website which hosts and publicises a calendar of events for the whole health and safety community and issues e-Bulletins to facilitate easy communication with a much wider audience.

#### Specific comments received

16. In discussion with PHASS members, there is broad support for moving to a more outward-facing approach with the proviso that PHASS, as currently constituted, shapes and directs events and that we retain the opportunity as a body to discuss current issues.

17. Written comments have been received from POOSH Scotland and the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives. Both believe that PHASS members need to be encouraged and supported to communicate within their own wider constituencies. They also suggest some sort of PHASS action plan - learning from the reasonable success of the former Scottish Government Action Plan on Health and Safety – which could be built into a more outward-facing approach.

#### **Proposals**

18. The following proposals flow from the above analysis.

- I. PHASS should change its three meetings a year into three **events** in different locations around Scotland **open to a wider audience**. Meetings would be

**publicised as open** – with a request to register - but a **selected audience of up to 40 people** would be invited on members' advice;

- II. PHASS should focus each event broadly on a **theme(s) in the health and safety strategy** – themes and associated topics could be proposed by anyone;
- III. Each event would review the previous one and prepare ideas and agree contributions for the next one. The **event programme would become in effect a PHASS action plan**;
- IV. The purpose would be to **showcase respective contributions by PHASS-member constituencies and to seek collaboration in improving performance**;
- V. PHASS members would therefore be expected to make short presentations and lead discussion appropriate to the event theme;
- VI. **PHASS and HWL NAAG could decide to hold joint events** where there is an overlapping strategy – eg reaching SMEs;
- VII. PHASS members should help **target invitations** to the wider audience – tapping into their own memberships and networks – according to the theme and location.

For example, **local services and groups could be invited** - such as Local Authorities, Local Chambers of Commerce, local trade representatives, local trade union officials and representatives; TUC H&S tutors, Business Gateway offices, SCOS Local Safety Groups, health and safety trainers from local colleges, Learndirect Scotland etc.

- VIII. Events would follow an **informal format** of short introduction/presentations led by relevant PHASS members followed by discussion;
- IX. The open session of each event would last **no longer than 2 hours** and consideration would be given to timing to maximise the opportunity to attend;
- X. PHASS would retain a **private session** for steering committee members to raise topical issues concerning operational matters or partnership projects in Scotland, as currently;
- XI. PHASS events and communication would continue to be **administered by HSE** but through an **online community** – mirroring the system for HSE's GB-wide Small Business Trade Association Forum;
- XII. **Information on HSE's activity** would no longer be compiled and presented for PHASS meetings but will be **accessible on the HSE website and the HSE Scotland website**;
- XIII. **Venues and catering for PHASS events would, as far as possible, be provided free** via local authorities and businesses and contributions from member-organisations – perhaps on a rota basis.

19. If these proposals are agreed, suggestions from PHASS members are now invited for:

- the theme(s)
- location/venue
- target audience
- contributions from selected PHASS members

for the first revamped event in November/December this year.

20. The value of the new approach would be reviewed after the first year's three events.

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