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**MINUTES OF THE 26TH MEETING OF THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL
LIAISON GROUP ON RISK ASSESSMENT**

**2 NOVEMBER 2001 AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING, 29
GREAT PETER STREET, LONDON, SW1P 3LW**

Present

Paul Davies	HSE (Chair)
Edgar Black	DEFRA
Adrian G Sayce	CAA
Stephen Creigh-Tyte	DCMS
Mike de Silva	DH
George Kowalczyk	DH
Mark Courtney	CO
Chris Butler	HMT
Barbara Richards	FSA
Bruce Bebbington	HO
David Coles	OST
Mark Filley	DEFRA
Margaret Davies	DTLR
Simon Pollard	EA

Apologies

Havard Prosser	NafW
Andy Bishop	SE
David Harper	DH
Andrew Keith	DfID
Andrew Dobbie	DTI

Guests

Joanne Drean	CO
Tracey Burke	CO
Jeremy Hotchkiss	CO

ILGRA Secretariat

Jean Le Guen	HSE (Secretary)
Robert Wellens	HSE (Minutes Secretary)

Elsie Cassin

HSE (Minutes Secretary)

Advisors

Robin Foster

HSE

David Rickwood

HSE

Richard Broughton

HSE

ITEM 1: Introductions

1.0 The Chair welcomed members and introduced substitutes, guests and new members: George Kowalczyk, DH; Barbara Richards, FSA; and Robert Wellens, Secretariat. The Chair noted that all papers now indicate their openness status, and that the Secretariat aimed to put the agenda, papers and minutes on the website within 8 weeks of the meeting. He commented that this was a significant meeting, in that it would be looking, both backwards and forwards, to ILGRA's future role. With risk rising ever higher on the Government's agenda, ILGRA needed to adapt to enable it to continue to contribute effectively in the changing environment. The Chair proposed that, bearing this in mind, discussion on the third ILGRA Report should concentrate on the future programme. He also noted that all the papers on the agenda were by the secretariat, and suggested that this argued for a need for a more pro-active approach from member Departments.

ITEM 2: Minutes of ILGRA Meeting on 15 May 2001 and Matters Arising

2.0 The minutes were circulated to members on 19 June 2001. An amendment had been made to paragraph 4. The minutes were agreed.

2.1 Robin Foster thanked ILGRA members for their comments and suggestions on the precautionary principle draft paper. These have been taken on board and the paper had been submitted to DTLR Ministers, who would be writing to Ministerial colleagues inviting them to agree to it being put on the ILGRA website as an agreed ILGRA position for consultation, rather than to endorse it as Government policy. The paper can, therefore, still be amended.

ITEM 3: Update/Progress on key initiatives:

Substantive response to Phillips – update by DEFRA/DH

3.0.1 The Phillips report was published in October 2000. The report criticised the handling of BSE, saying that:

- there had been breakdowns in communication between departments
- that the right controls had been put in place, but too slowly
- the controls had not been sufficiently robust
- that there had been insufficient candour from Government in communicating risk

3.0.2 The report had about 160 specific recommendations, of which the key themes were the need for:

- proper risk assessment and management

- a precautionary approach where there is uncertainty
- better cross-government working and contingency planning
- better approach to science and scientific advice
- greater openness in explaining more to the public what is being done and why and trusting their common sense and intuitive understanding of risk

3.0.3 The Government's interim response to Phillips was published in February 2001, and its substantive response followed in September 2001. These were good examples of joined up working. They pointed to the changes that had been made since 1996. For example:

- the FSA had been created
- OST had developed guidelines on scientific advice
- the modernising government agenda had encouraged a more joined up approach to government
- risk management frameworks had been prepared and published
- the Cabinet Office were producing a Government statement on risk
- risk communication was being improved
- co-ordination groups on zoonoses had been set up

3.0.4 The initiatives described in the Government's response were being taken forward and Departments will make progress reports as required. There was no intention to exercise general oversight over Departments.

3.0.5 There was general agreement that better risk communication training, based on research, was needed. The ILGRA Risk Communication sub-group was seeking to collate information on the risk communication training provided by Departments, and establish a register of research in this area. The register will be maintained by the secretariat of the ILGRA Risk Communication Sub-group, and will be made available on the ILGRA website. It was suggested that input from NGOs (e.g. green alliance) might be included in training courses to provide views on what people expect of Departments.

3.0.6 DH reported that they were revising their risk framework document, and bringing the Chief Medical Officer more centrally into the DH decision-making process. DH also reported that they are reviewing the operation of their scientific advisory committees, including methods of taking into account alternative scientific views, and the role of such committees in horizon scanning. They will circulate relevant papers to ILGRA members

3.0.7 The Chair pointed out that the Phillips agenda and the Government's response would influence strongly ILGRA's, as well as individual Department's programmes. ILGRA would focus on joined up Government aspects and would continue to avoid duplicating the work of others.

3.0.8 The Chair noted that the Phillips Report brought out the disconnection between policy makers and scientific advisors, implying a gap in the competencies of both. HSE and DH saw the need for appropriate training and it was agreed that they would meet to exchange initial ideas. OST suggested a Departmental workshop to pool ideas and agreed to meet with HSE to discuss. Policy and scientific staff needed

to work more closely together and develop an understanding of their roles in risk management, ILGRA could contribute by developing the elements of core training for policy and scientific staff.

Action:

- 1. DH to circulate points arising from review of operation of advisory committees, including how to deal with different scientific views, by 30 November.**
- 2. OST (with assistance from HSE) to consider arranging a workshop for Departments to pool ideas for the development of training for Policy and Scientific Advisors dealing with risk.**

PIU Project on risk – risk and uncertainty¹

3.1.0 Tracey Burke and Jeremy Hotchkiss introduced this item. The objectives of the project were to:

- embed good risk management practice across Government
- improve risk communication
- establish greater clarity on where responsibility for risks rest

3.1.1 PIU aim to build on the Phillips response, looking across a wide range of risks at a strategic level. They aimed to identify gaps and areas of duplication. They were also looking at the possibility of developing new structures for creating risk awareness. PIU expressed a keen interest in working with ILGRA, and would welcome ILGRA's input. The project is due to finish in February 2002.

Government Statement on risk²

3.2.0 Joanne Drean reported that the nature of the Statement had changed in the light of the PIU project. It would be a statement of high-level principles. A draft Statement would be discussed at the Risk Advisory Group meeting on 6 November 2001. ILGRA members were invited to comment on the draft, and to provide more case studies. The Chair asked that comments be sent direct to the Cabinet Office, copied to the ILGRA secretariat.

3.2.1 In response to questions from ILGRA members the following points were made:

- initial findings from the PIU project were being fed into the draft statement, but at this early stage there were no firm conclusions
- the issue of risk transfer was being treated broadly and would not be confined to PFI
- assigning responsibility for cross-cutting issues was proving to be complex;
- the possible problem of individual civil servants being sued needed to be addressed

¹ Please note that the PIU project is now scheduled to finished in May 2002 rather than February 2002.

² Please note that at the Risk Advisory Group Meeting on 6 November 2001, the decision was taken to incorporate work on risk management principles into the PIU study.

- the Statement would recognise that sometimes the principles conflict
- PIU recommendations on mechanisms within Government for addressing risk will influence where ILGRA can add value in its future work programme
- it was agreed that PIU would discuss the role of ILGRA with the secretariat

Action:

1. **Members to comment on the draft statement to the Cabinet Office, copied to the ILGRA secretariat, by 14 November 2001.**

ITEM 4: Third ILGRA Report to Ministers *withheld, Exemption 10 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, information will soon be published.*

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ITEM 5: Prioritising Risk Issues on the Basis of Societal Concerns (ILGRA/NOV01/03)

5.0 The Chair explained that this paper linked to corporate governance, which itself linked into the Government statement on risk. In introducing the paper, Jean Le Guen pointed out that events causing societal concern could destabilise Government and drew attention to the factors described in the paper which need to be considered when prioritising work on the basis of societal concern. The document was now on a limited consultation, with a broader consultation planned.

5.1 The Chair noted that this was an HSE-centric contribution, but it had wider implications for other Departments. He asked whether any Departments were interested in working with HSE to encompass these wider issues. He pointed out that the paper was about where to put effort, rather than whether or not to regulate.

5.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- how to take account of societal concern could usefully be incorporated in the Government Statement on Risk
- although societal concerns drive the political agenda, it would be best not to combine too early 'objective' risk assessments and societal concerns
- Businesses didn't presently know how to take societal concerns into account, and were worried that Departments were doing so
- CAA had developed similar concepts, and had quantified them. They offered to share this work with ILGRA
- views change over time, different publics have different views, and individual opinion often varies from that of groups
- high levels of societal concern might not indicate a need for regulation, but could indicate a need for communication. For example, HSE had responded to societal concerns associated with incidents of carbon monoxide poisoning from domestic gas appliances by publicity campaigns

5.3 The Chair suggested forming a small group to take the issue forward and asked anyone interested in being part of the group to contact Laurence Golob.

Action:

- 1. Members are to send comments to Laurence Golob and signal interest in taking part in a small group to take the issues forward by 19 November.**
- 2. CAA to share how they take into account societal concerns.**

ITEM 6: Strategies for Promoting Regulatory Compliance *withheld, Exemption 2 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.*

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ITEM 7: Working with the Media: A Guide to Risk Communication
(ILGRA/NOV01/05)

7.0 Introducing this paper, David Rickwood explained that it provided a progress report on four research projects, funded by several Departments, examining factors which affect the formation of public opinion on risk issues. The projects had looked specifically at the Social Amplification of Risk Framework, and at the effect of the media on public opinion. Two of the research reports had been published and were available on HSE's website, a third was being prepared for publication, and the last report would be published by Cambridge University Press early in 2002. The research steering group had decided that the findings should be put to practical use as academic and theoretical underpinning for a guide on the formation of public opinion to help Departments develop risk communication strategies.

7.1 The steering group would meet on 14 November 2001 to decide what further work on the guide was necessary, and to discuss a workshop, planned for January 2002 to validate the guide.

7.2 The Chair said that the potential for practical use of the guide was large, and that it was important for it to be an attention grabbing, attractive, accessible product. In discussion it was suggested that the guide could be incorporated in risk management/communication courses at the Civil Service College, and that the Government Communication and Information Service could usefully be involved.

7.3 HSE would arrange for the guide to be printed as an ILGRA publication and the CO agreed in principle to circulate it to Departments.

7.4 David Rickwood undertook to advise members of the outcome of the steering group meeting. Members were asked to send any comments and expressions of interest in participating in the subsequent work on the guide to David Rickwood within two weeks.

Action:

- 1. David Rickwood undertook to advise members of the outcome of the steering group meeting.**
- 2. Members to send any comments and expressions of interest in participating in the subsequent work on the guide to David Rickwood within two weeks.**

ITEM 8: Any other business and date of next meeting

8.0 The next meeting would be on Thursday 6 June 2002 at the Royal Academy of Engineering.

8.1 There were no comments on below the line papers.

8.2 The Chair told the meeting that this would be Jean Le Guen's last appearance as ILGRA Secretary before his retirement at the end of the year. Jean had been Secretary of ILGRA since its inception and had built it up to be a potent influence in the HSE and across Government. The Chair invited Jean to reflect on his time with ILGRA over the past ten years

8.3 Jean Le Guen pointed out that risk is no respecter of boundaries, so ILGRA had been formed initially to exchange notes on good practice and address common issues. This had expanded to encompass policy development. ILGRA's strength had stemmed from its members and the interchanges between them. ILGRA's work had blossomed to the extent that it was now no longer the only body looking at risk issues across Government. He wished his successor well.