

**MINUTES OF THE 1st MEETING OF THE
WOOD INDUSTRIES ADVISORY GROUP
Held on 22ND November 2005 at
Bewley's Hotel, City Walk, Sweet Street, Leeds LS11 9DB**

Present

David Sulman
Mike Marchant
Hywel Evans
Richard Lambert
Michael Lee
Tony Kaye

Nick Boulton
John O'Connell
Jerry Cecil
Tony Hollyer
John Dye
Robert Hudson
Mark Murphy
Patrick Martin
Maureen Kingman (Chair)
Alan Scobbie
Wendie Drammeh

Representing

UK Forest Products Association
UK Woodchain
UK Woodchain
British Woodworking Federation
British Woodworking Federation
Woodworking Machinery Suppliers
Association
Timber Trade Federation
British Inter. Freight Association
British Inter. Freight Association
Woodworking Consultant
TIMCON
Nat. Association of Shopfitters
Trussed Rafter Association
Trussed Rafter Association
Principal Inspector, Woodworking - HSE
Inspector, Woodworking - HSE
Minutes Secretary - HSE

APOLOGIES

Alun Watkins
Health and Safety Consultant, Furniture
Industry Research Association

Alistair Bromhead
British Furniture Manufacturers
Association

Phil Davies
GMB Union

ACTIONS AGREED:

- 1) **(Min 3.4) Chair** agreed to circulate accident statistics for the industry.
- 2) **(Min 4.6) Chair** to circulate names and locations of HSAO's in HSE.
- 3) **(Min 4.7) Mr Hollyer** to circulate the contact names and numbers for press and media contacts.
- 4) **(Min 4.8) Chair** to arrange for 'accident alert' reports to be sent to members following serious woodworking accidents.
- 5) **(Min 4.11) Mr Batchelor** to speak to CITB's health and safety department to ascertain what work was planned on woodworking and report back.
- 6) **(Min 4.12) Members** agreed to submit copies of their organisations' health and safety plans for the forthcoming year.
- 7) **(Min 5.2) Members** to forward names of union representatives to be invited to sit on the committee.
- 8) **(Min 6.3) Chair** to distribute WIS Sheet on 4-sided planer moulders.
- 9) **(Min 6.4) Mrs Drammeh** to distribute members' contact details.

1.0 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION and APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked UK Woodchain for covering the cost of the venue.
- 1.2 The Chair explained that the purpose of the meeting was to explore the potential for partnership working with the various bodies represented. She set out the view that if the Group were to continue it should not be a revival of the former Wood Industries Forum which had focused on outputs, such as publications. Rather, this Group should concentrate on achieving measurable improvements in health and safety for the woodworking industry by embarking on shared initiatives.
- 1.3 Apologies had been received from Alan Watkins FIRA International and Alistair Bromhead from British Furniture Manufacturers and Phil Davies from the GMB Union.

2.0 HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- 2.1 The Chair gave an overview of the accident statistics for the industry, indicating that machinery-related major injuries had plateaued in the last few years although 'over-3-day' injuries had reduced significantly. However, rates remained high in some sectors of the industry such as office, shop and kitchen furniture manufacture and wooden box manufacture.

The Chair said that there was a need for co-coordinated action with the industry and HSE working together to deliver accident and ill-

health reductions. She suggested that the raison d'être for the Group should be to increase productivity and efficiency by improving competence and keeping workers healthy and at work, rather than at home on sick pay.

She alluded to the successful partnership that had been established with the printing industry via the Printing Industry Advisory Committee (PIAC). The new way of working had been demonstrated during the HSE's Backs! Initiative. The representative bodies on PIAC had prepared the industry for the campaign and had ensured that information, training and support was in place. As a result, inspectors who visited found many of the companies were already taking action on manual handling and were better informed about musculoskeletal issues than other industries.

3.0 WHAT MEMBER BODIES CAN CONTRIBUTE

- 3.1 Chair asked members to outline what they felt they could contribute.
- 3.2 In the round-table discussion the point was made that companies were deterred from asking for help from HSE because of the perceived threat of enforcement action. It was felt that there was some way to go to build mutual trust. However, there was also the view that HSE had a role to play in tackling non-complying companies and ensuring that there was a 'level playing field' for the industry.
- 3.3 Members were interested to learn of the role of Health and Safety Awareness Officers (HSAOs) who visited companies to give advice and information only on complying with the law.
- 3.4 It was agreed that the Chair would distribute accident statistics for the woodworking industry so that there was a baseline to work to.
- 3.5 In a discussion on communicating with the industry, the point was made that the internet was not the best way of getting information to woodworking companies as very few of them had access on a regular basis to computers.

4.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY PRIORITIES FOR MEMBER BODIES

- 4.1 Mr Sulman stated that the main concerns for his members were slips and trips, falls, work related transport, noise & dust.
- 4.2 Mr Marchant explained that part of the role of UK Woodchain was to promote the development of skills and knowledge across the sector so that the industry could compete more effectively.
- 4.3 For the British Woodworking Federation the main priorities were manual handling, braking of machines, noise and dust, as well as improving levels of training. However, many members (and non members) lacked basic knowledge of how to do a risk assessment.
- 4.4 Mr Kaye stated that the WMSA represented several dust extraction equipment manufacturers and suppliers and was aware of the significant ill health issues from dust exposure in the industry. He

suggested more emphasis on the dangers of dry sweeping and blowing down.

- 4.5 Mr Boulton explained that the TTF's members were primarily involved with distribution and handling and said their major concerns were manual handling, working at height and transport issues. He was also concerned about the lack of specific advice for handling long lengths of timber which behaved very differently from cardboard boxes. Mr Boulton also felt that HSE's targeting of large employers during campaigns was leaving small companies, who needed more help 'to their own devices' and created a competitive disadvantage for the larger employers.
- 4.6 Mr O'Connell of BIFA explained that although his organisation was primarily concerned with freight forwarding and customs brokering, some members also built wooden packing cases. The HSE's accident statistics showed very high rates amongst wooden box makers, which needed to be addressed. Mr Cecil also raised a concern about the need to eliminate fear of inspectors and welcomed the appointment of HSAOs. It was agreed to distribute a contact list of HSAOs.
- 4.7 Mr Hollyer outlined his involvement in research on behalf of FIRA on methods for controlling wood dust and his role in relation to the woodworking press. He agreed to distribute press and media contacts to all members of the group.
- 4.8 Mr Dye of TIMCON stated that slips and trips and manual handling were the main health and safety issues for his members. He asked if HSE could provide an 'accident alert' system which they could distribute to members. The Chair said that this was already done for other industries and agreed to email disclosable information to member bodies when appropriate.
- 4.9 Mr Hudson felt that his members had a negative view of HSE and this issue could not be ignored if progress was to be made. However, a common interest had been shown in seeing improvements in accidents and ill health.
- 4.10 Mr Martin referred to the on-going support given to the TRA by HSE. However, he also felt that more attention should be given to small companies, particularly those who did not belong to trade associations who were less likely to have access to competent health and safety advice.
- 4.11 Mr Batchelor agreed to speak to CITB's health and safety department to find out if any projects were underway for the woodworking industry and report back.
- 4.12 Mr Lambert suggested that if industry health and safety initiatives were to be co-coordinated the first step was to ascertain exactly what work was already underway. It was agreed that members would forward copies of their health and safety plans for the forthcoming year.

5.0 APPOINTMENT OF NON HSE CHAIR

- 5.1 In discussion there was general agreement that HSE should chair subsequent meetings and that the title 'Wood Action Group' be adopted.

5.2 The Chair said that greater trade union representation was needed to balance the group and asked members to forward names of union representatives who may wish to sit on the Committee.

6.0 AOB/SUMMING UP

6.1 It was decided that future communications with members would be by e-mail.

6.2 Chair announced her intention to publish the minutes of meetings on HSE's Woodworking website which was to be launched in early 2006.

6.3 Chair agreed to distribute a draft woodworking information sheet to members on 4-sided planer moulders.

6.4 Mrs Drammeh agreed to circulate members' contact details.

7.0 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

7.1 It was agreed that another meeting would be held in the New Year (dates to be confirmed) at the Timber Trades Federation's premises.