

## **HSC/04/27 Annex D**

### **HSC OPEN MEETING – Q&A**

#### **Question 1: Stephanie Potter, CO Gas Safety, Carbon Monoxide and Gas Safety Society and Consumer Safety International.**

As a barrister I have been very surprised working with victims how most victims have incredibly good safety proposals that are sensible and not over the top. Therefore, they are a valuable resource in trying to prevent death and injuries. All other stakeholders – industry, government, unions, employees and even consumers are represented as Commissioners. I would ask that there be another Commissioner for victims in order to put forward their excellent views.

**Commission's response:** Commissioners are all appointed by Ministers and its very much down to Ministers who is appointed. However, all of us as individual Commissioners feel that we have an obligation to victims and to suggest we don't is not right. Also the Commission can access some of the advice and guidance unions receive from victims via their compensation scheme. All the Commissioners, in particular the TUC Commissioners, are aware of the specific needs of victims. Finally our inspectors obviously do speak to victims of accidents or the bereaved. In our in-house magazine there was a moving story about an Inspector's experiences working with a bereaved family.

#### **Question 2: Roger Bibbings, Occupational Safety Advisor, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.**

My question to the Commission is about their commitment to working with and through others in the h&s system. This is a theme that has begun to emerge in the Commission's Strategy but there are few signs yet that the Commission have a detailed and in depth understanding of the players in the system outside HSC/E. Do the Commission have plans for a consultative mapping exercise to help all the players in the system?

**Commission response:** The Commission is trying to get a meeting with ROSPA and British Safety Council and IOSH to start the process and intend to take this work forward. We have a pretty good idea about whom the key players are, whether its people from various professional bodies and institutions or organisation involved in the civil side.

#### **Question 3: Lawrence Waterman – President Elect ISOH.**

With HSC/E's new focus on developing Partnership, does the Commission envisage a need for any structure change?

**Commission response:** There has been some structure changes in relation to how HSE is set up to work in partnership with LAs – we have in place regional partnership managers, set up a program steering group which is made up of council members. HSC also wants to increase the number of seconded Environmental Health Officers in to HSE and vice-versa. There is no intention not to look at how we are structured; the challenge is finding the right structure to get HSC/E where we want to go and that is going to be an ongoing process.

**Question 4: Hope Daily – National health and Safety Officer UNISON.**

When will there be a response to DWP's select Committee on the role of HSC/E and are there any plans to review the Safety Rep Regulations?

**Commission response:** The Government is responding to Select Committee – the Commission have looked at text of what might go to the Minister and a response will be going from the Government to the Select committee. This will happen quite soon. In terms of the regulations on Safety Reps – last summer the Commission were unable to agree the way forward in relation to harmonising the 1977 and the 1996 regulations. There has been some important steps forward – the development of the worker safety advisor scheme. HSC hope to be in a position to say more on this in the not too distant future.

**Question 5: Reg Sale – Ergonomic Society.**

As a body keenly interested in health and safety, can I ask why the Occupation Health Advisory Committee was wound up. This was expressed by others who gave evidence to the DWP select Committee.

**Commission response:** The Commission have held lots of debates on how we structure ourselves and we looked specifically at the OHAC to see if such a committee was the best way to deliver our occupational health agenda. The Commission want to make sure that we are engaging with all our partners, professional bodies and all of those who can make a difference. Our concern is that we don't set in stone a certain institutional structure. At last year's conference, where we looked at how we take forward our occupational strategy, we explored the role of the OHAC. At this conference the conclusion was that, in its present form, the OHAC may not be the best body to take this work forward.

**Question 6: John Spanswick CE of Bovis lend lease and Chairman of the Major Construction Group.**

In relation to communication, it is important that HSC/E communicates some of the good anecdotal evidence about the good work you are engaged with. In terms of relation to new regulations – when you bring in new legislation will

you consider the health and safety outcomes and if the new legislation will make a real difference?

**Commission response:** In terms of regulation, the Commission thinks very hard about the impact of regulation – the Commission often have very difficult discussion when faced with the choices about how far we should regulate and what the impact is going to be. The Commission agree that we should communicate our successes – in the UK we do have one of the best health and safety records and this is, in some way, down to our goal setting approach.

**Question 7: Rob Strange, CE, IOSH.**

How do you feel about your participation in the recent fringe meeting at the major party political conferences; were they useful and will they be repeated.

**Commission response:** The chance to meet with councillors and to meet the showdow spoke people, as well as Ministers was very valuable. In relation to the Conservative fringe meeting, it was interesting that after Simon Jenkins had done his talk about hyper safety, there were a number of people who spoke supporting HSC. We are keen that as many people as possible understand our board approach and we welcome the chance to debate and discuss it with them.

**Question 8: Tim McGough British Retail Consortium.**

As an industry we have liaised very closely with the HSE and I commend the work HSE have done with our industry. But in terms of Regulation 13 of the Working at Height Regulations, the Construction industry want this provision. However, it would cause our industry a lot of problems. Is a possible way forward an ACOP for the Construction industry?

**Commission response:** The commission agreed to come back to this issue at a future meeting.

**Question 9: Chris Beach – President elect, British Occupation Hygiene Society.**

Given the number of initiatives started by the HSC/E, when do you think the Commission will convince managing directors that good health is good business?

**Commission response:** I think we are winning the argument and HSC/E have made considerable strides in last few years, moving towards an approach, which will help to achieve a higher level of commitment from managing directors. However, there are very few managing directors that have been prosecuted for health and safety offences and there are very few that don't believe there is some positive benefit in having a health and safety

regime. However there is a lot more HSC/E can do to turn people on to health and safety.

**Question 10: Jay Hodgson - Scot Haznet.**

Knowledge of health and safety in small business is very low and that, along side enforcement, there should be a wider educational program to teach small businesses what their responsibilities are - do you have a program in mind for that?

**Commission response:** Reaching the small firms sector is not easy, mainly because of the growth of small business in the UK economy, so yes we have to have ways of reaching them. However, it may not be as gloomy as indicated. The Commission and Executive are represented by Judith Donovan on a joint working party that is driving the new business link website. On this web site, the highest level of hits, after employment, is health and safety. That has something like 2million hits since July, so health and safety is very much on the agenda of small firms. What we have to make sure is that they can get the information easily. This brings us back to the Communication strategy, which has been developed by HSE. We have to find a way to make it very easy and very user friendly and non frightening. To help with this, Judith Donovan has set up a trade association forum, where all the main associations that represent small firms have agreed to participate. This forum is going to be used to make sure that HSC/E is putting out the right messages in the right way.