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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

HSC SCIENCE STRATEGY 2005-2008

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Advisor(s):

Cleared by Paul Davies on 13 September 2004

Issue

1. Consultation on the draft HSC Science Strategy 2005 – 2008, attached at Annex 1.

Timing

2. Commission meeting of 12 October.

Recommendation

3. The Commission is invited:
 - To consider the draft Science Strategy 2005-2008 and to identify any areas that require attention; and
 - To agree that, subject to the incorporation of its comments, the draft Strategy should be posted on the HSE intranet and web site, inviting internal and external stakeholders to comment. The Strategy will then be finalised and submitted to the Commission for approval to publish in early 2005.

Background

4. In 1999, the Council for Science and Technology published its review of S&T activities across Government (www.cst.gov.uk/cst/reports/#6), recommending that departments should adopt a more strategic, forward looking approach. The Office of Science and Technology (OST) published a Government implementation plan in response to this review, requiring departments to have a new or revised science and innovation (S&I) strategy in place by April 2001. The present HSC/E S&I Strategy was produced to meet this timetable and to a format laid down by OST.

5. Over the past five years, the Government has elaborated its expectations of Departmental S&I strategies. The *Science and innovation investment framework 2004 – 2014*, published in July, sets out the criteria that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has asked the Chief Scientific Adviser to assess in his review of departments' S&I strategies following the 2004 spending review. These cover the strategies':
 - Input to policymaking and service delivery;
 - Contribution to innovation and wealth creation; and
 - Contribution to government-wide knowledge and cross-government challenges.

Argument

6. The present HSC/E S&I Strategy needs substantial updating and revision to align with the new HSC Strategy - *A strategy for workplace health and safety in Great Britain to 2010 and beyond*. Its main focus is the processes and structures associated with the commissioning of science, rather than the content of the programmes, and it does not deal with in-house expertise in S&T. Although adequate to meet the Government's requirements in 1999, it is now outdated and will almost certainly not meet the more extensive requirements that have been elaborated over the past five years.
7. The new HSC Science Strategy 2005 – 2008 will be a daughter document to the new HSC Strategy and it will set out how HSE will apply S&T to help deliver the HSC mission. It will cover in-house S&T expertise as well as commissioned science. Table 2 outlines the 'science' priorities of the Strategic Programmes and work to develop these is still in progress. It is anticipated that Table 2 will become more detailed as these priorities are further developed. The HSE Board considered the draft Strategy on 25 August (B/04/041) and agreed that consultation should not be held up pending its completion.
8. The new Science Strategy is a high level document. It covers the various points in para 5 in general terms but not in detail. Indeed, to do so could lead to an unbalanced Strategy, which pays undue attention to matters that have little relevance to health and safety. Where such issues are relevant to HSC/E, they might be better recorded in the Project Record Form (PRF) (which is completed for each individual project) and set as funding criteria rather included than in the Strategy itself. The Strategy currently outlines the purpose of the PRF and will provide a hyperlink to a specimen form.

Consultation

9. Initial interviews conducted by Technopolis Ltd with the Chair and about 30 senior HSE staff to inform preparation of the first draft of the new Science Strategy; focus groups with a wide range of staff in Bootle, Edinburgh and Rose Court, the Science Strategy Committee and the Board.

Presentation

10. It is proposed that the draft Science Strategy will be posted on HSE's intranet & web site for comment by internal and external stakeholders, and finalised early in 2005.

Costs and Benefits

11. HSE annually spends about 15% of its grant in aid on commissioned S&T (£35m in 2003/04). In addition, HSE spends a similar amount on the salaries of some 780 S&T specialists. The new Science Strategy explains how HSE intends to use this science and engineering resource strategically to deliver the challenges set out in the HSC Strategy.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

12. Technopolis Ltd undertook the interviews with senior stakeholders, facilitated the focus groups and prepared an initial draft of the Science Strategy at a cost of £25.5k. Work to develop the Strategy and to undertake internal and external consultation will be undertaken by HSE staff and will be contained within existing resources.

Environmental Implications

13. n/a.

Other Implications

14. n/a.

Action

15. The Commission is invited:
- To comment on the draft Science Strategy at Annex 1; and
 - To agree that, subject to the incorporation of its comments, the draft Science Strategy should be posted on the HSE intranet and web site for internal and external consultation.

Contact

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