

Health and Safety Commission Paper		MISC/04/20	
Meeting Date:	N/A	Open Gov. Status:	Partially Closed
Type of Paper:	Misc	Paper File Ref:	
Exemptions:	Annexes 1 and 2 Exemption 10, finalised information to be announced shortly.		

## HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

### Party Conferences 2004

#### A Paper by Colin Douglas

#### Advisor(s): Steve Pointer

Cleared by Colin Douglas on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2004

#### Issue

- 1) Notice of plans and broad themes for Commission events at party conferences in September and October 2004.

#### Timing

- 2) Routine

#### Recommendation

- 3) Commissioners are invited to:
  - a) Note the outline plans at **annex 1**; and,
  - b) Consider attending at least one of the party conferences as mentioned in paragraph 9.

#### Background

- 4) The Communication strategy agreed by the Commission on 10<sup>th</sup> February (HSC/04/32) identified Key stakeholders and opinion formers as priority groups for communication activity in 2004-2005. Whilst stakeholder mapping continues, major political parties have already emerged as key. A survey of Westminster MPs recently suggested that only 32% of MPs rated HSE as "effective" or "very effective" as a regulator; this puts us in the bottom quartile of regulatory NDPBs surveyed. Additionally effective engagement of local politicians is key to the success of the Local Authority Partnership programme.

- 5) Improved stakeholder relationships require consistent attention over an extended period of time, however annual conferences are particularly important opportunities to make an impact. The Civil Service Management Code prohibits civil servants from attending party conferences and fringe events in their official capacity. However there is no such restriction on appointed commissioners. We have recently contracted A.S. Biss and Co, an experienced public affairs consultancy to provide advice; they are able to support events at the conferences.

### **Conference events**

- 6) The conferences provide opportunities to communicate key messages to some important audiences. Deadlines for the printing of conference guides, booking of venues and the need to give invited speakers advance notice, have made it necessary to agree very broad outlines already.
- 7) Soundings indicated that exhibition stands at the party conferences would not represent best value for money as exhibition areas tend not to be well attended. Instead lunchtime fringe events, close to the main venue have been selected to offer delegates both a thought-provoking discussion and an opportunity to eat lunch.
- 8) The overall theme is of the contribution health and safety can make not just to people's quality of life, but also to the productivity of public and / or private industry. This has been adjusted to suit the interests of the individual conference, as outlined in **annex 1**. Invitations are going out to speakers at the time of writing, according to availability it may prove necessary to arrange suitable substitutes if first choices are not available.
- 9) The speakers at the fringe events include representative of the Commission. However the impact and effectiveness of the events would be maximised if other commissioners attended as part of the audience and took the opportunity to discuss the issues and network in the margins of the events.
- 10) Trade unions and business groups are also important audiences. Experience and advice indicate that well designed and prominently located staffed display stands provide good opportunities for communication. Action is in hand as indicated in **annex 2**.

### **Consultation**

- 11) Within HSC/E Bill Callaghan, Timothy Walker and HSE Finance Policy Unit have been consulted. A.S. Biss & Co, HSE's newly appointed Public Affairs Advisers, are closely involved in designing the programme.

### **Presentation**

- 12) The events offer opportunities to communicate key messages to a broad audience through effective media handling. There are also risks: externally negative comments at the events could be seized upon and positive contributions ignored. These risks need to be carefully managed.

## **Costs and Benefits**

- 13)The health and safety benefits arise from:
- a) Raising awareness of the contribution health and safety can make to a wide range of agendas;
  - b) Engaging local politicians and raising their awareness of LA's roles in health and safety enforcement;
  - c) Tackling common myths of impractical health and safety requirements.
- 14)The costs are essentially limited to the financial and staff costs of hosting the events.

## **Financial/Resource Implications for HSE**

- 15)High quality display stands at the TUC and CBI conferences cost approximately £7,000 each and will between them require approximately 18 staff days to run. The fringe events at the three party conferences will cost up to £35,000, including planning and support on site by A.S. Biss and Co. If the Commission decided to participate in similar ways in future years, the costs would be repeated.

## **Environmental Implications**

- 16)None identified

## **Other Implications**

- 17)Consideration has also been given to attendance at party conferences in Scotland and Wales, it was felt that lessons should be learnt from the three main party events, prior to deciding on further involvement. Liaison is planned with HSE's Directors for Scotland and Wales on involvement in the relevant TUC and CBI events.

## **Action**

- 18)For information

→ Closed – Exemption 10, finalised information to be announced shortly

→ ←



**Closed – Exemption 10, finalised information to be announced shortly**