

Summary of the main points raised during consultation

- i. The draft Strategy is not sufficiently forward looking and does not recognise the need to ensure the availability of appropriate internal and external expertise in the longer term. *We have emphasised in section 1 (p. 1) that maintaining and developing appropriate expertise is essential; section 4 (p.10) has been extended to explain the key role of horizon scanning in identifying future such needs.*
- ii. There does not appear to be a clear, resourced and practical mechanism by which HSE takes internal and external advice to identify information gaps and define research priorities. *Steps we are taking to enhance the capability of the Strategic Programmes include defining the competencies and skills needed within the Programmes and developing a training package to deliver these: encouraging programme directors and managers to “embed” in their teams sufficient suitably qualified staff, including analytical scientists from the Corporate Science and Analytical Services Directorate (CoSAS). This is work in hand and too detailed for the Strategy but we will address this issue in replying to the respondent.*
- iii. Professional bodies (IOSH, ESRC) share the views of the OST scoping study that HSC's science strategy should develop more innovative partnerships with stakeholders, OGDs and professional and academic bodies. *We have expanded section 6 (p. 1) to emphasise the importance that we attach to establishing better mechanisms for involving academic and professional institutions. The offer to collaborate with ESRC on evaluation methodology is being followed up by CoSAS.*
- iv. The section on Science Governance suggests that everything is working as intended but the OST scoping study reports that there are significant weaknesses in practice – largely connected with i. and ii. above. Also there has been a suggestion that HSE should peer review all of its published research. *We believe this would be disproportionate and that the current measures, as set out in section 7.3 (page 22), are appropriate but we may need to re-visit our criteria following the OST review.*
- v. There is a need to specify the overriding scientific issues that need to be addressed during 2005 – 2008. *The key scientific issues are covered in the text and these have now been brought together in a new Executive Summary, which also explains the alignment of the Strategy with the revised Strategic Programme arrangements and the recently agreed HSC Business Plan 2005-8.*
- vi. The social sciences have an important contribution to make to HSC's efforts to understand problems and develop effective practical solutions to workplace health and safety. *We strongly endorse this comment and have made additions to sections 2 (p.2.) and 4 (p. 9) to reinforce the importance of the social sciences).*

- vii. The Strategy should include equality issues at work both in its methodology and with regard to the subject matter. *We agree and have amended one of the principles in section 2 (p. 2) to make this explicit.*
- viii. The proposed reduction in research on major hazards should be reconsidered for the following reasons:
- Although the major hazards industries have achieved a welcome improvement in occupational health and safety in recent years, there has not been a corresponding reduction in the frequency or magnitude of major accidents.
 - Many of the UK facilities are over 40 years old and operating well beyond their original design life.
 - As HSE has reduced its emphasis on major accidents, so the major operating companies have dramatically reduced their expenditure on research into such hazards.
 - The large operators are cutting back heavily on health and safety, and divesting assets to smaller operators, who have little specialist resource or operational expertise. The North Sea has lost its pre-eminent position with much of the deep water technology being developed elsewhere. In consequence, many of the key scientists have been made redundant or have taken early retirement and young engineers are reluctant to enter or remain in the industry.
 - Standards and guidance are the backbone of regulation of hazardous installations and, given the reductions in industry expertise, HSE support is critical.

The HSE Board has reaffirmed its decision to reduce research on major hazards.