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**Health and Safety Commission**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Health and Safety Commission held on 7 November 2006 in the Globe Room, Rose Court London.**

**Present**

**Bill Callaghan – Chair**  
**Sandy Blair**  
**Margaret Burns**  
**Danny Carrigan**  
**Judith Donovan**  
**Sayeed Khan**  
**Hugh Robertson**  
**Elizabeth Snape**

**Professor Stephen Wood, Chair of the WSA Challenge Fund management board - Item 5**

**Apologies: John Longworth, John Spanswick**

**Officials Present**

Geoffrey Podger (items 1-5)  
 Justin McCracken  
 Jonathan Rees  
 Alex Brett-Holt  
 Vivienne Dews  
 Colin Douglas  
 Susan Mawer  
 Neal Stone  
 Trevor Cain  
 Ann Marie Farmer

Giles Denham – items 5, 6  
 Stuart Bristow & Jenny Eastabrook – Item 5  
 Cath Cottam – Item 6  
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**Welcome/Introduction**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1 Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2006 (HSC/M09/2006)**

**1** The minutes were agreed.

**2 Urgent Business**

**2.1** None.

**3 Chief Executive’s Report**

**3.1** Presenting his report Geoffrey Podger highlighted the following issues:

British Nuclear Group Sellafield Limited (BNGSL) – The prosecution had resulted in a significant fine of £500,000 plus costs, the summing up by Mr Justice Openshaw had been particularly notable and the judgement would be circulated to the Commission.

Board visits to HSE Offices – The meetings had been worthwhile and staff had been positive about the information they had received and the opportunity to raise their concerns about the financial situation and the current difficulties with Coin. Staff remained concerned about the present position.

The publication of the health and safety statistics, 2 November 2006 – essentially the news was good with progress on all three targets including major injuries. Press coverage had focused on the enforcement statistics, where numbers were significantly down; however initial figures for the first half of 2006/07 indicated a reversal in this trend so he had been able to make

	<p>the point that a turn around had been engineered. There had been a good attendance from the media at the briefing, with coverage in the Financial Times, Sun and Daily Telegraph.</p> <p>Recent incidents in Scotland – There had been two incidents over the weekend: an LPG gas explosion in a cottage close to Larkhall and a fairground ride failure in Motherwell which had resulted in people being trapped for up to two hours. HSE was involved in both investigations neither of which had resulted in fatalities.</p>
<b>3.2</b>	<p>The Commission was interested in the details of the incidents and Mr Podger agreed to keep it informed.</p> <p>The Commission commended the small booklet summarising the key 2005/06 health and safety statistics, which it found very useful. It noted that there had been wide press coverage of the statistics launch and asked if it could be provided with the press reports. The Executive undertook to provide a full package including regional and trade coverage which normally appeared a few weeks later.</p>
<b>3.3</b>	<p>The Commission thanked the Chief Executive for his report.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Delivering the PSA: Summary Performance Report for Quarter 2 (2006/07) (HSC/06/93)</b></p>
<b>4.1</b>	<p>Jonathan Rees introduced the paper which covered the Strategic Programmes' performance against the PSA targets during July to September 2006, and sought Commission views on performance and the report to Lord Hunt. He apologised for the late circulation of the paper which had been delayed so that the 05/06 statistics could be included.</p> <p>The essential message was one of good news with significant progress being made against the targets, as summarised in annex 3, and tribute should be paid to all in the health and safety community for their work in achieving this. The ill health target was broadly on track to meet the Revitalising and PSA targets. The number of working days lost showed a significant fall and was probably on target. There was also a significant fall in the injury reduction figures, which had seemed to be plateauing. This was mainly in the production sectors, where HSE had put a lot of resources into some of the sectors, and where good progress was being made on developing leading indicators. However the picture on the services sector, both HSE and LA enforced, was less good. A fuller report on the statistics would be provided to the Commission in December.</p> <p>The overall assessment of the Strategic Programmes performance remained at amber/green, reflecting the efforts of HSE staff and the partnership with the LAs. Disease reduction and ill health had moved to green. Whilst major hazards remained at amber/green this was a more mixed picture reflecting the precursor indicators and a continuing need to divert the programme's resources into non-PSA work.</p> <p>The enabling programmes were coming to the end of their natural life, and continued to put in good performances.</p> <p>Overall the picture was good but there were significant challenges reflected</p>

	in the risk register.
<b>4.2</b>	<p>The Commission welcomed the improved statistics which it felt demonstrated that the work on health was making a difference. Staff should be congratulated on their work in difficult circumstances.</p> <p>It was concerned about performance in major hazards and raised a number of issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which diversion of resources was affecting performance</li> <li>• Whether HSC/E could be doing more to tackle the problems</li> <li>• The need to make sure Ministers were aware of the risks particularly in nuclear. The problems with obtaining personnel were not just a matter of resources</li> <li>• Whether HSC should write to the offshore and nuclear industries about their concerns with performance</li> <li>• A lot was happening in the nuclear industry and it was of concern if the industry were not clear about what was expected of them in health and safety</li> <li>• It wanted to follow up on what was being done with the industries.</li> </ul> <p>Responding the Executive said that the short-term changes in the precursor figures were not necessarily significant, given the low numbers. However there were a number of factors which gave concern over the medium term: in the nuclear industry factors such as such as the age of existing assets, the proposed new investment programme and their impact on HSE's resources. There had been resurgence in activity offshore that had led to a demand for experienced personnel and a consequent loss of expert inspectors to the industry. It would be necessary to keep a careful eye on pressures on resources.</p>
<b>4.3</b>	<p>The Commission also explored what was being done to improve performance in the services sector and welcomed the further analysis that would be done to better understand the statistics.</p> <p>It thought the report to Ministers should refer to the issues around resources and also set out how we were going to tackle the major risks. The Chair should set out the Commission's concerns about the financial situation when meeting with the Minister to discuss the report. Although progress had been made on the targets if resources were reduced performance could deteriorate and new challenges not met.</p> <p>The report should also make the point that our indicators were now accurately predicting outcomes.</p>
<b>4.4</b>	<p>The Commission agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the ministerial submission should be amended to reflect its concerns and submitted to the Minister.</li> <li>• Concerns on offshore would be discussed with the industry at the March meeting</li> <li>• Mike Weightman should be asked about the most productive and effective way of signalling the Commission's concerns to the nuclear industry.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair thanked staff for the good work they were doing.</p>

<b>5</b>	<b>Worker Involvement: Proposals on the future of the WSA initiative and first findings from the consultaion exercise (HSC/06/88)</b>
5.1	The Chair welcomed Professor Stephen Wood who was attending in his capacity as Chairman of the WSA Challenge Fund.
5.2	<p>Giles Denham introduced the paper, which focused on the future of the WSA fund and associated initiatives. As context a brief report on initial findings of the worker involvement consultation were given, but these would be presented in full to the Commission early next year.</p> <p>The WSA challenge fund was currently in its final year of three and would close at the end of March 2007. Consideration was required on the best way to take the initiative forward.</p> <p>The success of the fund was a tribute to the work of the Management Board. The first two years had been evaluated and this had shown it had increased health and safety in participating organisations. However, it was not a particularly cost-effective way of delivering an advice service to SME's.</p> <p>Stakeholders had been asked whether HSE should continue to promote a voluntary initiative like the fund but none of the options attracted general support or consensus. HSE was therefore recommending that the WSA initiative be discontinued and the lessons learnt from both the pilot and the challenge fund integrated into HSE's mainstream activities as part of the programmes.</p> <p>In the Construction sector there would be the opportunity to engage with employers and trade unions to ensure that worker involvement was a key element in construction activity for the Olympics. The lessons learnt would also feed into the way that HSE provides information, advice and support for SMEs.</p>
5.2	<p>The Commission recognised that the Fund had lead to a number of successes and the range of regional partners involved had been very good. However the fund had not really achieved its aim of worker involvement. This would need resources and new ideas. The report did not reflect the overall activity on worker involvement which HSE had been doing, and which was a tribute to the team involved.</p> <p>The Challenge Fund itself had not lead to the sustainable cultural change that the Commission would have liked to see and continuing the initiative in the current format was not appropriate. But many lessons had been learned which should be taken on board by HSE. The glass, ceramics, paper and board sectors all provided good models which could be incorporated.</p> <p>There was scope for the work to continue in the construction sector where it had been successful and might be sustainable. Both sides of the industry would need to take ownership of the initiative but HSE had an important role in promoting it.</p> <p>The Commission questioned the evaluation, the amount of the budget spent on it and the lack of involvement of the Small Business Trade Forum. It also wanted to see case studies used to spread good practice.</p>
	Responding Professor Wood said that he was confident in the results of the

	<p>evaluation, although they could be interpreted in two ways, corresponding to a “glass half-full” or a “glass half empty”. There had been many positive findings from the evaluation that, in his view, had been reported more cautiously than he would have done. Conversely there were some points where HSE had been less cautious than he would have been.</p>
<p><b>5.3</b></p>	<p>The Chair thanked the Board and the worker involvement team for their work. A number of issues had arisen and the spring discussion would be important. We needed to consider how to deal with sectors where union membership was scarce; to find ways to learn the lessons and take them forward; and to give more attention to the good work that was already in progress.</p> <p>The Commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted the first findings of the worker involvement consultation;</li> <li>• Noted the results of the WSA Challenge fund;</li> <li>• Agreed that the WSA initiative should discontinue in March and the lessons learnt mainstreamed;</li> <li>• Agreed that the Spring paper should include follow up on worker involvement in construction;</li> <li>• Wanted to find ways it could give a higher profile to worker engagement</li> </ul>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>HSC and HSE Disability and Gender Equality Schemes (HSC/06/91)</b></p>
<p><b>6.1</b></p>	<p>Giles Denham and Alex Brett-Holt presented the paper which sought the approval of the draft HSC/E Disability and Gender equality schemes, subject to minor amendments in the light of consultation responses.</p> <p>The schemes were for both internal and external audiences and it was important that they were within a coherent overarching framework. The race equality scheme would be integrated into this framework in 2007. Work was continuing on other diversity streams, for example age related issues and it was important that diversity work was embedded in mainstream activities.</p> <p>HSE was required to publish equality schemes for disability by 4 December 2006 and gender in April 2007. HSE had taken the two schemes forward in tandem with a common publication date of 4 December 2006. The aim was to concentrate on prioritisation.</p> <p>Although the timescale for consultation was tight all networks had commented. The final schemes would, subject to Commission agreement, be published on 4 December 2006.</p> <p>The gender priorities for HSE would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving performance management,</li> <li>• Career development opportunities for women particularly the senior grades,</li> <li>• Career development/progress, HSE tended to recruit rather than progressing internally.</li> </ul> <p>Skin disease reduction in the hairdressing and beauty industry had been removed from the priorities because it was considered to be stereotyping, although the work would continue.</p> <p>The disability scheme would focus on mental health issues including work related stress. Underpinning work had been done with the Disability Rights</p>

	Commission on developing an agreed statement on high-level principles.
<b>6.2</b>	<p>The Commission welcomed the reports, both the detail and the approach and the genuine consultation that had taken place. It had a wide-ranging discussion around the two schemes.</p> <p>It saw the health and safety community as predominately male, probably because of the concentration on safety and this was reflected in HSE, particularly at senior level and scientific grades. It wondered whether the Commission should do something on gender sensitivity. Research and analysis in terms of gender might be helpful, for instance most medical research was done on adult males. More could be done on what the focus and attention of the Commission should be. The framework seemed to be internally focused on HSE. The opportunities and implications for other partners to share in and reflect the approaches should be considered.</p> <p>There was strong support for the women at work agenda and a wish to see this reflected in the scheme by setting out in detail what was going to be done so that it could be an exemplar to others. Procurement was an example of where more detail could be provided.</p> <p>Other comments by the Commission included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the work skin disease reduction amongst hairdressers and beauticians should remain a priority.</li> <li>• Did the gender scheme consider the needs of the older woman and menopause? The TUC had issued a leaflet with good advice on this subject.</li> <li>• The disability definitions needed to be clear.</li> <li>• Concern over the five year ethnic minority figures</li> <li>• The food standards industry had produced a very good document “working safely in a Multicultural industry” which should be cascaded more.</li> <li>• The need to look at how we used communications –the language used often reflected the male dominance of the organisation</li> <li>• Having a table for other factors so that progress could be measured</li> <li>• Whether the low rates of self-declaration for disability were equivalent to similar organisations</li> <li>• The employment data indicated that in the bands where women were concentrated men were more likely to be promoted.</li> <li>• The need for overall diversity not just to meet the legal requirements</li> <li>• The need to monitor progress when all the schemes had been embedded</li> <li>• The value of a more detailed discussion of the issues including a diverse workforce, those in the working age workforce, incapacity benefit and return to work issues.</li> </ul>
<b>6.3</b>	<p>Concluding the Commission welcomed the report. It approved the schemes subject to any further points coming out of the consultation and the Chair would sign off the final documents.</p> <p>It agreed a seminar should be held so that it could discuss the issues in more detail and monitor the trends and check progress.</p>
	<b>Items 7 and 8 are closed. Fol Section 22</b>

