

Health and Safety Commission Paper		HSC/06/63	
Meeting Date:	25 July 2006	Open Gov. Status:	Fully Open
Type of Paper:	Below the line	Paper File Ref:	
Exemptions:	None		

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

A Paper by Colin Douglas

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Issue

1. This paper summarises progress since the May 2006 (2005/6 Quarter 4) update.

Timing

2. One of a series of quarterly updates.

Recommendation

3. HSC to note developments set out in this report.

Background

4. The Communication strategy agreed by HSC is built on objectives and milestones to:

- Improve health and safety by promoting the case for health and safety
- Present a clear picture of HSC/E's role and focus
- Build partnerships
- Put in place effective internal communications
- Establish a strategic communications approach
- Develop a communications culture

Promoting the case for health and safety and raising our profile

5. **Corporate Campaigns.** The Falls campaign ran from 22 May targeting maintenance workers working at low height in building or plant maintenance, and their supervisors. Advertising in the national press, national radio and online was accompanied by a programme of events and a celebrity led (Tommy Walsh of Garden Force) paid publicity campaign in national newspapers. HSE and Local Authority inspectors visited key employers during the period and with other stakeholders arranged over 150 events. More than 35,000 information packs were distributed (along with teabags, notepads etc) carrying the 'Take a Moment, not a Fall' message.

6. The website was the main focus of the campaign where 'Fallington' village presented a range of risks and guided visitors through the solutions. Feedback has been extremely positive and the website attracted 66,000 unique visitors who visited 79,000 times and viewed 155,000 pages over the 6 week period. Traffic to the Falls website is up 234% compared with the same period last year and half the campaign site visitors continued onto the HSE Falls web pages for further information.

7. Regional coverage has been extremely successful with imaginative photo shoots created by the Government News Network team to secure excellent coverage of HSE activity to promote the campaign. In the first week of the campaign GNN arranged over 23 interviews with local inspectors; press cuttings showed nearly every FOD Divisional Director reported quoting the campaign's topline messages.

8. **Media relations.** Media tracking data is not available for the whole quarter - we have reviewed and revised the contract to sharpen the analysis. April results show 41% favourable coverage, 5% unfavourable and 54% neutral – a significant upward trend in positive coverage (over a 24% favourable average in Jan – March 06). Regional and trade media deliver more favourable articles. Accidents and incidents were the leading issue with HSE 'working in partnership' as the leading positive message. The leading negative was 'HSE as an overzealous or bureaucratic organisation'.

9. A review of the Press Office has been completed and a new structure is being put in place by the end of July. A more proactive approach is being adopted and this is already beginning to deliver results, with a number of positive articles on stress in the national press and very strong regional press and broadcast coverage of the Falls campaign being two recent examples.

10. The HSE/EA Buncefield investigation remained high on the Press Office agenda as the independent Board launched their second and third progress reports - the latter revealed causation factors for the first time - and HSE issued findings from a HID inspection.

11. The fatal scaffolding collapse at Milton Keynes in April put the spotlight briefly on construction. BBC broadcast programmes 'Watchdog' and 'Countryfile' carried HSE messages on the safety of security barriers at car parks and the use of strychnine to control moles respectively. HSE's prosecution of BNGSL for the leak of radioactive liquor at the THORP plant attracted the whole gamut of national media interest (speculation of a forthcoming case, reporting of a decision to prosecute, first hearing at which BNSGSL plead guilty). Now that rail regulation has passed to ORR, HID and NSD will bear the brunt of media scrutiny for HSE's enforcement approach to high hazard industries (incidents, land use planning, prosecutions).

12. 'Elfandsafety' stories in the period were accompanied in the Daily Mail with a 'Health and Safety Killjoys' strap line – evidence of a campaign? HSE responded with letters to editors to make clear that HSE was not involved in decisions that were clearly a product of a risk averse approach. There was the usual mixed success with getting letters published but the benefits of posting them on the HSE web pages became apparent when a Sunday Times feature made reference to the many letters HSC/E officials had sent and sympathetically acknowledged the misinterpretation and exaggeration of the demands of health and safety (among other) regulation.

13. **HSE Online.** The 'What's New' section of HSE's Website helps people to keep in touch with news and events. 'What's New' relies on people remembering to visit the site – so we're trying to make it more convenient by 'pushing' relevant information to those who want it.

- *E-bulletins.* More than 10,000 people signed up for this free email service in the first month (June 06). So far, only 0.5% have withdrawn. Topic specific bulletins are now available – e.g. Stress, Statistics, Agriculture and (shortly) Construction. We expect

the sign up rate to rise following promotional work (July to October) and help from HSE's Infoline.

- *News Feeds*. This technique will enable people to automatically feed news from HSE's Website directly to another website or PC. It uses increasingly popular RSS (really simple syndication) techniques. A test version is now live – part of a redesign of HSE's 'What's New' pages.

14. This is a small start to something potentially important. So far, the database is confined to people who have signed up for a bulletin, joined an online community or taken part in a consultation. It could be used in many ways (internally and externally) – and for those who need guidance as well as those who want it.

15. **HSC communications**. The Commission were in collective action for open meetings, their Edinburgh Residential and a visit to Redgrave Court. Bill Callaghan chaired an Institute of Directors convention and addressed the Health Work and Wellbeing summit. Sandy Blair met officials, and addressed a Height Aware and an HSE/LA Partnership event. Margaret Burns attended the Public Servants Awards, UCEA health and safety event, and Royal Highland Show, with Danny Carrigan who also supported an asbestos consultation event and House of Lords lunch. Judith Donovan addressed the Institute of Directors, advised officials on communications issues and took part in the Challenge Panel. Liz Snape attended the HSENI dinner and conference; Sayeed Kahn spoke at the NHS Employers conference.

Presenting a clear picture of HSC/E's focus

16. Preparatory work is underway for the Performance Report, which will be published in November. As reported to the May Commission meeting (paper HSC/06/39), the report will be 24 pages, with very limited text. It will summarise highlights of the previous period and set out key themes and challenges for the future. A paper, setting out an outline of this report, will be presented to the September Commission meeting for comment.

Building Partnerships and Corporate Stakeholders

17. The second issue of the Westminster parliamentary newsletter appeared at the beginning of July and covered 'sensible risk', HSC and HSE activities in parliament, height aware campaign, recent prosecutions and updates on the Energy Review and Buncefield investigation.

18. We have been active in giving evidence to Commons Select Committees. On 17 May, Lord Hunt and Geoffrey Podger gave evidence to the Lords Science and Technology Committee on the Government's use of scientific evidence. On 24 May, Bill Callaghan and Geoffrey Podger gave evidence to the Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee on the work of HSE and HSC. On 13 June Dr Mike Weightman and Les Philpott gave evidence to the Commons Trade and Industry Committee on issues relating to nuclear new build.

19. Arrangements for the HSC's Autumn political party conferences are progressing well. Richard Lambert, the incoming Director General of the CBI has agreed to speak at the SMF/HSC fringe meeting at the Conservative Party Conference.

20. For the first time, the Commission held a summer reception for Parliamentarians at the House of Commons on 11 July 2006. This worthwhile event was hosted for us by Michael Clapham MP - Lord Hunt and Bill Callaghan also spoke. 12 MPs and 11 Peers attended the reception, with many more indicating that they would have liked to attend. HSE senior staff, were joined by Commissioners Judith Donovan, Margaret Burns, Hugh Robertson and John Spanswick. Plans are being finalised for this year's Commission participation in a series of fringe meetings at the political party conferences in the Autumn.

21. A planning group has been established, chaired by Danny Carrigan, to oversee arrangements for the Commission's 2006 Stakeholder Conference. The group has looked at the lessons learned from last year's successful conference, and is setting a very different framework for this year's event.

22. HSE activity to promote the case for sensible health and safety with corporate stakeholders is covered below and with other interest groups in HSC\06\46

Internal Communications

23. Work on the development and execution of major corporate campaigns and plans has continued during the period, with increased levels of internal communication activity around the launch of Electronic Data Records Management (EDRM) and key Human Resources based initiatives and processes.

24. Research findings from an analysis of HSE's internal audience has helped shape the internal communications strategy and will inform the scope of the review of the Pulse Panel (a staff sounding board) which is scheduled for this quarter. The analysis concluded that while our internal audience can be segmented by attitudes, these do not correlate with grade, discipline or location.

25. The team produced and analysed feedback from the spring round of exchange briefings that covered the HR Strategy and the Staff Attitude Survey, and produced the summer briefing on Diversity.

Commercial considerations

26. A revised edition of HSE's top-selling publication, 'Essentials of Health and Safety', was launched in May supported by a strong marketing and sales campaign. Early feedback and initial sales volumes indicate it is being well received.

27. The HSC Newsletter, following a decline in subscribers and readership, has now been revamped and relaunched as the bi-monthly Health and Safety Newsletter, of specific interest to small and medium sized businesses. The first edition was sent to subscribers in June and is being promoted. Feedback on look and content has been encouragingly supportive.

28. Our plan is to make priced information freely available through the HSE website from 1 April 2007, as HSC agreed. Officials are in discussion with government departments and external contractors to develop the new service in a way which meets the two objectives of making all information available *and* preserving capacity to meet required income targets.

Consultation

29. PEFD, Communications Delivery Service

Presentation

30. None

Costs and benefits

31. Our resources on communications are allocated to communications activity within programmes and core work aimed at changing awareness, understanding, attitudes and behaviours, and to building a sound platform for that activity by creating a positive public image for HSC/E, good relationships with stakeholders, and effective internal communications.

Financial implications for HSE

32. Spend on Communications Directorate payroll and admin costs, totalled £312,659 to end-June. Spend on publications, publicity, and promotional activity to end-March (excluding Communications Delivery Service staff costs) was £6,705k (£4,271k on information, publicity, and online services, £2,434k on print and publications).

33. Spend on publications, publicity, and promotional activity to end-June (excluding Communications Delivery Service staff costs but including costs of support from the Government News Network) was £2,490k (£2,198k on information, publicity, and online services, and £292k on print and publications).

34. Staff costs of Communications Delivery Service were £456K to end-June. Income generated to end-June was £957k (£923k sale of priced publications and £34k royalties and copyright fees).