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Health and Safety Commission

Minutes of a meeting of the Health and Safety Commission held on 6 November 2007 in the Globe Room, Rose Court, London

<p>Present:</p> <p>Judith Hackitt – Chair Sandy Blair Danny Carrigan Robin Dahlberg Judith Donovan Sayeed Khan John Longworth Hugh Robertson Liz Snape John Spanswick</p> <p>Apologies: Commissioners John Longworth, Judith Donovan and Danny Carrigan would be leaving the meeting between 12:00 and 13:15</p>	<p>Officials Present:</p> <p>Geoffrey Podger Jonathan Rees Justin McCracken Alex Brett-Holt Vivienne Dews Colin Douglas René McTaggart Lorraine Cassell Ann Marie Farmer</p> <p>Shelagh Molloy– Item 3 Mike Weightman & Len Creswell – Item 4 Hugh McNeal & Max Walker – Item 5 Gordon Macdonald, John Gould, Alan Clifford & Rachel Russell – Item 6</p>
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1	Agenda Item One: Welcome/Introduction
1.1	Judith Hackitt welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the small number of substantive items being discussed in open session at this months meeting which was unavoidable. Judith assured the Commission that this month was the exception and did not indicate a change of policy in terms of the openness of the Commission.
1.2	<u>Minutes of the meeting held on 09 October 2007 (HSC/M09/2007)</u> The minutes of the October meeting were agreed as drafted.
1.3	<p><u>Matters Arising</u> The Chair reported on the progress on the actions arising from the 9 October meeting, the highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Workplace Cancer – the Interim report on the burden of occupational cancer had been published on the HSE website and a news release had been issued on 31 October. b) Tackling Health and Safety in Agriculture – The Chair thanked Judith Donovan for agreeing to become the Commission champion for this sector and reported that Judith was scheduled to meet with lead officials in HSE on 14 November and would report back on progress to the Commission. The Chair also reported that work to seek further data to enable international comparisons and information on SHADS had been commissioned. c) Nuclear Sector – Robin Dahlberg had agreed to work with NuSAC on their structure and remit. d) Construction Sector – Sandy Blair had discussed the role of the local authorities with lead officials and work to take account of these discussions was being taken forward by HSE. e) Merger 2008 – The role of the advisory committees will now be revisited as

	<p>part of the merger exercise and the Commission are to be advised on future structures.</p> <p>f) Simplification Plan 2007 – As requested by the Commission the publicising of the successes of HSC/E in reducing regulatory burden is being built in to the sensible risk communications plan.</p> <p>g)</p>
1.4	<p><u>Urgent Business</u></p> <p>There were no urgent business items.</p>
2	Chief Executive's Report
2.1	<p>Geoffrey Podger highlighted the following issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Commission was informed that since the written report was finalised there had been a number of serious incidents (the warehouse fire at Atherstone on Stour, which had resulted in the deaths of four fire fighters; a fatality to a miner at the Wellbeck colliery; and the fire at the Coryton refinery). The Commission were informed that the HSE were working with the relevant authorities on all these incidents. b. The Annual Statistics had been launched on 1 November and had been reasonably well received considering the mixed results of this years figures. c. The HSC/loD Guidance on director leadership had been launched successfully on 29 October 07 and initial feedback was favourable. d. The Commission was also informed that the Government is carrying out a consultation exercise on the role of the Attorney General. HSE would be responding.
2.2	<p>The Commission thanked Geoffrey for his report and made the following comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Commission was concerned that there had been another five fatalities in the agriculture sector in the last month and reiterated their view that proportionate action needs to be taken to tackle the health and safety performance of this sector. b. The Commission were assured that the lessons learnt from Buncefield and from Coryton would be used, as was already the case with Buncefield, to improve the performance of the petro-chemical industry. The Commission asked to be kept informed of the key findings of the investigation at Coryton. c. The Commission noted the second fatality at the Heathrow Terminal 5 site construction site and noted that while any fatality is extremely regrettable, BAA have made significant efforts to achieve a good safety record at that site. The Commission informed the HSE that anecdotal feedback on this incident had indicated that there was concern that HSE were not on site more quickly following the incident (i.e. there is an expectation that HSE should arrive with the emergency services). The Commission was assured that if it was critical to the investigation that an inspector arrived at the same time as the emergency services then great effort is made to do so. d. The Commission welcomed the opportunity to note the outcome COMAH charging consultation in December.
ACTION	Justin McCracken to report back on the outcome of the investigation into the fire at Coryton.
3	Agenda Item Three: Future Positioning and Communications Update (HSC/07/58)
3.1	<p>Colin Douglas introduced the paper which covered progress in delivering the current strategy and set out the challenges for the future. His introduction made the following key points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The current Corporate Communications Strategy was focused on six themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the case for sensible health and safety

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a clear picture of HSC/E's role • Building partnerships • Effective internal communications • Develop strong and dynamic strategic communications approach • Develop a communications culture <p>b. Progress to date had been mixed. HSE continues to receive largely positive or neutral coverage from national media. Trade and regional media coverage is more positive. However, there is a significant section of the national media who attack health and safety and HSC/E as part of the 'nanny state'.</p> <p>c. A significant challenge remains in getting the media to consistently recognize and accept that the true nature of health and safety - i.e. that the sensible management of health and safety is about preventing serious work related injuries and ill-health and that there is still much work to be done in this area. The Chair's actions to try to achieve this were welcomed.</p> <p>d. The Commission was informed of the other challenges faced and the action to address them which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from audience groups that our publications were too technical and unattractive. HSE has made a conscious effort to produce short, simple and visually accessible information. These changes have largely been welcomed by stakeholders. • The website was being redesigned to improve accessibility of information. Visits to the site have increased to 1.5m visits a month. • Research into the relationship with MPs has shown constant increases in how HSE is rated in terms of effectiveness - rising from 29% in January 2004 to 55% at the end of 2006. However, in July 2007, this dipped to 42% - perceived risk aversion has always been a factor in how we are perceived with this audience. • Internal communications remain a major challenge. Whilst most of the individual channels are popular overall satisfaction remains poor at 37%. • Among key stakeholders HSE is trusted, seen to be committed to partnership working and to have good and improving communications. <p>e. The Commission was asked for a steer on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media and public positioning and the role of the Chair and the Commission. • The proposed strategic aims. • The positioning of HSC/E and health and safety more generally. • Continued suitability of the key messages.
3.2	<p>The Commission welcomed the opportunity to influence the future communications strategy and made the following points in response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Commission noted the role that the Government News Network (GNN) could play and suggested that the scope for making better use of that resource needs to be explored. b. The Commission noted the evidence base for the statement that "Each week it [health and safety] prevents five deaths and 300 serious injuries, and every day it avoids 500 cases of ill health". The basis for this would be circulated. c. The Commission noted that a portfolio had previously been produced on the role of the Commission as ambassadors – the Commission agreed that this portfolio should be used rather than 're-invented'. d. The Commission agreed that the use of 'third party advocates' needed to be built into the strategic thinking on communication. e. The Commission acknowledged the need for a certain level of caution by the HSE's press office but agreed the need for an increase in the proactive work they undertake. The Commission also agreed that in some cases a less cautious approach to responding to the media would be beneficial.

	<p>f. The Commission agreed the need to distinguish between protecting the HSC/E, as the authoritative body on health and safety, and defending the health and safety system more generally. In doing this the Commission agreed that it is important to not only rebut false stories but also be more robust in stating the facts and benefits of health and safety.</p>
3.3	<p>The Chair concluded the discussions by summarising that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A more fundamental review of the Communications strategy was needed that links into the vision of where HSC/E will be in 10 years time. b. In developing the revised strategy it is important to take the views of key stakeholders and the media to identify what they want from HSE to enable them to support the health and safety system and tackle unnecessary risk aversion. c. The role of third parties, and GNN, was vital to delivering the right messages to the right people; and d. The Commission as a whole should be playing a significant role in communications.
Action	Communications Directorate to draft the strategy to take account of the points raised and present it to the Commission in the new year.
Action	Communications Directorate to circulate the basis for the statement that: “Each week it [health and safety] prevents 5 deaths and 300 serious injuries, and every day it avoids 500 cases of ill health”.
4	Agenda Item Four: Progress on Generic Design Assessment (GDA) of New Nuclear Reactors (HSC/07/68)
4.1	<p>Mike Weightman introduced the paper which updated the Commission and made the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In July, following recommendations from DBERR, four designs had been accepted by the HSE and the Environment Agency for Generic Design Assessment (GDA). Work was broadly on track against the HSE’s timetable. To undertake the work, at the beginning of July, Nuclear Directorate (ND) had set up a GDA division, a HSE programme board had been established and a joint programme office was set up in liaison with the Environment Agency (EA). In August the first, preparatory, GDA step was completed for all of the designs and an IAEA consultancy contract was agreed to provide input to HSE’s next assessment step (Step 2). This step will involve inspection of design vendors’ systems for producing safety cases. b. In September a public involvement process was launched and dedicated HSE and EA web-pages have been set up. Each design vendor also announced the start of GDA via national press adverts and placed design information onto their company websites. c. HSE is working with stakeholders nationally and internationally throughout this process. d. The next steps include the continued more detailed assessment of safety cases and further stakeholder interactions. e. If necessary, before the start of Step 3, it is expected that the Government will invoke a ‘prioritisation process’ to reduce the four designs to three. f. HSE agreed to report back to the Commission in April 2008 following completion of step 2. g. The Commission was informed that a small number of additional staff will transfer to the GDA division to complete GDA step 2 and but that a more significant build up of resources would be needed for step 3 and beyond. This makes the need to recruitment more critical to the delivery of this work

	<p>to the agreed timescales.</p> <p>h. The Commission was also informed that the Government plan an announcement around the end of the year on the Energy review at which point the Commission would be provided with a 'MISC' paper.</p>
4.2	<p>The Commission thanked Mike for his presentation made the following comments:</p> <p>a. The Commission acknowledged the importance of securing sufficient resources to ensure that right people were in post at the right time to deliver this challenging workload.</p> <p>b. The Commission recognised the political sensitivities around the expansion of the UK nuclear programme and the need to monitor HSE/C's role.</p> <p>c. The Commission welcomed the approach being taken to deliver the GDA work, especially its openness and transparency.</p>
Action	Mike Weightman to produce a MISC paper when the Government announcement on the Energy Review is made at the end of the year.
Action	Mike Weightman to return to the Commission at the end of Step two (April 2008) and to keep the Commission informed on the recruitment situation.
	CLOSED SESSION
5	Agenda Item Five: Update: BRE Review of the Health and Safety Regulatory Regime (HSC/07/78) (Closed under section 35 of FoI Formulation of Government policy)
5.1	This section of the minutes is closed.
6	Agenda Item Six: Creating a Sustainable Organisation: Proposal for a Single HQ (HSC/07/74) (Closed under section 36 of FoI Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs)
6.1	This section of the minutes is closed.
7	The Monthly Finance Report and Staffing figures (Closed under section 35 of FoI Formulation of Government policy)
7.1	This section of the minutes is closed.
8	The draft agenda for 11 December Closed under section 22 Information for future publication.
8.1	This section of the minutes is closed.
	Below The Line Items
9	Consultation document on amendments to the regulations on the manufacture and storage of explosives (HSC/07/75)
9.1	The Commission endorsed the publication of the Consultation Document.

10	'Managing Radioactive Waste Safely – A Framework for implementing geological disposal' – DEFRA Consultation Document (HSC/07/77)
10.1	The Commission agreed the response to DEFRA and noted the paper.