

## Health and Safety Executive Board Minutes

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Exemptions:	None		

### HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

#### HSE Board

Minutes of meeting of HSE Board held on Wednesday 8 January 2003, in the Globe Room, Rose Court

#### Present

Sandra Caldwell  
Paul Davies  
Vivienne Dews  
Adrian Ellis  
Robert Humm  
Justin McCracken  
Alan Osborne  
Nick Starling  
Kate Timms  
Timothy Walker  
Laurence Williams  
Chris Willby  
Sian Lewis

#### Also attending

Items 3 and 4 – John Ives  
Item 5 – Phil Scott  
Tony Hetherington

Mark Dempsey - Secretariat  
Shameen Sheikh - Secretariat  
Apologies – Peter Graham

#### **1 Draft minutes of the HSE Board meeting held on 4 December 2002**

1.1 The minutes were agreed, noting that Adrian Ellis needed to be added to the list of attendees, including open government status.

#### **2 Health and Safety in HSE. Report by Justin McCracken**

2.1 At the last Board meeting it had been noted that separate management arrangements were needed for policy staff, whose jobs differed from those of operational inspectors. To avoid duplication, this might apply to all office-based staff, including, for example, RPD and the solicitors.

**Action Justin McCracken to raise with the corporate Health & Safety Committee to suggest a review of the management architecture to reduce duplication of effort.**

### **3 Health and Safety Performance and Forward Plan**

3.1 John Ives explained that the Board was invited to review these documents given that there was an intention to make them publicly available. A good deal had been achieved in the last 6 months, although the statistics were open to a number of interpretations. Reporting levels had risen and there was an increased willingness to report cases of stress through the incident reporting system.

3.2 DSE was a cause for concern, in some cases because the use of equipment aggravated existing injuries. New approaches to user training were being piloted and support had been made available for DSE assessors.

3.3 The corporate H&S plan for the next year had been improved to make it less prescriptive and allow more flexibility, based on corporate priorities and D/D risk assessments.

3.4 In discussion, the following points were made:

- i The High Level Forum was to be rejuvenated and these papers could be offered as an exemplary approach which other departments and agencies might draw upon to generate ideas and priorities;
- ii The Board needed to consider whether it needed to carry out its own stress risk assessment;
- iii Record keeping in terms of risk assessments and the identification of stressors was important to support any defence in the event of litigation;
- iv Reported cases of verbal abuse needed to be handled with care. They did not always lead to ill health and the number might not be reliable.

3.5 The Board **agreed** that the paper should be published with an explanatory note to provide the context for the verbal abuse cases

**Action John Ives and Justin McCracken to review the handling for future reports of verbal abuse.**

**Action Justin McCracken to raise the issue of reporting on targets and outcomes with the corporate H&S Committee, and to consider the arrangements for how Board members could carry out a stress risk assessment on Board activities.**

### **4 Benchmarking Health and Safety Management**

- 4.1 John Ives described the exercise to benchmark HSE's performance against a similar organisation using the ministerial checklist. The Highways Agency (HA) had agreed to take part. HA formed part of HSE's sponsor department when the exercise had started and was experienced in benchmarking. The report used a "traffic light" approach to highlight areas where performance was satisfactory or where further attention was needed.
- 4.2 A key issue for HSE was the management of contractors, including those providing temporary staff. HA's management of contractors was a strong point. Those areas where HSE's results were "amber" had tended to indicate the need for greater clarity and consistency rather than fundamental weaknesses.
- 4.3 The Board noted the pilot in the FOD London area on lone working and that the work would be adopted in other areas if the evaluation demonstrated that it would lead to improvements. The management of contractors and management of sickness absence needed further attention.

**Action The areas for attention were addressed in the forward action plan.**

**Action The Board agreed to the publication of the report, subject to the agreement of HA, in order to encourage this approach and lead by example.**

## **5 Sector Working in HSE**

- 5.1 Phil Scott and Tony Hetherington explained that the papers on this issue represented, at this stage, a summary of emerging proposals. There were complex issues to address and a wide range of views to be taken into account. Alongside the emerging proposals, key issues for the Board to consider were the basis of further consultation within HSE and, subsequently, how to communicate the outcomes with external stakeholders.
- 5.2 In discussion, the Board noted the need to recognise the significant contribution that sectors had made. The new arrangements needed to deal with the new economy and be at the heart of the policy/operational interface. PEFD needed to be involved in future discussions given the resource issues; and clear objectives and outcomes were needed if we were to be able to measure effectiveness. The proposals needed to be ambitious; to link outputs to resources; and to be relevant to HSC/E's priorities, while noting the need to retain expertise in some areas such as manufacturing.
- 5.3 Good practice in joint working occurs but is not applied consistently. Relations between OSD and SPD and between the Agriculture Sector and its policy counterparts were quoted as examples of effective working together. A model of how a revised Sector would work should be developed based upon the proposed Public Services Sector.

5.4 **The Board agreed:**

- i That more was needed on the strategic objectives of sectors - the “what” as much as the “how”;
- ii That the public services sector should be developed in line with the new approach to demonstrate what we were trying to achieve;
- iii That paragraph 48 of the paper provided a sound basis for ensuring the involvement of science and technology, operations and policy input;
- iv That, in the light of these comments, internal consultation should take place on the basis of paragraphs 8, 35, 38, 47 and 48, and refer to the Board’s overall endorsement of the proposed arrangements;
- v That communication with external stakeholders should take place at a later stage and be based on a clear explanation of where HSE wanted to get to and what it was seeking to achieve.

**Action Phil Scott and Tony Hetherington would launch the internal consultation on this basis, and report back in March with further proposals for the work of sectors and external communications.**

**6 Managing Ministerial and Commission Business and Media Events**

6.1 Mark Dempsey and Sian Lewis described new arrangements for managing the flow of business with DWP ministers. They took a close interest in health and safety issues and new arrangements for dealing with submissions had been agreed at HSE’s instigation. It was vital for HSE’s reputation and credibility that the new arrangements worked well. Board members were invited to take an active interest in contributing to a new style forward look; disseminating guidance notes on Nick Brown’s preferred method of working; and ensuring that submissions covered the relevant issues and allowed sufficient time for ministerial consideration.

6.2 Presentational issues were also important. In some cases, press office was not consulted adequately on handling and presentational issues. As a general rule, they needed to see all submissions and HSC papers, preferably at the drafting stage.

6.3 The Board agreed that it was important to ensure that business was handled in line with ministerial preferences and that presentational issues were properly considered. It was noted that similar arrangement for the direct submission of submissions to DfT and DTI ministers should be pursued.

**Action a) Board members to ensure that contributions to future forward looks, including handling arrangements, are provided in a timely way and that press office is consulted on all submissions; b) Secretariat to circulate guidance notes attached to the paper.**

