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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

The HSE Board

Communications: update and planned changes

A Paper by Colin Douglas

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Issue

1. This paper gives an update on progress in developing the HSE's Communications function since the arrival of the Director of Communications and sets out some changes in the pipeline.

Timing

2. To go to the Board meeting of 4 February 2004.

Recommendation

3. The Board is recommended to:
 - i. Note the approach to the Strategy Roadshows, and give support.
 - ii. Note progress in developing the Communications Partners Network.
 - iii. Confirm the disbanding of the Communications Steering Group.
 - iv. Note the various communication reviews to be conducted over the coming months.
 - v. Note that a new communications planning process will be put in place and approve the approach whereby this planning focuses principally at the level of strategic programmes.
 - vi. Approve the continuation of the publications moratorium to the end of the financial year.

- vii. Approve the approach to communicating Board decisions as outlined below.

Background

4. This paper provides an update, and recommendations where appropriate, on the following items:
 - i. Strategy Roadshows
 - ii. The establishment of the Communications Partners Network
 - iii. Communications Steering Group
 - iv. Communication Reviews of HSE to be undertaken over the coming months
 - v. Communications planning process
 - vi. Publications Moratorium
 - vii. Communicating Board decisions

Argument

Strategy Roadshows

5. Over the course of March, we intend to roll out a series of events across the country which will involve the Chair and Director General presenting the HSC Strategy to HSE staff. The aim of the roadshows is to reinforce the commitment of the Commission and Executive to delivering our new and ambitious strategy, and to encourage staff to engage in working out what contributions they and their team will make to achieving the strategy's objective.
6. The support of the Board will be required in encouraging staff to attend these roadshows. It will be important for the Board to be well represented at these events in order to demonstrate commitment to the strategy and to translate strategic objectives into new activity on the ground to engage staff interest.

Communication Partners Network

7. During January, two induction events were held for the new Communication Partners. The purpose was to set out the broad principles of strategic communications and define the roles they would play in its development. We received positive feedback about these events from those attending – although there is some trepidation on their parts about the scale of the challenge they are taking on and the degree to which they will receive the support of the Board and line managers in promoting the necessary changes in behaviour and having the necessary time available. The responsibilities of Partners are as follows:
 - i. Promote a communications culture
 - ii. Contribute to development of Communications Strategy
 - iii. Work with Communications Directorate and D/D management teams to develop Communication Plans for your D/Ds (needs to link in with Programme Communication Plans)
 - iv. Facilitate the implementation of Communication Plans

- v. Be a source of advice, within D/D, on how to access communications support
- vi. Be a conduit for feeding corporate communications information to D/D, and key D/D info to Communications Directorate & Communications Network
- vii. Contribute to the evaluation of communication activities'

The effectiveness of the network will be reviewed at an early date. A list of partners is at Appendix 1.

Communications Steering Group

8. The Communications Steering Group has been responsible for establishing the publicity and publications priorities based on the HSC/E business plan, deciding where HSE should put its efforts on publicity and publications and advising on the overall level of publicity and publications spend. It has also been responsible for agreeing exemptions from the publications moratorium. It was always envisaged that these responsibilities would naturally fall to the new Director of Communications. Therefore, with the Director of Communications post now in place, it is proposed to disband the Communications Steering Group.

Communication Reviews

9. A number of reviews have been commissioned to look at various aspects of HSE's communications. These reviews will supplement the DIAS Review to give a detailed picture of the shape of our communications and will make recommendations for improvements. The reviews will cover:
- The HSE/C visual brand: currently, we have no standard look and feel to promotional and information materials. The intention of this review is to develop standard design templates to create a consistent image for publicity and information material – leaflets, powerpoint presentations, posters, letterheads, etc. This will not look at the logo design, but will set out guidelines for how the logo should be used.
 - Internal communications: This will map the range of internal communication channels in use across the HSE, and will assess the strengths and weaknesses of these various channels. The end output will be proposals for improving internal communication systems.
 - Media Relations: This will look at the effectiveness of our proactive and reactive media relations activities, our media spokespeople, and how well we measure media impact. It will also provide some benchmarking against other organisations.
10. The brand and internal communications reviews will both be conducted by Radical. The review of media relations will be conducted by a PR consultancy with specialist strength in providing media relations services and advice. A number of consultancies have been invited to tender for this work and a decision on who to award the contract to will be made in the first week in February.
11. In order to ensure that the review teams are able to develop a good picture of the workings of HSE and our communication activities, it will be important that they have access to a range of staff – including senior colleagues and relevant colleagues in

DIAS. We will develop a proposed schedule of meetings that ensures effective co-ordination between these reviews.

Communications Planning

12. Once the Communications Strategy has been finalised (it is on the agenda of this meeting, and is scheduled to go to the next meeting of the Commission), we will move into detailed planning of the communications work programme for the next financial year. The communications work programme will need to: support delivery of the Communications Strategy and the needs of our various strategic programmes and business operations. It will need to ensure that we prioritise more effectively than we have done in the past. The intention is to finalise the communications work programme by mid March – but we will need to have developed a broad picture of cost by mid February in order to feed into the financial planning process. This planning process will replace the invitation for bids which DIAS have put out in previous years.
13. It is envisaged that the planning process will begin, immediately after agreement of the Communications Strategy, with the development of a national communications plan, followed immediately by communication plans for the strategic programmes. Directorate plans would only be required to cover those needs that have not already been addressed in the programme plans. We are developing, with Communication Partners, the communications planning templates to be used in this process.
14. Final decisions on priorities and resource allocations for the overall plan will need to rest with the Communications Director. Additional bids for support which arise during the year will need to be sent via Communications Partners to the Communications Directorate to consider whether additional resource is available to meet new business needs.

Publication Moratorium

15. The publications moratorium has had limited success. Indeed, compared to its impact it has provoked a disproportionate degree of anxiety across the organisation. It is proposed that the moratorium continues until the end of March, with the Director of Communications making decision on exemptions on the basis of business and strategic need. From the beginning of the new financial year, it is proposed that the moratorium be replaced with a numerical cap on the number of leaflets, booklets and other publications to be produced – a number to be determined by the communication planning process that follows the communications strategy, and likely to be significantly less than the current year. We need to refocus our communication effort into a broader range of channels and reduce our dependency on leaflets, booklets, and other publications.
16. Board members will need to be aware that these controls will free up Directorate/Division resources which have traditionally been devoted to authoring and revising our publications. Plans will need to be put in place, once the communications plan is agreed, to divert the resource to our business priorities.

Communicating Board decisions

17. At last month's Board meeting we discussed the need to agree an approach to communicating Board decisions to staff. It is proposed that in the future we adopt the following approach:

- i. The Board paper authors, along with relevant Board Directors, should consider the internal and external communication needs and risks whilst drafting the paper. Relevant Communication Partners should be kept informed. The section on "Presentation" is the appropriate part of the paper to outline the communication considerations.
- ii. Where the paper has significant communication implications, the Communications Directorate (Strategic Communications Team and Press Office) should be consulted in advance of the Board meeting about communication handling.
- iii. During Board meetings, we should discuss and agree key messages to staff and, where appropriate, external audiences after each item. At the end of the meeting, we should consider which items on the agenda to be prioritised for communicating.
- iv. It is proposed to put a new cascade briefing system in place once the Internal Communications Team has been formed. Board decisions would provide an important source for the content of the cascade briefings.
- v. A note should be sent, from Director General, to SCS following each Board, summarising the decisions made and key messages. This would also go onto the Intranet. It would be drafted by the Internal Communications team in liaison with the relevant report authors.

Consultation

18. DIAS and Communication Partners

Presentation

19. See above

Costs and Benefits

20. Decisions to invest in a new communications capacity, planning system and set of activities are consistent with HSC/E's new strategic objective to make communications an intervention in its own right.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

21. The financial resources available to the new Directorate in 2003-4 and 2004-5 are currently under discussion. The resource required from Communications partners remains uncertain until the communications programme is developed in more detail and will vary in different parts of HSE. Partners themselves have estimated the likely resource as 10 - 50% of their time.

Environmental Implications

22. N/a

Other Implications

23. N/a

Action

24.

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