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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

The HSE Board

A new style Annual Report for 2005/06

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Cleared by Vic Coleman on 26 October 2005

Issue

1. Proposals for a new look Health and Safety Commission Annual Report for 2005/6

Timing

2. The proposed process and timetable for producing next year's Annual Report is at Annex One. Agreement to these proposals is required soon in order to introduce the revised arrangements in time.

Recommendation

- 3 That the Board:
 - agrees these proposals for a new style annual report;
 - agrees the outline structure in annex two;
 - supports the development of this work by helping to identify key achievements for inclusion in the report; and
 - reinforces the message that less detail and a shorter report will mean that the new style Report cannot include details of all our activities.

Background

4 The Health and Safety at Work Etc Act 1974 (HSWA) requires that the HSC report to the Secretary of State on the performance of its functions (principally to propose new laws, to conduct research, to provide information and advice and to operate statutory functions). In order to satisfy Treasury and HSWA requirements, it reports on these functions and the accounts and must include an Operating and Financial Review (OFR). However within these constraints there is also flexibility in the way the document is presented.

5 The recent Central Office of Information (COI) review of HSE publications commissioned by Communications Directorate described the Annual Report for 2003/04

as 'surprisingly readable' and 'engaging'. However, the review also said it was 'extremely long' and needing to 'appear much more modern and up to date'. Although the latest Annual Report for 2004/05 was significantly reduced in size and has much improved presentation, we believe that more can be done to reduce its size further and update its appearance. Lord Hunt commented on the size of the document and the Chair has indicated that he would support a shorter and more modern document.

Argument

6 Traditionally the HSC Annual Report has been a comprehensive document of record and has been used as the vehicle to make publicly available a great deal of factual material. The document has covered virtually all HSE activity and has contained much detail and process information. However, interest in the document is relatively low with only around 300 copies of the 2004/5 document having been requested.

7 We propose that the Annual Report should be developed as a more effective communications tool to target our key audiences including, for instance, our 30 top stakeholders, MPs and some Ministers, Commissioners and their constituencies. Such a document would need to be much shorter, snappier and better illustrated and would focus on the top achievements during the year. Publication of the Report in June, a month before the Parliamentary recess, provides opportunities to target MPs and certain Ministers. To optimise the launch of the document a communications strategy will be developed. We will need to be clear about who our audiences are this for this new style document and how we can develop the document to deliver our messages effectively.

8 To achieve these changes it will be necessary to structure and produce the report differently. Previously, sections of the report have been commissioned in draft from various departments across HSE. This has led to largely process based material of varying quality, level of detail, and consistency. Producing a coherent and readable report from this has been a highly challenging task for Strategic Planning Unit and it has been difficult to resist demands from some for too much detail to be included.

9 A proposed outline structure of the report is set out in annex two. The emphasis would be to show HSE as an organisation concentrating on delivery rather than process. We would aim for a much shorter document than the present 108 pages (perhaps half). The COI's Annual Report for 2004/5 is 60 pages long and HSL's is 45 pages. In both cases, an innovative approach has been taken to the content and presentation and the text is interspersed with illustrations. Instead of comprehensive detail on HSE's structure, processes and organisational arrangements, we propose that the bulk of the report focuses on major achievements during the year. Case studies and examples of delivery against the Business Plan could be presented under themes such as:

- Progress with targets
- Enforcement
- Communications as an intervention strategy
- Progress with strategy etc

10 If we are to adopt this approach it will be necessary for HSE and HSC to commit to a shorter, less comprehensive document and accept that much less detail will be included than previously. It may be difficult for some in HSE to accept that their work,

though important, will not be included in this new style report and this will need to be understood. As we want to continue to be seen as a transparent organisation, we will need to consider how the information previously included can continue to be made available to those interested. Making it available on the Internet is one possibility or it could be made available on demand under Freedom of Information legislation.

11 We recognise that it will be necessary to liaise with contributors and discuss these proposals with Commissioners and obtain their support. We aim to do this during November and December with a below-the-line paper including a skeleton report to the January Commission meeting for agreement. If HSC agree the proposals, SPU will proceed with developing the new style report aiming to circulate a draft to Board members for comment and agreement at the end of February/beginning of March 2006.

12 We have set up a steering group to develop these proposals, guide the production of next year's Report and consider options for future years. The Steering Group comprises, Shelagh Molloy/Alf Williams (Communications Directorate and CDS), Peter Buckley (Strategy Division), Neal Stone (the Commission), Patricia Williams and Mark Reyland (Finance Unit). The Steering group propose to engage the services of a copywriter at an early stage to ensure a sharp and consistent presentation of text throughout.

Consultation

12 The steering group (see paragraph 12) has agreed this paper and the proposals.

Presentation

13 A new style Annual Report along these lines should be more interesting and effective in delivering the key message that HSE is an organisation that is serious about delivery.

Costs and Benefits

14 Case studies and examples of what has been achieved could be influential in having a positive impact on some of our stakeholders. A sharper, more focused approach to the Annual Report should make the whole process less resource intensive at all levels and more than offset the cost of a copywriter. Moreover, illustrative case studies and examples will provide a route map for stakeholders to take forward other positive interventions.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

15 The Annual Report is now a free publication. These proposals are unlikely to involve any significant increase in resource for HSE contributors over that already required for a more traditional format Report and there may be some saving. For the first year of the report there is likely to be increased resource input from SPU to develop the new structure. The services of a copywriter – to be provided by CDS – will also be an additional resource.

Environmental Implications

16 Less paper.

Other Implications

17 None

Action

18 The process and timetable is set out in annex one.

Contact

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Suggested outline structure for Annual Report 2005/6

Forewords

Introduction setting the context

One year in summary

Themed examples (to be developed by the steering group and agreed by senior management)

For instance case studies and examples under the following themes:

- Progress with Ministerial targets
- Enforcement
- Communications as an intervention
- Progress with the strategy
- Workforce/HSE employees
- Efficiency

Annexes setting out any detail that is still considered necessary

The Annual Accounts of HSC and HSE

The Operating and financial review – which will include