

Meeting Date:	1 August 2007	FOI Status:	Fully Open
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Exemptions:	None		

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the HSE Board meeting held on Wednesday 1st August, Hope Room, Rose Court, London

Present

Geoffrey Podger	Jonathan Rees	Justin McCracken	Alex Brett-Holt
Eddie Morland	Colin Douglas	Giles Denham	Vivienne Dews
Patrick McDonald	Kevin Myers	Mike Weightman	

Apologies

Sandra Caldwell and Jane Willis

Also attending

Steve Dennis, Peter Buckley (all items), Bill Gunnyeon (Items 2 & 3) Gaynor Coldrick (for items 2 – 5), Dave Thomas (Item 2), Peter Brown and Tim Beaumont (Item 7).

Minutes René McTaggart.

1 Minutes of the HSE Board held on 6th June and the Action Points

1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as drafted.

2 Agenda item 2 – Monthly Finance and Staffing update – June out-turn (Paper B/07/77– Closed)

2.1 This section of the minutes is closed.

3 Agenda item 3 - Communications Budget – update on first quarter 2007/08 and implications for the remainder of the year (Paper No B/07/78)

3.1 Colin Douglas introduced the item and asked the Board to:

- a. Provide Communications Directorate with proposals to ensure the flexibility in the Communication budget is put to best use;
- b. Note that there is £2.5m un-allocated funds available as a number of major projects are now being delivered in a more targeted way at much reduced cost;
- c. Note the apparent reticence of programme teams to commit to spending communications budgets until late in the year;
- d. Provide a steer on the preferred options outlined in the paper (paras 10-24) so that measures can be put in place to ensure the money is deployed effectively this financial year;
- e. Note that the spending options outlined in the paper would each make a positive contribution to the delivery of HSE's objectives.

3.2 The Board thanked Colin for the paper and made the following comments in response:

- a. The Board noted that the flexibility offered by the under-spend available is due to the role Communications Directorate played in challenging assumptions made in the originally planned activity;

- b. The Board agreed there was a good business case for undertaking an additional campaign in the construction sector but also agreed that any activity would need:
 - the support of UCATT and other key stakeholders;
 - complement the views of the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the delivery of improved health and safety in the construction sector;
 - to work within a wider, cross-sector, topic specific campaign if that were the chosen route
- c. The Board agreed to a new topic specific campaign, to the continuation of current planned communications projects, and more small scale tactical activity;
- d. The Board agreed its preferred option for a national advertising campaign was a cross-sector, topic specific campaign focusing on a key area. The Board agreed that reducing slips, trips and falls from height would make a significant contribution to meeting our objectives as they account for a significant portion of major accidents in the workplace;
- e. The Board agreed that as slips, trips and falls were also significant problems in the construction sector that, subject to the caveats above, a construction specific strand should be included in the communication campaign. The advertising campaign should be run in Q4;
- f. The Board also agreed to seek opportunities to bring forward work on construction specific activity planned for later in the year;
- g. The Board also agreed that the development of any proposals will need to be done in conjunction with the HSC.

Action Point 73

Colin Douglas/Secretariat to arrange discussion with the HSC once the proposals have been sufficiently developed.

- 4** **Agenda Item 4 – HSE 2007 Pay Settlement - Annual Review Mechanism (Paper B/07/86 – Closed)**
- 4.1 This section of the minutes is closed.
- 5** **Agenda Item 5 – Performance and Risk Management report – 1st Quarter 2007/08 (paper no B/07/79 - Closed)**
- 5.1 This section of the minutes is closed.
- 6** **Agenda Item 6 – Legal Risk Register (Paper No B/07/80 – Closed)**
- 6.1 This section of the minutes is closed.
- 7** **Report on health and safety issues – Stress (paper no B/07/82)**
- 7.1 Peter Brown and Tim Beaumont provided the Board with an update on the work of HSE to tackle stress in the workplace and in HSE in particular. Peter’s presentation included the following points:
 - a. Stress is a major cause of days lost and ill health. HSE’s approach is about working closely with stakeholders and employers to address the main causes of stress at work;
 - b. The approach aims to providing pragmatic steps (the stress management standards) to reduce the risk of stress making people ill – it is not about eliminating stress;
 - c. The indicators are that the number of new cases of stress are starting to reduce now that employers are taking action;

- d. The Board were informed that within HSE some 20% of sickness absence is attributable to stress. There are some stress hot-spots but equally there are areas with very few cases of stress recorded;
- e. The corporate plan includes policies to address stress which are in the process of being bedded in – we are yet to realise the benefits across the organisation;
- f. The stress management standards would be a helpful tool in delivering organisational change such as the HWWW programme;
- g. It was suggested that stress action plans for HSE should be reviewed along with the HSE's approach to managing sickness absence.

7.2 The Board thanked Peter for his clear presentation and made the following remarks in response:

- a. The Board acknowledged that there is a risk that a genuine attempt to help staff may be abused by some therefore the language used in describing the HSE's approach needs to be carefully chosen;
- b. The Board agreed to ensure that the language used when addressing stress is appropriate – for example it would be inappropriate to indicate that stress can be eliminated or that any task that may cause stress should not be undertaken;
- c. The Board agreed the development of better guidance and support for line managers dealing with staff made ill by stress;
- d. The Board acknowledged that stress in the workplace could actually relate to non-work related issues. That said, the Board also noted that regardless of the cause it inevitably effects staff performance/their attendance at work
- e. The Board welcomed the opportunity to receive an update in Spring 2008.

7.3 Geoffrey Podger concluded the discussions by welcoming and supporting the measures being taken to address stress. Geoffrey commended Peter and Tim and their teams for the sensible approach outlined in the paper and asked Board members to consider how best they can manage stress in their part of the organisation.

Action Point 77 RPD/Peter Brown to develop improved support mechanisms for managers on managing staff suffering from ill health related to stress.

Action Point 78 Board members to consider how best they can manage stress in their part of the organisation alongside approaches to manage sickness absence and change.

8 Proposed Merger with Gang-masters Licensing Authority (paper no B/07/83 – Closed)

8.1 This section of the minutes is closed.

9 Agenda Item 9 – Draft Agenda for the September 07 meeting

9.1 The Board agreed the agenda subject to the following changes:

- a. Item 3 to be reworded to more accurately reflect the content of the paper;
- b. Amend the time allocations to allow more time to discuss key agenda items.

10 Any Other Business

Staff Attitude Survey - Closed

- 10.1 This section of the minutes is closed.
- Review of the Information for Employees Regulation
- 10.4 Giles Denham outlined the findings of the review of the Information for Employees Regulations and made the following comments:
- a. The regulations require employers to complete the 'Health and Safety Poster' by entering the details of the relevant enforcing authorities;
 - b. The review found that the cost of purchasing the poster was not the main regulatory burden but rather the time and effort needed to obtain the information and keep it up to date;
 - c. To reduce this burden the following options were being proposed:
 - do nothing
 - replace poster with a leaflet
 - replace the existing poster with a pre-prepared version (providing info-line as the contact)
 - d. The Board were asked to consider whether these were the right options.
- 10.5 The Board thanked Giles for his introduction and made the following remarks in response:
- a. The Board acknowledged that the poster was not the optimum design as it contains too much information to be useful to a majority of employees;
 - b. The Board agreed that the benefit of the poster needs to be looked at in the wider sense as in purchasing it employers often also took the opportunity to obtain other health and safety guidance;
 - c. The Board agreed that to do nothing was not an option as the requirement to purchase and complete the poster equated to a £25m burden on business;
 - d. The Board agreed that replacing the poster with a leaflet was a viable option but that might fail to ensure that all employees had received and retained the relevant information;
 - e. The Board agreed that a simplified version of the poster should be an option but did not agree with info-line being the pre-prepared contact. The Board agreed that this approach would add burdens on Info-line (which it is not currently equipped to deal with).
- 10.6 The Board concluded the discussion by agreeing that, subject to the views expressed being taken into account, that the HSC should be consulted on the proposed options.
- Action Point 81** **Giles Denham to amend the proposals to reflect the Board's discussions and consult the HSC.**