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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

The HSE Board

Strategic Plan for International Engagement in 2008/09

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Issue

1. Approval of a high-level plan for international engagement in 2008/09.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. That the Board approves the plan annexed.

Background

4. In discussion of paper B/07/113 on international engagement last November, the Board asked that a high-level plan for international engagement be developed each year for approval by the Board (action point 107). This is the first such plan.

Argument

5. A plan (annexed) has been developed in discussion with Board members, HSE staff, DWP, BERR and UKRep. It is divided into four parts: key business that Board members will wish to be aware of; key events to be attended by Board members; learning from others; and people and stakeholders to engage.
6. This plan is for HSE. DWP and other departments have their own international engagement plans, particularly for Ministers. In the coming year, it is unlikely that business will require Ministers to lobby their overseas counterparts specifically on our dossiers. However, health and safety may feature as an element of wider briefing for Ministers' international visits.

Key business and international events

7. The first two parts are self-explanatory. They concentrate only on the most politically sensitive business and the major events. Of course, a great deal of other important work goes on in technical working groups, competent authority meetings and other international meetings or conferences, especially but not exclusively in nuclear and major hazards. This technical input can influence political thinking on directives and legislation that might in turn lead to proposals for new directives or amendments. It is important that this work continue.

Learning from others

8. **Part three** is the most tentative section, which can be strengthened in subsequent years based on experience. The Board recognised that although some see HSE as a world leader in health and safety, we should not be complacent and we need to learn from others. There are five suggestions for areas for organisational learning. In addition, the Board will wish to be aware that Phil Scott will be leading the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee review of the Netherlands labour inspectorate. This may provide additional learning opportunities.
9. We are already deeply engaged internationally on **nuclear** safety, security and safeguards. International fora are the main ways in which the UK both influences and learns from modern practice across the world, and this needs to continue to maintain our ability as a world leader in nuclear safety. The United States, Canada, France and other major nuclear powers are the principal players, but we can learn something from most other nuclear countries. As part of this, we provide high-level input into International Atomic Energy Authority-led peer reviews of other states' nuclear regulatory systems.
10. It seems clear that we need to stay up to speed with developments generally on **occupational health systems**, including 'advice', where much is happening and some other countries have gone through quite different approaches fairly rapidly. The Scandinavian countries remain exemplars for occupational health but their social systems are, of course, quite different from ours and learning cannot be a process of merely copying their systems. Elsewhere, places to watch include Australia, the United States and Canada because of the nature of the thinking and development underway and the relatively closer comparability of their workplace cultures to ours.
11. Similarly, many countries are experiencing challenges with **migrant workers**, whether documented or undocumented. This issue goes much more widely than health and safety, of course. Its political profile is unlikely to diminish soon and the experience of other countries and institutions could be very valuable.
12. We also need to learn more about systems for influencing dutyholders to encourage both **director leadership and worker involvement**. An initial focus on models in the Anglophone world may be helpful.
13. Finally, last October HSC asked for more information about what we can learn from other countries in terms of interventions and influence on health and safety performance in **agriculture**. We are currently pursuing an approach to this through contacts in the International Social Security Association.

14. It is not envisaged that this will entail specific study visits. Much 'research' can be accomplished at the desk through the internet or by telephone. In addition, academics and colleagues in OGDs often have well-developed information networks that we can exploit informally. All staff can take opportunities at existing overseas meetings to gather intelligence on the key issues and feed it to the relevant operational or policy teams. A recent example is intelligence on changing ownership patterns for COMAH sites, on which a member of staff gathered helpful intelligence at an international meeting.

People and stakeholders to engage

15. **Part four** sets out plans for engaging people, institutions and other countries. It is based on the premise that, in addition to the strong technical relationships many HSE staff have with their counterparts abroad, **we need to do more to influence politically** in Europe. Technical arguments alone do not guarantee success in negotiations, particularly when the UK's wider agenda is for simplification and administrative burden reduction. Depending on how the dossiers in part one develop, SCS staff and Board members may need to meet their counterparts in the Commission and like-minded Member States to ensure effective lobbying for UK interests.

16. →

21. ←

22. We also need to continue to engage and influence the **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work** in Bilbao and the new **European Chemicals Agency**, based in Helsinki, which will play a key role at the centre of the new European framework for regulating chemicals.

23. →←

Consultation

24. DWP, BERR, UKRep, Policy Group, Communications, Legal Advisers, PFPD, FOD, HID and ND.

Presentation

25. Our key messages are that HSE seeks to be recognised as one of the world leaders in health and safety. Our record is good, but we know that there are areas where we can improve and we are determined to learn from others. In Europe, we are committed to working constructively with our partners to enable workplaces to be safe and healthy and so contribute to a prosperous Europe for all.

26. We will look for and, where appropriate, make opportunities to establish and reinforce this position, especially through third-party endorsement.

Costs and Benefits

27. The benefits of better international political engagement will not be realised immediately. It should make us more influential with our partners in other member

states, which should lead to better outcomes for the UK. However, these benefits cannot be quantified. The costs are small. Some additional visits by senior managers will be necessary to build relationships with influential people and institutions in the first instance. However, in the main we are proposing making better use of intelligence gathered by staff at existing visits rather than arguing for special visits.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

28. Paper B/07/113 estimated the annual staff cost of HSE's international work at approximately £1.5m, with another £0.5m in overseas T&S. This strategy calls for a few more visits to Europe by senior staff for lobbying the Commission and other member states. The additional resources involved should be no more than about £3000 (i.e. up to six visits), taken from existing budgets. Improved lobbying of the European Parliament by policy teams with active dossiers can be accommodated within existing resources.

Environmental implications

29. There will be an additional impact on the environment from the small number of additional visits proposed. Wherever practical, lower carbon emission methods of transport such as Eurostar are preferred. Taking advantage of existing meetings to learn from and influence colleagues will help ensure that any adverse environmental impact is kept to a minimum.

Action

30. If the Board approves the plan, international unit will implement and monitor it, reporting to the senior management team in spring 2009 together with a follow-on plan.

Health and Safety Executive Strategic Plan for International Engagement 2008/09

1. Key business

The main items of international business that are on the horizon and which will need careful management are:

- Substantive amendment to the EMF directive. (SCS responsible: Les Philpott)
- Needlestick infections. Likely to proceed to proposal for directive to amend the Biological Agents Directive. Risk does not justify the measure. (Les Philpott)
- Amendments to the Seveso Directive. The Commission has started a review of the directive and is expected to put proposals forward in late 2009. Nevertheless, we need to be influencing effectively now. (Les Philpott)
- Musculoskeletal disorders – possible directive. Also risks opening the way for legislation on stress. (Peter Brown)
- Carcinogens and mutagens directive amendment. Likely to expand scope to include reprotoxins and to introduce new procedures for assigning exposure limits to carcinogens and mutagens. (Steve Coldrick)
- Global harmonisation of classification etc of chemicals. This has wide implications and it is essential that we maintain influence at the UN to manage the impact. (Steve Coldrick)
- Support BERR in activities to:
 - persuade the European Commission (DG Enterprise) that controls on chemicals should reflect both hazard and risk, and not just hazard. (Steve Coldrick)
 - review 'new approach' legislation. It is vital to retain a risk-based approach. (Liz Gibby)
- Continue to monitor European Commission desire for competence in nuclear safety, security and radioactive waste management. (Mike Weightman)

2. Events to be attended by Board members

These events support our aim to be recognised as a world leader in health and safety.

- EU Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee meetings (Sandra Caldwell)
 - March 2008 (Slovenia)
 - December 2008 (France)
 - March 2009 (Czech Republic)
- International Association of Labour Inspectors (Kevin Myers, vice-president)
 - Annual conference in March 2008 (Adelaide, South Australia)
 - Triennial Congress and General Assembly in June 2009 (Geneva)
- Meetings on the Nuclear Safety Convention (2008) and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management (2009) (Mike Weightman)
- European High Level Group on Nuclear Safety (Mike Weightman, vice-chair)
- World Congress on OSH, Korea, July 2008 (Jane Willis).
- France holds the EU Presidency in the second half of 2008. They plan at least one conference and may organise a meeting of health and safety directors-general, which Geoffrey Podger may wish to attend.

3. Learning from others

Topics for HSE staff to gather intelligence on and feed to relevant policy teams:

- Nuclear safety – from most nuclear countries, but the USA, Canada, France and other major nuclear countries are the priority
- Occupational health systems – the Scandinavian countries, the USA, Canada and Australia
- Migrant workers – all countries that have a significant migrant population
- Stimulating director leadership and worker involvement – the Anglophone world
- Agriculture – all countries. Initial contact through ISSA.

4. People/stakeholders to engage

Depending on how the dossiers in part one develop, SCS staff and Board members may need to meet their counterparts in the Commission and like-minded Member States to ensure effective lobbying for UK interests.



HSE – International Unit
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