

Open Government status: Partially open

Paper Number: ACTS/11/2003

Exempt material: Item 1.5 of the public version of this paper contains sections that are withheld under Exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information – ‘information that would cause unwarranted invasion of personal privacy’.

Meeting Date: 13 March 2003

Type of Paper: Information

**HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TOXIC SUBSTANCES**

Secretary’s Report

ITEM	ACTION	BY	PROGRESS
1	Handling the agenda		
1.5	Sandra Caldwell suggested that members might like to consider having an open meeting during 2003. She asked for volunteers to meet John Thompson and Secretariat to discuss how the open meeting should be handled. Dr Ian Brown, Dr Ian Carney, Mr Bud Hudspith and Dr Len Levy volunteered.	→ ← This section is being withheld under Exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information	Meeting held on 16 December 2002. Issue is considered in paper ACTS Open Meeting (ACTS/06/2002).
3	Finalisation of the Forward Look (FL)		
3.4	As members were unhappy with the revisions that had been made, Sandra Caldwell asked members if they were content with the original version of the bullet point summary. She proposed to write a covering minute to accompany the FL when it was submitted to the HSC. This would capture the points members had made during discussion. The Environment representative’s comments [which had occasioned the revisions] would be put aside but the minute would explicitly acknowledge that one of the major uncertainties with the FL is the REACH programme that is coming out of the EU.	ACTS Secretariat	Annex 2 has been revised: specifically section 1, bullet points 5 and 9 (Environment representative’s comments deleted – instead, these will be accommodated via a covering minute [see below]); also, bullet point 22 (“ <i>More women....</i> ”) has been moved up into “likely changes” section. Current thinking on presentation of ACTS’s FL to the HSC is that it will form part of a coordinated response on behalf of all subject advisory committees, later in the year.
4	Finalisation of ACTS future work		

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	plan		
4.2	Members considered the last sentence of the redrafted aim unnecessary.	ACTS Secretariat	The last sentence has been removed from the aim.
4.5	A TUC representative believed there should be more emphasis in the plan on input from workers to address knowledge gaps. Safety representatives and others know better than anyone what is happening in the workplace, yet this source of information is virtually untapped in any systematic way. Sandra Caldwell acknowledged that this was an important point and agreed to ensure that the emphasis is adjusted in the Work Plan.	ACTS Secretariat	Annex 3 (Essential themes) has been revised. Specifically, the second bullet point ("Utilises partnerships/intermediaries) has been expanded to include the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of input from workers • use of input from safety representatives • use of input from employers • activity to be coordinated amongst other groups concerned with occupational health
4.6	Several TUC representatives said it was important to ensure ACTS did not operate in isolation to relevant work progressing elsewhere in HSE. The plan should be explicit about the need for activity to be coordinated amongst all groups in HSE concerned with occupational health (e.g. OHAC, SH2, IACs, Sectors etc.). Sandra Caldwell agreed and said discrete, targeted initiatives would make it easier to request specific help of other groups, including Local Authorities. Work was in hand to coordinate activity but was not finished yet. She undertook to ensure that the collective thinking on this issue is brought back to ACTS, possibly in March 2003. She also asked Secretariat to make this issue more explicit in the Work Plan.	Sandra Caldwell and ACTS Secretariat	HSE's Strategy and Analytical Support Directorate are still dealing with the collective thinking on this issue. <p>In terms of ACTS's own stance, the paper 'Progressing the work plan' (ACTS/03/2002) proposes how ACTS can engage with other HSC Industry Advisory Committees (IACs) and Subject Advisory Committees (SACs) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify specific initiatives where ACTS can develop partnerships to stop people being made ill from exposure to substances at work; • raise the profile of ACTS and gain support for its work plan and HSE's Chemicals Strategy; • promote E-COSHH Essentials; and • promote European Week of Safety and Health 2003 on prevention of risks caused by dangerous substances.
4.7	A CBI representative asked if resource was something that could be addressed in the plan. Sandra Caldwell responded that it should be possible to provide guesstimates on resourcing. She proposed that the plan included a commitment to produce 2-page summary project plans for any initiatives that are taken forward. She asked if members were content with this approach. This was agreed.	ACTS Secretariat	A project plan will be developed for any initiative that is taken forward in the work plan. This will include a section estimating the resources that will be required.

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4.10	An Independent representative commented that it was unclear how the draft initiatives had emerged from Annexes 3 & 4. Sandra Caldwell responded that the discussion on this agenda item had generated a lot of very useful feedback. She suggested that Secretariat take away the committee discussions and pick up the points in a cover paper presenting the Work Plan to the HSC. The paper could clearly state what 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd priorities are. A draft of this paper could be circulated to members before it is submitted to the Commission	ACTS Secretariat	ACTS Secretariat letter to members dated 17 January describes proposals for revising the work plan. Members' comments on the proposals were taken into consideration in the drafting of the paper 'Progressing the work plan' (ACTS/03/2003). The same letter included a draft paper presenting ACTS's new work plan to the HSC, for members' approval. The paper is now being submitted to the HSC meeting on 11 March as a below the line item.
4.11	Sandra Caldwell asked for the ACTS sub-groups, in particular WATCH, to be reconsidered so as to match the approach ACTS is adopting in its new ways of working.	John Thompson and Paul Oldershaw	Refer ACTS/04/2003.
4.11	Sandra Caldwell asked for volunteers from members to provide feedback on the asthma web pages that HSE are developing.	Michael Topping's team	Michael Topping's team wrote to the six ACTS members who volunteered to help in quality reviewing new HSE web pages on asthma. These asthma web pages have been developed as part of HSE's asthma strategy for inclusion in the HSE website. They were asked to make an assessment and advise HSE of comments before the site goes "live" (scheduled for 28 February).
4.11	Sandra Caldwell invited anyone with a particular interest to attend the meeting of the OEL framework sub- on 28 January, when the list of problem substances in EH40, and brief supporting data, will be available for discussion.	ACTS Secretariat and members	ACTS Secretariat sent members an e-mail on 11 December 2002 reminding them of the invitation to attend the OEL framework sub-group on 28 January.
8	MEL proposal for refractory ceramic fibres		
8.3	Sandra Caldwell asked if members were content to recommend going out to consultation. It was agreed.	Richard Pedersen	A Consultative Document is being published.
8.4	A CBI representative wished to submit some factual corrections, from ECFIA, concerning the MEL proposal paper.	Richard Pedersen	ECFIA's submission will not be used to correct the paper, since this is a historical record of what was considered by the committee. However, the submission has been taken into consideration in the drafting of the Consultative Document.
9	Progress with the asthma strategy		
9.2	Sandra Caldwell said HSE would examine how it could more effectively involve LAs in the asthma strategy and also asked Donald Adey to contact the Scottish LA representative.	Donald Adey	Donald is working with the Local Authority Unit in HSE to see how we can achieve better joint working with LAs.

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9.3	An Independent representative asked if the cost of the project had been quantified.	Donald Adey	Quantifying the overall cost of the project is difficult. We are discussing ways to establish the cost to industry of occupational asthma with partners. An industry survey is under consideration.
9.4	A TUC representative noted that ACTS is not mentioned in the paper, whereas the asthma topic is featured prominently in the committee's work plan. The paper did not mention anything about sectors, groups or IACs. This seemed a major omission.	Donald Adey	Revisions to the asthma action plan now under way will include reference to ACTS and will build in working with Industry Advisory Committees.
9.6	Sandra Caldwell asked, if progress was made in relation to engaging key people in industry sectors, would a member be prepared to accompany Donald Adey to a sector meeting, provided we could get asthma on the agenda.	Donald Adey	Visits to industry are planned. Sandra Caldwell will seek a volunteer to accompany Donald Adey on a visit, at the 13 March 2003 ACTS meeting.
14	The new European Chemical Strategy		
14.4	ACTS members asked for the new European Chemical Strategy to be a standing item on future ACTS agendas.	ACTS Secretariat	All future ACTS agendas will include an above the line item on the new European Chemical Strategy.

ACTS Secretariat