

Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances Paper		ACTS/21/2006	
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Exemptions:	None		

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TOXIC SUBSTANCES
FUTURE OF ACTS: PROPOSED WAY FORWARD
A Note by the Secretariat

Background

1. The present constitution of ACTS expires next month. This issue was considered last November when it was decided to establish a working group to look into the way forward. The note of the meeting of the Future of ACTS Working Group was presented at the last meeting. The Working Group members have since also met with the Director of the Disease Reduction Programme (DRP). After that, it was agreed that the matter be put to this meeting for debate by the full Committee.

2. It has been acknowledged that ACTS is not set up for delivery, but has an expert advisory role. Whilst ACTS could advise on future DRP priorities, it has a wider scope with interests in issues such as REACH and nanotechnology¹. Because many of these areas of work are under development, process issues as to how ACTS feeds in will be iterative and some flexibility will need to be maintained to allow the best working arrangements to be established over time if necessary. In order to make the most impact at the appropriate time, ACTS will have to look at different ways of working. It has also been noted that the ACTS membership will need to be reviewed whilst maintaining tripartism.

Options

- (i) **Reconstitute as a formal Advisory Committee.** To justify this under s.13 of the Health and Safety at Work Act we must present a business case. This is a zero-base exercise. We have to be able to show that if we were starting with a blank sheet, such a Committee is what would be designed to meet the needs of HSC/E, and that the benefits justify the costs.
- (ii) **Reform as an Expert Advisory Forum.** Whilst maintaining the established 'ACTS' name, administrative rules and procedures could be simplified, meetings could be matched to business needs, with the option of transacting some business via an electronic forum. This would have no practical impact on the sub-committees,

¹ A draft map is annexed although, in practice, given that many of these issues are in a state of constant flux it is difficult to define key relationships.

although some of them may also warrant a review. The Expert Forum could advise both HSC/E directly, and because of its greater flexibility would be in a better position to influence fast-developing issues.

Recommendation

3. The Secretariat would recommend option ii. It allows more flexibility in the Committee's approach and is therefore better placed to accommodate the areas of work in which ACTS has an interest.

Action

4. Members are invited to consider the recommendation and decide on the way forward.

ACTS secretariat
November 2006

MAP of ACTS and potential related bodies/activities

