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WATCH COMMITTEE

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF NEW AND EMERGING ISSUES AND REVIEW OF EXISTING ADVICE

Issue

To have in place an operating procedure to deal with the early identification of new and emerging issues and review of existing advice.

Background

It was agreed by WATCH at the first meeting (8 March 2004) that such a procedure was required. Members generally agreed with a proposal that was tabled at the second meeting (10 June 2004) but noted that it was also the remit of WATCH to reconsider previous advice. The proposal has been altered by the secretariat accordingly.

Current proposal for the operating procedure

The Committee acknowledges the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees, which includes guidance on the early identification of issues, stating:

'In order to provide timely advice to Ministers, committees should ensure that they have mechanisms in place that allow them to consider on a regular basis whether new issues in their particular areas of responsibility are likely to emerge for which scientific advice or research might be needed.'

New or unexpected developments in science and technology may also give reason for committees to review advice that they (or their predecessors) have issued in the past. Committees should consider this possibility alongside the emergence of new issues.'

The Committee agree that :

1. Once a year, probably in January at a residential meeting, there will be time set aside for the Committee to discuss new and emerging issues and whether any previous advice needs to be reviewed. Members will consider such issues in advance, discussing with colleagues etc as appropriate, so that there can be a full discussion at these meetings.
2. When Members identify information on specific issues etc, where previous advice may need to be reviewed, or other issues that the Secretariat might not otherwise be aware of, then they should send the relevant information to the Secretariat. The Secretariat will ensure that appropriate staff in HSE review the information and then report back to the Member. This will include a plan for further action if this is considered to be appropriate.

Action

WATCH is asked to agree the current wording of this draft operating procedure.

WATCH Secretariat
February 2005