

**HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ARBORICULTURE AND FORESTRY ADVISORY GROUP (AFAG)**

Minutes of the 14th meeting, held at Lantra Sector Skills Council, Lantra House, Stoneleigh Park, Coventry, CV8 2LG on 2 and 3 April 2008

Present:

Roger Nourish	HSE (Chair)
Alan Plom	HSE (Secretary)
James Brown	Confor
Gerald Bonner	Bartlett UK
Hans Fairley	AEA
Neil McKay	Bidwells
Jim Dewar	FC (Tech Sec)
Steve Osborne	FC
Des Campbell	NIFS
Donald Maclean	FCA
Peter Jackson	UAG
Martin Lennon	UPM Tilhill
John Price	LGE
Simon Richmond	Arb Assoc
Steve Hewitt	NPTC (2 nd only)
Ros Johnson	Lantra (2 nd only)
Alex Murray	UKFPA
Natasha Perry	Bomel (2 nd only)
Tony Bird	Lantra (2 nd only)
Simon Parry	HSE
Frances Hirst	HSE
Jason Liggins	HSE
Varna Amjad	HSE (Minutes Sec)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

[Secs Note: For convenience and ease of reference the notes of the meeting are presented as listed in the agenda, not necessarily in the order discussed.]

1.1 Roger Nourish welcomed everyone to the extended meeting, which was being held over two days at the request of members, to enable a more in-depth discussion on each of AFAG's projects. He thanked Lantra for hosting the meeting and for members' continued support, dedication and commitment to AFAG.

1.2 Roger was pleased to welcome three new members to AFAG: Ros Johnson (Lantra SSC), Alex Murray United Kingdom Forest Products Association (UKFPA) and Des Campbell (Northern Ireland Forest Services (NIFS)). He noted that Simon Richmond was now representing the Arboriculture Association. Also joining members on day one were Natasha Perry (Bomel) to present the findings of their

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research into accident causation; Tony Bird (Lantra SSC) to introduce Lantra's Online Competence Framework and Steve Hewitt (NPTC) to discuss the current revision of the suite of chainsaw Certificates of Competence.

1.3 Apologies were received from Paul Elcoat (ISA), Emily Ramsey (FC), Colin Saunders (FC), Robert Beaney (FC) and Mike Volp (NATO).

2 URGENT BUSINESS

2.1 No urgent business identified.

3 MINUTES OF 13TH MEETING (25-26 SEPT 2007)

3.1 The minutes were agreed subject to the following amendments:

- Paragraph 2.1 - last sentence should read '... employees up to *foundation* degree level.'
- Paragraph 6.4 - Jim Brown had agreed to contact the industry, not CONFOR.
- Paragraph 7.9 - 'foresters' should be replaced with 'forestry workers'.
- Paragraph 9.61 - needs revising to more accurately reflect the position

ACTIONS: E Ramsay to provide revised text for 9.61.

HSE to amend minutes and post on AFAG webpage, asap.

4 MATTERS ARISING

[Secs Note - Actions from the last meeting not noted under 4 below have either been discharged or, where appropriate, discussion was deferred and is recorded under the relevant Agenda item/Project report.]

4.1 **Action note 4.5 - 'Future' ATV Safety Helmet** – Feedback received via Simon Richmond was passed on to HSE staff; Frances will also circulate this to members.

ACTION: F Hirst

4.2 **Action note 4.8 - HSE's Insurance Initiative** – This work had reached a commercial in confidence stage and whilst the insurance company concerned had been rather dragging its feet (for other unrelated reasons), Roger was still reasonably optimistic the HSE/CMI developed risk assessed underwriting software would be commercially adopted/piloted. Roger would be inviting a number of the players involved to a meeting at an appropriate point.

ACTION: R Nourish

4.3 **Action note 6.10 - Future research funding by FC** – Jim Dewar had received no suggestions for new topics. A Plom asked if the industry could fund Bomel's proposed follow-up survey to complete the evaluation of the Arb SHAD, which had not received HSE funding. The Arb Association confirmed they did not have sufficient funds available and FC are now over-committed for 2008-09.

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4.4 Action note 8.1 - Launch of new AFAG community sites – Jason explained that the new web pages had been delayed, but it was hoped they will now be launched by the end of May. He encouraged members to visit the site. Members asked HSE to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to keep it up to date and current issues raised by the industry are dealt with promptly.

ACTION: HSE

4.5 Action note 9.13 - Accident Analysis/Size of Industry – Jim Dewar had provided FC's annual report. Ros Johnson reported that further information should be available within Lantra SSC to feed into the Impact Assessment. Discussed at 7.1.

ACTION: Ros Johnson

4.6 Action note 9.15 - Accident Analysis/Training – As Simon Richmond is no longer at Lantra Awards he is unable to provide the summary of training courses requested. He thought this was still a worthwhile avenue and should be pursued, and pointed out that there may be other bespoke training, eg within organisations that may not be picked up.

ACTION: HSE

4.7 Action note 9.17 - Accident Analysis/Project Group – The project group have not met to review the report as the final version has still to be completed.

4.8 Action note 9.28 - Training & Certification – Only Pete Jackson had offered to forward some case studies illustrating the benefits of training to businesses. Pete and other members reminded to send examples to Alan Plom asap, to enable a rough business impact assessment to be completed before the next meeting.

ACTION: P Jackson/All Members

4.9 Action note 9.29 - Mapping of European Standards – Roger had presented a paper at the International Social Security Association (ISSA) Agriculture Section Colloquium in Pamplona. He highlighted the increasing numbers of foreign workers moving across borders make it imperative to find out equivalent levels of qualifications. He proposed an ISSA project be set up to map training and competence certification for hazardous operations such as tree work. This was widely supported. ISSA are meeting next week to discuss proposals and a further meeting in May to prioritise the work and secure funding.

4.10 Jim Dewar has passed information about ENFE's proposal to Alan Plom – this is not relevant to the mapping proposal.

4.11 Action note 9.26 - Steep Ground Working – Jason had received a lot of feedback from outside AFAG. There is a need to clarify the responsibilities of forestry works managers and site safety coordinators, eg in guidance and through articles in the journals.

ACTION: HSE/Project Group

4.12 Action note 11.3 - Falls from vehicles – The link to the HSE's campaign website had been sent to members, to publicise the new 'good practice' guidance in their newsletters, etc.

5 AFAG WORKPLAN 2005-08 AND BEYOND

5.1 Roger reported that the paper attached to AFAG 08/01 had been presented to AIAC on 18 March 2008. AIAC acknowledged AFAG's achievements since 2005 due to it being such a dynamic and results-driven group. AIAC members were invited to give a steer on future AFAG projects but none were forthcoming as they were content with AFAG's current and proposed work.

5.2 Jim Brown had spoken to Judith Donovan, the Commission's 'champion' for Agriculture at the AIAC meeting. She confirmed that she and the 'Insight' project team are looking specifically at farming area they were content with the work that AFAG is doing.

6 BUSINESS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Alan reiterated the Government's new rules for Departments to carry out business impact assessments (BIAs), This is part of the Better Regulation drive, and intended to ensure that new guidance, publications and other initiatives which establish 'new' standards or practices are cost effective and do not impose indirect 'regulatory' burdens - especially for smaller businesses. The benefits as well as costs to industry must be assessed at the outset, so this could be useful in promoting the advantages of good practice to businesses.

6.2 A full BIA is required if the cost to industry is £5 million or more per annum, a less formal assessment for less. Even if AFAG stakeholders are doing the work, a BIA has still needs to be considered if HSE are involved. The guidance is still being developed but it was believed that a BIA will be needed for new AA guidance such as on MEWPs but would not be needed for publicity campaigns; SHADs; leaflets; and inspection campaigns, promoting current accepted good practice. A BIA is not required for research projects but any guidance produced from research would need to be assessed.

6.4 HSE will need to consult industry to establish costs and benefits – AFAG members and relevant trade bodies, etc, will be called upon to provide figures.

7 REVIEW OF AFAG PROJECTS 2005-08 (AFAG 08/01)

7.1 A.1 Research into Accident Causation and Evaluation of SHADs

7.1.1 Natasha Perry gave a presentation on Bomel's research into Accident Causation and Evaluation of Forestry and Arb Client SHADs. She had been working with Jason for over a year and a half on the projects and had been unable to attend the last meeting. She was glad to be presenting the work to AFAG. When finalised, the project report will need to be cleared for publication by HSE's senior management.

7.1.2 The information was well received and prompted several questions on the data used. Roger emphasised the fatality data was accurate as it is meticulously checked by the Sector. However, although the fatal data is 'clean' other data comes from what is reported to HSE and has to be presented in a set format. Natasha explained that they

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had checked the RIDDOR data to confirm that the accidents used were related to forestry, etc.

7.1.3 Members were concerned that the incident rates quoted were higher than expected, possibly because the figure used for the number of workers in forestry was too low or didn't include the self-employed. Alan pointed out that the employment figures would include non-machine operators, so the figure for people actually at risk could be higher. Roger explained that it would be incorrect to assume that the incident rate would come down if self-employed were included as the self-employed are twice as vulnerable to fatal accidents as employees, so if self-employed were included the rate could increase. Ros offered to obtain information on employee numbers compiled by Lantra.

ACTION: Ros Johnson

7.1.4 As the report included data on all tree work and arboriculture not just forestry, Pete Jackson suggested changing the title of the report to reflect this. Alan explained that the project had been extended at AFAG's request to include Arb and agreed the title should be changed. Simon Richmond asked for a more detailed breakdown in arboriculture if that was possible.

7.1.5 Jason said we should take a long term view – on average there are 4 or 5 fatalities a year related to tree work. There will always be slight problems with the original RIDDOR data but it looks like most fatalities and accidents involve use of chainsaws.

7.1.6 Jim Dewar expressed concern about 'headline' figures from this report painting a poor image of the industry. Roger said that the figures should be presented in context and recognise that the forestry industry has made significant progress and brought the rate down, but there was evidently more to be done.

7.1.7 Simon Richmond asked whether it was possible to separate out the arb data from forestry, particularly for post-2001, when the SICs were changed.

7.1.8 Hans Fairley asked whether there were any statistics for pre-1996 when the chain saw CoCs were introduced. Accident rates could then be compared to see if the CoCs had made an impact.

7.1.10 Pete Jackson reported that in response to pressure from their clients UPM were checking their total recordable incidents - which were ~4x those of the electricity supply industry - to look at ways of reducing them. He asked whether UPM could use Bomel's cultural barometer. Jason to check copyright.

ACTION: HSE

7.1.11 The consensus among members was that accident rates were not acceptable and more work had to be done to reduce the number of accidents. Additional actions agreed were:

- Summary of research to be sent to members, as soon as cleared.
- Ensure it is made clear the research covers arb as well as forestry.
- Accident rates to be confirmed.

ACTION: HSE

7.2 A.2 Training & Certification

[Sec's Note: Discussion on this item continued over the 2 days but is recorded together in this section.]

7.2.1 Roger reminded members that although there was agreement within AFAG that work needed to be done on 'T & C', it was disappointing that after nearly 3 years review and discussion, a consensus had not been reached on how to take the issue forward.

7.2.2 Simon Richmond referred to the paper he had sent out after the September AFAG meeting, requesting comments from specific sectors of the industry. The paper had been drafted to help move the project forward as progress had been slow. It outlined just one way forward, not necessarily the only one. Whatever is decided must be owned/endorsed by AFAG. Simon had received 5 responses to his request for comments – a summary of these was distributed at the meeting.

7.2.3 There was wide agreement that more was needed than the existing NPTC entry level chainsaw CoCs and this is an opportunity to improve the poor safety record of the industry. However there must be industry backing for any proposed scheme and it must be seen as beneficial. Any scheme must be applicable across the industry as a whole.

7.2.4 There was agreement that the suggested option of a 'Register of Tree Work Operators' ('R2') was a good idea in principle but the main hurdle would be its implementation. It was important the project remained under AFAG's control until it was in a suitable format to be put out for tender.

7.2.5 Roger accepted that the discussions on T & C had come a long way but it was now time to decide whether to pursue the issue any further. He asked Members to confirm whether the project should continue to be taken forward before any further detailed discussions took place.

7.2.6 Donald Maclean was concerned that Simon's proposal wouldn't achieve what was required. He felt that there was no support in the forestry industry for a register of tree work operators. What was key was the training itself, rather than how it was recorded.

7.2.7 Pete Jackson was concerned that the existing system is not preventing accidents. Martin Lennon observed that although AFAG could see the benefits of a registration scheme, the industry wouldn't. A better option would be to retain the existing system but improve the requirement for refresher/update training.

7.2.8 A general discussion on the way forward followed. The key points raised were:

- a) Would it be possible to base an arb/forestry scheme on an existing scheme eg similar to that for construction (ie the CSCS card);
- b) What was needed was a scheme which would:

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- i. be recognised by people in the industry;
 - ii. capture an operator's training, skills, qualifications and experience, over the long term;
 - iii. provide tangible benefits eg accident reduction, increase in job opportunities;
 - iv. help create a level playing field (between businesses), and
 - v. improve the safety of the industry.
- c) The term register may be off putting -a 'list' might be better;
- d) Arb and forestry may need separate schemes;
- e) Employers need educating to recognise skills and experience;
- f) Although there is an existing requirement for refresher/update training this is voluntary and although it is available there is poor uptake. Should it be made compulsory? Updating is key here.
- g) The possibility of putting an expiry date on existing CoCs needs further discussion.
- h) From a cost benefit point of view, any new scheme should show a reduction in accidents.
- i) Before any scheme is introduced a BIA/cost benefit analysis will have to be carried out.

7.2.9 Roger Nourish summarised this part of the discussions by confirming that Members had not reached a consensus on the way forward but did agree that something needs to be done. A cost benefit analysis (BIA) would only be carried out once every one was in agreement as to what was required.

7.2.10 Ros Johnson explained that Lantra SSC covers the 17 land-based industries, which typically have high skills but low qualifications. Lantra is addressing this by putting together 'Sector Approved Job Profiles' (SAPs) and identifying the National Occupational Standards (NOS) required for each for each job. Members were encouraged to comment on the SAPs and the NOS' are being developed by the industry through their representatives on Lantra's Trees and Timber Industry Group. The NOS provides a list of basic tasks that are necessary to do jobs in any particular industry. These feed into training - VQs for example - and are reviewed regularly by the relevant industry Group, to keep them up to date.

7.2.11 The NOS for the Trees and Timber Group is almost complete and covers 5 specific areas:

- i. Forestry machinery;
- ii. Steep ground working;
- iii. Qualifications structure;
- iv. Transporting loads; and
- v. Chainsaw standards

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AFAG members were invited to comment on the NOS via Lantra's web site. Paper and link to be circulated.

ACTION: HSE

7.2.12 Job profiles will become the standards that will feed into the relevant qualifications. There are currently massive changes taking place across the board in education. 'Units of learning' are being given a credit rating which can be combined to give a qualification. This could have an impact on the proposed register of tree work operators. The changes are due to come into operation in 2010.

7.2.13 Steve Hewitt then updated Members on NPTC's review of the chainsaw CoCs, for which accreditation was due to expire on 1/3/08. The deadline for the review has been extended to 1/9/08 due to the difficulty of getting feed back from industry/stakeholders. NPTC are anxious to take account of AFAG's views. In particular comments are needed on the awards themselves as well as the qualification structure. Comments so far indicate that the content of units is fine but the structure is not - in particular it is hard for those outside the industry, clients, etc, to understand.

7.2.14 The difficulty is that there are 3 groups that need to be catered for: arboriculture, forestry and other chainsaw users. NPTC want to improve the structure to make it more flexible. A general discussion on NPTC's proposed changes raised the following issues:

- i. The possibility of a 12 months "provisional license";
- ii. The possible merger of some units eg CS 32/CS33 and CS34/CS35;
- iii. Whether CS38 remains a stand alone unit;
- iv. Why some units appear optional and others not;
- v. The position of refresher training;
- vi. Application to sawmills;
- vii. Whether there should be an expiry date, this won't be introduced unless the industry asks for it.

7.2.15 It was agreed that Simon Richmond would circulate a note requesting Members views, Members to respond by 14 April to enable collated responses to be sent to NPTC by 18 April.

ACTION: Simon Richmond

7.2.16 **Online Competence Framework (OCF)** - Tony Bird (Lantra SSC) outlined Lantra OCF and highlighted its potential to provide a database/IT platform for 'R2'. The system has been developed by Lantra for use by all industries. It enables on-line recording of training, skills and professional development. It contains career maps that let a user know what skills are needed now and in the future and also identifies skills gaps. A paper-based system is available for those without internet access.

7.2.20 The tool can be used to keep track of groups of employees and is management/employer assessed. It can be used to record external qualifications and other necessary business competencies. Job competencies can be chosen from the appropriate 'Sector Approved Job Profiles' (SAPs) mentioned earlier by Ros.

7.2.21 The poultry industry, for example use the OCF as a way of keeping records for individual employees which can be transferred from employer to employer. The

system can also be used by the self employed. CVs can be printed off the screen and job adverts and jobs wanted added.

7.2.22 Alan commented that the OCF could possibly be used by the tree work industry to record on-the-job learning/experience as well as formal training, etc. Jim Dewar suggested that bodies in AFAG could perhaps fund Lantra to develop and run an OCF on behalf of the tree work industry.

7.2.23 **Health & Safety VQs** - Alan led a discussion on the potential application and benefits of 'health and safety management' VQs in the tree work industry. The suite of VQ's (at Levels 2, 3 and 4) initially developed for the farming industry is attracting interest in the farming and there is some support for a similar VQ in forestry and arb. From HSE's point of view the existence of a VQ would:

- help clients eg LAs choose a competent contractor;
- improve management and supervision of dangerous activities;
- help define the role of Forestry Works Managers and Site Safety Coordinators.

7.2.24 Alistair Mitchell (HSE Ag & Food Sector) is willing to work with the industry to adapt and develop a VQ but the major part of the work is writing the question sets for which he doesn't have the expertise. However, concerns had been expressed that this would impose another cost on the industry and funding is seen as a big issue. It had been agreed that as VQs are not statutory training and if they are described as contributing "added value" they are eligible for funding.

7.2.25 Frances Hirst reported that she, Alan Plom and Steve Hewitt are to meet with the Highways and Construction Industry Training Agency (HCTA) to discuss where their Chainsaw Operators Registration Scheme fits into the current training system and to ensure that it is to the same standard as the current NPTC CoCs.

ACTION: HSE/S Hewitt

7.2.26 Frances also reported on the Food Industry Passport Scheme which was launched in 2002. A copy of SIM 01/2002/51 and leaflet INDG381 were circulated to Members. This Scheme is now administered by the Safety Passport Alliance, which covers a number of industries. Further details are available at: <http://www.safetypassports.co.uk/index1.html>. Roger Nourish is to ask the Food Industry Forum for examples of cost/benefit analyses. The Sector will also contact the Construction Sector for information on their 'CSTS 'register of competence' scheme.

ACTION: Roger Nourish/HSE

7.2.27 Roger Nourish and others summarised the previous discussions as follows:

- i. AFAG acts as a focal point for all sides of the industry and the key stakeholders are represented. AFAG's role is to lead on health and safety issues in the industry to provide workable, practicable proposals to enable the industry to improve its performance.
- ii. Doing nothing on the issue of training and certification is not an option. We are dealing with a dangerous industry and although accident rates have improved more needs to be done.

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- iii. AFAG members agree that something needs to be done but there is currently no consensus on any one particular scheme or option. However, we do need to move the issue forward.
- iv. Some in the industry consider that refresher training just provides income for training providers, and is not seen as contributing to improving safety.
- v. The FCA and others are concerned that the suggested scheme will not “add value”, over and above current practice. This issue will be addressed through the BIA and Cost/Benefit Analysis. The next step is for HSE to assemble, with members help, the costs and benefits of what is proposed. For the purposes of BIA we need to look beyond just health and safety issues, eg benefits in improving performance and viability + profitability of businesses.

ACTION: HSE

- vi. For this work to progress we need to know what the industry wants before approaching potential system providers.
- vii. The key elements required are to have a way of recording experience, refresher/update training and qualifications.
- viii. Cost information from existing schemes would be useful.
- ix. AFAG/industry has to believe that whatever scheme which is introduced will reduce accidents.

7.2.28 The following actions were agreed to move the work forward:

- i. Roger emphasised that a decision needs to be made at the next AFAG meeting. HSE to draft a letter highlighting the issues that need to be addressed.

ACTION: HSE

- ii. To push this forward, 2 ‘focus groups’ to be convened - one for arboriculture (Chair Simon Richmond) and one for forestry (Chair James Brown). Invitees to each group should extend beyond traditional AFAG members and affiliated organisations, to gauge the views of people in the industry who will have to use any scheme introduced. The Focus Groups should meet as soon as possible so their findings can be fed back to the next meeting of AFAG. Alan Plom to attend both meetings to provide continuity.

ACTION: S Richmond/J Brown

- iii. Summary of the accident information from Bomel research to be produced, asap (see item 7.1.11).

ACTION:HSE

- iv. ‘T & C’ will remain on the workplan for 08/09 and will be taken forward via the arb and forestry focus groups, subject to their agreement and recommendations.

7.3 Update on Other Projects - Project Group Feedback

7.3.1 Roger Nourish introduced this session by informing members that due to the merger of the HSC and HSE, and resultant review of the Industry Advisory Committees, the long term future of AFAG was not known. Therefore, AFAG's future workplan can only be put together for a year at a time. However, as the key role of AFAG was widely accepted and its work generously supported by the industry, it was inconceivable that it would not continue in some form.

7.3.2 **B.1 Steep Ground Working** - Jason suggested that the new guidance could be used as model when drafting guidance to clarify the roles of FWMs and SSCs. Neil Mackay confirmed that the guidance covers site/job management and not just machinery selection, so could be useful.

7.3.3 **B.2 Work at Height** - Frances reported that a revised draft of AFAG 401 had been produced but this is currently too long and detailed. Gerald Bonner, Pete Jackson, Simon Richmond, and Martin Lennon volunteered to help with the editing.

ACTION: F Hirst/nominated Members

7.3.4 The Arb Association's MEWPs guidance will be available for comment via their web site from the end of April.

ACTION: F Hirst to issue link and Members to comment

7.3.5 The AA's Guide to Good Climbing Practice is due for revision but this is likely to be a long term project as it will need to take into account the findings from the rigging research.

7.3.6 Gerald Bonner reported that the Irish Government had decided that the WAH Regs were never intended to apply to arb/tree climbing. Relevant information to be sent to Frances.

ACTION: Gerald Bonner

7.3.7 **B.4 Rigging and Dismantling Techniques** - The final report has been received and is being reviewed by Frances and Jim Dewar. Once agreed the report will need to be cleared by Elizabeth Gibby before it is put on the HSE website. We need to decide how best to disseminate the information, so the project group will continue into 08/09 to progress this. Possible outcomes include an AFAG leaflet and a more detailed (AA) guide.

ACTION: F Hirst/J Dewar

7.3.8 **B.5 Machine-Assisted Take Down** - Graham Hodgson has been commissioned to carry out this work and is due to report back to the WG by the end of April. The WG are meeting in June to discuss his report. The recommendations on safe techniques will be fed into training. This is a good example of the need for update training. Trainers will be needed to pass on the information. This is not 'basic' training as experience will be needed before this work can be attempted.

7.3.9 An AFAG leaflet was considered essential but a business case will be required to justify this. Alternative ways to publicise the information were discussed, eg through a trade association

7.3.10 Members called for HSE enforcement to underpin the introduction of new methods. HSE will review the EMM guidance to inspectors when appropriate.

ACTION: S Parry

7.3.11 **B.6 - Chainsaw PPE** - Jim Brown reminded AFAG that the guidance on chainsaw trousers has not been reviewed for some time. Type C trousers are not always suitable for use in hot weather and asked whether the guidance could be changed to include an element of risk assessment in the choice of trousers. Recent accident history supported this approach and the current re-draft of AFAG 401 has introduced this as a possibility. Frances Hirst replied that as things stand at the moment HSE/AFAG's advice has to be that PPE should comply with the advice in the relevant BS. Any changes to the BS will need to be taken up through the relevant CEN WG. Further discussion will be held during the re-drafting of AFAG 401.

ACTION: HSE/Members

7.3.12 **VAT on PPE** (Action note 9.41) was also discussed. The concern was that smaller contractors were not buying PPE 'spares' because of the cost. Jason had previously confirmed that HSE is not the appropriate route to pursue this issue and advised that Members should take it up with HM Revenue & Customs through their trade associations or MPs.

ACTION: Members

7.3.13 **C.1 Promotion of Rehabilitation Services** - Alan reported that this project had evolved into 'Provision of Occupational Health Services'. Authorities in Scotland are very keen on developing this initiative in rural communities and the proposed AFAG project had been offered as a pilot. This is being run in partnership with the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland and Healthy Working Lives. Relevant members are asked to publicise this work and a copy of the baseline survey and questionnaire is to be circulated to them.

ACTION: Alan Plom/Members

7.3.14 **C.2 Musculo-Skeletal Disorders** - Pete Jackson emphasised that MSD is not just an aerial treework issue and there is a danger that the project's remit could become too large if extended widely to arb and forestry. This would make delivery of any outputs difficult. To overcome this the WG had decided to put together a web-based information resource (similar to that for agriculture), aimed at raising awareness and which could be completed relatively quickly. The aim was to have this done by end of March 2009. A finalised project plan will be completed shortly.

ACTION: P Jackson

7.3.15 **C.3.1 Whole Body Vibration** - Jason Liggins reported that further work is need on the draft guidance produced by HSE's Noise & Vibration team, but this should be completed by end of September 2008. Jim Dewar offered to make the FC's internal guidance for managers on WBV (currently on its website) available more widely to the industry. HSE are also producing a new Ag Information Sheet (AIS). All guidance once published will be announced and made available via the AFAG members' community web site.

ACTION: S Parry/J Dewar

7.3.16 **C.3.2 Hand Arm Vibration** – Alan Plom reported that in response to an increase in RIDDOR reports and claims on HAVS - particularly from LAs, colleges, etc where monitoring and reporting systems are improving, HSE's N & V Specialists have proposed a project to improve the provision of information for users in this sector. They propose to discuss methods of measurement and the required information with a selection of machine manufacturers, importers and suppliers. This is to be followed up through the AEA and BAGMA.

7.3.17 Hans Fairley was concerned that this exercise would not be much help as such meetings have been taking place for the past 12 years. He found that hand held meters being used by some companies/advisors do not always provide reproducible results and users are unwilling to accept that manufacturers information accurately represents field conditions.

7.3.18 **C.3.3 Noise** – HSL's woodchipper research has been agreed and should be published on HSE's web site shortly. A key finding was that current hearing protection on chainsaw helmets is not of a high enough standard for use with wood chippers. Simple guidance for the industry is necessary and this information now needs to be got out to manufacturers/importers and operators. Tony Mitchell (HSE Ag Sector) is going to take this up with relevant manufacturers.

7.3.19 **C4 Pesticides** - Jason reported that biological monitoring has shown no ill health but some skin effects were reported. Improved controls are needed on site and HSE is working with FC, PSD and approval holders looking at improving the product. PSD is currently reviewing the approval to see if it needs changing.

ACTION: HSE/PSD

7.3.20 **Project D1 Promotion of Best Practice** - Alan reported that the aim of this group was to identify current and future needs, and to find new ways to reach and influence the industry. As a consequence, HSE has successfully bid for funds to produce trial podcasts.

7.3.21 The forestry SHAD run recently in the Forest of Dean had been filmed to provide training material and short clips for podcasts on key messages. These will be trialled with some FC apprentices. The FC has also produced an "Introduction to Forest Safety" DVD, which Emily Ramsay distributed to members at the last meeting.

7.3.22 Jason has been liaising with 'Worksafe BC' - the British Columbia version of HSE. They have a very good series of web based hazard alerts which they have agreed that HSE can use, although they will need to be converted to reflect UK standards and terminology. These will be made available via the Tree Work web site. This web site is currently being developed and comments from members on what should be included are welcomed.

ACTION: All Members

7.3.23 The two new AFAG community sites - one for members only and the other for the public - are expected to be launched in April. Simon Richmond asked who would be responsible for keeping the websites up to date. It was agreed that Project Leaders should be responsible for their topics on the members site, and in Jason's absence on leave, Frances Hirst would be monitoring and managing the public site.

7.3.24 Jim Dewar suggested that reports on relevant research should be put on the community site, eg Executive Summaries, with a link to the main research document elsewhere on HSE's website, or wherever.

7.3.25 Jim also reported that AFAG leaflets have recently been translated into Chinese to help them deal more safely with the severe damage caused by recent ice storms.

7.3.26 **Project D2 – Production, Review and Maintenance of Guidance** - The current list of industry guidance needs updating. This should then be put on the Tree work web site. HSE would be reviewing current and proposed publications for 2008-09.

ACTION: HSE

8 STANDARDS WORK

8.1 Jim Dewar reported that important international standards work was continuing on roll-over protection, PPE and noise and vibration. Colin Sanders now represented FC on the BSI committee (AGE29), which is chaired by Hans Fairley. Alan reported that in Jason's absence over the next year, he and Simon Parry were covering HSE's interests.

8.2 A new work item on grab/crane fed chippers has been proposed for AGE 29.

8.3 Members asked for an occasional update/summary to alert the industry of significant developments. The BSI publications are not suitable for this. It was agreed that BSI Committee members (H Fairley (Chair of AGE29), C Saunders (FC) and J Liggins/A Plom (HSE) to alert and consult members as/when appropriate and include updates in Tree Work News as well as at AFAG meetings.

ACTION: H Fairley/C Saunders/ HSE

9 RESEARCH

9.1 This has been covered as part of other items.

10 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

10.1 Further to the discussions on Projects D1 and D2, Alan reported that during 2008-09 HSE's mobile unit will be at the AA's Trade Fair, Saltex, and APF.

10.2 AFAG's presence at the APF was discussed. The seminar at the last APF was not a success as only 25 people attended so this didn't warrant the effort that was put in. It was agreed that another seminar would not be organised this year, but it would be helpful if members could spend time on HSE's stand, as limited HSE staff are available for the event. Volunteers needed – please inform Alan Plom.

ACTION: All Members

11 AFAG WORKPLAN 2008-09 AND BEYOND

11.1 **Current position** – Roger summarised the projects which are either complete or almost complete. These include 'Root causes of accidents', 'Steep ground working', 'Work at height' (Q3) and 'Whole body vibration' (Q2).

11.2 **Projects continuing into 2008-09** - Training and certification (Priority A), Rigging and dismantling (A), Machine assisted takedown (B), promotion of occupational health services (A), HAVs (A), Noise (A), Pesticides (B), MSD (A), Chainsaw PPE (B), market surveillance (B), promotion of good practice (A), production, review and maintenance of AFAG/other guidance (A), welfare on forestry sites (C).

11.3 **New projects for 2008/09** - The proposed list of possible projects for inclusion in the 2008-09 work plan was discussed. Members agreed to add 'Work near OHPLs' (Priority A) and 'Forestry site management (including lone working)' (A). The other topics suggested, eg 'Reducing chainsaw accidents in tree work' will be covered by existing projects, such as training and certification.

11.4 HSE will recast these projects into a new AFAG workplan for 2008-09 making it clear which are 'task and finish' projects and which are actually continuing functions of AFAG.

ACTION: HSE

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 None

13 DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 Wednesday 15 October, Forestry Commission HQ, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh EH12 7AT