

Open Government Status:

FULLY OPEN

AFAG/05/M8final

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**ARBORICULTURE AND FORESTRY ADVISORY GROUP (AFAG)
SUB-COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the 8th meeting of the AIAC sub-committee on Arboriculture and Forestry held on Thursday 14 April 2005 at 0930 am at Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG.

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| Present: | Dr R Nourish | HSE (Chair) |
| | Mr J Dewar | FC (Technical Secretary) |
| | Ms E Ramsay | FC |
| | Mr B Hatton | AA |
| | Mr J Brown | FTA |
| | Mr K Leech | UKFPA |
| | Mr S Richmond | LANTRA |
| | Mr J Bradley | Northern Ireland Forest Service |
| | Mr N McKay | ICF |
| | Mr G Bonner | TCIA |
| | J McGarrie | LGA |
| | Mr A Hodkinson | HSE |
| | Mr G Miller | HSE |
| | Mrs F Hirst | HSE |
| | Mr J Liggins | HSE |
| | Mr A Plom | HSE |
| | Mrs R Lack | HSE (minutes) |

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|-------------------|---------------|------|
| Apologies: | Mr E Shepherd | PCS |
| | L Stewart | FC |
| | J McAuley | FC |
| | P Elcoat | ISIA |
| | K Penfold | FC |

- 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES** **ACTION:**
- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were read out. Kevin Penfold (FC) has withdrawn from AFAG and Chairman proposed that we send him a letter thanking him for all his hard work during his time with AFAG. All agreed. **HSE**
- 1.2 Several new HSE staff were welcomed: Alan Plom who has replaced Eddie Marshall in the Agriculture and Food Sector, and is Head of Safety Section, based at Stoneleigh; Jason Liggins who is progressively taking over forestry from Gary Miller, based in Edinburgh, and Frances Hirst, who will be taking over the lead on arboriculture from Adrian Hodkinson. Adrian will be moving to HSE's Hazardous Installations Division in May and the Chairman expressed his gratitude to Adrian for all that he has contributed in his time in the Sector, adding that this will be a loss to the Sector. This was wholeheartedly endorsed by all the members, who wished Adrian well in his new post.
- 2. MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING DATE 10 NOVEMBER 2004** **ACTION:**
- 2.1 The minutes of the 7th meeting held on 10 November 2004 were discussed and agreed as follows:
- 2.3 **AFAG Strategy/Workplan** - This is now an agenda item. (5.2)
- 2.4 **Manual assistance when felling trees** - Members were disappointed that there are no clear guidelines as there are when chainsaws are used. The view of the members continues to be that the existing guidance should not be changed. (6.7)
- 2.5 **Update on Work at Height Regs** - Taken as read. (9.3)
- 2.6 **Steep slope working** - This is now an agenda item. (10.3)
- 2.7 **Working with electricity companies** - Southern Scottish Electricity Company (SSC) agreed in March that they will share their information related to this topic. (12.3)
- 2.8 **Working with electricity companies** - G Miller stated that when contractors carry out risk assessments they have to produce a justification document for all live working processes, copies should be made available if requested. S Richmond reported on Lantra's Utility Arboriculture Group. This includes contractors and gives them a forum to speak to the electricity companies. He suggested FC be represented on this Group. **Lantra** (12.5)

3. MATTERS ARISING

ACTION:

Progress on actions agreed at last meeting was outlined.

3.1 **Chain saw gloves** - J Brown reported back on the origin of wearing gloves being made mandatory. This originally arose in response to the high incidence of hand injuries although accident analysis by HSE indicated that many of the investigated injuries related to lack of training and non-use of a chain brake. The EN for gloves was produced in 1999 in response to advice to the European Standards Committee that testing methods for gloves were not uniform. For example SATRA used a different method to other EU countries.

3.2 Jim recommended that a relaxation of the rule that operators must wear gloves whilst using a chainsaw should be considered because:

- The majority of chainsaws are fitted with a chain brake;
- Gloves made to the current standard do not provide protection against the wet;
- Heated handles and anti-vibration mountings are widely available and used.

However, Jim and other Members recommended that AFAG should not be advising people *not* to wear gloves because this is important for some operations, and particularly during training. Also many arborists choose not to wear gloves.

3.4 The Chairman proposed to include this as a main item for discussion at the next meeting. A Hodgkinson reminded the meeting that it had been agreed that a working group be set up to progress this. It was agreed that J Brown would form a sub group and prepare a paper summarising the points made, as a basis for discussion at the next meeting. WG members to include Gary Miller, Jason Liggins, Keith Leech, and Simon Richmond. J Brown will consult them.

**Secretary
J Brown**

4. HSE PROGRAMME AND PROJECT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

ACTION:

4.1 The Chairman outlined the recent changes in HSE's structure and ways of working. He emphasised the pressure being placed on all Civil/Public Services to try to reduce resources whilst maintaining high levels of service. To help achieve this HSE would need to work in partnership with stakeholders. HSC/E has reviewed its allocation of resources and what the organisation can do to change and improve. HSC's Business Plan for 2005/06 was issued to members.

4.2 The Chairman then outlined the position with HSE's 'Revitalising' targets. We are now about half way through the 10-year period and the indications are that many of these will not be achieved. This has resulted in HSE now having a 3-year PSA target agreed with ministers. These are to reduce the number of fatalities and major injuries by 3%, ill health by 6%

and days lost by 9%, by 2008, HSE is focusing delivery of these reductions, through a series of Programmes based on the 3 separate targets and has restructured accordingly. This is illustrated in para 4 of the paper. All members should read this.

Members

- 4.3 As a consequence of combining the target for fatal and major injuries, agriculture is not a priority or stand-alone programme, but is now part of the 'Injury Reduction Programme', itself part of the over-arching 'FIT3' Programme. Page 2 of the paper describes the structure of these programmes and their inter-relationship. HSE has decided on 'horizontal' programmes focussing on hazards. The Sector had therefore recast the draft Ag Programme into a number of projects, contributing mainly to the injury reduction programme, but also the others.

- 4.4 The Chairman reassured members that agriculture is still an important part of HSE's work and that it will contribute in many ways to several of the projects. The Workplace Transport and Falls from Height programmes are particularly relevant to AFAG, as we will be helping to reduce and make a substantial impact on these targets. He praised all of his colleagues in the Sector for adapting quickly to the new way of working and their hard work preparing the projects and guidance to the field for the new work year. He was also confident that Arboriculture and Forestry would continue to be well served by HSE's operational resources.

- 4.6 Agriculture will be supported by a significant new resource in the field - Health and Safety Awareness Offices (HSAO's). Members were concerned this would lower the quality of service and influence of HSE, and asked if the HSAO's would provide technical and legal advice. The Chairman explained that the HSAO role was primarily advisory, but this is still very new. 'Expert' advice will still be available from inspectors.

- 4.7 B Hatton expressed concern about the quality of advice from HSE's InfoLine. On a few occasions when he or colleagues have used it they have been given incorrect advice. He was concerned that this advice would be followed which could lead to problems. Bruce said that he would like to see information highlighting where to go and who to speak to for accurate, clear, specialist advice in HSE. A Plom reported that InfoLine's function is being reviewed with a view to possibly expanding its role to include legal interpretation, rather than just general signposting to information. Any specific examples of wrong advice can be passed on by the Sector.

Members

5. AFAG STRATEGY/WORKPLAN 2005/08

ACTION:

To agree submission to the AIAC

- 5.1 Following the last meeting Adrian had circulated a revised draft. He had received no comments from Members, so the Chairman asked the group for their comments and agreement to submit it to the AIAC.
- 5.2 Following further discussion, the roles in respect of each 'project' set out

in Appendix 1 were finalised, as follows:

5.3 **Underlying causes of accidents and ill health** - The analysis needs to look at all available data, including any disclosable information from insurance companies, and to consider unreported incidents. This would also have implications for training. Emily agreed to champion this.

5.4 **Steep slope working** - N McKay will lead.

5.5 **Occupational Health** – Agreed A priority. B Hatton said he would be the overall champion with Paul Elcoat taking this forward in relation to tree climbing and musculo-skeletal disorders.

5.6 **Communication** - This needs to be looked at as a whole. B Hatton agreed to do this.

5.7 **AFAG 401**- S Richmond is to do further research on this and will champion.

5.8 B Hatton asked if there was any way of getting information from insurance companies about the types of accidents that people are claiming for. He was concerned that the arb industry is being penalised for non-treework related accidents eg for incidents involving tree climbers slipping when getting out of their vehicle. The Chairman agreed to look into this and report back.

R Nourish

5.9 **Rigging and dismantling** - Champion to be changed to F Hirst with the possibility of Jim Dewar assisting.

6 REPRESENTATION

ACTION:

6.1 A Plom outlined the 'HSE and LAs Working Together' Strategic Programme (SP). As well as LA's being major employers, contractors and intermediaries, over 400 LAs have responsibility for health and safety enforcement at many premises where arb activities are carried out. One of the aims of the SP is to get LA's involved in policy making at the outset, eg through consultation and representation on committees such as AFAG so we should consider inviting an LA representative.

6.2 All members agreed to this and that one representative should be sufficient. Preferably the individual will have experience of managing Tree Officers and the tree maintenance function within LAs, arranging contracts, etc, rather than just technical/operating skills. This group were also being invited to Safety Awareness Days, as part of the Sector's Arboriculture Project. A Plom to contact LACoRS (the body representing LAs nationally) for a nomination, but members were asked to let Alan know of anyone who might be suitable for this role.

**A Plom
/All
Members**

7 PUBLICATIONS AND GUIDANCE

ACTION:

7.1 G Miller is progressing the new publications and revised guidance. Seven titles had been reduced to 6. A final meeting was due on 16 May on the Cultivation and Excavator leaflets. The Firewood Process, Fire fighting and Debogging leaflets had all gone to DIAS/Communications Directorate. They have not been finalised yet as there are still some photographs that need to be dealt with.

7.2 The draft Utility Arboriculture leaflet is more or less complete but Gary would like any comments about this to be sent to him by the end of the month if possible. If anyone wants to add anything extra then please let Gary know asap. Adrian expressed concern that it was similar to the existing AFAG guide on Electricity (G55) and that the section relating to arboricultural work was very short. He felt that in its present state it would be difficult to justify its production. Gary said he would look at this and members were invited to comment before June. **All Members**

8 CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCE

8.1 B Hatton stated that there are proposals to review the way that Certificates of Competence are managed, for example, they could be renewed by reassessment after an appropriate period. Bruce broadly supported this proposal, but recognised the cost implications. He suggested that if reassessment was introduced, NPTC would obviously benefit financially and perhaps could be persuaded to put some of the money back into the industry. S Richmond confirmed that NPTC have considered reassessment, but have no plans to investigate further at present. **ACTION:**

8.2 Several other points were raised. Some people have old style certificates and have not undergone any re- training. Certificates that do not have an expiry date could be 15 years old. If an accident happens there is no way of showing where the training was carried out, or if there had been any refresher training. Unless it is made mandatory to refresh certificates, then people will not do it.

8.3 N McKay stated that there are more and more demands from employers to have a person who has had a certificate for less than 5 years and that he prefers the option of training to assessments.

8.4 S Richmond said there were two main points to consider: what the industry feel is needed and whether HSE will support any change. The Chairman emphasised that HSE are interested in promoting best practice and if the industry is in agreement on the way forward, then HSE is likely to fully support the changes. However further industry consultation is needed before changes can be introduced.

8.5 G Bonner added that the current system is not ideal as many trainees obtain their NPTC assessment asap without any further training after this. He felt that personnel records and training should be demonstrated

through CPD.

- 8.6 As there was no clear consensus as to what should happen next, the chairman proposed that if necessary HSE could facilitate meetings with NPTC and LANTRA. S Richmond agreed to look into the current situation in more detail and report back to the next meeting.

**S
Richmond**

- 8.7 It was agreed that a sub-heading of Training and Certification will be added under the item 'Examination of underlying and root causes' section in the workplan. G Bonner with B Hatton will champion this.

9 ACCEPTANCE OF EUROPEAN/WORLDWIDE QUALIFICATIONS.

ACTION:

- 9.1 This topic was previously briefly touched on in the item on Certificates of Competence. This has been discussed by some of the members and a group set up to take it forward.

- 9.2 S Richmond reported that highly skilled people do move from country to country to work but are finding it difficult due to different qualification requirements. NPTC recognise there is a need to look at this. S Richmond raised the fact that The European Arboriculture Council has 2 schemes – the European Treework and the European Technicians Certificate schemes. These have had a low uptake in this country as we already have a recognised qualification system. However, someone may come to this country to work with a European Treework Certificate but this may not be recognised as equivalent to NPTC. NPTC feel that it is worth resolving this issue. This was one of the main topics discussed at the first international conference on training, networking and partnership, held in February 2005. More information on this event and topic can be found at www.eduforest.org

- 9.3 A number of projects are being set up to explore the options available and S Richmond has a paper on this. He is interested in becoming involved in some of these.

- 9.4 As a result of severe storm damage in Sweden, people from all over the world have gone to work there. This work will finish in approx 18months when many people may want to come to work in the UK, but there may be a problem with their qualifications. There may also be a shortage of assessors if there is a sudden influx of people wanting to be trained. S Richmond is hoping that a more unified approach to qualifications will be adopted after the conference to deal with these problems.

- 9.5 There are also problems of language to consider. This can be overcome by adequate signage, posters and training eg to understand the meaning of a warning shout. It was agreed that we need to find a way of mapping each country's qualifications for specific jobs and compare them. J Dewar has spoken to his equivalents abroad and they have also agreed

- that mapping is the way to go. K Leech offered to produce a summary of the problem and S Richmond agreed to produce a brief outline of what was discussed at the meeting. **K Leech
S
Richmond**
- 9.6 It was agreed that a next possible step would be to produce a paper to inform Ministers. Mike Dudley heads the International Section of Forestry so he could be a point of contact.
- 9.7 J Dewar agreed that the FC will fund a mapping exercise and S Richmond will look at how this can be achieved. J Dewar will champion this work and liaise with S Richmond. **J Dewar
S
Richmond**
- 10 MOBILE ELEVATED WORKING PLATFORMS ACTION:**
- 10.1 There was a brief discussion about use of mewps for lowering cut sections. Bruce Hatton did not have all the information available and it was agreed that this subject would be discussed at the next meeting. Pictures were shown of a simple screen to separate a mewp operator from a chainsaw operator when sharing the platform basket. **Secretary**
- 11 STEEP SLOPE WORKING**
- 11.1 J Dewar introduced the subject of steep slope working. Some harvesters have overturned whilst trying to climb steep slopes and a working group had been set up to discuss this. Guidance on this issue will need to take into account that it is not simply the steepness of the slope that causes overturning, but local variations due to hollows, boulders etc or the effects of adverse weather conditions. The Group has looked at how best to get the guidance, including reinforcement of best practice out to the industry. They are also looking at training requirements as there is currently no specific training available. Draft guidance has been produced.
- 11.2 The Members discussed current advice as some machines are working over 40% and up to 60% with only one or two failures. Advice from machine manufacturers was variable. There was some information available about tilting cabs, but these are not recommended to work above 50%. It was agreed that AFAG should work alongside manufacturers to try to identify and establish best practice and guidance to work together.
- 11.3 K Leech pointed out that the inside of cabs need better protection, eg padded areas over sharp edges. He suggested that we should be looking at the standard of cabs but not presume that all would roll over.
- 11.4 N McKay suggested that we could try to get the manufacturers of the machines to attend a meeting to discuss the issues. However, some people thought that there might be problems with this approach and after some discussion it was agreed that this might not be the best course of action to take.
- 11.5 The Chairman observed that this has the making of a good piece of

guidance. The next steps would be to try to find a way of speaking to the manufacturers.

12 LONE WORKING

12.1 G Miller referred to a report he had presented on an inspection blitz 2 meetings ago which had identified lone working as a key issue. There has recently been a fatal accident where a man had been struck by a fallen tree and not found for some 6-7 hours. The Procurator Fiscal had criticised the system of work, but this was one commonly used.

12.2 It was agreed that specific assessments and controls need to be in place where lone working takes place. K Leech said the problem was how someone can find out if they are the last person working on a site. It has since been recommended that where possible two way radios should be used or to ensure that there is always a point of contact between workers.

13 A.O.B

13.1 S Richmond asked about the quantity of AFAG guidance leaflets available.

13.2 The Work at Height Regs came into force on 6 April. They aim to ensure that all work at height is properly managed. A brief guide to the Regulations is available, but there will not be a published ACoP. A compilation of “frequently asked questions” will be produced and posted on the HSE website.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14.1 The next meeting was proposed to be held at Forestry HQ, Corstophine Road, Edinburgh on Tuesday 18th October. However, this might clash with half term holidays in Scotland – Garry to check.