



*15th Meeting
15 October 2008
Edinburgh*

Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group

AFAG held its 15th meeting at the Forestry Commission HQ, Edinburgh on 15 October. The main aim of the meeting was to review progress on AFAG's current Workplan and to discuss in detail AFAG's Terms of Reference and Workplan for 2008-09 and beyond. The meeting was chaired by Alan Plom as Roger Nourish has recently moved to a new position in HSE's Hazardous Installations Division. Members recalled the effort and support that Roger has given to the industry through AFAG and wished him well in his new post.

Industry Update

AFAG acknowledged the current difficulties faced by the forestry industry following the collapse of orders from the building industry and competition from imported timber. Members agreed that this made AFAG's work, aiming to produce sensible, industry-led guidance, all the more relevant as it will help businesses to avoid the cost of accidents. Business Impact Assessments are required for any new initiatives and these would need to take account of the current financial situation.

New members

Two new members were welcomed to their first meeting – Imogen Mole representing the National Association of Tree Officers and Alex Laver representing the International Society of Arboriculture.

Research Update

Two important research projects have recently been completed:

- *Forestry intervention appraisal and evaluation framework*
- *Rigging and dismantling techniques in arboriculture.*

These will inform future AFAG guidance. The full reports will be published on HSE's Research webpage soon and summaries made available via the AFAG webpage and Treework News.

NPTC Review of Chainsaw Certification

The review of the current Certificates of Competence (CoC) has been delayed because qualifications are now required to be based on the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and the 'Sector Approved Profiles' (ie job descriptions) currently being produced by the Lantra (Sector Skills Council) Trees and Timber Industry Group. Any revisions to the CoC's have to be finalised for use by September 2009.

Many working in the industry have complained that the CoC's need to be changed to reflect current practices, but it is disappointing to note the lack of comments received from the industry on the draft proposals for the revised structure of chain saw units. It is not too late!

Trees & Timber Sector Approved Profiles (SAPs) & National Occupational Standards (NOS)

There has also been a poor response from the industry on the review of the NOS. Comments on this round were required by 30 October, but they are continually 'under review'. It is vital that people working in the industry have an input to the development of these 'task-based' descriptions as they determine the structure of training and qualifications. James Brown has recently taken over as chair of Lantra's Trees & Timber Group and is seeking new members to contribute to this process and AFAG has expressed its concern to Lantra SSC that few in the industry understand or appreciate the significance of these.

Project Updates

Causes of Accidents in Tree Work - Project Group to meet to discuss how to make best use of the findings of the research.

Training and Certification - Since the last AFAG meeting, the Arboriculture Industry Focus Group has met (chaired by Simon Richmond). This Group was tasked with looking at the feasibility of developing a system for the industry to record informal (on the job, etc) training as well as formal qualifications and other ways to demonstrate competence. Meanwhile James Brown (CONFOR) has been canvassing the views of the forestry industry. AFAG decided to convene a small group to devise a model 'questionnaire' to help employers ensure employees have the correct training and competence for the work required. The aim is to incorporate the questionnaire into a revised AFAG 805.

Work at Height - Work on revising AFAG 401 *Tree Climbing Operations* is almost complete. The Arb Association's *A guide to the use of MEWPs in arboriculture* has been published and is available from the Arb Assoc <http://www.trees.org.uk/publications.php>

Communications - The AFAG 'communities site' is now up and running at <http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagpublic/grouphome> This is for the public and those working in the industry and provides a platform for anyone:

- to highlight issues to AFAG;
- to actively participate in AFAG's work; and
- to find out what AFAG is doing and why.

Work is also underway to develop a **Tree Work website**. If you have any ideas on what you would like to see included on this site please contact Frances Hirst at frances.hirst@hse.gsi.gov.uk

New Work

Three new projects are being included in AFAG's Workplan for 2008/09:

- Reducing chainsaw accidents in tree work
- Safe tree work near overhead power lines
- Management of health and safety at forestry sites (including the roles of Forest Works Manager and Site Safety Coordinator & Lone Working)

Nb. Full details of the meeting including updates on all other AFAG Projects will be provided with the minutes available to AFAG Members via the Documents page on the AFAG members site:

<http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagmembers/grouphome>

Information on AFAG's activities will be posted on the 'open' AFAG website:

<http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagpublic/grouphome>

INTERESTED IN WHAT AFAG DOES? WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY? THEN REGISTER ON THE AFAG WEBSITE TO RECEIVE REGULAR UPDATES AND TO PROVIDE INPUT DIRECTLY INTO AFAG'S WORK WHENEVER YOU WISH.

<http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagpublic/grouphome>

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS AND SHARE YOUR IDEAS AND GOOD PRACTICE ACROSS THE INDUSTRY TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS.

Nb. All information provided at registration will be treated as confidential and will not be used by HSE or any other organisation for any other purpose.

For further information, contact Frances Hirst at frances.hirst@hse.gsi.gov.uk