



Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group

*AFAG News
Summary of
16th Meeting
21 May 2009*

This occasional Newsletter summarises the main issues discussed at the last AFAG meeting held at City & Guilds NPTC, Stoneleigh on 21 May 2009. Please circulate this widely.

The main aim of the meeting was to finalise AFAG's Terms of Reference and Workplan for 2009-10 and beyond and to review progress on the various Project Groups.

New members

Members welcomed Graeme Walker as the new chair. Graeme has recently taken over from Roger Nourish as Head of HSE's Agriculture and Food Sector. Three new industry members were also welcomed – Martin Lennon (NPTC Assessor/Trainer), Bruce Hamilton (Public and Commercial Services Union) and Graham Munford (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Rural Industries Group).

AFAG Projects - Updates

The AFAG Workplan and Progress Report on Projects will be updated and put on the AFAG website. Progress reported on a selection of AFAG's key projects included:

Causes of Accidents in Tree Work

The review of reported accidents is now complete. The work is to be taken forward by the following projects.

Training & Certification

AFAG 805 is to be revised to provide guidance for employers and employees on the value of recording on- the-job experience/continuous professional development (CPD), refresher training and to help and encourage clients to select and employ competent contractors.

Several AFAG members are involved in the European initiative to develop a European 'Chainsaw Certificate'. It is important that GB is actively involved as it requires standards of training across member states to be mapped. The current NPTC units are being used as a basis for comparison and the first assessment was piloted at a meeting in Germany on 16/6/09. Auditing will be required to maintain the integrity of the scheme and a council is to be set up to administer the initiative.

Reducing accidents involving chain saws.

This new Project Group will meet shortly to agree the scope, outcomes and timelines for the project. This will be linked into the FC's own review of chainsaw work and training.

Improving management of work at height

The AA's Guide to Good Climbing Practice is to be revised and will be linked to the drafting of a Guide to Good Rigging Practice. AFAG has also been asked to consider publishing guidance on the use of cranes in arboriculture. An article in a recent AA Newsletter invited further information, and the issue is also being discussed at the next ISA conference.

Machine-assisted takedown of trees

The research report is complete and just needs editing for release on HSE's website. AFAG leaflets 310 *Use of winches in directional felling and takedown* and 603 *Mechanical harvesting* will be revised by the working group and then circulated for consultation by the trade organisations.

Treework near Overhead Power Lines

This project has two elements - one relating specifically to mechanical harvesting and the other to general treework near OHPLs. The field research is waiting for a second forestry site to be identified. The guidance for arborists in AFAG 804 *Electricity at work: Forestry and arboriculture needs* strengthening and this will be addressed during the current revision.

Improving Management of H&S at Forestry Sites

Work on revising INDG 294 *Managing health and safety in forestry* is underway. This project was set up to clarify roles, in particular that of Site Safety Coordinators and a position paper is being drafted.

It also included identifying and sharing good practice on lone working, aiming to producing new AFAG guidance. However this will now become a separate but linked project. Industry will be invited to comment on this issue in due course.

Machinery Standards

The chair of the BSI committee AGE29, Hans Fairley, asked for volunteers from industry to join this committee, to bring their experience of using machinery. It represents GB in negotiations on European and international standards specifying the design of most of the key machines used in the treework industry. This is relevant to arboriculture as well as forestry, eg it was through this committee that top handled chainsaws were permitted and currently manufactured. This area is coming under scrutiny again and as most

existing members of the international committees are manufacturers (plus a few regulators) it is important users are adequately represented.

Updates on significant new developments and requests for comments on draft standards will be put on the Treework web site and alerts issued to subscribers of Treework News, as they arise.

For further information (or volunteers!), contact alan.plom@hse.gsi.gov.uk

Communications

Treework website

HSE has been developing a new Treework website, to make as much information and guidance readily available. The structure was demonstrated to AFAG members and was well received. The site was due to go live in the middle of June but due to essential further work in redesigning HSE's website, is now expected to be launched by 1 September 2009.

Short podcasts are also being developed based on material filmed at a Forestry Safety and Health Awareness Day (SHAD). These will also be made available via the Treework website. We will be seeking comments on their suitability and impact from people working in the industry. Watch this (virtual) space!

Research Update

The research report on Engaging arboriculture clients: Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs) is now available on HSE's web site:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr699.pdf>

Lantra Sector Skills Council - Trees and Timber Industry Group

The reinvigorated group met on 12 May 2009, under its new chair James Brown. Key actions for the group include looking at training requirements for new entrants to the industry, young people in the 14-15 age group and encouraging industry apprenticeships.

Events - Safety & Health Awareness Days (SHADs)

Engaging Arboricultural Contractors SHADs – Attendance is by direct invitation, sent to local authorities and other major clients in the area of each SHAD. Events already organised are being held at Coleg Gwent, Usk on 21 July 2009 and the following day at Sparsholt College, Hants. A further event is being planned for March 2010 in London (date and venue TBC).

Forestry SHADs – Three events were run in April/May this year. Feedback on their new more interactive format (involving working machines) has been good, so a similar format will be used at the next events. These are being planned for later in the year and will be held in Dyfed, Devon and Grampian -

dates and venues TBC. Invitations are sent out by industry trade organisations.

Further information on SHADs is available from Glenda.treneary@hse.gsi.gov.uk

IOSH Transport Safety Event - IOSH Rural Industries Group has organised a 'networking event' at the Forestry Commission's Visitor Centre, Cannock, Staffs on 22 July. This will include practical sessions assessing risks on 'user-worked' railway crossings, working near overhead power lines and trailer braking. If this event is a success, it is hoped that further events will be run in association with Network Rail for Authorised Users of rail crossings.

Details have been sent to all AFAG and AIAC members. See the IOSH website or contact alan.plom@hse.gsi.gov.uk for further details.

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AFAG PAPERS

Full details of the AFAG meeting including updates on all other AFAG Projects will be provided with the minutes to AFAG Members (only) via the Documents page on the AFAG members' site:

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

When agreed, the minutes, all committee papers and other general information on AFAG's activities are posted for anyone to access on HSE's 'open' AFAG webpage:

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

INTERESTED IN WHAT AFAG DOES? WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY?

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