

**Open Government status:** Fully open

**Paper Number:** M3/2002/12

**Exempt material:** None

**Meeting Date:** 6 November 2002

**Type of Paper:** Below the line

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION**

### **CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CONIAC)**

#### **REPORT FROM CONIAC SMALL FIRMS ADVISORY GROUP (SFAG)**

### **Summary**

**This paper reports on the SFAG meeting held on 27 June 2002**

#### **Issue**

1 This paper updates CONIAC members on discussions at SFAG meeting M2/2002 held on 27 June 2002. Unfortunately a number of members were unable to attend this meeting and a presentation on Occupational Health issues also had to be deferred due to the unavailability of a presenter.

#### **Grant Scheme**

2 The proposed pilot grant scheme to help small firms improve their health and safety performance has been of particular interest to the group with a previous presentation by HSE Small Firms Unit. The group was advised that proposals were still being developed but that advance information would be provided to members so that their organisations could alert small construction companies to the pilot scheme. Unfortunately advance information was not received prior to the release of a press notice on 29 July. This announced that the pilot grant scheme to be administered by the Small Business Services had been launched and would run until May 2003 in three regions - West Yorkshire, Essex and Devon and Cornwall<sup>1</sup>. The information was cascaded to members and feedback on any early applications will be discussed at the next SFAG meeting on 17 October 2002.

#### **Working Well Together**

3 Members discussed the bus tour, new initiatives including SADs, the November conference and the WWT awards. Members were asked to promote the awards to ensure a good number of responses.

#### **Vibration and Noise Directives**

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<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Executive have allocated £2 million pounds over the next 2 years (from April 2002) to rollout access to occupational health and safety support for employers and employees in SMEs across all occupational sectors throughout Scotland.

4 Members received a presentation on these two Directives from Graeme Royal having requested this at a previous meeting. No major issues arose.

### **White asbestos**

5 Recent press article ie in The Sunday Telegraph, had suggested that white asbestos did not pose a hazard to health. Members asked whether there would be a relaxation of the rules. The Federation of Small Builders had prompted the debate through some proposals about whether materials containing white asbestos should be included in the new laws. The Secretary subsequently ascertained that the DG had written to The Sunday Telegraph stating that the articles were misinformed, did little to increase public understanding of a very important occupational health issue and that not to include white asbestos in new laws would be irresponsible and against the public interest.

### **Action**

6 CONIAC members are asked to note the above report.

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