

Open Government status: Fully Open

Paper Number: M2/2006/4

Meeting Date: 20 July 2006

Type of Paper: Below the Line

Exempt material: None

Paper File Reference:

Intranet embargo: None

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CONIAC)

PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONIAC'S FIRST OPEN MEETING: 23 NOVEMBER 2006

Summary

This paper seeks CONIAC's agreement to an open meeting on 23 November 2006. It proposes that: the meeting be in Rose Court, with 30 public places; the format to follow HSC conventions on availability of agendas, papers, Minutes, observation at meetings and closed sessions; and there should be an opportunity to ask questions at an "open coffee break". It also offers HSE's website and Press Office as means of publicising the event and describes security arrangements.

Issue

1. This paper sets out, and seeks CONIAC agreement to, the proposed arrangements for CONIAC's first open meeting on 23 November 2006.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. That CONIAC agrees to the proposed arrangements for the open meeting, which are that:

- the meeting should be held in Rose Court;
- it should be publicised via the HSE website and HSE's Press Office;
- the number of public places should be limited to 30;
- the public should have observer status only, but with an opportunity for questions during the coffee break;
- HSC-agreed principles for closed sessions and papers should be applied; and

- The agenda and papers will be made available not less than 4 days before the meeting;

Background

4. CONIAC paper M1/2006/3 - "CONIAC OPEN MEETINGS" – (discussed at the March 2006 meeting) gave information on HSC's policy on openness and its advice to its Advisory Committees on holding open meetings. HSC encourages Advisory Committees to hold some open meetings during the year, where appropriate. CONIAC has not held a meeting where the public has been invited to listen to committee proceedings, although it, and HSE, have engaged with the industry in a wide variety of ways. CONIAC was asked whether it believed it would be appropriate to hold an open meeting and, if so, to discuss related issues (publicity, numbers to attend etc) set out in the paper.

5. Members were generally in favour of making all meetings open. They agreed that 23 November was a good choice for an initial open meeting since it would coincide with development of the launch process for the new CDM Regulations. The CONIAC Secretariat was asked to develop the detailed arrangements.

Suggested arrangements

6. Our proposed arrangements for the meeting are set out below. In arriving at them, we have adhered to the tried and tested arrangements for HSC open meetings.

Venue:

7. We are proposing a London venue on this occasion, because it would be helpful to see, in familiar circumstances, how the first open meeting works out. We will then be in a better position to manage a meeting in a non-London venue (if one is agreed for the future) and if necessary, adapt the arrangements based on this first experience.

8. CONIAC meetings are usually held in Rose Court (the Rose Room). For the November meeting, to facilitate the suggested discussion at the coffee break (see paragraph 12 below), we have made available both the Rose and the adjoining Globe Room (separated by a moveable partition).

Numbers attending:

9. Similar to the limitation on numbers for HSC open meetings, we propose that 30 places be made available on this occasion. The Rose and the Globe Rooms can seat these numbers comfortably.

10. We propose to set up a simple registration system, with places allocated on a "first come, first served" basis. If there is over-subscription, with numbers far exceeding demand, Members may wish to revisit the numbers restriction with a view to better accommodating the interest in the future.

Publicity and invitations:

11. HSE has a number of outlets available to publicise the meeting and invite people to register. HSE's Construction website is a popular site with a high number of "hits". We would be happy to use this, as well as the general HSE website where we could highlight the event both via a ticker tape message and an advertisement with a link to the details on the Construction website. The CDM webcommunity site is also available. HSE's Press Office can invite construction-sector journalists – limiting the number to 5 because of the total number of places available at this stage. CONIAC Members might wish to use these and/or other sources, but we would be grateful if you would advise the Secretariat in the first instance, so that registration arrangements can be synchronised.

Meeting format:

12. For the formal meeting, we propose that members of the public observe and listen to the discussion, i.e do not take part in the debate. However, an 'open coffee break', halfway through the session would give attendees an opportunity to meet with Members and officials in an informal setting and ask questions. This is the standard HSC format, but again, Members may wish to adapt this for later open meetings, for example – by having an open question and answer session at the end of proceedings. Closed sessions can be arranged when issues of a sensitive nature can be discussed.

Availability of papers prior to a meeting

13. Customarily, the CONIAC agenda and papers are placed on the HSE website after a meeting. Minutes are placed on the HSE website once formally cleared at the subsequent meeting. We recommend revising the arrangements for the agenda and papers in line with HSC procedures and making them available four working days before each meeting. Late papers can be put in the meeting room on the day.

14. The HSE agreed principles for closed sessions and papers are set out in HSC/05/40¹ and we advise that these criteria are applied to CONIAC open meetings. The paper describes how the exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act should be applied when deciding whether a paper, or part of it, should be closed and how those papers (and the agenda) should be handled at an open meeting.

Security:

15. Only people who have registered beforehand will be allowed in to the meeting. Members of the public will not be permitted to bring placards, banners or notices into the meeting room. Photography, video or sound recording of proceedings will not be permitted without permission. HSE's security staff will be fully briefed of the arrangements and will be provided with a list of those registered to attend, who in turn will be required to sign in at the front security desk.

Typical audiences at HSC or Advisory Committee meetings

16. During discussion of the CONIAC open meeting paper at its March 2006 meeting, Members sought information on typical audiences at HSC or IAC meetings. For HSC

¹ <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/hsc/meetings/2005/080305/c40.pdf>

meetings, they comprise individuals (usually with a health and safety role) from a broad range of organizations: trades unions, local authorities, universities and colleges, private companies and safety and health-related bodies, as well as members of the public. Attendees at IAC meetings are usually from the particular industry, but solicitors and insurance brokers who specialise in a particular sector have also taken an interest.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

17. The cost of supplying additional refreshments will be met within existing resources. No travel expenses are paid to members of the public attending open meetings.

Consultation

18. The Secretariat has taken advice from the HSC, other IAC Secretariats and HSE's Finance Unit.

Presentation

19. It is difficult to judge the level of interest that will be taken by journalists or the trade press. Construction-related matters usually give rise to a fair amount of public interest. The CDM legislative package will have been discussed and hopefully approved at the HSC's meeting in October, so unless more work is required there may be little of substance to discuss on the issue, apart from procedural matters of submitting the package to the Minister. However, launch and publicity arrangements will be firmly underway, which may warrant discussion of activities planned by CONIAC to support HSE in delivering its CDM Benefits Realisation Plan. The construction-sector public may well wish to hear of these developing arrangements.

Action

20. Members are asked to agree the proposed meeting arrangements (summarised in paragraph 3 above). The CONIAC Secretariat will firm up agreed arrangements and update Members well ahead of the November meeting.

Contact

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