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OIACHLG/07/M3

**HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION  
OFFSHORE INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
HELICOPTER LIAISON GROUP (OIAC HLG)**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2007, HSE, Rose Court,  
London SE1**

**Present**

Chair:	Steve Walker	HSE
Members:	John Monaghan	HCA
	Mike Crabb	HCA
	Dave Howson	CAA
	Kevin Payne	CAA
	John Taylor	Unite, TGWU Section
	Rab Wilson	Unite, Amicus Section
	John Monks	IADC
	Ian Evans	BROA
	Phil Wiggs	
Secretary:	Phil Sumner	

**Item 1 – Introduction/Apologies**

1. Apologies had been tendered by Mike Lunt (HSE), Peter Norton (BHAB) and Sarah Glover (OCA). No response had been received from Brian Teeder (Oil and Gas UK).

**Item 2 – Status of matters arising from minutes of previous meeting**

**ACTION 3/1: Sarah Glover to seek information from OPITO about whether training undertaken by HLO/HDAs covers awareness of helideck netting condition.**

A copy of a note provided by Sarah Glover was circulated to members. This stated that whilst the current version of the OPITO Handbook requires the HLO to check the condition of the helideck perimeter safety net it does not specify a method. Following detailed discussion, it was agreed to seek feedback from the forthcoming meeting of the Oil and Gas UK Aviation Safety Technical Group (ASTG) when progress towards implementation of the joint industry guidance on helideck netting testing would be considered. The issue would be carried forward as a substantive item to HLG's next meeting.

**CARRIED FORWARD TO NEXT MEETING AGENDA**

**ACTION 3/2: HSE to consider inclusion of an article in Teashack News highlighting action taken to improve helideck netting standards.**

The Chairman advised that an article would be included in Teashack News in due course when there was a clearer picture regarding implementation of the joint industry guidance on helideck netting testing.

**ACTION 3/3: HSE to request that its inspectors ask duty holders what checks they have in place to ensure the fitness for purpose of helideck netting and report back to HLG.**

The Chairman confirmed that HSE's inspectors had instructions to assess the adequacy of duty holders' arrangements for netting testing. These would be reassessed in the light of HLG's discussions and feedback from ASTG.

**ACTION 1 (MEETING 28/11/07): HSE to reconsider its instructions to inspectors on duty holders' arrangements for netting testing in the light of feedback from ASTG and implementation of joint industry guidance.**

**ACTION 4: HSE/CAA to table the Offshore Helideck Design Guidelines document for endorsement at HLG's next meeting.**

Covered on the agenda.

**ACTION 5: HCA to provide HSE with information and examples of manning practices in relation to specific NUIs.**

Covered on the agenda.

**Item 3 – UK Offshore Helicopter Safety Record 1977 – 2006**

2. Providing a brief summary of the updated report recently published by Oil and Gas UK, the Chairman noted that it painted a picture that offshore helicopter operations in the UKCS compared favourably with other offshore helicopter operations both in the North Sea and worldwide. In discussion, it was noted that the report's main message was that offshore helicopter travel was of the same order of safety as car travel. The Trade Union representatives believed the public's perception remained that helicopters were an unsafe environment even though the statistics suggested otherwise. Dave Howson noted the 50% increase in the average passenger fatality rate over the original study published in 2003, and cautioned against relying on the statistics too much.

#### **Item 4 – Helicopter/helideck issues at normally unattended installations**

3. The Chairman reported that HSE inspectors responsible for Southern North Sea installations felt it timely to reassess a range of issues concerning facilities on NUIs. He outlined the issues forming a package of work which were being taken forward. The Energy Institute had proposed a project to develop guidelines covering many of the areas of concern; HSE had given its support in principle to such a joint approach but would undertake work itself should the project not find sufficient support within EI to enable it to proceed.

4. In discussion, the following issues were identified by members as being relevant to HSE's review;

- In HCA's experience the frequency of operations to NUIs had reached the point where a new 'mid point' category between NUI and manned had evolved;
- The need for the provision of additional fire-fighting equipment to mitigate extra manning levels allowing all persons to escape in an emergency;
- The minimum fire-fighting equipment standard should be described by a risk assessment;
- The importance of having suitable fire-fighting media available - dry powder will extinguish a fire but not cool it.

5 John Monaghan provided an account of a recent demonstration of helideck fire-fighting using both dry powder and foam extinguishers fitted with a 12m hose, (rather than 4m which is generally fitted) which he had witnessed at RGIT Montrose. A copy of his report identifying a number of his concerns at certain aspects was provided to members for consideration.

6. Following this, Kevin Payne circulated copies of slides from Astech Safety, an aluminium helideck manufacturer based in the Far East, illustrating the DIFFS System, permitted in CAP 437 as an alternative means of compliance to traditional fixed monitor systems. Copies of the slides are attached to these minutes. The presentation also addressed a method of fire-suppression based on a passive fire-retarding concept permitted, under CAP 437, for NUI platforms without an adequate power supply. (A passive system has been installed on Shell's Carrack UKCS platform).

7. The Chairman thanked members for their contributions, confirming that the issues and areas of concern identified would be taken into account in HSE's review.

#### **Item 5 – Update of the Offshore Helideck Design Guide**

8. Kevin Payne outlined the approach to the review being undertaken jointly by CAA and HSE. The Chairman invited comments from members in respect of the updates to Chapters 1 – 8 which had already been circulated to members for comments. In discussion a number of detailed comments were provided by John Monaghan which were noted by Kevin Payne. In response

to concerns expressed by John Taylor, the Chairman confirmed that as the guidelines represented 'best practice', the removal of text which was duplicated in other documents, e.g. in the UKOOA Helideck Management Guidelines and CAP 437, would not reduce its force. Any 'aspirational' areas for possible higher standards than provided for in the Guidelines would be considered as part of the review.

9. John Monaghan requested that HSE reconsider the requirement to establish adequate audit arrangements (insofar as it related to helidecks), within the Offshore Legislation section of Chapter 4.

**ACTION 2: HSE (Mike Lunt) to reconsider the requirements for audit arrangements in Chapter 4.2.2.2 of the revised Guidelines.**

#### **Item 6 – Changes to ICAO Annex 14, Volume 2**

10. Kevin Payne circulated a briefing note summarising the main proposals arising from work in progress since 2004 by ICAO's Heliport Design Working Group for the amendment of ICAO Annex 14 Volume 2 as they related to offshore helidecks and shipboard heliports. He advised that these were intended to apply only to new helidecks completed on or after 1 January 2012. Following completion of the current consultation with member states, the changes were due to be published in 2008. **Post meeting note:** Following the State letter consultation process, completed in December 2007, the ICAO Secretariat has stated that these proposals will not be published and adopted until 2009.

#### **Item 7 – HSE offshore helideck inspection programme**

11. There was nothing to add to the report provided at HLG's previous meeting.

#### **Item 8 – Feedback from HCA helideck inspection programme**

12. John Monaghan reported that HCA had undertaken a survey of the attitude of helicopter pilots towards helideck issues during Summer 2007. Initial results showed good feedback which combined with HCA's own findings, confirmed the trend of a continuing improvement in standards. Mike Crabb noted that helicopter operators and pilots were now showing greater responsiveness towards helideck conditions as reported by HCA in its inspection reports.

13. Kevin Payne advised that his own audit of a sample of recent HCA inspection reports confirmed a substantial improvement in the standards reported in previous inspections (i.e. a downward trend was confirmed based on a comparative measure of the number of non-compliances raised during consecutive inspection cycles). Two notable exceptions were operations to NUIs and perimeter nets.

## **Item 9 – International Helicopter Safety Team**

14. Held over until the next meeting.

## **Item 10 – Research update**

15. Dave Howson circulated an update of projects in progress under the joint industry HSRMC research programme, briefly describing the position on each. The update is attached to these minutes. Regarding the work to define a minimum performance standard for rebreathers (EBS), John Taylor noted that offshore workers felt more confident and positive about helicopter travel following their EBS training.

## **Item 11 – HLG annual report to OIAC**

16. The Chairman advised that HLG was required to present a report on its activities during 2007 to OIAC's next meeting in March 2008. HSE would circulate a draft report reflecting HLG's usefulness and benefits for members' comments.

## **Item 12 – AOB**

17. The Secretary advised that HSE had substantial stocks of the leaflet 'How offshore helicopter travel is regulated' remaining and invited members to notify him of any further needs within their organisations. It was agreed to contact organisations such as offshore training bodies who had previously taken copies, with a view to disbursing further quantities.

18. The Chairman advised that OSD was updating its offshore aviation strategy. He proposed tabling this at HLG's next meeting.

## **Item 13 – Timing of future meetings, including possible agenda items**

19. It was agreed to continue with the cycle of twice yearly meetings. Meetings in 2008 would be held on 4 June and 26 November, both taking place in London.

Items identified for inclusion were;

- Helideck netting issues
- Helicopter/helideck issues at normally unattended installations
- Offshore Helideck Design Guidelines update
- International helicopter safety team
- HCA inspection programme (including results from the pilots' survey)
- HSE helideck inspection programme
- HSE aviation topic strategy
- Research update

The Chairman invited members to identify items for inclusion in possible external presentations.

## **ACTIONS**

**ACTION 1: HSE to reconsider its instructions to inspectors on duty holders' arrangements for helideck netting testing in the light of feedback from ASTG and implementation of joint industry guidance.**

**ACTION 2: HSE (Mike Lunt) to reconsider the requirement for audit arrangements in Chapter 4.2.2.2 of the revised Helideck Design Guidelines.**