

Small Business Trade Association Forum Minutes

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Small Business Trade Association Forum	
Minutes of the Meeting of the Small Business Trade Association Forum, held on 17 January 2006 in the Hope Room, Rose Court.	
<p>Present</p> <p>Judith Donovan CBE, Chairman</p> <p>British Chambers of Commerce British Constructional Steelwork Association British Glass Manufacturers' Confederation British Wood Preserving and Damp Proofing Association Electrical Contractors' Association Federation of Small Business Forum of Private Business National Hairdressers' Federation Quarry Products Association Vehicle Builders and Repairs' Association</p> <p>Apologies</p> <p>British Coatings Federation British Dental Association British Hospitality Association British International Freight Association British Retail Consortium British Woodworking Federation Confederation of British Industry Construction Plant Hire Association Engineering Employers' Federation Federation of Master Builders Federation Of Tour Operators Hair and Beauty Industry Association Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association Institute of Directors National Association of Shopfitters National Care Homes Association National Farmers' Union National Federation Of Retail Newsagents Registered Nursing Home Association Road Haulage Association Rural and Industrial Design and Building Association Small Business Bureau</p>	<p>Officials Present</p> <p>Jenny Eastabrook (Head of Cross Cutting Interventions Division)</p> <p>Debra MacLeod Louisa McNamara Meena Sharma</p>

1.	Introductions and apologies
1.1	<p>Judith Donovan welcomed both existing and new members to the meeting.</p> <p>Since October's meeting, five new organisations have joined the Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural and Industrial Design and Building Association • British Glass Manufacturers' Confederation • National Association of Shopfitters • Quarry Products Association • British Constructional Steelwork Association
2.	Minutes of the last meeting
2.1	Members approved the minutes.
2.2	Debra MacLeod drew members' attention to an item in the update paper which marked a success for the Forum. Following discussion at the last meeting on priced publications, HSE's Communications Delivery Service has agreed to offer a significant discount of just over 30% to Forum members for bulk orders of the publication Essentials. Forum members can also order bulk copies of free leaflets at no cost.
2.3	Debra thanked those members who took part in the recent SBTAF external evaluation exercise. Interviews have now been completed and a report of the key findings is being drawn up. Full feedback will be given at the next Forum meeting.
3	Sensible Risk Assessment
3.1	Steve Pointer gave a presentation on the principles of sensible risk management, which HSE is developing. Steve explained that HSE is trying to explain clearly what managing risks sensibly is and is not about. Steve explained that it is not about banning people from using ladders or trapeze artists wearing hard hats, but about managing risks by applying sensible measures. The principles will be launched for consultation at Easter. HSE is also updating its guidance on risk assessment and Steve circulated two alternative drafts for comment outside the meeting on which general approach was more useful.
3.2	There was general consensus amongst the Forum that a key issue was that some managers in small firms were loathe to sign off risk assessments because of fears that they would be held responsible should something happen. The Forum agreed that guidance should address this misconception. The document should make clear that signing off a risk assessment does not imply individual responsibility, should an accident occur. Members felt that it should also be made clear that risk assessment does not have to be a specialist task and that someone who is conversant with the job can complete a risk assessment in many instances.
3.3	<p>Forum members agreed that any guidance should be kept simple and should include information relating to employee and employer responsibilities. It would also be helpful for the final document to explain that risk assessment is not about passing the buck, to include information on residual risk and director's duties, and to include worked examples to help people follow the steps.</p> <p>Steve confirmed that the language would be kept short and simple and the final document would include examples.</p>

4	Health and Safety 'Proof of competence'
4.1	Paul Reeve from the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) presented to members an overview of a recent joint initiative with HSE. Paul identified that there is a proliferation of health and safety pre-qualification schemes which are used to ensure certain standards of health and safety. Although these schemes act as a quality assurance and are potentially very helpful to small business, by making choosing contractors easier, or winning contracts easier, it was probably unnecessarily bureaucratic and costly for small firms if they were required to comply with a number of different schemes. There was a perceived uncertainty about which scheme was best to apply for, and concern about duplication of effort and cost for small business which reinforced negative feelings about health and safety generally as an overly bureaucratic process.
4.2	Working with colleagues, and taking support from the Major Contractors Group (MCG) and Construction Health and Safety (CHAS) along with John Carpenter's report for HSE (http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr422.htm), the Specialist Engineering Contractors group (SEC) has developed core criteria and core questions to establish contractors' competence, which they have submitted to HSE for consideration. Paul emphasised that the aim of these suggestions was not to change schemes that already exist, but to consider ways whereby schemes can be mutually recognised to avoid duplication.
4.3	Jenny Eastabrook confirmed that these proposals have been included in HSE's draft simplification plan and are under consideration. However, there are key issues that need to be worked through and resolved before HSE can formally support a scheme, including the balance of benefits as between sector specific and generic schemes; and the impact on commercial providers. Jenny confirmed that HSE would welcome Forum members' input on pre-qualification schemes in their industries.
5	Workplace Health Connect (WHC)
5.1	Elizabeth Gyngell (Better Health at Work Division) updated members on the launch plan and promotional campaign for Workplace Health Connect. The service, which is aimed specifically at businesses in England and Wales with between five and 250 workers, will be launched on 23 February 2006. A separate scheme, 'Healthy Working Lives' is being piloted in Scotland and this will mesh with WHC.
5.2	The service will cover provision of advice on occupational health and safety and return to work. Elizabeth emphasised that the service is run in partnership with HSE and is confidential so an inspection by HSE will not occur as a result of contact. Elizabeth assured members that the confidential service will provide some advice on sickness absence management and advisors will be appropriately trained. Should employment law issues arise, callers will be signposted to another organisation that can give advice on these issues.
5.3	Elizabeth informed members that the marketing campaign for the launch is underway at the moment, so there are real opportunities for members to become involved in promoting the service. Leaflets will be available and there will also be regional press and local radio advertising. The pathfinders will also set up regional stakeholder councils to promote the service locally. Elizabeth asked the Forum to alert their members and to contact Secretariat if they would like any material.
5.4	Further information on WHC can be found at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/workplacehealth/index.htm
6	Better Business promotion campaign

6.1	<p>Max Howard (Communications Directorate) gave a presentation on the current HSE campaign aimed at SMEs. The <i>Better Business</i> campaign is based on a successful campaign HSE ran in 2005, which promoted the business case for effective health and safety management. The current campaign has a particular focus on businesses with 10-50 employees, and highlights the potential bottom line benefits of introducing simple steps to manage health and safety in the workplace. The average cost of injury or ill-health related absence from work is around £1,200, but having good health and safety management at work can save businesses money and bring increased productivity. The intention is to persuade employers that effective health and safety precautions don't have to be costly, time consuming, or complicated; they can be simple and easy to start.</p>
6.2	<p>The campaign will run throughout 2006 in several phases. The first phase includes press and radio advertising, a dedicated microsite (www.hse.gov.uk/betterbusiness) and a range of PR activity at national and regional level. The next phase will continue with PR activity and focus on the development of further evidence of the business benefits in the form of case studies.</p>
6.3	<p>Debra thanked those Forum members who had put forward case studies to be used in the campaign. Debra informed colleagues that she is happy to provide text on the campaign for members to use in their own publications.</p>
7	<p>Members' opportunity to raise 'hot' topics</p>
7.1	<p>The issue of the potential impact of the proposed revisions to client duties in the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (CDM) was raised. Members were informed that HSE has appointed a secondee, Tim Kind, in a personal capacity, to help assess the impact on small/one off construction clients.</p>
7.2	<p>Members were informed that the CDM Regulations 1994 are under review with the Health and Safety Commission having issued a consultative document outlining proposed revisions in April 2005. The aim of the revision programme is to simplify the regulations to improve clarity, so making it easier for duty holders to know what is expected of them.</p> <p>The proposed regulations build on the established general principles of the existing CDM regulations and take account of responses to the 2002 Discussion Document <i>'Revitalising Health and Safety in Construction'</i> and other feedback from industry. They aim to improve the management of risk in construction by ensuring that responsibility is placed with those in the best position to influence or manage it.</p> <p>The proposals recognise in particular the key role that clients have on the whole process, and clients will be given a new duty to ensure that suitable project management arrangements are in place throughout the project life. It would not, however, be reasonable or sensible to expect clients to become experts in construction health and safety, or to take on the management of construction projects, and therefore the regulations propose a new role- that of the health and safety co-ordinator- to advise and assist the client.</p> <p>Tim alerted the Forum that he would be seeking their views and the views of their own members, amongst other stakeholders, to feed into his report, which will be completed by the end of March 2006.</p>

7.3	There was some brief discussion of the proposals. Members from different industry sectors raised differing views. Some had concerns about the level of duty of care that these proposals place on the client. These views will be followed up outside the meeting.
7.4	The secretariat agreed to circulate an email to all members covering the proposals and the basics of CDM for considered response by members.
8	AOB
	No issues raised.
9	Meeting round up and close
	The next meeting will take place on 11 April 2006. Geoffrey Podger, HSE's newly appointed Chief Executive will also attend.
Actions	<p>Secretariat to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate electronically both versions of the five steps to risk assessment • To ensure Forum members have access to the press releases announcing the Workplace Health Connect service and the Better Business Campaign, short notes on WHC and the campaign for use in member briefings or magazines, and electronic copies of the advertisements for use in their own promotion work • Circulate a note to members covering the CDM regulations and proposed revisions <p>Forum members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • send comments on the draft five steps to risk assessment to Steve Pointer (steve.pointer@hse.gsi.gov.uk) by 7 February, either direct or through the secretariat. • inform the secretariat about pre-qualification schemes in their industries. • alert their own members to the current Better Business campaign, tools and support materials • tell the Secretariat of any PR opportunities they may be aware of e.g. events they are running • share details of potential case studies - organisations that have successfully introduced health and safety in their workplace and reaped the rewards. • contact Secretariat if they would like copies of Workplace Health Connect leaflets

To contact the Small Business Trade Association Forum Secretariat, please email sbtaf.secretariat@hse.gsi.gov.uk or telephone 020 7717 6319