



**To:** Directors of Environmental Health/Chief Environmental Health Officers responsible for health and safety enforcement in District, Unitary or Island Councils, London Boroughs and Metropolitan District Councils.

15 October 2007

Dear Colleague

## **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN HSE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

As joint-chairs of HELA we are writing to provide you with an update on the LA/HSE partnership, and to seek your help.

In short, we believe the partnership is flourishing demonstrating real benefits for health and safety by working together rather than separately, although we have yet to reach the point at which it becomes self-sustaining. The following link will take you to a recent review by HSE and LACoRS, which sets out the key achievements and future challenges (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/lau/lahse.pdf>). We are also attaching the summary of that report to this letter.

We are particularly appreciative of the local authority resources committed so far and the contribution this has made to Fit3 delivery and progress towards achievement of national targets and delivery of sensible health and safety enforcement.

A detailed plan for the partnership, discussed at HELA, is also available via: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/hela/010307/h3\\_06.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/hela/010307/h3_06.pdf). This plan takes the central activities aimed at supporting and building the partnership through to April 2008. Field programmes for 2008-09 are also currently being discussed between HSE policy and partnership teams and LACoRS colleagues, and with your staff through the established local planning arrangements.

You will be well aware of the current work by BERR on the establishment of the LBRO, and the related interest in LA regulatory services. We believe that the LA/HSE partnership provides a good model for the relationship between central and local regulators, but we acknowledge that the development of the partnership has to take full account of the "better regulation" agenda. We would ask for your tolerance of any related impact this emerging policy may have on developing the partnership.

We would also ask for your help on two further specific matters. We intend to conduct an evaluation of the partnership in summer 2008. Much of this will rely on "soft" information about relationships, communications, attitudes and the like. We should be grateful for your co-operation, and that of your staff, as we try to gather this information in the coming months. Second, we are this year running a number of regional conferences about building the partnership, rather than the single event we have held in the past few years. The

events run from 24<sup>th</sup> October to 4<sup>th</sup> December and we hope that you and your councillors in particular will support them. Further information is available at:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/lau/events/lacorsevents07.htm>

More generally, we are grateful for your continued support for the partnership. We should be very happy to receive any views and comments on the partnership, or those provoked by the documents referred to in this letter. Please send them to Gareth Broughton, Acting Head of the Local Authority Unit, at [gareth.broughton@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gareth.broughton@hse.gsi.gov.uk) or to [LAU.enquiries@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:LAU.enquiries@hse.gsi.gov.uk).



Paul Unsworth  
LA - Joint Chair of HELA  
Chair of LACoRS Health and Safety Policy



Justin McCracken  
HSE - Joint Chair of HELA  
HSE – Deputy Chief Executive (Operations)

Extract/summary note from:

## **THE LA/HSE PARTNERSHIP – A STOCKTAKE**

A note by Phil Scott, HSE, and Mark DuVal, LACoRS

### **Why this stocktake?**

This note sets out our view of the current state of the LA/HSE partnership. It reports the activities and achievements of 2006-07 (the first year in which operational plans were systematically drawn up to include the partnership) against an overall assessment of the health of the partnership, the underpinning arrangements, and current challenges. The note foreshadows a fuller evaluation of the partnership which has been planned for next summer.

This stocktake was promised following HSE's "Fundamental Review" as a timely milestone along the partnership road. As well as the value of keeping a collective eye on progress, and on the costs and benefits of the partnership, this note has four further related objectives:

- to contribute to the high-level communications about the partnership, with Local Government and in HSC/E, and with the other stakeholders who have an interest, such as BRE, other regulators and the devolved administrations);
- to fulfil a commitment to HSC/LGP (the senior/political level governance forum for the partnership) to provide a review of partnership progress for their meeting in autumn 2007;
- to provide an up-to-date setting for the process of partnership planning for 2008-09;
- to seek a steer on the approach to the evaluation due next year.

We have aimed to keep the core issues from the stocktake relatively short. However, our wish also to do justice to the range and substance of partnership activities in the field, and to provide a progress report on the main workstreams, has resulted in a couple of substantial annexes. We assume that readers will be aware of the background and early history of the partnership. There is considerable material for those who wish to remind themselves of this, much of it available electronically. A short list of relevant documents is at Annex 1.

### **Our current view of the partnership**

We would like to offer our own assessment of the current state of the partnership, against which readers may judge the information, views and comments which follow. We believe that:

- the partnership is well on the way to becoming embedded as "the way we do business". New governance arrangements, after one or two "wobbles", are now working well. Strong support from the HSC, HSE senior staff, and local government institutions remains the bedrock on which continued progress can be built;

- **there is a significant body of partnership activities – joint plans, projects, initiatives, trials and routine business – taking place in the field, aimed squarely at the health and safety targets which we share. There is growing acknowledgement that the LA contribution to the HSC programmes and priorities – hundreds of staff-years of effort – is vital, rather than simply a “nice to have”;**
- **the relationships which underpin this work, at the centre and in the field, have improved out of all recognition from the very patchy picture which existed before the partnership programme, though challenges remain on both sides;**
- **the relatively low priority given to health and safety regulation by local authorities, against their many other responsibilities and local community priorities, means that we will always need work hard with councillors and LA senior managers to maintain the profile and importance of health and safety;**
- **we are nevertheless encouraged by the positive reaction to the partnership by other regulators and those involved in the Better Regulation agenda, and we continue to see our contribution to this work as a priority. There are however some weighty “better regulation” issues to be resolved, not least in ensuring consistent risk-based approaches to inspection, investigation and enforcement practice, and in regulating large, multi-site businesses effectively and efficiently;**
- **there remain other significant challenges – the level of resources required to maintain the partnership’s momentum; communications between LAs and HSE, and within both “organisations”; finding better ways of identifying, reporting on, and giving credit to the substantial efforts made by LAs; and not least, the need for LAs to respond to local priorities alongside those set from the centre – public safety being a good example of an issue which is a priority for LAs whereas (major hazard risks aside) it is not a major objective of the Commission’s strategy;**
- **the changing relationship between the devolved administrations and their local authorities represents a further, political, challenge to which the partnership is likely to need to respond;**
- **we have a reasonably robust basis (a “balanced scorecard” approach) for undertaking the fuller assessment of the partnership planned for next summer. This will aim to include such “hard” measures of costs and benefits as we can reasonably determine.**

Mark DuVal      Phil Scott

August 2007