

**PARTNERSHIP ON HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SCOTLAND
NOTE OF THE 3rd MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE
ON 6th APRIL 2006**

In attendance:

Margaret Burns, HSC (Chair)
Stewart Campbell, HSE Director, Scotland
Alistair Dodds, Highland Council (Local Authorities as employers)
Harry Frew, UCATT and STUC
Douglas Greig, Scottish Executive, Department of Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, Enterprise and Industry Division
Prof Russel Griggs, CBI Scotland
Ian Lavery, Glasgow City Council (Local Authorities as employers)
Rory Mackail, Scottish Federation of Small Businesses
Dr Karen McDonnell, representing Occupational Health and Safety professionals
Aileen Simpson, Delivery Manager, Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives (in place of Steve Bell)
Ian Tasker, STUC
Sarah Jones, HSE, Director's Office, Scotland (Secretary)
Danny Carrigan, HSC (observer)
Jackie Wood, GNN Scotland (observer)
Billie Wilson, HSE (Committee secretariat)

Apologies:

James Fowlie, COSLA
Linda Shanahan, STUC & FBU
Steve Bell, SCHWL

Welcome and introductions

1. Margaret Burns welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced Alistair Dodd and Ian Lavery as new members of the steering committee representing local authorities as major employers and Aileen Simpson, newly appointed Delivery Manager at the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives.

Minutes

2. These were agreed as published. Members confirmed that they were happy to comment on a draft circulated by e-mail before the minutes were published on HSE's website. This would happen as soon as practicable after each meeting.

Matters arising

Closer working between HSE and LAs

3.1 The pilot of the HSE and LA joint warranting in the Western Isles was still in progress. It was agreed to have an item on HSE/LA partnership working at the next meeting.

Establishing a sub-group on the Scottish evidence base

3.2 Potential members from a range of interests and organisations had been invited to attend a first meeting on 12 May. Membership from the Scottish Executive was clarified as needing to come from health analysis and policy rather than enterprise and lifelong learning. Scottish Enterprise might want to be represented as well.

Producing a directory of OHS resources

3.3 Karen McDonnell reported POOSH Scotland's work to gather data on OHS expertise across Scotland from professional bodies and groups. The response had been good with six organisations so far responding. Information from REHIS was still awaited and information on occupational psychologists would be forthcoming in April. The committee discussed how the information gathered could be organised and made available. Qualifications on its use and usefulness included the need to clarify whether practitioners registered or residing in Scotland were actually practising here; their capacity to take on additional work (eg they might already be employed full time within a particular business or on a corporate contract); and their willingness to have their name and details published as part of a directory. It was agreed to regard the individual-based data as having the potential to (a) improve awareness of the range of expertise available to employers and therefore the need for them to be an 'intelligent customer' of OHS services within an effective health and safety management system; and (b) improve access to expertise provided the above caveats could be addressed. Once POOSH Scotland had ensured that the data was as complete as possible based on what individual organisations could offer, the committee would consider the next steps. The data was also a welcome update of previous collective knowledge of OHS resources and could help to identify gaps that the Partnership might want to take action to address.

Action: Karen to progress with the help of POOSH Scotland.

Worker involvement

3.4 Ian Tasker expressed the STUC's disappointment at failing to get 3rd round funding to continue work within the voluntary and social enterprise sector. Whatever the future of the Workers Safety Adviser Challenge Fund there were some valuable lessons for Scotland (and the rest of Great Britain) emerging from the project to improve worker involvement within this sector, not least a lack of access to competent health and safety advice. Ian would speak to James Fowle about this problem. The full evaluation of the 2nd round – which the STUC had contributed to – was due to be published soon. The committee was made aware of the forthcoming HSE consultation on options for improving worker involvement which included for example possible regulation on a requirement to consult safety representatives on risk assessment. Meetings would be held around the country as part of the consultation exercise. Ian and Harry reported continuing reluctance on the part of some employers to the involvement of workers in health and safety despite evidence that it could improve performance and have other employee relations benefits. Stewart proposed that business and trade union members of the Partnership arrange a meeting to see if a consensus was possible on the next steps to encourage worker involvement in Scotland. Experience varied considerably by sector. Douglas suggested an approach to the Scottish Manufacturing Advisory Service to see if a partnership-type agreement could be reached in that sector. Alistair highlighted the charter of rights and responsibilities agreed between Highland Council and their trade unions.

Action: Ian to arrange for case studies to be supplied for posting on the Partnership pages of the HSE Scotland website. Business and trade union members to consider the way forward. Ian to speak to James about health and safety support for voluntary and social enterprise sector businesses.

A small business strategy

3.5 Rory Mackail reported that the FSB were currently piloting a new survey tool with their members. In theory, a subset of questions for FSB's Scottish members on communication of sensible health and safety could be incorporated in the roll out. Russel said that the Scottish Enterprise was currently considering the specifications for retendering delivery of small business support. It could be timely for the Partnership to seek the inclusion of basic health and safety messages in training and support packages.

Action: Douglas/Russel to effect an introduction for Margaret to Terry Curry, Scottish Executive's High Growth Manager with a view to arranging a meeting.

Good neighbour scheme with businesses and colleges

3.6 Russel reported that Dumfries and Galloway had agreed to partner their own part time health and safety adviser with the health and safety officer at Faslane naval base to share experience and best practice. It was hoped to be able to report on the value of this exchange at the next meeting with a view to developing some criteria for generic guidance on good neighbour schemes. Sarah would try to meet CHASTE to get their views on what kind of mutual support would be helpful in improving health and safety understanding and performance within the tertiary education sector.

Action: Russel to report experience at the next meeting. Secretary to meet CHASTE.

The aquaculture sector

3.7 Margaret had now written to the chair of the new Fish Farming/Aquaculture Health and Safety Committee (FFAHSC) welcoming their initiative and asking to be kept apprised of their plans and progress.

Media strategy

3.8 Jackie Wood, GNN asked for feedback on any internal communications about the role of the Partnership within member organisations and reminded members to provide their press office contact details to help co-ordinate media approaches when appropriate.

Plans for a second Partnership conference

3.9 Discussion on the issues in the paper lead to the conclusion that a better alternative to a stand alone conference - around the agreed theme of the contribution that good health and safety and risk management can make to smart, successful Scotland - might be to seek participation in other key events in the Scottish diary. The aim would be to 'mainstream' messages about the value to business and the Scottish economy of investment in health and safety. Members were asked to identify events with the potential to receive the health and safety message and at which we might offer a speaker, and to notify the Secretary.

Action: Members to notify the Secretary of relevant events and opportunities. Secretary to produce a diary of events and to help secure invitations to the Partnership to provide speakers.

Better regulation agenda – impact in Scotland

4. Douglas Greig explained the Scottish Executive's response and how it differed in some important respects to the programme in England and Wales. The Scottish Executive already had a number of initiatives to improve the environment in which businesses operate. The aim in Scotland would be to address specific issues identified in consultation with businesses via the forum chaired by Russel for example, as opposed to adopting universal measures whose impact was unclear. In addition, DTI plans for a statutory Local Better Regulation Office might not be implemented in Scotland in quite the same way as it was difficult to see how such a mechanism could easily influence policy and practice across reserved and devolved boundaries. There had been discussions about a range of cross-regulator issues and HSE and the Scottish Executive intended to examine the options for better coordination. In discussion it was agreed that there was no role for the Partnership at this stage but Douglas and Stewart would keep members up to date on emerging issues. In the context of the review of penalties, there had been discussions between interested groups in Scotland with the McCrory team examining this issue nationally and HSE was organising a seminar in June to discuss the issue from a health and safety perspective

Action: Douglas and Stewart to ensure Partnership interests represented as appropriate and update members.

Public services workshops

5. PHASS/03/07 outlined plans for a series of workshops as part of HSE's programme of work with the public sector. The paper was noted.

Factors Influencing Scotland's Construction Accidents (FISCA)

6. The long-awaited research report which looked at the apparently higher rates of accidents in the Scottish construction industry compared with other parts of GB had been launched earlier in the week. It found that the historical higher rates could be explained by the finding that Scotland had a larger proportion of manual workers (who were therefore exposed to higher risk) as opposed to office workers. In other words, Construction workers in Scotland are generally not exposed to greater risks than their counterparts in the rest of GB. The research did however provide insights into the range of risks associated with different skills and occupations in the industry which was being addressed by HSE's GB-wide construction programme. There was one particular finding that suggested that the industry might benefit from more intensive training in the correct use of system scaffold. The full report was commended to members. The new Evidence sub-group might wish to study the report's methodology for its application to other important Scottish industries. It was agreed that Margaret would write to Allan Wilson, Deputy Minister for Transport and Lifelong Learning with a copy of the report. The good news was that more recent trends showed that major injuries in Scottish construction were falling and had fallen below the GB average. The challenge would be to reduce this still further, as well as to tackle fatal injuries, against a background of increasing migrant labour in Scotland.

Action: Margaret to write to the Minister with a copy of the report. Evidence and Evaluation sub-group to consider implications.

Date of the next meeting

7. This would be arranged for early September.

Action: Secretary to canvass for dates and a preferred location.