

**PARTNERSHIP ON HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SCOTLAND
NOTE OF THE 2nd MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE
ON 8th DECEMBER 2005**

In attendance:

Margaret Burns, HSC (Chair)
Steve Bell, Strategic Director, Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives
Stewart Campbell, HSE Director, Scotland
James Fowlie, COSLA
Harry Frew, UCATT and STUC
Douglas Greig, Scottish Executive, Department of Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, Enterprise and Industry Division
Prof Russel Griggs, CBI
Rory Mackail, Federation of Small Businesses
Danny McLaughlin, Glasgow City Council (Local Authorities as employers)
Dr Karen McDonnell, representing Occupational Health and Safety professionals
Ian Tasker, STUC
Sarah Jones, HSE, Director's Office, Scotland (Secretary)
Val Morgan, GNN Scotland (observer)
Ali Ford, HSE (Committee secretariat)

Apologies:

Linda Shanahan, STUC & FBU

Welcome and introductions

1. Margaret Burns welcomed everyone to the meeting. She announced Karen Niven's departure from the committee for a new job based in the Hague. Karen McDonnell was welcomed as the new representative of occupational health and safety professionals. Danny McLaughlin was welcomed and introduced as representing Ian Lavery. Ian and Alistair Dodds were new nominees for the committee representing Local Authorities as employers. This completed the set of representatives on the steering committee as envisaged at the stakeholder conference in February.

Action: The Secretary would arrange a meeting with new members, Ian and Alistair, as well as James from COSLA before the next meeting to discuss roles and responsibilities.

Progress on meeting health and safety targets

2. Margaret reported on the recent announcement of progress towards meeting the government's health and safety targets at the half way stage. The trend in work-related ill health was probably on target to achieve a 20% reduction by 2010; and the number of days lost was possibly on target to achieve a 30% reduction by 2010. The number of major and fatal injuries had fluctuated but it had not fallen by enough at this stage to indicate that the 10% reduction will be achieved by 2010.

3. Stewart commented on the recently published report on offences and penalties in 2004/05. The report could be misleading for Scotland as it showed an apparently lower rate of successful convictions for the number of charges reported. This could however be due to decisions by the Procurator Fiscal to choose different charges to those suggested by HSE inspectors or to drop some altogether as a result of the plea adjustment procedure. Stewart reported that for Great Britain as a whole, HSC/E wished to reverse the downward trend in the number of prosecutions. A review had already shown however that the fall in prosecutions did not reflect a drop in resources devoted to enforcement activity so different approaches might be needed.

4. On penalties, it should be noted that in Scotland costs could not be awarded. Recent cases such as Transco had shown that significant penalties were possible. The Scottish Sentencing Commission might be looking at health and safety penalties and the McCrory review of penalties following up the recommendation by the Hampton Report - including additional and alternative penalties - might influence the debate on the importance of appropriate penalties for health and safety offences.

5. The committee discussed proportionate resources to address the rate of major and fatal injuries in Scotland. Stewart reported much closer working between HSE and Local Authorities in Scotland designed to make more efficient and effective use of resources across traditional enforcing authority boundaries. He suggested circulating a short paper on the joint Local Authority/HSE warranting pilot.

Action: Stewart Campbell to commission a paper

6. Ian reported that at a recent STUC meeting with the Crown Office the idea had emerged for a conference looking at the issues involved in prosecuting health and safety offences within the Scottish justice system. This would be likely to be held jointly with the Scottish Executive with HSE participation - probably in late spring 2006.

Action: Ian to pursue arrangements with Crown Office

Minutes of previous meeting

7. The minutes of the previous meeting on 29th August had been agreed and published on the Scotland pages of the HSE website.

Matters arising from the minutes

Evidence Group

8. The terms of reference for a joint Partnership/Healthy Working Lives Evidence Group (PHASS/02/02) were agreed subject to removing the word "ill" from the first bullet point.

9. A suitable Chair would be approached - agreed with the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives. Potential members of the Group would be approached from each of the suggested organisations listed that gathered relevant data and had an interest in its interpretation. A first meeting would be arranged before the next meeting of the steering committee.

Action: HSE and the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives to establish the group initially by writing jointly to potential Chair(s) and members.

Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives

10. Steve reported on developments including the need to understand the relationship between Healthy Working Lives in Scotland and a new "Work, Health and Well-being" strategy announced in October by the DWP and Health Department in England. As Chair of the Healthy Working Lives Advisory Panel, Andrew Cubie would be writing to relevant Ministers to seek clarification.

11. The draft business Plan had now been signed off by the Advisory Panel. The intention was for a 'soft' launch of the new brand in 2006 which would take over from integral services such as Safe and Healthy Working and Scotland's Health at Work. The content of the new Healthy Working Lives award scheme was being developed to encompass occupational health and safety as well as health promotion activity.

12. The arrival of Scotland Against Drugs staff from April next year would contribute expertise to the employability agenda of Healthy Working Lives. It would be important that this activity should dovetail with DWP pathways to work.

A directory of OHS resources in Scotland

13. The POOSH group in Scotland (Professional Organisations in Occupational Safety and Health) had reviewed the request for work in this area and proposed a number of options. After some discussion it was agreed as a starting point to ask POOSH to update the mapping exercise of occupational health services and professionals in Scotland produced in 2001 as the precursor to the establishment of the Safe and Healthy Working service.

14. The intention would be to build on this update by including information on the type of resources available from other organisations included in the diagram of 'health and safety networks in Scotland'.

Action: Karen McDonnell to pursue with POOSH seeking help and support from the Partnership as necessary. Secretary to circulate copies of the previous mapping exercise to members of the committee (hard copy will be sent in the post).

Increasing worker involvement

15. Ian Tasker presented the emerging findings of the current STUC project - under the Workers' Safety Adviser Challenge Fund 2nd funding round - to improve worker representation in the voluntary and social enterprise sector. He reflected on the apparent lack of competent health and safety advice available in these growing sectors of the economy and the surprising welcome with which the project had been received. Worker involvement mechanisms were now up and running in several participating organisations ranging from micro-firms to medium-sized enterprises. Initial feedback indicated improvements in the health of organisations beyond the immediate aim of better health and safety management including some outcomes which were not anticipated such as better staff morale and employee relations generally.

16. The committee agreed that publishing case studies of participating organisations to record and promote the conditions for good worker involvement, as well as the immediate and wider economic benefits to the business, would be helpful in embedding the lessons of this project.

17. Case studies were one part of marketing material on the benefit of worker involvement via a range of routes including the LaCORS/HSE extranet, Scottish Enterprise, H&IE and Business Gateway and the Scottish Manufacturing Advisory Service. It would also be important to improve the availability of access to advice on how to go about getting workers involved via training for Healthy Working Lives advisers.

18. It was agreed that the findings of the project and general message about the value of worker involvement should also be fed into the current Strategic Funding Review of the Voluntary Sector commissioned by Malcolm Chisholm MSP, Minister for Communities.

19. As Local Authorities were major clients of voluntary sector services it was agreed to establish what advice and guidance they currently offered to organisations on health and safety management and worker involvement.

Action: Once the project ended the STUC would approach a selection of participating organisations willing to offer themselves as case studies for developing into suitable material for dissemination via a range of routes.

Margaret would write to Malcolm Chisholm MSP with observations relevant to the current Strategic Funding Review of the Voluntary Sector.

James agreed to research current practice amongst Local Authorities in meeting the voluntary sector's need for advice and support on health and safety.

Small firms strategy

20. Rory outlined FSB members' views on health and safety information. He reported work to improve communications with FSB members including the development of a survey tool. The committee then discussed how a strategy could be developed. SEPA's small firms strategy might provide some useful pointers and it was agreed that Scottish Enterprise and Highland and Islands Enterprise would play an important role and that the Partnership should establish contacts.

21. The committee agreed that the first step should be to consult small firms and asked Rory if the FSB would seek views from its members on the top four solutions to effective communications on health and safety. This would then be used to develop key messages for disseminating via small business advisory routes.

22. Stewart mentioned the next stage in HSC/E's Better Business campaign which would be aimed at small businesses. Examples were required of small firms who had recognised the value of good health and safety management and who would be willing to act as spokespeople in the media.

Action: Secretary to liaise with Rory on FSB members' participation and feedback.

Local business/college good neighbour scheme

23. PHASS/02/03 provided some suggested aims and background on related developments which could provide the framework for such a scheme. Russel reported that the CBI would pilot an approach Dumfries and Galloway. Karen reported interest amongst signatories to the RoSPA Scotland Higher Performers' Challenge.

24. The committee agreed that it would be useful to learn more about the work CHASTE and to know the views of further/higher education unions. Meetings would be arranged to help inform the development of the detail for a menu of activities which local businesses and their colleges could select from in setting up realistic local partnership agreements.

Action: Secretary to make contact with the CBI pilot; Ian to facilitate a meeting with higher and further education unions; Secretary to meet CHASTE representatives with the lead inspector.

A health and safety committee for the Scottish aquaculture industry

25. PHASS/02/04 refers. The committee discussed the background to this initiative in a key sector of Scotland's economy. It strongly welcomed the new Committee and asked to be kept apprised of its plans and progress.

Action: Margaret to write to the Chair of Fish Farming/Aquaculture Health and Safety Committee (FFAHSC)

Media strategy for the Partnership

26. Val Morgan of GNN Scotland presented an approach designed to reinforce key messages about the purpose and actions of the Partnership. The committee agreed that consistency of communications would be important on issues which were clearly Partnership business. Members would remain free to represent their organisations on issues which were not covered by the Partnership's agenda or about which there was not complete consensus.

27. To enable swift contact for media comment and quotations, Val asked for details of members' press officers. To support individual members of the committee in promoting the Partnership's work within their own organisations, Val offered to produce a communication for use on websites and newsletters (now attached).

Action: Secretary to obtain press officer/internal communications contact details. Val to draft communication intended for internal use by members of the committee in their own organisations.

Future engagement of stakeholders

28. Margaret and Stewart gave feedback from the recent meeting between Lord Hunt, GB health and safety Minister, and Allan Wilson MSP, Minister with co-ordinating responsibility for health and safety in Scotland. It had been agreed to hold a joint HSC/Scottish Executive reception in 2006 – possibly at the Scottish Parliament - to bring together officials and representatives with an interest in the contribution that sensible health and safety and risk management could make to a successful Scottish economy. The reception could be the scene-setter for a major stakeholder conference later in the year about health and safety in the context of improving Scottish competitiveness and the Smart, Successful, Scotland strategy.

Action: Secretary to liaise with Margaret, HSC Chair, Bill Callaghan and Ministers on the arrangements for a reception. A paper on the aims and arrangements for a conference would be produced for discussion at the next meeting.

Date of the next meeting

29. The date of the next meeting at the end of March/beginning of April would be agreed by e-mail.

Action: Secretary to circulate dates seeking availability.