

Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2020

Skype Online

Present

Chris Jones	Cory <i>Chair</i>
Toni Gladding	OU <i>Secretary</i>
Lee Schilling	Health and Safety Executive
Geoff Smallwood	CIWM
Jo Carter	Health and Safety Executive
Lindsey Mann	GMB
Paul Stokes	ESA/FCC
Lisa Chilcott	WRAP
Antonia Grey	BMRA/Temp VC
Ashley Wild	LARAC
Toni Robinson	REA
Adrian Bond	SWITCH
Jim Brown	SWITCH

Apologies

Denise McGlynn	EU Skills
Beth Gordon	LAWS

Visitors

Debbie Palfrey	WRAP
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1. Matters Arising

PS noted that ESA have set up a strategy group and have intention to set up some technical working groups. There is a degree of overlap with WISH and hence this may need further discussion to ensure this doesn't occur. JC mentioned she and Rick Brunt had a meeting with Richard Hulland and Steven Freedland. CJ welcomes ESA becoming more engaged and putting resources into the sector. The overlap with WISH is mainly within the safer workgroup area but also impacts on the healthier group. The steering group discussed how SMEs would engage with ESA and have any involvement, and when guidance is written this must be considered. A criticism levelled at WISH that CJ did object to is that wide consultation equals guidance to the lowest common denominator – this is not true, and WISH does not back down from higher standards. In fact, it was agreed wider consultation very

often improves engagement. JC commented that WISH is the main method of engagement for the HSE with the industry. ESA has also made a criticism about many wide and varied groups creating guidance, which has been tidied up considerably during the end of 2019/early 2020. CJ stated that WISH will maintain its transparency, openness to all and governance processes and would happily work with ESA as has always been the case.

2. WISH COVID Response

CJ reported that WISH was asked on 25th March (by Defra although it was apparent there was a real need within the industry) to prepare an information sheet for industry. A small task and finish group was convened consisting of TG, CJ, AG, JC and GS. The group achieved a first draft on 28th March which went out for consultation and had over 50 responses within 48 hours. The information sheet (subsequently called Info 13) has been revised 7 times since. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to this information sheet throughout the industry, and it is widely considered that waste collections were largely able to continue throughout the UK due to the practical help and guidance it contained.

JB also noted how well received the guidance was in Scotland.

CJ noted that there is no evidence of workplace transmission in the waste industry which is quite remarkable. TG noted Defra have been very happy with the guidance and it has been shared internationally via ISWA in a seminar of 450 people in 60 countries.

WISH also extend their thanks to CIWM for helping with the older WISH website and ensuring updates were regularly published.

3. Working Groups

Leadership & Worker engagement: PS reported on the group including some case studies etc. for the WISH website. LM commented that the meeting planned for November has been postponed until next year.

CJ asked if lockdown had improved team relationships. PS noted that front line workers at landfills and EFWs etc. that run throughout had a different experience to perhaps office workers or household waste recycling centres which may have affected relationships and engagement. JC commented that employer consultation has been very important during the pandemic. JB agreed with PS that operational staff felt more of the burden than office staff. TR agreed with all these comments and return to work interviews were being carried out. CJ commented that some flagging of these issues would be a good idea in future Info 13 versions.

AW commented that Local Authorities generally have not had any Furloughed staff because of the nature of the sector. Many staff have been redeployed to other service, i.e. Parking Enforcement are working within the community food hubs and wider emergency response activities. He also commented front line waste staff have been praised across the country by the general public and there has been a general step change in perception towards front line collection staff, which has certainly helped with morale and engagement. In terms of engagement this has continued with supervisors monitoring operational staff, however, there have been issues undertaking H&S Committee meetings because of the requirement for social distancing. Many front-line operatives don't have the equipment or knowledge to undertake online meetings, so alternative methods are

being developed. Generally, it's been business as usual for front line services from an LA perspective with a few issues around infrastructure sites, but these do not generally relate to H&S.

Safer work group: No progress during the pandemic due to capacity issues. AG commented a meeting needs to occur and a new chair to be elected.

Healthier work group: On hold during the pandemic nothing in the diary currently.

Building competence: On hold during the pandemic nothing in the diary currently.

SMEs: On hold during the pandemic, but there has been active dissemination of information with those companies who have previously engaged. Networking activities are the focus of the group at the moment and planning for future activities is underway.

Other groups allied to WISH:

People in bins: TG reported that the work has concluded currently, and a final report was released in February. There was a lot of engagement from the press (two page spread in The Guardian) and twitter (including various MPs commenting). This work will be developed further, prior to the pandemic TG and the OU were due to visit the Houses of Parliament to discuss further initiatives with MPs which is currently on hold.

Fire: GS reported that v3 was released just before lockdown. AG asked if there were more waste fires during lockdown, CJ commented that this was a seasonal increase which happens most years, but statistically it was similar to usual.

Aerosols: GS reported that a group had been formed and an initial meeting had taken place, and that future meetings have also been on hold and will be restarted once everything becomes slightly more stable.

SWITCH: JB reported that SWITCH was originally looked after by ZWS, subsequently have now become a Scottish Charitable organisation. The organisation has gained traction and has more interest from industry and government and is hopeful of more funding. JB commented the pandemic has raised awareness of health and safety. CJ commented that SWITCH have extensively commented on Info 13 curing the pandemic and have developed a strong relationship as a result.

CJ noted it would be a good idea to re-contact all the groups to reach out with everybody to restart everything and reawaken interest. CJ will come up with a note for Chairs. It was also agreed a monthly catch up call for the steering group would be enacted.

4. WISH Business

Advanced planning for delayed WISH event

Originally the biennial conference was planned for re-scheduling in October, but now it is very likely to be March 21.

An online event could be arranged but would probably lose the working group element. A discussion agreed that a webinar type event during October could be a good 'information session' with a conference during next year. There was a discussion about splitting the usual WISH format of a morning "reporting/information" session (where the WISH SG, WG chairs and others report on the work done since the last WISH GM and propose strategy) and an afternoon session of working groups in each of the strategic theme areas discussing and proposing work for WISH in the coming two years. The proposals for consideration was to hold a reporting/information session by webinar during October potentially followed by separate meetings (virtual or otherwise) to replicate the normal afternoon session.

In order to run the webinar WISH do need to find a host. CIWM or LetsRecycle were both discussed as possibilities. The idea would be to use this as a platform to launch the draft strategy and give people a chance to comment for 32 days or so after. CJ suggested asking the Chairs of each of the themes to come up with ways in which to run their workshops in the new year, either webinar, or online meeting/questionnaire etc.

WISH website & publications

Draft website now in full with publications loaded, and a link has been provided to the steering group to review. All comments are invited about the website within a week.

A list of WISH publications has been circulated with any comments please to GS ASAP.

5. Any Other Business

HSE Update

Changes in HSE Personnel: Selvin Brown (Head of Engagement and Policy Division (EPD) has left HSE). This is the Division in which our team sits. Martin Temple (Chair of HSE Board) is finishing at the end of July. Rick Brunt is now Senior Civil Service and heads up the Operational Strategy Division reporting to Head of EPD. Adrian Hodkinson is Acting Head of our unit – Ag, W&R and Vulnerable Workers Unit. Paul Kloss has been promoted to the Director of Regulation team. Ceri Beynon has been promoted to Principal Inspector (PI) Wales Operational Construction Team. Jo Carter is currently reporting to Adrian as Acting Principal Inspector of Waste & Recycling team. A new PI will be appointed in due course on a level transfer from another PI position. Lee Schilling joined the W&R team at the end of March.

Spot Checks: HSE are now carrying out spot checks. As well as investigating concerns and looking at COVID-19 controls during preventive inspections such as COMAH visits, they are also visiting sites to carry out actual inspections of COVID-19 controls, where necessary. The usual proactive programme of inspections to high risk sectors such as the waste sector has not yet started, however.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/regulating-health-and-safety/index.htm>

<https://press.hse.gov.uk/2020/07/02/hse-urges-businesses-to-become-covid-secure/>

Fatal Injury Statistics: <https://press.hse.gov.uk/2020/07/01/hse-releases-annual-workplace-fatality-figures-for-2019-20/> Latest fatal injury stats released 01 July. Overall message for the waste sector

pretty much as before: The 5 deaths in 2019/20, translates to a fatal injury rate of 4.57 deaths per 100,000 workers. Numbers are small and prone to annual fluctuations so better to look at the average over the last 5 years as this has the effect of smoothing out year-on-year fluctuations. This shows an average annual of 9 deaths, giving a corresponding rate of 7.71 deaths per 100,000 workers. In terms of rate Waste and recycling (along with agriculture) continue to come out worst, with a rate of fatal injury some 18 times as high as the average across all industries (based on 5-year average rate). HSE has recently reminded the industry not to forget the basis health and safety risks, whilst still taking measures to ensure that they control the risk from COVID-19.

Non-fatal RIDDORS stats: The breakdown of non-fatal injuries in the waste sector (SIC38) by private and public sector is now published at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/adhoc-analysis/ridwaste-1819.xlsx> This shows a plateauing of accidents across the Sector as well as similar numbers of specified injuries reported by both the public and private sectors. There is a will to interrogate the reports further to find out on which type of sites the accidents occur, but this is not an easy task due to the SIC code allocation. Nevertheless, there are plans to try to examine this further this work year.

Prosecutions: Two notable prosecutions since WISH last met:

- i) An operative had to have his lower leg amputated after being struck by a moving excavator. He had been standing in its blind spot. He was an agency worker and the court heard that he (and other agency workers) had been left to manage themselves without any supervision or monitoring.
- ii) A paper bale fell and seriously injured an employee. Bales were stacked in single columns up to 5 high without support or tying in. There was also a practice of removing contaminants from stacked bales by hand creating voids in lower bales. Following the accident, a segregated area was set up to remove contaminants before bales were stacked.

Safety Notice – Vehicle Rollovers: A safety notice has been put out to industry from HSE regarding vehicle rollovers following a report from Merseyside police of 3 recent scrap metal vehicles turning over. They were all caused by lighter materials underneath unsecured heavier items such as cars.

HSE draft guidance note: HSE have drafted a guidance note on the safe storage and forward movement of waste materials following nine fatalities caused by a wall collapse and 'overlarge' buckets impairing visibility on material handlers. This guidance:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l138.htm>

There is always a difference between HSE and industry guidance:

- HSE guidance is goal setting, identifying what is to be achieved to comply with the law
- The industry guidance provides practical ways to achieve the above and sometimes goes beyond the strict letter of the law to describe best practice.

Moreover, the proposed HSE guidance is wide enough so it can be applied across industries, to wider recovery, storage and transport of materials on site. HSE would like WISH to identify anything that is fundamentally wrong with what we are asking for. The aim is to put out goal setting guidance now that is technically sound, practicable and achievable.

Other reports included the siting of bins and an operative in London falling through grating to a basement below.

JC also reported that LAWS have not met during this period. As a group they are moving towards a central steering group with representation from members. JC asked if anyone in Scotland would be on the group (to AB and JB).

TG reported on a new academically funded project on COVID in the waste industry led by Exeter University. The project aims to investigate the effects of COVID-19 on the UK's waste sector and to mitigate hazards related to waste management during the outbreak. It works in partnership with national industry associations and local authorities to : generate urgent data on the sector's rapidly changing waste management practices (using a suite of social research methods to examine pivotal processes, including collections, disposal, and administration); in collaboration with key workers, the project will map the sector and design a pandemic toolkit that can amplify workers' voices in decision-making and it is intended to create guidelines and an industry report, in collaboration with WISH to enable greater co-ordination between authorities; addressing both the immediate crisis and contributing to future preparedness plans. They are looking for both industry and local authority participants, please contact TG for future information.

WISH would like to thank Dick Perry for his many years of engagement from WRAP and welcome Lisa Chilcott as the new representative.

6. Date of next meetings

Wednesday 30th September 2020 online