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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES

MAJOR HAZARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

Proposal to set up The Working Group on Pipelines

A Paper by Neville Briscoe

Cleared by Kevin Allars on 29 June 2001

Issue

1. A proposal to set up a new working group on pipelines.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. Members are invited to endorse the proposal.

Background

Health & Safety Executive

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4. In January 2001 HSE met with representatives from UKOPA - the United Kingdom Onshore Operators Association, to

- a. consider its request to have a more structured role in providing comment and input to the health and safety advisory process, as it relates to onshore pipelines, namely through representation at ACDS's Major Hazards Sub-Committee,

and to,

- b. gain a better understanding of the HSE approach to risk assessment, the methodology that it has developed and applies, and the significance of its role in advising the local authority planning process.

5. The meeting produced several key outcomes. First, there was a recognition of the added value UKOPA could bring to the formal advisory process, and second, an acknowledgement that the HSE processes were not as transparent nor as clearly understood as HSE would intend.

6. In February 2001, ACDS considered the proposal that pipelines conveying gasoline should attract the full duties of the Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996 (PSR). Although Members accepted the argument and evidence presented, and agreed the recommendation that such pipelines should be proposed for attracting the full duties of PSR, they remained alert to concerns expressed by gasoline pipeline operators, of gaps of knowledge in the sector coupled with a poor understanding of the HSE approach to risk assessment and advice relating to the local planning process.

7. Although the events were unrelated and set up to meet different requirements and time frames, the outcomes of each concluded with the similar recommendation for some additional communication/advisory provision to be in place, which would not only be able to draw in the involvement and contribution of the pipeline sector, but in turn, to be able to better inform it.

Proposal

8. Although our original considerations centred around the setting up of two groups:

- the UKOPA initiative, which would have seen a group being asked to consider a range of pipeline issues over an ongoing time frame,

and

- a separate ACDS/gasoline group to look at the already highlighted specific needs of that sector, but over a much shorter time frame,

our deliberations have now led us to proposing a single working group. A single group would not only meet the needs of the industry and ACDS, but would represent a more effective use of internal and external resources.

9. Draft terms of reference have been prepared and are at Annex 1.

10. Accountability for the working group would be with MHSC. Although the working group would have a brief to look at all relevant aspects of onshore pipeline activities, as they affect health and safety. Reports on progress and liaison arrangements would be made to MHSC. Responsibility for the wider reporting of outcomes would also remain with MHSC, as would the ownership of any published material. It is also proposed that the membership, including Chair, be reviewed by MHSC every two years.

Appointments

11. It is proposed that a current member of ACDS be invited to become the first Chairman (HSE will further advise MHSC at its meeting on 10 July of the outcome of ongoing discussions regarding the Chairman). In turn, he/she would be supported by HSE in seeking nominations from those organisations listed in the Terms of Reference. It is likely that the main Secretariat activity will be taken up by UKOPA, possibly supported by HSE.

First Agenda

12. Although the working group would enjoy a wide remit, it is likely that its first priorities for the opening agenda would need to be those already highlighted by UKOPA

and at ACDS. It is considered that this would represent a substantial first agenda, and would include:

- Item 1. Understanding the processes - how can they be made transparent - whilst this would be something for pipeline operators generally, there is an immediate need for those in the gasoline sector to better understand this soonest.
- Item 2. Land-Use-Planning - how the sector might better understand its effects on the laying of new pipelines and developments in the vicinity.
- Item 3. Intelligence - applying what is in place to report and comment on incident trends.
- Item 4. EU Directive - anticipating where the UK might need to act, e.g. arrangements for informing the public.
- Item 5. Looking at the current regulatory package - providing feedback.

Action

13. Members are asked to endorse:

- a) the setting up of a new working group on pipelines - namely, The (MHSC) Working Group on Pipelines;
- b) its terms of reference;
- c) its initial programme of work.

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