

# ***DTI 'Strategy for Sustainable Construction'- consultation events***

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

### **1. SUMMARY**

Safety in construction has been subject to concerted regulation for many years with a more or less continuous improvement in performance which continues. The result is that almost everyone in the industry understands the need for vigilance in safety, although there are still too many lapses from acceptable practice. There has been an increasing focus by the HSE on Health in construction in recent years. The consequences of ill health are well researched, but the industry, especially smaller companies and the self-employed, has yet to adequately embrace this as an imperative.

The social and economic benefits of better health & safety are clear drivers for sustainable construction, but many in the industry would not think of health & safety in this context. It stands on its own as an overriding and indispensable condition for the industry.

- **Understanding – good**  
Industry practitioners are clear on the human benefits of H+S.
- **Practice - fairly well defined**  
Large and medium companies and projects are very well versed in H+S. But at the mini/micro SME end of the industry practice is less satisfactory.
- **Measurement – variable**  
Currently based mainly on safety statistics from statutory reporting. Health reporting is less advanced. Statutory reporting gives little substantive information for further analysis so that the areas for priority action can be addressed.
- **Controls – regulations in place, enforcement reasonable**  
The HSE's profile is high and there is constant engagement with industry. Also, industry generally understands that good H+S is usually associated with good project delivery. There is however concern at the gulf between larger companies and SMEs.

### **2. VISIONS AND METRICS**

#### **2.1 Industry vision**

##### **2.1.1 Published provisional/initial targets and metrics**

The '*Revitalising Health and Safety*' strategy statement (HSE, June 2000) set national targets for improving H+S performance by 2010:

- To reduce the incidence rate of fatalities and major injuries by 10%
- To reduce the incidence rate of cases of work-related ill-health by 20%
- To reduce the number of working days lost per worker for work-related injury and ill-health by 30%
- To achieve half the improvement under each target by 2004

The Review of Sustainable Construction (2006) replicated these targets, but set as industry's vision 'zero RIDDOR' by 2020. (It also set as industry's interim vision "2006; annual review" which does not appear to have meaning.)

Progress is monitored by the HSE. It publishes graphs showing progress, updated annually. Progress must however be driven by the performance of individual companies; unless they monitor progress and understand what is driving improvement, continued and consistent improvement is unlikely.

<b>Table 1 Visions and metrics</b>		
<b>Vision</b>	<b>Source of target</b>	<b>Associated metric</b>
Reduce fatalities & major injuries by 10% by 2010	Revitalising Health & Safety, HSE, 2000	Accident frequency rate
Reduce work-related ill health by 20% by 2010	Revitalising Health & Safety, HSE, 2000	Accident frequency rate
Reduce lost working days from work-related injury and health problems by 30% by 2010	Revitalising Health & Safety, HSE, 2000	Accident frequency rate
To achieve half of each above improvement by 2004*	Revitalising Health & Safety, HSE, 2000	Accident frequency rate
Zero RIDDOR	Review of Sustainable Construction, 2006	Accident frequency rate

\* note: this vision was repeated in the 2006 Review of Sustainable Construction.

#### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

- Are you aware of the performance of your organisation / its projects in the context of these targets?
- Does your organisation treat ill health and lost worker days with the same importance as safety? If not, what drivers would change that?
- Should H&S be regarded as a sustainability issue or might this diminish its importance?
- Are the current visions appropriate?
- What are the barriers to improvement at the SME level?
- Are there specific actions that might be focused on?

#### **2.1.2 Metrics**

Safety in construction has been subject to concerted regulation for many years with a more or less continuous improvement in performance which continues. The result is that almost everyone in the industry understands the need for vigilance in safety, although there are still too many lapses from acceptable practice. The micro/mini SME and self-employed end of the industry is of particular concern.

There has been an increasing focus by the HSE on Health in construction in recent years. The consequences of ill health are well researched, but the industry, again especially smaller companies and the self-employed, have yet to embrace this as an imperative. The reduction in lost working days would be a clear economic benefit, but will be a derived consequence of improvement in the primary issues of safety and health.

**Table 2 Assessment of current awareness and attainment**

Rating 0 – 5 (see Appendix 1 for guidance)	Reduce fatalities & major injuries by 10%	Reduce work-related ill health by 20%	Reduce lost working days from work-related injury and health problems by 30%
1 Established principles /sound science	5	5	5
2 Widely understood across industry	4	2	2
3 (Technically) attainable with no risk and no skills shortage	4	4	4
4 Cost-effective	5	5	5
5 Compelling business case	5	5	5
6 Strong Market pull	4	2	2
7 Established metrics and performance data	5	4	3
8 Degree of regulation	5	3	1

### 2.1.3 Current performance and interim targets

Information recently published by the HSE suggests that steady progress continues to be made in reducing deaths and accidents. However, the improvement has to be maintained. There are balances to be reached with other sustainability issues, eg deconstruction for re-use may involve risky working at height; remote demolition lessens risks to workers but makes it harder to recycle.

#### DISCUSSION

- How attainable are the above visions by the target dates?
- Do practitioners understand what needs to be done to continue the recent improvements?
- Which, if any, of the policy, regulatory or industry initiatives that you are aware of are likely to have the greatest impact on continued improvement?

## 2.2 Published Government targets

### 2.2.1 UK targets

**Government target:** The reduction of fatalities, injuries, work-related ill health and worker days lost from H+S consequences. [Source: HSE Revitalising Health and Safety, 2000 and DTI Review of sustainable construction 2006]

**Metric:** Accident frequency rate

**Industry vision:** Zero RIDDOR

**Progress:** unclear (stated in DTI review as “2006; annual review”)

**Achievement date:** 2020

**Primary responsibility:** Individual clients; HSE

**Mechanism for achievement:** Process actions; training; formal mechanisms (codes & standards); informal mechanisms (best practice guides)

**Secondary responsibility:** designers; contractors

### 3. MECHANISMS

#### 3.1 Policy and regulatory responsibility

The major government initiatives are through the HSE.

#### 3.2 Industry and market drivers

Industry above SME level has largely adopted the regulations made by the HSE; adoption by SMEs is however very patchy. Contractors with fewer than 15 employees have about 44% of all construction workers (exc. professionals), but have 67% of fatalities, 57% of injuries and 61% work-related ill-health.

The drivers for improvement are (in no particular order):

- High cost of accidents and injury
- Workforce interest
- Publicity profile
- Client susceptibilities

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

- How much progress in the area over the past 5 years has been driven by regulations and how much by market/voluntary measures?
- How much future change is going to be driven by regulations / enforced policy compared with market / voluntary measures?
- What might industry do to continue or accelerate the improvements seen over recent years? (eg better focus on current initiatives; new activities)
- How might SMEs be motivated to adopt new and/or safer ways of working?
- What might government do to encourage further improvement?

## Appendix 1

### Guidelines for scoring Table 2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Principles</b> established and practice within reach of most companies	Widespread <b>understanding</b> of principles across most parts of the industry	Technically attainable with little or no <b>risk</b>	<b>Cost effective</b> to implement within present fiscal / regulatory regime	Compelling and well promoted <b>business case</b>	Strong <b>market pull</b> from both public sector and private sector	Published <b>metrics</b> on current performance / benchmarking	Highly regulated, clear signals of future policy / regs
SCORE 5							
SCORE 0							
Gaps in scientific / social / economic principles	Knowledge and understanding across most parts of the industry non-existent	Technical risks / serious skills shortages	Not presently cost effective in competitive market or using conventional business case justification	Little in the form of case studies and evidence of <b>business case</b>	Little market pull beyond regulatory minima	Little in the form of any current openly available data	Largely unregulated and reliant on voluntary action