



# The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland NEWSLETTER

PROTECTING & IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

December 2009

## New President Installed



Rod House was installed as President at the Institute's AGM on 19 November. Rod is Consultant in Environmental Health with Health Protection Scotland and his 'view' will appear in the forthcoming Winter 2009 edition of the Institute's Journal *Environmental Health Scotland*. The AGM also considered the following Special Resolution, proposed by Rod House and seconded by Alistair Thomson - *The members of the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland regret the recent decision of the Council of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) to establish a CIEH Region in Scotland. The members believe that the long-standing amicable relationship, reciprocal arrangements and the mutual understanding and respect enjoyed for so many years may be jeopardised and that unnecessary confusion over the respective roles and responsibilities of the two organisations, both of which are incorporated by Royal Charter, could result. The members call on the Council of the CIEH to re-consider its decision.* Following a show of hands, the Special Resolution was carried with only two votes against and no abstentions.

## Prestigious Award for Dr Tracy Morse

The Institute recognises Tracy's contribution to the protection of public health in Malawi with the presentation to her of its Meritorious Endeavours in Environmental Health Award for 2009. The award specifically recognises Tracy's work as Project Manager of the University of Strathclyde's Scotland Chikwawa (Malawi) Health Initiative. The Initiative works to improve environmental health and maternal health and to drive down infant mortality rates in four villages in the Chikwawa region in southern Malawi.

Tracy also lectures on the BSc Environmental Health degree course at the University of Malawi's Blantyre Polytechnic, supervises a range of research programmes and is a regular contributor to the REHIS Journal *Environmental Health Scotland*.

Tracy, her husband Chad and their two young daughters live in Malawi and are home for Christmas – her parents live in rural Aberdeenshire so it is fair to say that they will be experiencing slightly cooler weather here than if they had stayed home in Malawi where temperatures are currently close to 40°C!



## Influenza A (H1N1) Update

On 10 December the Scottish Government announced that Health Protection Scotland estimated that around 3,100 people have contracted influenza A (H1N1) in the past week. It was also announced that 1,344 people with influenza A (H1N1) have been hospitalised since the start of the outbreak and that there have been 54 deaths linked to the outbreak. Further advice and guidance is available from the Scottish Government website [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk).

## Scottish Government's Healthy Working Lives strategy

Earlier this week Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, launched *Health Works* the conclusions of the review of the Scottish Government's Healthy Working Lives Strategy. *Health Works* refreshes the 2004 strategy to ensure that it remains relevant to the needs of the working age population of Scotland. The review was undertaken during 2009 in collaboration with a wide number of stakeholders. The update has two key areas of focus. One is on the workplace and the role employers have in looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees, and how this contributes to improving productivity and profitability. The other area identifies actions to improve and develop access to health services that help and support people to reduce the health barriers to remaining in or returning to work. *Health Works* identifies a number of actions for the Scottish Government and key partners that will be taken forward over the next 12-18 months. A copy of *Health Works* and supporting documents can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/workingage-1>.

## REHIS – 135 Years Young!

REHIS will celebrate its 135th birthday on Wednesday 20 January next year.

## MAEHO Hosts EFEH Meeting

Last month the Malta Association for Environmental Health Officers (MAEHO) hosted

the European Federation of Environmental Health (EFEH) meeting on Malta. The meeting was held at one of the conference rooms at the newly built Mater Dei Hospital. During the meeting, which was attended by John Attard Kingswell, Director Environmental Health, a number of important issues were discussed and it is hoped that for next year EFEH will propose a policy paper for the up coming IFEH World Congress. Following the meeting a detailed tour of the hospital catering service was given by Aaron Simpson, President of MAEHO. The course dinner on Friday was held at Marsaxlokk fishing village where those present enjoyed some of the local catch. A Grand Harbour tour by boat was organised on Sunday morning which concluded the weekend long event.

## New REHIS Office

REHIS, for the first time in its history, has become the owner of office premises. The premises, in Edinburgh's Tophichen Street, allow the Institute to meet both its accommodation and investment needs. It is hoped that occupation of the offices will be achieved by the end of February next year.

## REHIS CPD Submissions

The deadline for 2009 submissions is 31 January 2010. Please note: Regulations require the submission of corroborating evidence of participation in all CPD activities.

## Young Samanyika

Young Samanyika, a Malawian EHO, was in Scotland for twelve weeks on a Commonwealth Universities Fellowship and returned home at the beginning of the month after a very successful visit. The aim of Young's visit was to assist in the development of the Environmental Health Profession in Malawi and to assist in the re-establishment of the recently revitalised Malawi Environmental Health Association. Young, a District Environmental Health Officer in the Blantyre District of Malawi and Interim Secretary of the Malawi Environmental Health Association presented a paper entitled *Organisation of Environmental Health in Malawi and Plans for Professional Development* to wide acclaim at the

recent Environmental Health Update event in Edinburgh. On behalf of Young I take this opportunity to thank everyone who made his visit so enjoyable and worthwhile.



## Health Inequalities: The Role of Environmental Health

Alastair Macdonald, who graduated from The University of Strathclyde's MSc Environmental Health degree course in the autumn, presented a poster at the recent Faculty of Public Health 'Public Health in a Change of Age' Conference in Peebles. Alastair's poster presentation entitled 'Health Inequalities in Scotland Today: The Role of Environmental Health' covered research findings reported in Alastair's MSc degree dissertation. Alastair's abstract stated: *Health inequalities as a result of socio-economic differences exist within Scottish society between the most well-off and the least well-off. The least well-off members of society have a healthy life expectancy at birth which is 10 years less than the Scottish average. The subject of health inequalities in the UK was first given prominence by the Black Report (1980) and since the publication of the Acheson Report (1998) attention has turned to what can be done to reduce health inequalities. The Scottish Government published the Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities (2008), entitled Equally Well. This report highlights the importance of action on the physical environment to reduce health inequalities but does not say anything about the role of the Environmental Health Profession in such action.*

*A survey of 94 Environmental Health Officers and technical support staff from 22 of Scotland's 32 local authorities was carried out to ascertain the opinions of people working in environmental health in Scotland on the subject of health inequalities. 86% of participants in the survey thought that contributing to reducing health inequalities is within the remit of the Profession. 71% thought that the Profession does not currently have a great enough involvement in endeavours to reduce health inequalities in Scotland. On the basis of these findings it is suggested that the Profession can contribute in a highly positive manner to reducing health inequalities in Scotland and that it could have a greater involvement in efforts to do this than it does at present. REHIS supported Alastair's presence at the Conference through funding from its General Reserve Fund 'good works' fund.*

## Global climate change goals

Scottish Government First Minister, Alex Salmond, has told delegates to the United Nations Climate Summit in Copenhagen that Scotland has the natural resources and technological expertise to make a substantial contribution to global climate change goals. The First Minister is attending the summit to promote Scotland's world-leading climate change legislation. Mr Salmond will also sign a joint statement with President Mohamed Nasheed of The Maldives - a nation most acutely affected by climate change - that will set out a commitment of both countries to work together to combat climate change through the sharing of technology, know-how and research. Further advice and guidance is available from the Scottish Government website [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk).

## Smoking statistics

Minister for Public Health and Sport Shona Robison commenting on this week's smoking cessation statistics stated that the Scottish Government is investing record levels in smoking cessation - £11 million a year - and that money is helping people throughout Scotland to quit

smoking. Ms Robison went on to advise that giving up smoking is the biggest single thing anyone can do to improve their health which is why this government is working to make smoking less attractive and cigarettes less available. Building on the ban on smoking in public places the Scottish Government is taking the Tobacco and Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill through parliament with the hope that resulting legislation will end the display of cigarettes in shops and ban sales from vending machines - both measures designed to stop children from taking up smoking. REHIS strongly supports the Scottish Government's actions to control tobacco sales and usage in the fight to protect and improve the health of the Scottish people. Further advice and guidance is available from the Scottish Government website [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk).

### Private Rented Housing Report

Shelter and Consumer Focus Scotland have produced a joint report entitled *Improving the private rented sector in Scotland for the benefit of consumers*. The report sets out the joint position on some of the key issues affecting tenants in Scotland's private rented sector and focuses on the specific needs of the most disadvantaged tenants in the sector. The key issues considered in the report are access to private rented housing; state of repair in the sector; energy supply; energy efficiency; tenant rights and responsibilities; representation of tenants' views; and protection and redress. Further information is available from Consumer Focus Scotland [www.consumerfocus-scotland.org.uk](http://www.consumerfocus-scotland.org.uk).

### REHIS Annual Conference 2010

Next year's Conference will be held at the Glynhill Hotel, Renfrew on 19 and 20 May. The Conference theme will be 'Environmental Health - 135 Years Protecting Scotland's Population' and Dr Harry Burns, CMO Scotland, has agreed to deliver the keynote address.

### Merry Christmas!



### Forthcoming events

Healthy Environment Network 'Working together to create healthier sustainable places across Scotland' event, 4 February 2010, Stirling. Further details from Louise Rennick - [louise.rennick@health.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:louise.rennick@health.scot.nhs.uk).

REHIS Law Enforcement Weekend, 19 to 21 February 2010, Tulliallan

SoCOEHS Conference, 25 and 26 March 2010, St Andrews

REHIS Annual Conference 19 and 20 May 2010, Renfrew

2nd All Africa Conference on Environmental Health, 24 to 28 May 2010, Lilongwe, Malawi

UKPHA Conference, 'Confronting the Public Health Crisis', 24 and 25 March 2010, Bournemouth.

If you wish to feature any Environmental Health or Public Health initiative, event or activity in the REHIS Newsletter, please contact Tom Bell, Chief Executive, on 0131 225 6999 or [tb@rehis.com](mailto:tb@rehis.com)