Environmental Health Scotland

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The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland

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On the cover: Private water supplies - where's yours? See pages 9 to 11. Photograph by Ian Britton.

CONTENTS

THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW

David Cameron

This is the fourth occasion where I have had the opportunity to commit my thoughts in writing regarding REHIS and Environmental Health. On the first occasion I indicated my belief that sometimes Environmental Health was perceived as 'narrow' whereas it should be seen as the broad spectrum of public health. In the second article I commented on our 'coming of age' and suggested we needed a 'step change' to move our perceived image from being primarily food safety to embrace all other aspects of Environmental Health. Most recently I suggested that the membership were not being active enough in the moulding of the Institute for the future.

As I am rapidly approaching the end of my twelve months as President I am a little surprised that the membership has not reacted to my comments. From our membership survey, one response which stood out above all others was the reaction to the Institute's Journal. Members liked it and were very complimentary of the articles and information contained within its pages. If this is the case, are the readers content for the few to control the destiny of their professional body? I hope not and perhaps a lively response from the membership with nominations for Council places in November will restore my faith.

I have developed over each of these pieces the idea that we cannot as an organisation become complacent. We have achieved much – financial stability; Chartered status; the provision for suitably qualified and experienced members to become Ch.EHO MREHIS (or Ch.EHO FREHIS). Where we need to develop is at a strategic level with our potential partners in public health and during the last twelve months we have been maintaining our dialogue with these potential partners. The setting-up of a Project Steering Group to further the role of *Environmental Health in Scotland and the Health Improvement Challenge* is a concrete example of this thrust. However, we need to do more and involve more of our members.

One of the many 'buzz phrases' which I keep stumbling over in the most unlikely places is 'succession planning'. This is urgently required within REHIS. To achieve a successful and seamless transition on an ongoing basis experience is essential. This experience needs to be harnessed and passed on to the emerging generation of members who will take REHIS into the next decade. With a few notable exceptions we seem to be struggling to encourage 'new blood' into Centre Management Committees and Council membership.

I have been involved with Environmental Health for 30 years. Initially this was as an academic in a related field looking for an opportunity to develop another undergraduate course in the 1970s when The Royal Sanitary Association of Scotland announced that Environmental Health was to become an all-graduate profession. The venture was unsuccessful for a variety of reasons but the subject matter, and probably more importantly the people I met, fuelled my passion for Environmental Health. These feelings still exist and today are also driven by contact with these individuals and their successors. There is a phenomenal wealth of talent out there; please lend some of this to REHIS and we will continue to go from strength to strength. If this is achieved and sustained we will inevitably become more influential in the field of public health, resulting in an even better environment for Scots and adopted-Scots (transient and permanent) to live in and enjoy for the foreseeable future.

H_2O HIGHLAND COUNCIL SPONSORED PROJECTS

The Highland Council Transport, Environmental and Community (TEC) Services has, over the last few years, supported a number of research and development posts for environmental issues through the sponsorship of student placements, under the supervision of Anthony Carson (Principal Environmental Health Officer, Contaminated Land). In 2002/2003 these included a post graduate student from the University of Paisley and a placement student from The University of Sunderland. A description of the work carried out by both students is given in the following two articles. Both projects were successfully completed and the post graduate project is currently receiving academic review.

Editor.

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GROUNDWATER VULNERABILITY AND POLLUTION RISK IN THE HIGHLANDS

by Louise Carr, BSc (Hons), MSc Student, The University of Paisley

Introduction

It is the responsibility of the Highland Council to identify land, within its boundaries (figure 1), that it considers to be contaminated as defined in Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This definition requires a significant pollutant linkage to be present, linking a source of contamination to a receptor via a pathway (figure 2).

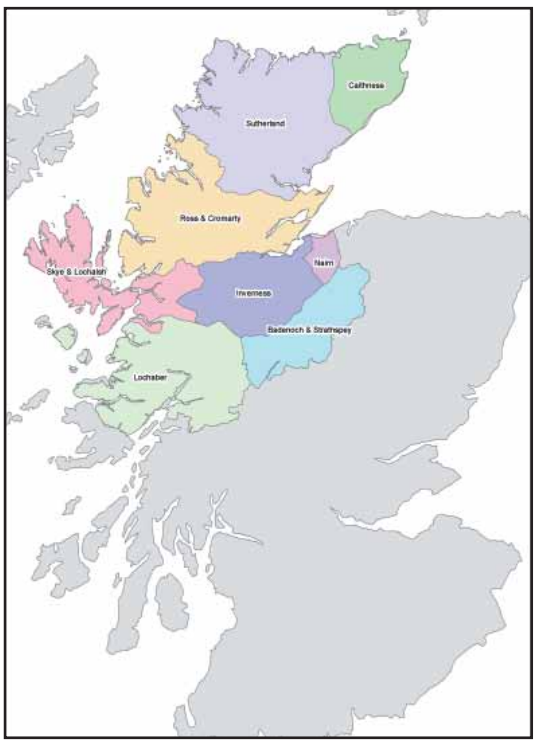


Figure 1. The Highland Council area.

Figure 2. Pollutant linkage necessary for a site to be considered contaminated.

Groundwater can act as both a pathway and a receptor within this pollutant linkage. In order for the Highland Council to be able to consider groundwater within its prioritisation of potentially contaminated sites it was necessary for a groundwater vulnerability map to be produced for the area.

The British Geological Survey has published a map at the scale of 1:625,000 for the whole of Scotland, however, it was thought this scale was too generalised and a map at a scale of 1:50,000 would be much more valuable.

Incorporating the groundwater vulnerability model with information held digitally within the council on potentially contaminated sites allowed a pollution risk model to be created.

Both the digital groundwater vulnerability model and the pollution risk model were produced using ESRI Arc 8.2 software. This ensured that the models were compatible with, and easily incorporated into, the council's Geographical Information System (GIS) database, and its associated prioritisation system.

So what is Groundwater?

Groundwater comprises approximately 4% of water on Earth and is held within rocks and superficial deposits beneath the water table. A common misconception is that groundwater exists as rivers flowing underground. Although this is possible, (eg, karst flow in calcareous rocks), it is not the case in the Highland Council area.

Why is Groundwater Important?

The nature of the Highlands is such that many communities are remote and a lot of households are not on a mains water supply. Groundwater provides an important source for many of the Highlands' private water supplies, which serve a population estimated at 17,000. It is, therefore, important to preserve groundwater and keep it free from contamination. Groundwater can also supply base flow to rivers and surface water bodies. If it is contaminated, some of the pollutants can also be transported along with the base flow.

The Pollution of Groundwater

Pollution is often associated with human settlement, land use and industrialisation. Contaminants present as liquids or in solution can move downwards through the strata under gravitational forces. Rainfall penetrates the soil and percolates through the underlying strata. If mobile pollutants occur at the ground surface they, too, will penetrate the strata and pollute the groundwater. Where there is heavy rainfall (as there often is in the Highlands) a head pressure may build up and less mobile pollutants can often be forced downward to the water table where they or their degradation products may have a detrimental effect on the chemistry of the underlying groundwater.

The Geology Bit

Certain rock types are more permeable than others. This is also true of the superficial geological deposits (drift) which sometimes overlie the solid rock. Therefore, some geological rock/drift types are better at retaining water than others.

Where groundwater contained within an aquifer (a geological unit, rock or drift deposit, that is capable of storing groundwater in significant yields) is overlain by an impermeable rock or superficial deposit, it is less vulnerable to surface derived pollutants (as the impermeable layer acts as a shield). Where no impermeable layers occur, the mobile pollutants from ground level can easily percolate the strata and pollute the groundwater.

The Clever Bit

The production of a digital aquifer vulnerability map on GIS means that vulnerable areas can be seen at the click of a button. By overlaying land use on the map it is possible to predict areas likely to be contaminated from past and present industrial processes. Couple this with information supplied by the Environment Agency on the contaminants likely to arise with each industrial process along with some knowledge on pollutant mobility, and it becomes possible to predict the types of contaminants likely to be polluting the groundwater.

WOW, How Do I Make One?

The digital aquifer vulnerability model was created using the following four layers:

1. recharge (falling as rain)
2. superficial deposit permeability
3. solid rock permeability
4. presence of faulting.

1. Recharge (falling as rain)

Recharge is calculated using the annual average rainfall data (available from CEH, Wallingford) and the slope of topography (calculated from the Ordnance Survey's height data). Rainfall is less likely to percolate the ground surface when it falls on a steep gradient. Where the topography is flatter, rainfall is likely to collect and infiltrate the strata. Where the volume of rainfall is greater, there is an increased chance of surface pollutants reaching the water table.

2. Superficial Deposit Permeability

The superficial lithological units were classified according to their general permeability and split into three groups of:

- high permeability
- moderate permeability
- low permeability.

Information on the presence and types of superficial deposits was extracted from the British Geological Survey's (BGS) DigMap 50, version 1.5.

3. Solid Rock Permeability

Within the study area there were three basic rock types to consider:

- crystalline metamorphic rocks
- crystalline igneous rocks
- sedimentary rocks.

As with the superficial deposits, these can be grouped according to their general permeability into the following classifications:

- high permeability (eg, sandstone)
- moderate permeability (eg, conglomerate)
- low permeability (eg, granite).

The flow through the bedrock is important as it determines the ease with which water, and therefore soluble pollutants, may be transported. The rocks were split according to their dominant flow type:

- inter-granular flow in saturated zone
- groundwater movement controlled by fissures
- less permeable formations including concealed aquifers (aquifers concealed at depth beneath covering layers).

The dominant flow type and the rock permeability are grouped together and put into a final class of:

- high permeability
- moderate permeability
- low permeability.

Information on both the type of rock and dominant flow type was extracted from the BGS's DigMap.

4. Presence of Faulting

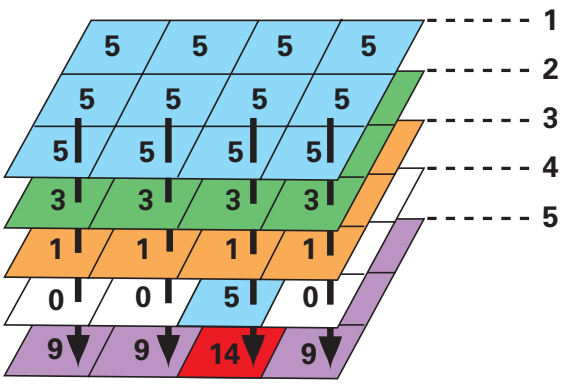
Faults and other unconformities may provide a direct pathway for surface derived pollutants to reach the groundwater. Areas where faulting occurs are considered to be more vulnerable to groundwater contamination than areas where faulting does not occur. Information on the presence of faulting was taken from the BGS's DigMap.

The Final Map

The four layers:

1. recharge
2. superficial deposit permeability
3. solid rock permeability
4. presence of faulting

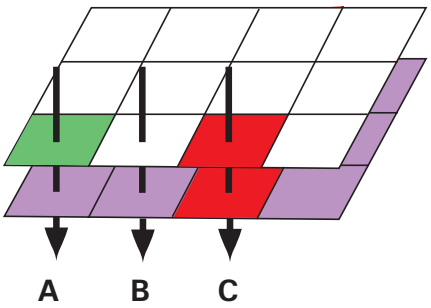
are converted to raster data (lots of squares) and scores assigned to the different attributes (eg, high permeability, low recharge, no faulting, etc). The computer was programmed to then calculate the value for each square overlying one another using the imputed formula to produce a final score which is presented as the aquifer vulnerability layer (figure 3).



1 = RECHARGE
2 = SUPERFICIAL DEPOSIT PERMEABILITY
3 = SOLID ROCK PERMEABILITY
4 = PRESENCE OF FAULTING
5 = AQUIFER VULNERABILITY

Figure 3. Groundwater Vulnerability Map Construction.

The pollution risk map was created using two layers, the groundwater vulnerability map and a layer created within the Highland Council which shows areas of potentially contaminative land uses. The latter is draped over the former within the GIS (figure 4).



A = MODERATE HAZARD RANK
MODERATE VULNERABILITY
B = NO HAZARD RANK
MODERATE VULNERABILITY
C = HIGH HAZARD RANK
HIGH VULNERABILITY

Figure 4. Groundwater Pollution Risk Construction.

The potentially contaminative land uses are allocated a hazard risk score according to their perceived polluting potential described in the Desk Reference Guide to Potentially Contaminative Land Uses (Syms, 1999).

Selection tools within Arc allow areas where there is a high pollution risk situated upon highly vulnerable groundwater to be identified. Different combinations of groundwater vulnerability and pollution risk can also be selected within the GIS. This allows for the prioritisation of sites according to the pollution risk to groundwater. The Environment Agency's CLR 8 (2002) document lists the pollutant profiles likely to be encountered at different industrial sites. Information on the mobility/solubility characteristics of each pollutant was collated into a database. This information was then used to predict the types of contaminants likely to have a polluting effect on the groundwater.

Discussion

It should be acknowledged and noted that there are limitations within the models. However, the models were designed to be used as screening tools to help prioritise areas of land for contaminated land inspection. For this purpose the limitations within the models are deemed acceptable. The models have been tested through intrusive investigation on potentially contaminated land to see if the geological sequences used with their construction are accurate. Groundwater samples were also screened for contaminants predicted to be within the site by the Environment Agency's CLR 8 document. The results were positive with the majority of the sites having the predicted geological sequences. The groundwater results were also conclusive of the model's accuracy.

Conclusion

The model was intended to provide a means for the Highland Council to screen all of the sites identified in its potentially polluting land-use database in order to assess the possibility of groundwater contamination. The models produced are screening tools in their early development stages with the potential to be expanded and built upon. These models provide a framework for integrating information from a variety of sources and quantifying assigned attributes within these data sets to allow comparison and prioritisation. Provided that their limitations are considered in their use, these models provide a valuable tool for the Highland Council in the implementation of its Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy.

The models could be further developed and adapted to consider the harmful effects of contaminant types along with the possibility of contaminated groundwater coming into direct contact with human or environmental receptors. Then the associated risk could be used to assist in the prioritisation process. This could be done by adapting the models to consider, for example, the proximity of groundwater abstraction points.

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COMMUNICABLE DISEASE AWARD

This award is presented at the Institute's conference to a member for 'Meritorious Work in Communicable Disease'. The award, sponsored by Past President Dr John Curnow, consists of a book token and a splendid quaich which the award recipient keeps for a year. Recipients' names are engraved on the quaich.

Nominations from members for the award for 2004 are welcome. Nominees must be members of REHIS. For further information on the award, or to discuss a possible nomination, please contact John Frater at the REHIS office. The closing date for nominations for 2004 is 22 October.

PRIVATE WATER SUPPLIES – WHERE'S YOURS?

by Rebecca Shutler, Placement Student, The University of Sunderland and Louise Carr, BSc (Hons), MSc Student, The University of Paisley

Introduction

The Highland Council recognises the potential for private water supplies to become receptors within the pollutant linkage necessary in the identification of contaminated land. The council has a Geographical Information System (GIS) centred database which stores all relevant environmental and historical data in a format that is easily consulted and manipulated. The council is also developing its own prioritisation tool which will be integrated with the GIS to allow potentially contaminated sites to be prioritised and investigated under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. To allow the location of private water supply sources to be incorporated into its prioritisation the Highland Council has commissioned a pilot mapping project. Individual sources were mapped using a Compaq iPAQ pocket PC loaded with ESRI ArcPAD 6.0 software and a Trimble GPS Pathfinder. In doing this, the council has gained a digital database which has been incorporated into its central GIS and shows the source of supplies.

Private Water Supplies in Highland

It is the responsibility of the Highland Council's Transport, Environmental and Community (TEC) Services to regulate and monitor private water supplies within the Highlands. There are approximately 2,800 private water supplies across the Highland Council area serving a population of approximately 17,000. The supplies range in size from those serving individual domestic properties to those supplying major food and drinks manufacturers.

Water supplies are abstracted from both surface waters and groundwater (figure 1). Surface water abstractions can be taken from both streams and lochs (photograph B). Where the source comes from a stream the entire stream has been digitised to allow for the possibility of contamination occurring up-gradient of the abstraction point. Where the source is from a borehole or spring (photograph A) the abstraction point is marked as a point.

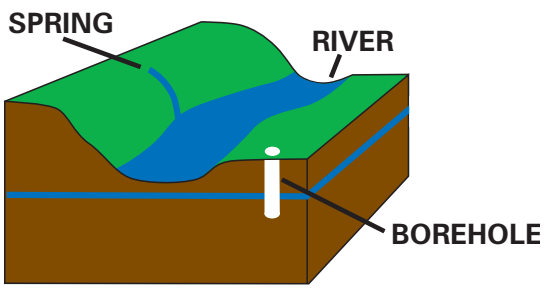

Figure 1. Examples of Abstraction Points.

Photograph A. Abstraction from spring.

Photograph B. Abstraction from pond.

Project Goals

A 12 month pilot study has just been completed by a placement student from the University of Sunderland. The placement goals were, within the pilot study area, to:

- provide good information on the sources of private water supplies;
- identify private water supplies which might be impacted by neighbouring land use; and
- provide a working procedure for mapping and data collection at the sources of private water supplies.

Initially the study was to cover Nairn, the smallest geographical area within the Highland Council. However, the project soon moved on to include Inverness and parts of Sutherland. A more recent three month student placement has collected information from the Lochaber area too.

Procedure

Information regarding the locations of private water supplies and contact names and addresses was collected from council records. A standard letter outlining the nature of the project and requesting a date and time suitable for a visit to enable the source to be mapped was sent out to each of the addresses for each area. Later, a questionnaire was sent out to those properties with a water supply that was not registered with either Scottish Water or the Highland Council asking for more details about their supply which allowed files held within area offices and held on the Council's database (Flare) to be updated.

A standard shapefile was constructed on the GIS which was used for collecting information on the position of each source as well as information about protection measures and treatment. Table 1 lists the attributes which accompany each mapped source.

Flare ID	Council's ID
PWS Type	Eg, spring, borehole
PWS Name	Name of property
Cat. Class	Supply classification
No. Houses	Number of houses served by supply
Contact Name	Name of contact
Address	Address of contact
Telephone	Telephone number of contact
Tank	Present/absent
Comments	Comment on type of tank if present
Lid	Present/absent
Comments	Comments on type of lid if present
Fencing	Present/absent
Comments	Comments on type of fencing if present
Treatment	Present/absent
Comments	Comments on type of treatment, eg, UV filters, etc., if present

Table 1. Attributes for private water supply mapping.

Results

The project collected valuable information regarding not only the locations of supplies, but also the treatment received and the number of houses fed by each abstraction point.

The mapping of supplies will become the responsibility of area officers during routine water sampling visits, this is currently being piloted in the Ross & Cromarty and Lochaber areas. Training and working procedures outlining the steps necessary to undertake digital mapping have been provided to area staff who are assigned this extra responsibility. GIS support will be given from central headquarters which will also collect the information gathered and incorporate it into the existing digital database.

Statistics

This section provides numerical information on the progress made in the actual mapping of private water supply sources. Statistics are also provided where information on a private water supply is known but the source is still to be mapped.

Mapping

Nairn:

- 38 private water supplies mapped
- 1 private water supply noted as now on mains supply
- 1 letter returned to sender
- 83% complete.

Inverness:

- 156 private water sources mapped
- 17 private water supplies noted as now on mains supply
- 17 letters returned to sender
- 154 properties gave no response
- 55% complete.

Sutherland:

- 25 private water sources mapped
- 5 private water supplies noted as now on mains supply
- 1 letter returned to sender
- 81 properties gave no response
- 27% complete.

Questionnaires

Sutherland:

- 404 total returns
- 238 properties on private water supplies
- 132 properties on mains water
- 1 property has no water supply
- 2 properties have been demolished
- 29 letters returned to sender.
- No response from 235 properties
- 63% complete.

Conclusions

The mapping project has not only provided information on the location of water supply abstraction points, but it also gives information on the type of supply (eg, spring, borehole, stream) and whether any treatment is received before the water is consumed. This allows areas where private water abstractions may be at risk from both chemical and bacteriological contamination to be identified.

It is likely that under the Water Framework Directive local authorities/government agencies will have to collect information on the location and volumes of groundwater being recovered from Scottish aquifers. The information gathered and procedures piloted through this project will assist the collection of such data.

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DAIRY PRODUCTION HOLDINGS

by Derek A Oliver, Environmental Health Officer, West Lothian Council

A new licensing system for dairy production holdings has been created by West Lothian Council, in consultation with the milk industry and the farming community. It ensures hygiene and safety standards meet with legislative requirements, but also reflects the farming community's viewpoints. Consistency in the execution of inspections was also of importance in the devising of the system.

Each production holding has been issued with a Guidance Booklet, comprising legal definitions and associated guidance based on legal interpretation, Scottish Executive guidelines, milk industry guides, farmers' input, and independent officers' experiences.

This booklet is divided into seven sections, following a guidance note which outlines the legalities behind the Dairy Products (Hygiene) (Scotland) Regulations 1995 and the powers of the Environmental Health Department of West Lothian Council. The seven sections are:

I. General Conditions for Hygiene of Production Holdings

II. General Conditions of Hygiene Applicable to Staff

III. Conditions for Housing Animals

IV. Conditions for Milking, and the Handling, Cooling and Storage of Raw Milk on the Production Holding

V. Conditions for Milking and Filtering Operations

VI. Storage Requirements

VII. Animal Health Standards.

Following advice during consultation with the milk trade and farmers themselves, it is anticipated that, by providing guidance outwith the legal jargon format so that it is clear and concise, conditions within dairy production holdings will not only improve, but standards will be maintained to a high level of compliance.

In line with ensuring the regulations are being complied with, standards to improve biosecurity and occupational zoonoses are also being targeted.

West Lothian Council aims to ensure all visits to dairy farms will initially commence with thorough disinfection. New provisions of personal protective equipment, cleaning materials and disinfectant have been made available in order that a safe inspection can be conducted and an example of good practice illustrated.

Inspectors will also be available to discuss extra biosecurity measures that the farmer wishes to carry out in and around the farm.

Through research and thorough implementation of the legislation, it is envisaged that inspections will not only improve standards of hygiene and safety on the farm but also promote good practice in order to prevent the spread of contagions, infections and/or food-borne disease.

To ensure the farmers' perspective was reflected in this operation, a consultation exercise was carried out. A sample of dairy production holdings, representing a random selection of parlours and byres, were each sent a guidance booklet, a self-assessment form (a simple Yes/No tick box, where a 'Yes' indicated that compliance was being met), and a feedback form. When issuing the guidance booklet, the self-assessment form was included in order that farmers could carry out their own periodic spot-check inspections to ensure they are meeting the necessary legislative standards prior to any Environmental Health visit. It is an excellent management tool. Any 'No' answers can be discussed during the next inspection or the farmer can contact the officer at the council's offices.

From the feedback form, it was evident that the farming community welcomed this consultative and inclusive approach to inspections. It permits concentration on the areas requiring attention and the guidance booklet helps to indicate the necessary works to be carried out in order to meet compliance. A quote from one farmer was very encouraging:

"Completing the [self-assessment] pro forma forces you to look carefully at farming practices and brings areas needing improvement to your attention."

The inspecting officer will also complete the inspection by handing over an inspection report at the end of the visit, a single sheet with 'satisfactory' tick boxes, and any specified works required to secure compliance clearly stated. This helps to prevent mounting paperwork being delivered up to a couple of weeks later, and also allows any required works to be started immediately. In line with all this, a new licence has been issued to every farm. This means that the farms have been allocated a new number and new licence certificate, effectively voiding any number previously issued.

Of course, this article does not cover the full system in detail but, following encouraging remarks from the farmers and the milk industry (including representation from the National Dairy Farm Assured Scheme), it is envisaged that the relationship between the enforcing authority and dairy producer will improve, and thus have the desired positive effect within the dairy farming community.

The system is currently being circulated within the Lothian and Borders Food Liaison Group in order that consistency in inspection can be more widespread. The system can be discussed in more detail with me. I can be contacted at derek.oliver@ westlothian.gov.uk and (direct dial): West Lothian Council, 01506 775329. A copy of the guidance booklet may also be sent out on request.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

by Keith McNamara, Committee Chairman

The most recent REHIS Management Committee, on 7 July, dealt with a variety of topics, including:

Development Plan

This Plan contains the priority projects and issues for the Institute over a three year period. Progress with the Plan was reviewed in some detail at the meeting, and a report arising from this review forms a separate report in this Journal.

General Reserve Fund

It was agreed to allocate funding from this reserve to a study to map the National Occupational Standards for the Practice of Public Health with the REHIS Diploma in Environmental Health. This will be a very useful piece of work, to allow us to demonstrate that the REHIS Diploma contains national public health standards (which are rapidly becoming the 'industry standard' for occupations working in the field of public health), and will highlight areas that we can do further work on to increase the National Occupational Standards content.

Public and Media Relations

Several proactive press releases had been distributed which had received favourable comment (see REHIS website for all media releases), and a draft media release was prepared regarding the control of smoking. Suggestions are invited from members for future press releases.

Annual Conference; 18/19 November 2004

The President tabled a draft programme which was discussed and agreed in principle.

Public Health Agenda

The Committee had set five criteria for the appointment of a chairman for the Project Steering Group (PSG), to take forward the consultants' recommendations and possible candidates were considered against these criteria. Terms of reference for the PSG are to be drafted, to ensure it is focussed on priority actions.

Elementary Food and Health Course

Following a meeting between the Scottish Executive, NHS Health Scotland, and REHIS, draft agreement was reached for the use of materials developed by those collaborating in providing the Elementary Food and Health Course.

A BLAST(IE) FROM THE PAST(IE)!

by John F Crawford

October of this year sees the thirtieth anniversary of the first intake of students to the BSc course in Environmental Health at the University of Strathclyde. The 1974 intake was for third year entrants only and drawn from applicants who were already qualified Sanitary Inspectors, ie, holders of the Diploma of the Royal Sanitary Association of Scotland (commonly known as the 'Royal' in those days).

The concept, design and delivery of the new BSc course had not been without controversy. Several years previously, the Royal had managed to generate an almost unprecedented amount of rage and fury among those Sanitary Inspectors employed at the time in Scotland's small burghs, large burghs, counties, and cities. This outrage emanated from the circulation of a letter from the Royal to Town Clerks and County Clerks intimating the former's intention to push for a degree course and expressing the view that, in future, they expected that all Chief Officers would be educated to degree standard. This was considered an affront to virtually all existing qualified officers, although the range of work they undertook varied widely depending on the type of local authority they worked in. The one problem was that the Royal had the power to examine those wishing to enter the profession and had to be listened to.

It was known that there already was a degree course at Aston University (indeed the jungle drums hinted that a chap from Fife named Vettraino and a mate had gone off in that direction) but that was considered mostly to be fine for the English; we Scots didn't need a degree and we certainly wouldn't be bossed around by someone who had!

Despite this, some twenty souls, having presented themselves for interview at the University of Strathclyde during the summer of 1974, started the first session of the third year that October. They did not have their sorrows to seek.

Despite the unfailing support and enthusiasm of Civil Engineering Professor Ian Barr, some of the lecturers were hostile to the idea of 'these people' getting into university. One lecturer recounted having once had an unhelpful (or so he said) encounter with a Sanitary Inspector on building control work and had formed his impression of the profession on that basis. It was only when the writer became a lecturer several years later that he began to understand the pecking order in the institution: the elite among the course lecturers had to have a first degree in civil engineering; a PhD was a necessity for promotion in the Department; and a portfolio of (refereed) publications in appropriate journals was to be admired. What hope for a bunch of students who had arrived via day-release tuition at Cambuslang College or block-release courses at Langside College (and afterwards the College of Food Technology)?

There was one dedicated Lecturer in Environmental Health, (Ian Fleming), but the bulk of the lectures were delivered by other Departments (including Civil Engineering) of the University.

By the festive season of 1974, half the students had dropped out and gone back to their full-time jobs. The remaining ten, however, stuck it out and made sufficient endeavours to progress into the fourth year.

By the summer of 1975, the University was in a position to accept applications for entry into the first year of the course as well as taking further third year entrants. The third year entry in 1975 (a total of three students) would prove to be the smallest class in the course's history, making it virtually impossible for its members not to pay attention to the lecture in hand (or indeed to 'dog' classes).

The first year of the new BSc course was predominantly similar to that of a general science degree, with a sprinkling of lectures in Environmental Health just to remind students where they were heading. The entry qualifications weren't particularly onerous and it seemed that a number of the students were sponsored by local authorities whose recruitment priorities were different from those of the University. This resulted in a dropout/failure rate (politely described in the University as 'invited to withdraw') which was of spectacular magnitude. Many of the course's critics in the University saw this phenomenon as a validation of their original views on the Department offering a degree in Environmental Health. Some of these individuals had to eat their words, however, when the results of the final exams were announced in July 1976. Not only was there a healthy sprinkling of upper second class degrees (not easily achieved in those days) but a first class honours degree had been awarded to Kevin Thomas.

The course continued apace and in January 1977, Mike Jackson was appointed as a second Lecturer, his first ever lecture being given to the class of three (heaven knows what went through his mind that January morning after meeting that bunch).

Shortly after the start of the course, Scottish local government had been reorganised (in 1975) and most of the new District Councils had appointed Directors of Environmental Health, many of whom seized the opportunity of their new-found status to promote the profession far beyond its standing at the time. Removal of the burghs, counties and cities offered the opportunity to seek more uniformity in the EHO's job. Gone were the 'municipal engineering' duties (roads, sewers, street lighting, swimming pools, parks, cemeteries, etc) so beloved of the 'small burgh' boys (for an example of 'etc', the writer had represented Saltcoats when it played Lanark Burgh in *It's a Knockout* in 1972!). Instead there was an opportunity to offer specialism in food, health and safety, pollution control, etc. Directors of Environmental Health were now being quoted (and listened to) in local papers as the new local authorities realised here was an officer whose training enabled him or her to 'sort out things' after all the other Council departments had been unable to do so. A Society of Directors of Environmental Health had been formed and was invited to nominate professional advisers to CoSLA. The former Sanitary Inspectors' Association, (considered by some to be more lively and vigorous than the Royal but without the latter's rights to examine students), had been renamed the Scottish Institute of Environmental Health (SIEH) and was keeping a healthy eye on the opportunities for further raising the status of the EHO.

By 1980, the Strathclyde course was still accepting first year and third year entrants. The block release courses at Napier College and Glasgow College of Food Technology continued to offer the four-year block release course. There were still significant student losses in the degree course particularly in the first year. In early 1980, Ian Fleming decided to return south of the border and the writer was fortunate to be appointed alongside Mike Jackson. Some of the attitudes towards Environmental Health undergraduates experienced as a student five years earlier were still around. Ian Barr, however, continued to make it known in the University that he was behind the course, 'come hell or high water'.

Two events in the early 'eighties would later be seen as the turning point for the Strathclyde course. Firstly, the Royal and SIEH agreed to combine and form REHIS, bringing the former's powers and the latter's vigour together; secondly, the course academic entry qualifications were increased to a higher standard, meaning stronger students more able to cope with the onerous scientific aspects of the course. The new REHIS hierarchy quickly established close links with the University and even offered a place on the new Executive Council. For the first and only time in their working relationship, Mike Jackson pulled rank and said the writer 'was to do it'!

Being on the Executive Council allowed the University access not only to REHIS but also to the Society and, indirectly, to CoSLA. The opportunity was taken to point out that the University's role was to educate students while the REHIS role was to moderate access to the profession (these roles hadn't always been clearly understood by some during the earlier years). The one drawback identified was that any potentially 'good' EHO who couldn't get into the University would be lost to the profession (although there was still the opportunity of using the Diploma course to gain access to third year).

There were further developments during the early 'eighties when the Glasgow Food College Diploma course folded, to be followed shortly afterwards by the Napier course.

Today Strathclyde graduate EHOs are to be found throughout Scotland's councils, SEPA, consultancies, etc. Many have gone on to obtain MSc and PhD degrees and nobody bats an eyelid. Ian Barr whilst retired, still displays the enthusiasm for the course he had thirty years ago (as witnessed by his attendance at Mike Jackson's retiral 'do' last year).

Of the original ten graduates of 1976, most if not all have gone on to make their mark in the profession. Davie Grant is running the Environmental Health service in Dumfries and Galloway; Trevor Jones runs North Ayrshire's Cleansing Service; Kevin Thomas runs the same council's Environmental Health and Trading Standards Service; Bert Wilson runs Renfrewshire's Environmental Health Service; and John Hutchison has his own consultancy.

It would appear that the foresight of the Royal over thirty years ago was well-justified. Sadly, another reorganisation of local government in 1996 meant the down-sizing of Council Departments resulting in the Environmental Health Service being part of a much larger Department which, in a number of cases, isn't led by an EHO. Whether this will have any long-term effects on the future development and training of the EHO remains to be seen.

The late A M M Connell, (Greenock Burgh), who was one of the main drivers for a degree course in the early 'seventies, would have been proud of the advances made in furthering the profession during the last three decades. He was once quoted as remarking on his first wage as being 'three half-crowns per week (37.5p today!). To put it into perspective, on becoming qualified in 1972, the writer settled (after negotiation) for a permanent post in Saltcoats for the second placing on AP4. Those were the days!

Note: 'Blasties' was the name given to the residents of Kilbirnie by Robert Burns (on account of the blastfurnacemen at nearby Glengarnock steelworks). Although born in Renfrewshire, John F Crawford has had a (strange) fascination for the place since moving there in 1962 and still (even more strangely) follows the local team, the Ladeside, to an obsessive degree. The author's modesty has prevented him from mentioning that he has also gone on to make his mark in the profession as he is the Head of Protective Services for East Ayrshire Council. Editor.

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MEMBERSHIP, EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

by John Stirling, Chairman

Although the MET Committee meets only twice a year, there is no close season for its members. The work carries on, much of it driven by the Institute's Development Plan. The review of CPD opportunities and the promotion of CPD to members, SoCOEHS and SEPA continues under the stewardship of Bernard Forteath. He reported that the potential for including management training within the CPD scheme is being investigated by Tom Bell.

A review of the present Centre system in context of the Royal Charter, the possibility of issues-based 'Centres', the opportunities for Centres to include REHIS business issues at meetings, planning of social events, the provision of more member support via the Centres and the consideration of how the REHIS office can provide full support to both Centres is a comprehensive remit which falls to Past President, Helen Barron. Helen is actively pursuing these matters, commencing with consultation with Centre Officers. Helen would welcome any comments members may have on this matter.

A promotional brochure extolling the benefits of membership of REHIS is currently at the printers. Once it is to hand it will be circulated to all interested parties, made available at a variety of events and included in selected mailings. It will also be available on the Institute's website.

Feedback suggests that the recently introduced membership application forms are working well. Consequently, it is felt that the deliberations of the committee's Membership Applications Group are unnecessary and accordingly it has been agreed that the Group's activities be sisted pending a review of the new membership forms in 18 months time.

Opportunities for promoting Affiliate membership have been reviewed. Endorsement is not contrary to the Institute's Royal Charter, but there are potential difficulties in organisations describing themselves as Affiliate Members. It was agreed not to actively seek further Affiliate Members, and that the Council would deal with any applications as they arise.

Maximising income from 'commercial activities' is being considered. The Elementary Health and Safety Course teaching aids have been redeveloped and are now also available in PowerPoint™ on CD. The Intermediate HACCP Practices Course (which replaced the Principles of HACCP Course) was launched in January 2004. A new Introduction to HACCP Course will be launched shortly. The Institute is constantly reviewing ways to maximise activities and income, but has to be aware of the competition in this area when making changes. If we could ensure the same regulatory push for training in the occupational health and safety sector that exists in the food sector it would result in increased use of the Institute's courses.

With regard to assessing new opportunities for income generation and maximising existing income sources, the committee is continually reviewing opportunities. An example of this is the Elementary Food and Health course; however, the Institute has been commissioned to provide this course by the other partners (The Scottish Executive, Scottish Consumer Council, NHS Health Scotland and the Food Standards Agency (Scotland)) and the introduction date for this course is beyond our direct control. I am indebted to Martin Henry, John Frater and Stephen Rooke for assistance with the matters referred to in the last two paragraphs.

ENHANCING THE PROFESSION THROUGH AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH-KNOWLEDGE BASE

by Harold D Harvey [1] and Paul Fleming [2], Editors, Journal of Environmental Health Research

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Abstract

There is a call in the recent visioning document from the Health Development Agency and the CIEH for an enhanced research effort to help generate an evidence-base for environmental health practice. In the USA the recently published environmental health revitalising strategy includes 'supporting research' as an essential element.

In response to such demands for proof of best practice in Environmental Health, a growing body of research in the discipline is being generated. It is fair to say, though, that there has not been a tradition amongst Environmental Health professionals, or academics, of writing up research for publication.

Why is the reporting of research not a priority? In many cases, research is undertaken to pass an academic qualification. The immediacy and relief of finishing the project can lessen the enthusiasm to share findings with the wider professional world. Often those who undertake needs assessments and evaluations as part of their professional role are not given time to disseminate often interesting and important findings. In the academic world, the pressures of teaching and administration can militate against publication.

No matter what the inhibiting factors, we are losing the opportunity to enrich the Environmental Health professions as a whole and strengthen the evidence base from which we work if quality research work is not written up for publication.

This paper discusses the need for an Environmental Health research-knowledge base and explores the factors which will provide the setting for its continued development and maintenance.

Key Words

Environmental Health, evidence-based practice, peer review, research, research-knowledge base.

Introduction

In today's world, buzz words such as accountability, best value, effectiveness and evidence-based practice are the norm in many policy documents and business plans, not to mention their use in political and management rhetoric. Increasingly, professionals in all disciplines are being challenged to offer proof that their practice is effective, efficient and equitable. Traditional modes of working are being scrutinised to prove their worth.

In the visioning document from the Health Development Agency, *Environmental Health 2012: A key partner in delivering the public health agenda*, in which the interface of Environmental Health with the new public health agenda is explored, there is a call for an enhanced research effort with a view to generating an evidence-base for policy, strategy and practice in environmental health (HDA, 2002). In the USA, the recently published Environmental Health revitalising strategy includes 'supporting research' as an essential element. The *Environmental Health in Scotland and the Health Improvement Challenge* report, commissioned by REHIS, has a recommendation to nurture the academic hinterland by means of research.

Discussion

Research is seen by some as a high level activity carried out in universities by a few advanced academics generating new knowledge which sometime in the future will be written up, read, integrated into academic curricula, taught to new professionals and thus eventually applied in practice (Harvey, 2001a). There is an important place for this form of high level research and every profession should strive to be a stakeholder and they will receive recognition as a result. Research, however, has a much wider meaning and a much greater influence on professions and professionals than this (Harvey, 2001b, 2001c).

In any organisation, obsolete information, assumptions and beliefs can be as dangerous as obsolete machines. The initial qualifying education and training course as the means of acquiring a body of facts which will last for the duration of a career is no longer tenable, if it ever was. Watkins et al (1992) suggest that the lifespan of a vocational degree is about four years! Rapidly increasing knowledge and the broadening of portfolios make existing facts and skills inadequate and changing environments can make them obsolete. As the growth of new information and new knowledge accelerates, education and training at all levels needs to become less about delivering knowledge *per se* and more about helping people to learn how to find out for themselves. This gives a greater emphasis to the development of research skills in education and training. To facilitate this, most Environmental Health undergraduate programmes now incorporate research skills in the curricula in the form of a project and dissertation module. Following graduation and qualification, many Environmental Health professionals continue their academic studies on a part-time basis whilst working. Seventy six percent of local authority Environmental Health Officers in the UK hold post graduation job-related qualifications (Harvey and Suiter, 2000). This part-time academic pursuit provides the opportunity for masters research projects to be directly linked with current practice issues. In both undergraduate and post graduate projects candidates design, implement, analyse and report on the findings of a thorough study of a selected topic under the direction of an academic supervisor (and sometimes also a practitioner).

The aims of a research project are frequently stated in terms of the individual and, indeed, on completion of a successful project the student may know more about that specific, narrow topic than anyone else; but few others may become aware of this. Commonly, the project work is written up as a dissertation, assessed internally and placed on a bookshelf, never to be opened again. This is not waste. The process of designing and managing a research project, writing up the dissertation and seeing the work in print bring knowledge and skills development and personal satisfaction. Yet more could be achieved - a significant number of Environmental Health projects undertaken globally each year have the potential to contribute to the research-knowledge base for policy, strategy and practice in Environmental Health. This, however, will not happen unless the research work is published.

It is fair to say that there has not been a tradition amongst Environmental Health professionals, or academics, of writing up research for publication. Why is the reporting of research in the discipline not a priority? When research is undertaken to pass an academic qualification, the immediacy and relief of finishing the project can lessen the enthusiasm to share findings with the wider professional world. Often those who undertake needs assessments and evaluations as part of their professional role are not given time to disseminate often interesting and important findings. In the academic world, the pressures of teaching and administration can militate against publication.

No matter what the inhibiting factors, we are losing the opportunity to enrich the Environmental Health profession as a whole and strengthen the evidence base from which we work if quality research work is not written up for publication. An important aspect of research is finding out that which is not yet programmed into the existing knowledge structure of an academic discipline and publishing to contribute to the research evidence-base (Bournier, 1998).

There is thus a need for capacity building in the reporting of Environmental Health research. Publishing in professional and academic journals contributes to the evidence-base, and the dissemination of current research via peer-reviewed publications, which carry the credibility of a rigorous quality assurance mechanism, is essential to developing and maintaining the authority of the profession and validating the work of practitioners.

Perhaps in the past there has not been sufficient recognition or convenient opportunities for the presentation or publication of research findings on Environmental Health topics. Today, however, the professional bodies increasingly recognise publishing as part of professional development. 'Writing-up' research, presenting a conference paper, evaluating a practice issue, or carrying out a specialist literature review is a learning experience recognised in the REHIS, CIEH, NEHA and other bodies' continuing professional development schemes. Several Environmental Health professional bodies also have a peer reviewed journal (or a journal with a peer reviewed section) (see Harvey and Fleming, 2003). REHIS, CIEH and IFEH contribute to the annual University of Ulster Graduate/Post Graduate Research Conference on Environmental Health Protection and Safety, the aims of which are to provide a forum for new and emerging researchers to present their findings (Harvey, 2003).

Conclusions

The following will contribute to the continued development and maintenance of an Environmental Health research-knowledge base:

- An improved recognition amongst the profession that the publication of papers in quality assured professional and peer reviewed journals is important to the enrichment of the Environmental Health profession, essential to the strengthening of the evidence base from which we work and significant to the continued recognition of the status of the Environmental Health professions by governments and our partner professionals;
- The recognition by employers/managers that research and professional evaluations/needs assessments based on practice activities are contributors to the improvement of service delivery;
- The inclusion in the curriculum for the education and training of Environmental Health professionals of research methods, skills development in the writing of academic papers and an opportunity for each student to study a topic in-depth which may provide data for a short paper or the basis for post graduate research;
- The review by the Environmental Health professional bodies of their aims, objectives, mission statements, curricula and other documents (which commonly set the agenda for their members and the profession in their geographical area) to determine whether there is sufficient attention to those factors which will create awareness, generate impetus, fund and provide opportunities for members to carry out research, publish and contribute to a global Environmental Health research-knowledge base.

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I am particularly glad to report that Harold Harvey, the co-author of this article, was recently presented with the Distinguished Teaching Fellowship Award by the University of Ulster. Harold has written for Environmental Health Scotland *before and I hope to receive further contributions from him in the future. Harold is a leading advocate of building Environmental Health's academic hinterland, considering the academic and research base to be an essential component of a modern profession.* Environmental Health Scotland *is eager to support Harold and others in pursuit of this objective. Editor.*

Harold D Harvey.
Photograph courtesy of the University of Ulster.

TRAINING THE TRAINER

by Craig Smith, Principal Environmental Health Officer, West Lothian Council

Like most local authorities, West Lothian has in recent years experienced increasing difficulties in finding suitable training opportunities for ethnic language food workers. Our businesses are changing and an increasing number of staff and owners do not speak English very well, if at all.

The main ethnic languages in West Lothian food businesses are Cantonese and Urdu/Punjabi. A questionnaire sent to local catering businesses in June 2002 indicated that ethnic language workers faced a number of difficulties. The availability and cost of training was identified as a problem. Businesses also identified that staff turnover caused further problems.

Training courses had been run in the past for both Cantonese and Urdu/Punjabi speakers. However, the Cantonese course was run with the assistance of an interpreter and the presenter for the Urdu course had to come from Leeds.

At the same time, we were working more with interpreters from Interpretation and Translation Services at the City of Edinburgh Council during routine food hygiene inspections. This was having enormous benefits in improving standards and understanding within the businesses.

It was felt, however, that more was needed to provide further assistance to the businesses. The lack of training was a big problem but it was difficult to tell businesses to get their staff trained when the opportunities were few and far between. We therefore decided to take on the task of providing trainers who could present hygiene courses in ethnic languages. An approach was made to the Interpretation and Translation Services to see if we could find a Cantonese speaker and an Urdu/Punjabi speaker who would be willing to undertake the Diploma in Advanced Food Hygiene and other necessary training to become registered course presenters with REHIS.

Two volunteers were found. Jeanice Lee who is a Cantonese speaker and who had worked with our officers during a number of visits, and Badaruddin Qureshi who speaks Urdu and Punjabi. Neither Jeanice or Badaruddin had any formal food hygiene training and little, if any, food industry experience.

A training programme was developed for Jeanice and Badaruddin to prepare them to undertake the Diploma in Advanced Food Hygiene course. This included completing the Elementary Food Hygiene course and providing the course handbooks for the Intermediate and Advanced courses. Meetings were held to assess progress and mock essays and exam style questions were set to help develop examination skills and understanding of material. A range of practical visits was arranged to a wide variety of food premises to help them gain a better understanding of how the food industry operates. The training programme started in May 2002 and was completed in June 2003 with the successful completion of the Diploma in Advanced Food Hygiene Course. The course fees were paid for by the Policy and Equality Department within West Lothian Council.

Jeanice Lee obtained her provisional registration as a course presenter with REHIS soon after. However, due to new work commitments she was not able to present a course for us until June 2004. This, however, went extremely well and we were able to offer the course free to 16 local food workers.

Badaruddin needed some more training experience before he could obtain his provisional registration. In April 2004 a series of short training sessions were organised for Urdu/Punjabi speaking food workers in West Lothian. Badaruddin presented these and has now received his provisional registration. We are planning a free Elementary course for local businesses in the autumn.

There was no formal agreement entered into, just an understanding that Jeanice and Badaruddin would provide a free course for our local businesses. The process has been long, and the effort from all has been significant. However, it has been satisfying to see this project through and feel that a meaningful contribution has been made to improve the training opportunities for ethnic language food workers, not only in West Lothian, but throughout Scotland.

We hope to work with Jeanice and Badaruddin more in the future. If anyone would like more information then please contact me (tel: 01506 775364).

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH 8TH WORLD CONGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA; 22-27 FEBRUARY 2004

by Drew Hall

Drew Hall, on the left, at the Congress Dinner with Lorna McHattie, Tom Bell and David Cameron. Photograph courtesy of Lorna McHattie.

I was very fortunate to be selected as the REHIS membership representative for the 8th IFEH World Congress on Environmental Health.

The City of Durban played a very able host for the week long event organised by the South African Institute of Environmental Health (SAIEH).

It was very refreshing to experience the enthusiasm and commitment of delegates at the Congress. The event itself had been highly publicised in South Africa and received great support from the South African Government and the Local Municipality - Thekwini Council - which, incidentally, has a population almost as large as Scotland.

On my trip from Durban Airport I was met with numerous three metre high lamp post banners advertising the Congress. The Minister of Health and the Minister for Environment and Tourism for the South African Government gave keynote addresses. On the opening day there was television and press coverage and even a demonstration outside the conference centre. When was the last time that happened at the REHIS conference?

I was greatly impressed by how the Congress was taken in such a serious and important manner by the South African Government and people. The South Africans were also clearly delighted to be hosting the event. To say the event programme was full would be a slight understatement as it was rare for each day's proceedings to fit in the time allotted.

657 delegates from 39 countries attended the Congress. Over 90 papers were presented from academic, environmental health, industry and community organisations from five continents. This was truly a world participation event.

Overview of Congress Programme

The Congress was spread over five days, if one doesn't count the speeches at the Mayor of Durban's Welcoming Function on the Sunday evening.

Day 1 - Monday 23 February

Morning - opening ceremony, messages of welcome.
Afternoon - Plenary Session.

Day 2 - Tuesday 24 February

Four full parallel sessions run throughout the day.

Day 3 - Wednesday 25 February

Day - Field trips.
Evening - IFEH and SAIEH National Awards Banquet.

Day 4 - Thursday 26 February

Morning - Debating Session.
Afternoon - Plenary Session or IFEH Regional Committee meetings.

Day 5 - Friday 27 February

Resolutions and Closing Speeches.

Congress Themes

The Congress had a simple yet emotive theme/slogan 'Our people – Our World'. The broad subject areas presented at the Congress were:

1. Environmental Health Management
2. Risk Assessment and Management
3. Communicable Disease
4. Community Development
5. Education, Training and Development
6. Food Management and Safety
7. Housing – An Environmental Health Perspective
8. Occupational Health and Safety
9. Pollution
10. Water and Sanitation
11. Waste Management.

Not surprisingly, the majority of the papers presented were relative to Africa. There was, however, a number of Scots who presented papers including Bernard Forteath (Renfrewshire Council), Dr John Cowden (SCIEH) and Lorna McHattie (Abertay University).

Day 1

We were all entertained at the opening of the Congress with a very active display of song and dance representing the various cultures of South Africa. This was followed by a colourful ceremony at which a flag for each of the countries represented was presented.

The Congress began with a series of welcome speeches from various dignitaries, including South African Government Ministers, local mayors, the IFEH President and the South African Institute's President.

The afternoon's plenary session was delayed slightly as the Chairman announced to the Congress that he and some of the police would go and speak to the demonstrators outside and that we were not to be concerned and we were in no danger. I was not concerned about my safety up until then! Apparently the demonstrators were from a local environmental pressure group who wanted a few places at the conference for their members; this request was granted.

Plenary Session

There were several well-researched and presented papers which gave a taster of what was to come and an indication of some of the problems, issues and concerns affecting South Africa, some of which are briefly outlined as follows:

Poor Man's Fuel

It is estimated that between 40% and 50% of South African households use paraffin for some part of their domestic energy requirements, ie, 9 million households. These are low income households. Cooking is the most significant use of the fuel. Paraffin is cheap compared with other energy costs including hardware. The cheapest of stoves is between £1.20 and £1.75, but may only last for about three months. Paraffin is around 20 pence a litre.

There are three principal dangers in the use of paraffin:

1. Fire
2. Ingestion (sold in unsuitable containers (some are former food containers) from bulk supply)
3. Poisoning by means of indoor air pollution.

It is estimated that up to 80,000 households experience paraffin-related fires each year. Burns are the leading non-natural death for the 0-9 year old age group in South Africa. The Paraffin Safety Association in South Africa has launched a safety awareness campaign and is lobbying the Government to legislate for safe containers, safer stoves and alternative affordable fuels.

Health Care Waste

This issue was raised a number of times during the Congress, in presentation and discussions.

What we would call clinical waste does not appear to be adequately regulated and managed in South Africa. There are poor controls and the majority of the waste is landfilled in authorised and unauthorised sites. The Environmental Health professionals (EHP) are seeking proper regulations and suitable controlled disposal of this waste without resorting to incineration.

Air Pollution/Environmental Injustice

Another recurring subject and theme was the problem of the air pollution in the Southern Basin of Durban and environmental injustice. The South Durban Basin is a prime example of environmental injustice. It is a mix of heavy industrial, including two large oil refineries, and dense coterminous community settlements (townships). This resulted from poor land use planning and the racial discrimination policies of the apartheid era. Emissions from industry in South Africa were largely uncontrolled for decades.

The term 'environmental injustice' was coined in America in response to the disparities of environmental quality provided to deprived communities (mostly coloured) which are more likely to be burdened with a significant and disproportionate amount of environmental impacts and risks compared to more affluent communities (mostly white). This led to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) defining environmental justice as 'the fair treatment for people of all races, cultures and incomes regarding the development of environmental laws, regulations and policies'.

It was not until the post-apartheid era that these polluting industries came under enormous public pressure to reduce emissions. One company, Engen Oil Refinery, agreed a five year programme with the community to reduce sulphur dioxide and particulate emissions by over 65%. However, this early progress with the community has broken down due to mistrust. The communities now object to any proposed work by the refinery, even if it is to clean the emissions and improve environmental impact on the surrounding area.

The Minister for Environment and Tourism, Valli Moosa, has introduced a multi-point plan to improve and progress matters. The main outcomes of the plan are the establishment of a comprehensive air quality monitoring system in the Basin, a health study and an air quality management plan. The South African Government is also introducing updated and new Environmental and Air Quality legislation.

Day 2

This was decision day as I had four parallel sessions, each with 18 presentations to choose from. I decided to pick presentations and change at the planned breaks. The start of each session presentation was timed to correspond with that of the other sessions to allow flexibility between sessions, however, my experience of the previous day indicated that the South Africans regarded the programme timetable as for rough guidance only. This was borne out with the number of sessions running very late.

I decided to opt for sessions on environmental health management, housing, waste management and pollution and communicable diseases.

Environmental Health Management

Speakers from several countries contributed to this session and ranged from 'Redirecting the Role of Environmental Health' from a South African to 'Environment and Health Collaboration' from a Swede.

I always found the South African presentations the most fascinating as they had clearly identified pressing environmental/public health problems and were trying to deal with these with wholly inadequate resources. Not only do they still have the public health problems that we had over 150 years ago, such as the lack of water and sanitisation infrastructure, but are also trying to deal with the current issues affecting the first world: complex air pollution, health care waste, genetically modified foods, etc.

One presentation described the uneven spread of Environmental Health professionals; the Eastern Cape area of South Africa where some small municipalities had reasonable staff resources and were achieving much, while others had very little. The only EHP in one poor municipality was diverted from a proper role to collect debts as he was the only employee with a car. However there are a number of proposals currently underway in South Africa to address issues of resources and uniform working by restructuring the Municipal Health Service and local government.

Housing

Again there was a wide range of presentations, from mould and damp in new low cost housing in South Africa to spatial aspects of social housing in Dublin (yes, in Ireland).

A study of a government low cost housing programme, Waterloo Area, in South Africa found that 51% of houses had visible signs of damp and mould. These houses were on average only three to four years old and were constructed to help eliminate the chronic housing shortage in South Africa. The study involved a physical survey and the completion of a health questionnaire by the occupants. These houses were of single brick construction with cement or metal profile sheet roofing and often with earth floors. The survey found, not surprisingly, that the houses were of poor construction and had poor ventilation and very little moisture proofing. The presenter advocated raising community awareness about dampness and mould and, as almost an afterthought, 'improved workmanship and selection of materials on the builder's part is also recommended'. To be fair the presenter also advocated the need for laws and regulations to address this problem.

In an attempt to improve a shortage of housing the African authorities are making problems for the future.

Communicable Diseases

The presentations, apart from a Malaysian paper on Dengue Haemorrhaging Fever, were all from Africa. What surprised me was there was only one paper on HIV/AIDS and no other discussion or resolution time was spent on it, despite being a major killer in Africa. This might have been down to the Congress organisers, as a World Conference on HIV/AIDS was held at the same venue in Durban just last year.

South Africa has become the site of the fastest growing HIV epidemics in the world. On average, 1,700 citizens are being infected with HIV each day in addition to the 5.3 million South Africans also estimated to be living with HIV at the end of 2002. The primary goals of the South African Government strategic plan are to:

1. Reduce the number of new infections (specially among youths)
2. Reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on individual families and communities.

Environmental Health professionals are seen to be playing a main role in this plan.

Day 3

This was field visit day. I opted for the community development visit to the Valley of a Thousand Hills. As expected, it did not run to programme. However, it was a great chance to experience how the largely Zulu population live away from urban centres.

This was a rural area but was surprisingly densely populated as there were small round cottages spaced out around 150 metres from each other. We were able to experience Zulu dancing at one of the projects and see a traditional Zulu mud hut. At this project, women are taught growing skills and chicken husbandry. They are given a chicken of their own to raise and materials to make a chicken coop. They even have a hand operated machine to make chain link fencing; this is a very slow operation.

At a visit to a local secondary school it was very humbling to see every child immaculately dressed in their school uniform and well behaved. The school was just a collection of huts and prefabricated buildings. The head teacher was delighted to show us the new science classroom, which had been completed recently. This was a prefabricated hut equipped with just three sinks.

We also visited the 'Valley Trust' a facility founded 50 years ago by a Dr Halley Stott to provide health care to the black South African poor. The Trust has greatly extended its work, attempting to deal with HIV/AIDS, community health support, community learning/training for employment, and life skills. The Trust does receive some state aid but it is largely funded through donations. One presenter at the Trust described the youth diversity programme aimed at young teenagers. The idea of the programme is to get the youths involved in sport like football, basketball, etc, to 'stop them having sex' and the associated HIV risk. I do not recall having the sex choice so readily available in my youth.

Congress Awards and Dinner

Congratulations to Mike Halls for being presented with the Eric Foskett Award for his outstanding contribution to IFEH. It was good to see Mike being finally recognised for his considerable efforts in IFEH since its conception.

The event had more than its fair share of speeches, but was enjoyable. It was great to see and hear from the recipients of the best students' award. Their enthusiasm and gratitude for receiving the award was incredible, they obviously consider themselves very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to become Environmental Health professionals.

Day 4

The first half of the day was a debating session largely contributed to by African delegates. The debated topics were health care waste, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), pollution, water and sanitisation. I found these sessions to be the least rewarding of the Congress and it is debatable whether they advanced anything, although they had the potential to do so. The quality of the debate from the floor of Congress was questionable.

The GMO debate was clumsy in part; one delegate was concerned that GMO foods were causing the increase in obesity in children and other delegates went slightly off target and related GMOs to the increase in the female hormone oestrogen in the environment. She concluded that this was causing an increase in homosexual activity in African men.

In the afternoon I attended the interesting meeting of the IFEH Europe Group chaired by an Irish Republic delegate, Raymond Ellard. I will not go into detail as no doubt Mike Halls will provide a report.

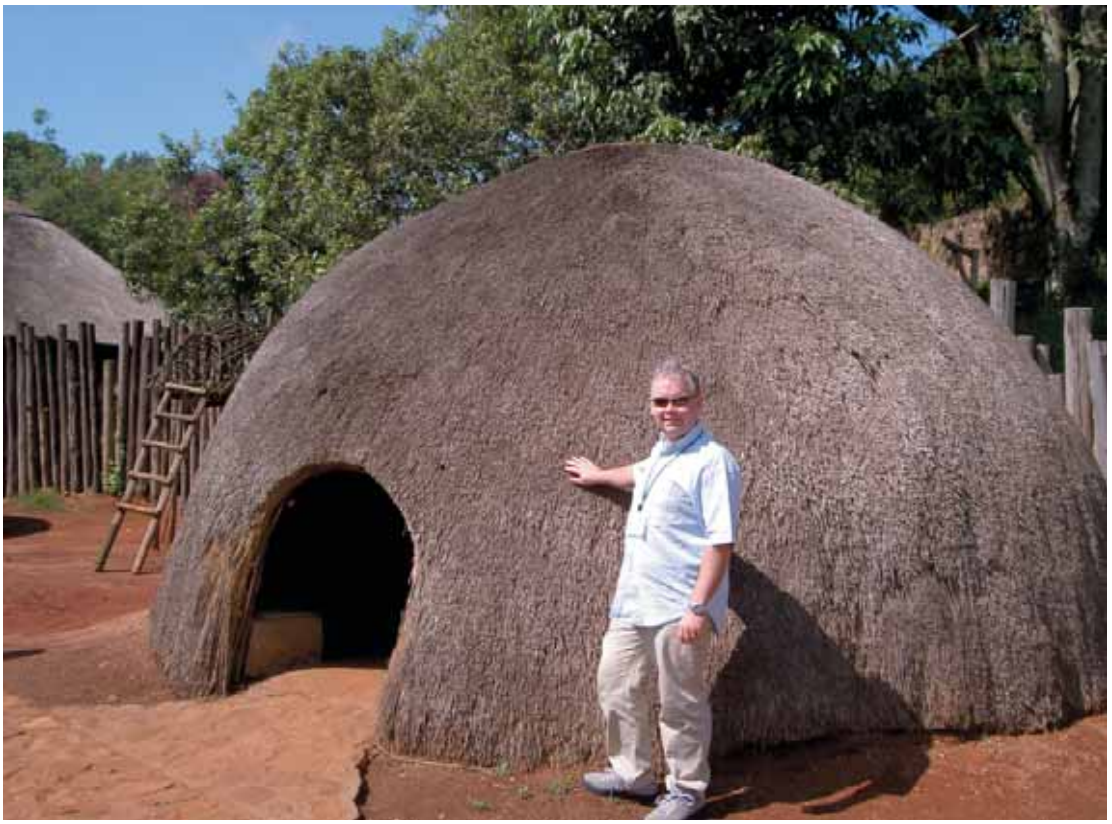
Day 5

Resolutions were debated at the Congress, 12 relating solely to Africa and 17 to international matters. The 17 international resolutions are listed at the end of this article. Points raised at the debate were largely about semantics interspersed by important points. It took over four hours to reach agreement and it was more than my brain that was numb at the end of it. We finished up with some more speeches.

Finally

I would again like to thank the REHIS membership and Council for affording me the opportunity to meet and listen to such a diverse range of people and professionals, and to experience some South African culture. I am hoping to have a list of the papers on the REHIS website and if you wish copies of the papers please contact me on tel. no. 01475 712616 or e-mail: drew.hall@inverclyde.gov.uk .

REHIS normally sends two delegates to World Congresses on Environmental Health. One delegate is usually the President. This year was no exception, with the President being, as is the norm, one of the delegates. To decide the second delegate, the Council arranged for all members of the Institute to be given the opportunity to decide if they would like to attend the Congress. Members who expressed an interest in attending were asked to provide a brief overview of what benefit attending the Congress would bring to them. The Management Committee was charged with deciding which of the applicants would attend. Keith McNamara, Chairman of the Management Committee, made appropriate arrangements and it was agreed that Drew Hall would be the second delegate. Editor.



Drew Hall beside a traditional Zulu mud hut.
Photograph courtesy of Drew Hall.

The science classroom at the secondary school referred to on page 23.
Photograph by Drew Hall.

8TH WORLD CONGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RESOLUTIONS

by Drew Hall

At the 8th World Congress on Environmental Health, organised by the South African Institute of Environmental Health and endorsed by the International Federation of Environmental Health, held on the 22 – 27 February 2004 at the International Convention Centre in Durban, South Africa, the Council of the International Federation adopted the following Resolutions, hereafter called the Durban Resolutions, as the outcome of this Congress.

The 8th World Congress on Environmental Health was prominently signposted in Durban. Photograph by Drew Hall.

Resolutions

1. Environmental Health professionals should be committed to: (1) advocating for the right to a healthy environment; (2) working within the institutional framework and partnering with stakeholders to enhance Environmental Health; (3) developing and reforming policies and legislation to provide a healthy environment; and (4) incorporating these principles and ethics as part of their professional goals.
2. There is a need for public education and labelling requirements regarding genetically modified foods to provide consumers with credible information and the ability to make informed choices.
3. An effective and appropriate management system is needed to ensure food safety, food security, and the viability of non-GMO foods and crops.
4. All organisations (government and industry) should develop performance criteria and tools for accountability that include proper assessment of their impacts on society, public health and environment.
5. Because Environmental Health programmes affect multiple departments and jurisdictions, and involve multiple competencies, a coordinated response by governmental agencies is needed.
6. There is a need to allocate resources to build capacity, competencies and opportunities, specifically targeting women, minorities and disadvantaged groups.
7. Legislation, interventions and education are needed to promote environmental justice and to protect the health of the most vulnerable populations (children, women of child-bearing age, the elderly, etc).
8. Materials, processes and products which damage health or the environment should be controlled or phased-out so as to eliminate harmful exposure. This includes a rapid elimination of lead from fuels, paint, and other products; mercury from bleaching creams; and asbestos products.
9. Recognising the significance of indoor and outdoor air pollution from the use of solid fuels (wood, dung, etc) and kerosene/paraffin, alternative cooking and heating appliances/ stoves which minimise air pollution should be developed, made affordable, and promoted by educational campaigns. Unsafe appliances should be outlawed.
10. Government, academia and community groups, especially in developing countries, should evaluate the environmental and health consequences of global climate change and develop a response strategy.

11. Environmental Health impact assessments, environmental standards and guidelines require to be submitted to a transparent, independent and credible peer-review process prior to acceptance or implementation.
12. To protect public health (especially with regard to vulnerable populations), emission and ambient standards to control pollutants should be developed within an agreed time schedule.
13. Accessible and affordable supplies of safe water and sanitation should be provided for all communities, particularly the poor and/or disadvantaged, by 2015.
14. Because incineration of health care waste produces persistent toxic substances, incineration, as currently practised, contravenes the Stockholm Convention aimed at eliminating these substances. The continued availability of incinerators inhibits the development and use of alternatives, hence international organisations and governments should provide a scheduled phase-out of existing health care waste incinerators, place a moratorium on the permitting/licensing of new units, and promote safer waste disposal options.
15. Recognising the costs and health consequences of unplanned urbanisation, including migration, there is a need for enhanced planning, infrastructure development, pollution control, and other processes to protect and enhance environmental and public health and the quality of life, so as to accommodate growth and economic development in both cities and rural communities.
16. Noting that Environmental Health involves the whole community, members of communities should be provided with the opportunity to participate meaningfully in future IFEH Congresses. They should also have the opportunity to attend Congresses and to obtain IFEH publications at reasonable cost. Future Congresses should devote sessions to research, which reflects the involvement of communities in Environmental Health.
17. To encourage student participation and provide educational opportunities, student attendance at IFEH Congresses should be encouraged by minimal conference fees, scholarships to attend, student awards, and student sessions.

CHARTERED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

Further to the item in *Environmental Health Scotland* Vol 16 No 2, I am able to provide an update on progress towards the recognition of the first Chartered Environmental Health Officers.

The revised Scheme of Continuing Professional Development for members who are Environmental Health Officers is being reprinted and will be sent to all EHO members shortly.

The Certificates of Compliance for members who are Environmental Health Officers are about to be printed. The target to have the first certificates issued before the end of the year remains; in fact, I should like to begin issuing these in November.

If any member would like to be included in the first batch of the certificates and, therefore, to be one of the first Chartered Environmental Health Officers, the final date for Tom Bell to receive the completed CPD Record Cards for 2001, 2002 and 2003 is 29 October 2004.

Record Cards received from 30 October to 31 January 2005 will be dealt with on an ad-hoc basis.

I will include an item in the Winter 2004 issue of *Environmental Health Scotland* containing advice regarding the issue of Certificates of Compliance after 31 January 2005.

John Frater
Chief Executive

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'PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS'

REHIS has agreed in principle to become a collaborating organisation for *Public Health News*, which is published by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). As a consequence of this, CIEH has offered to provide its weekly publication *Public Health News* free of charge to REHIS members as it already does with *Environmental Health News*.

Any REHIS member who would like to receive *Public Health News* can do so by requesting to be added to the circulation list. Contacts for this are John Frater or Helen Black at the REHIS office. This can be done by telephone or by email to contact@rehis.com.

Paul Bradley
Chairman, Environmental Health Promotion Committee

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY SCOTLAND NEWS

by Emma Lane, Communications Officer, Food Standards Agency Scotland

The summer may be over but the sun certainly hasn't set on the wide variety of work being carried out at the Food Standards Agency Scotland.

As ever, the Agency is currently involved in a number of projects designed to inform and assist all its stakeholders, which include industry, local authorities and consumers.

Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice – Butchers' Shop Licensing Supplement to the Retail Guide (Scotland)

The first Scotland-only Industry Guide, which focuses on butchers' shops licensing, will be published later this year.

Ten sector-specific guides have been published in the UK since 1995, including high profile retail and catering sector documents.

However, this new guide, which has recently undergone consultation, approvals and Agency recognition, will be the first to look solely at the Scottish perspective in a particular industry.

This Supplement to the Retail Guide to Good Hygiene Practice gives advice to butchers and other retailers in Scotland on how to comply with the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995.

In particular, this Supplement provides guidance on compliance with regulations which amend those requiring the licensing of businesses handling unwrapped raw meat and selling both raw meat and ready-to-eat food.

It also contains guidance on how to comply with the Food Safety (Temperature Control) Regulations 1995.

Separate guides on the butchers' shops licensing topic have already been published in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Industry Guides were developed because of the General Food Hygiene Regulations 1995, which indicate that European Member States should encourage the printing of such documents to help improve legal compliance and consistency.

The responsibility for ensuring the Government endorses each guide was passed to the Food Standards Agency when it was created in 2000.

Industry representatives, who also consult with enforcers and other interested parties, draft the guides – the FSA oversees this process.

There is no legal requirement for food businesses to follow the advice these guides contain – however, local authorities are obliged by law to give the documents due consideration when carrying out food hygiene inspections. This helps create a consistent enforcement approach across the country.

Imported Food – Step Change Project Update

The proposal to create a single agency to deal with imported food has, for the time being, been shelved.

In May 2004 the FSA presented a report detailing the success of the Step Change project to the Cabinet Ministerial Committee.

Step Change is a cross-Government initiative, led by the FSA, which aims to improve the co-ordination and delivery of local authority inspections of foods and animal products at air and seaports.

The project ran from April 2003 to March 2004 and helped the Agency draw up a number of success criteria, focusing on controls, checks and co-ordination.

Following the FSA's presentation, the Committee was satisfied that these criteria had been met through the project.

However, a significant amount of work continues to take place across local and central Government to address concerns about potential animal and public health risks associated with imported food.

These include developing control-related data management and communication systems, as well as continuing to audit port functions and improve co-ordination and support for food sampling initiatives, and continued training programmes, such as the development of the Official Fish Inspectors' course in Scotland.

Feedback from Food Enforcement Officers

It is vital that the FSA in Scotland, and across the UK, maintains constructive links with all of its key stakeholders, including food enforcement officers.

As such, the Agency is asking you for your feedback and suggestions on how it works and how partnership working can be improved.

To submit a comment or suggestion please contact 01224 285100.

SEPA NEWSROUND

by Stewart Prodger, Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Recent Developments at SEPA

With a new corporate top team, organisational restructuring and new duties on the way, participation in various Scottish and UK projects, consultations and guidance being issued, and the usual mix of prosecutions and enforcement actions, life has never been busier for SEPA.

A major change for the organisation was heralded in May when SEPA announced its new top team. Joining Chief Executive, Dr Campbell Gemmell and Director of Finance and Corporate Support, John Ford are Colin Bayes, from SEPA, as Director of Environmental Protection & Improvement; Richard Claughton, from the Environment Agency, as Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development; Calum MacDonald, from SEPA, as Director of Environmental & Organisational Strategy and Dr Chris Spray, from Northumbrian Water, as Director of Environmental Science.

Highlights included further progress made by SEPA and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service as their environmental prosecutors got to grips with waste in a joint training event. In July, a report showed that further improvements to the quality of Scottish rivers, coasts and estuaries were identified in 2003. SEPA recently launched a new water quality interrogation system on its website, allowing visitors to investigate the quality of Scottish rivers monitored by SEPA, using Geographic Information Systems technology.

The Agency also published a new comprehensive guide to 'who does what' in the Scottish environment. The web-based directory at www.sepa.org.uk/about/ includes the main responsibilities for major public bodies, as well as phone, website and email details.

Enforcement and Court Actions

Scottish Water has been in the dock a few times over the last few months. It was fined £2000 on 12 August for causing pollution in the Brodiach burn near Westhill. In July it was fined £5000 for permittingsewage effluent to be discharged into the River Esk and a fine of £2500 was imposed after a plea of guilty to causing pollution in the River Enrick last year.

O'Brien Construction Ltd of Thurso was fined £1000 for illegally dumping 600 tonnes of soil and peat in June 2003; Dollar Brewer, **Harviestoun** was fined £10,000 fine for allowing brewery wash-down water to enter the River Devon; **Trichem Scotland Limited** was fined £7500 after liquid detergent from their site entered the Bog Burn in West Lothian.

Other enforcement action included **Glasgow City Council** being issued with an enforcement notice, requiring them to comply with a number of conditions in their waste management licence. **Dundas Brothers Ltd** had its Rendering Authorisation revoked, following a number of actions including the service of three enforcement notices and five prohibition notices.

Campaign Work

Recent campaign work has included SEPA's participation in the Scottish Flytipping Forum Enforcement Week. Members of the Forum targeted illegal dumpers and reminded everyone that the Dumb Dumpers Stopline, 0845 2 30 40 90, will be a crucial tool in combating illegal dumping. SEPA is also a partner in the VIBES (Vision in Business for the Environment of Scotland) Awards and encourages REHIS members to look at www.vibes.org.uk and see if their organisation should receive recognition and reward for the sort of cost-savings brought about by good environmental practice.

Consultations and Guidance

Several consultations and guidance documents were issued recently. These include proposed guidance on how electronic waste such as televisions and computers should be treated in the future and a reminder that landfill sites in Scotland will no longer be able to accept most types of hazardous waste following changes to waste legislation. Views were sought on access to environmental information for Freedom of Information Act implementation and SEPA released a consultation which identifies the pressures and resulting impacts on our water environment.

All these activities and a lot more are detailed further at SEPA's website, www.sepa.org.uk, and we'd recommend REHIS members visit and sign up for SEPA's weekly email update.

PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP

by Allan Davies, Head of Local Authority Unit (LAU), Health & Safety Executive

I have almost completed two years now with the Health & Safety Executive and have been astonished at the pace of change within the organisation, but equally impressed by the genuine desire to work differently and more effectively. The programme I described in my last article, 'LAs and HSE working together', is a clear indication of this new commitment. I thought I would use this article to update colleagues in Scotland on progress thus far.

During the course of the last few months a considerable amount of work has been undertaken by staff in LAU, supported by others in HSE and particularly by LACORS. One of the key and important issues for us to resolve was the establishment of the Programme Team, the identification of work streams within the programme and which members of the team would take the lead for each individual project identified in the programme plan. The programme plan is in the final stages of completion and will be posted on the HSE/LAU website as soon as it is complete although it will need to be a 'live' document, capable of reflecting the need to be flexible as the work proceeds. LACORS has been contributing, at this planning stage, ensuring that the interests of local government are properly reflected in the work of the programme. It will be critical to maintain the local government input and I am determined to involve as many Environmental Health Officers as possible.

In my last article, I referred to HSE's new Partnership Managers and also to the intention to recruit, by secondment, a number of EHOs to help establish the programme around the country. This is an important development ensuring HSE understands the commitment of local government and the profession to health and safety. I am expecting that HSE will begin the process of recruiting an EHO to support the Partnership Manager during this period, so watch this and other spaces. In Scotland there is also the opportunity for a second post with the Sector group in Glasgow. In the meantime I have already advertised and appointed a new senior manager, from local government, to join LAU and help to lead on the programme work, Gerry Kasprzok, formerly Head of Environmental Health in Norwich.

The elected members' Steering Group I referred to last time met for the first time in July and considered a 'high level' statement which sets out the commitment of both HSE and local government to delivering the aims of the programme, a partnership which will undoubtedly make a major contribution to the Government's health and safety targets for Great Britain. Alison Hay is the elected member leading for COSLA and is giving great support for the work, carrying the banner for Scotland.

A number of projects are well underway, including efforts to publish information currently available to HSE Inspectors on the HSE website together with an 'extranet' provision, for communications with LAs. It is hoped that, as the extranet develops, it will also have an interactive ability, to enable a two way exchange of information, sharing experiences, good practice, etc. Good communication is vital if this programme is going to succeed and other project work, complementing the IT provisions, seeking to ensure that we 'get it right' will be ongoing throughout the life of the programme. After all, setting up a new partnership is one thing, maintaining it is something else, so the infrastructure to sustain it is essential. Recognising the fact that future interventions may be different and that local authorities might have a wider responsibility, work is also underway to examine the support EHOs will need in the future.

The views of EHOs in local government, in Scotland, were sought in the survey carried out during July and August, by King's College London. This was followed up by telephone interviews, specifically focussing upon work investigating an interventions strategy. A formal consultation document on this part of the research, ie, interventions strategy, will give further opportunities to make your views known.

I keep on saying that success will require a commitment from the profession, winning the hearts and minds of professionals, managers, elected members and also HSE staff centrally and regionally. I am confident that this will happen and although it will take some time it should generate huge benefits. REHIS members are a central ingredient in this mix and I will be seeking both support and challenge for these proposals to ensure they are as effective as possible. Please let me have your views.

email: allan.lau.davies@hse.gsi.gov.uk

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HOUSING WORKING GROUP

by Alistair Thomson

The REHIS Public Health and Housing Working Group continues to provide an excellent forum for discussion of major topical issues affecting Environmental Health professionals. At its June meeting, a presentation was made by Martin Hughes of the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner on *The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002*.

In answer to the questions, 'What is The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 all about and what new rights does it provide for people seeking information?', Mr Hughes offered the following information. This and further details are also available on line at http://www.itspublicknowledge.info .

A Brief Introduction to the Act

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 enables any person to obtain information from Scottish public authorities. This is a legal right and will ensure that all people get information to which they are entitled. This legal right of access includes all types of 'recorded' information of any date held by Scottish public authorities. From 1 January 2005 any person who makes a request for information must be provided with it, subject to certain conditions (outlined below). The Act will be promoted and enforced by Kevin Dunion, the first Scottish Information Commissioner. He will be Scotland's first independent enforcer of freedom of information with legal powers to ensure the public's right of freedom of information is upheld. The Act will come into force on 1 January 2005.

The Act generally:

Entitles any person that requests information held by a Scottish public authority to receive it (subject to certain conditions).

The Act applies to:

All Scottish public authorities including: The Scottish Executive and its agencies, The Scottish Parliament, Local Authorities, NHS Scotland, Universities and Further Education Colleges, and the Police.

General Principles of the Act

There will be a general right to apply to a Scottish public authority for information. The Act places an obligation on all Scottish public authorities to adopt and maintain a 'publication scheme'. This scheme sets out: the categories of information the authority publishes, the manner in which it is published, and details of any charges for receiving the information.

The public authorities have to allow access to the following information: the provision, cost and standard of its service, factual information or decision-making, and the reasons for decisions made by it.

Exemptions under the Act:

There will be exemptions: information relating to national security and defence, police investigations, and the formulation or development of government policy. If a public authority decides not to release information, as it considers it exempt, it must give reasons for its decision. This 'refusal notice' will allow the applicant to request a review to the decision, and then to seek a determination from the Scottish Information Commissioner. Other information may be exempt as it is already 'published' and therefore easily accessible.

The Public Interest

Even if an exemption applies, the public authority still has to consider whether to release the information in view of the public interest. All the circumstances surrounding the release of the information are considered, including the grounds for exemption - and the balance will always be in favour of disclosure. Information will only be withheld if the public interest in withholding it is greater than the public interest in releasing it.

There are some absolute exemptions where this rule does not apply. Categories include: information otherwise accessible, statutory prohibitions on disclosure, breaches of confidence, court records, and information for which other rights are provided.

The Scottish Information Commissioner

The Scottish Information Commissioner is responsible for ensuring that people get the information from the public authorities to which they are entitled. The Commissioner will actively promote and enforce the compliance of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act. He will deal with specific applications for decisions by any person who feels information has been unjustifiably withheld. More generally he will encourage a culture of openness by public authorities. This will be done through the promotion of good practice - which involves making sure all material requested is provided clearly, concisely and in plain English. It also ensures that the authorities react to requests within a reasonable time frame.

Enforcement of the Act

Anyone who has made a request for information may apply to the Scottish Information Commissioner for a decision as to whether the public authority has properly dealt with the request. If it is decided an appeal is valid, the Commissioner will try to achieve a settlement between the public and the public authority. If this is not possible then the Commissioner will issue a decision notice.

The Commissioner has powers to require an authority to provide information necessary for him to come to a decision. So, if an authority is not co-operating with an investigation, he can issue an 'information notice', obliging the authority to supply to him the information in question. He can also issue good practice notices recommending changes in the way in which authorities conform to the Act.

Freedom of Information and Data Protection

Individuals already have the right to access information about themselves under the Data Protection Act 1998. This is a completely separate matter which is the responsibility of the UK Information Commissioner. Requests by individuals for personal information about themselves do not come under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act.

Alistair Thomson is the Council member with responsibility for public health and housing matters.

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THE SCOTTISH FOOD SAFETY OFFICERS' REGISTRATION BOARD

by John Stirling, Chairman

The Board last met on 5 March of this year and the following summarises most of the main points.

Bill Adamson (Food Standards Agency Scotland) welcomed the participation of Board Secretary, Tom Bell, and Alan Yates (Principal EHO with Highland Council acting as a technical adviser for the Institute) in the Food Standards Agency working group considering the introduction of a qualification to provide competence in the inspection, seizure and detention of foodstuffs.

The exemption from the requirement for Higher Certificate in Food Standards Inspection candidates to submit five reports ceased at the end of the March. The exemption only applied to candidates who had been authorised to undertake food standards inspection prior to 15 September 1995, who continued to undertake these duties and who held the Scotvec/SQA Advanced Diploma in Food Safety.

Subsequent to the recent exercise to approve qualifications offered by colleges and universities which meet the Board's academic pre-entry/pre-registration requirement, it was agreed to review the content of these courses every two years. A review will be held before the two year period expires if substantive changes to any curriculum take place.

The Board considered changes to the practical training manuals for Trainee Food Safety Officers (FSOs).

As the proposed amendments were minor, the Board agreed to consider them ahead of the next meeting. No adverse comment was received and the manuals were distributed to trainees and to their employing authorities.

The Board's career leaflet for FSOs has been revised and copies can be obtained from the REHIS office.

Revised terms of reference for the Board were agreed at the Council meeting on 12 June. Should anyone wish a copy of the revised document they should contact the Institute's office.

The next meeting of the Board will take place in the Autumn.

FINANCIAL REPORT

by Martin Henry, Honorary Treasurer

The Council budgeted, back in May 2003, for a break-even for the financial year to the end of March 2004. The very strict controls on expenditure which applied in 2002/03 were eased slightly as that financial year had ended very much ahead of budget. Of course, with the 2002/03 budget being prepared in early 2002 it had to be very rigorous indeed.

Income for the year 2003/04, at £651,135, is virtually identical to that for 2002/03 at £666,039, a difference of only 2.2%. This is very encouraging and shows the relatively stable annual income which the Institute is achieving at present.

For 2003/04, in round figures, the provisional results are:

- Income £651,000 2% above budget
- Expenditure £622,000 3% below budget

giving a provisional surplus of £29,000.

Even though interest rates were at historically low levels during the financial year, careful use of term deposits resulted in an income of £18,397 being obtained from investments. Due to the annual surplus being above budget, I have recommended to the Council that the General Reserve Fund be allocated rather more than the income obtained from investments in this financial year.

The General Operations Fund, which finances the Institute's day-to-day financial activities, is still under-resourced in cash terms, so I have recommended to the Council that £5,000 be allocated to it. I will prepare an article for a future issue of the Journal explaining the General Operations Fund in more detail.

Work has commenced with the Institute's website. The cost for this will be substantial, so I have recommended to the Council that another £5,000 should be allocated to the e-rehis Reserve. The same amount was allocated from the 2002/03 financial year. This approach spreads the cost of this major project, which is expected to be substantially complete before the end of 2004, over three financial years.

I mentioned in my financial report last year, in Journal 15/3, that Community Training accounts for 65%-70% of the Institute's income. The 2003/04 financial year once again saw the amount within this range, with an income percentage of 68.8%.

Financial Year 2004/05

This financial year is in its early stages and the 'actual' figures used here are to early August 2004.

A budget has been prepared for the year, with monthly phasing incorporated to enable financial performance to be tracked throughout the year. The outline budget, in round figures, is:

- Income £618,000
- Expenditure £668,000

Giving an anticipated loss of £50,000.

The projections are very tight for income, which is not assumed to equal the previous year. Expenditure has been planned to allow for the matters which the Council really wants to address. Top of the list was the recruitment of a Professional Development Officer to enable Tom Bell much more time to undertake the promotion of Environmental Health in Scotland. Other items are deliberately phased for later in the financial year which allows for expenditure savings to be made if the financial position after six months is not encouraging. At this early stage, the year looks reasonable.

To early August 2004:

- Budgeted Income £202,327
- Actual income £262,336
- Budgeted Expenditure £188,700
- Actual Expenditure £216,403

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DEVELOPMENT PLAN

by Keith McNamara, Senior Vice-President

Members received a copy of the 2004/05 Development Plan with the Summer issue of *Environmental Health Scotland*. The Management Committee considers that it is useful for members to have an update regarding progress towards the objectives of the Development Plan around half way through the financial year. I have prepared a Development Plan review document, showing progress as at mid-August, which will be circulated shortly.

In summary, this review of Development Plan activities shows both the wide range and depth of the work being carried on for members. I'd like to thank the REHIS staff and the many volunteer members who are working hard to meet the actions detailed in the Development Plan.

FROM THE COURTS

Glasgow City Council

Accused:	J D Wetherspoon PLC
Address of Premises:	Sir John Stirling Maxwell, Unit 13B Shawlands Arcade, 140 Kilmarnock Road, Glasgow
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990, Sections 8(1a) and 8(2c)
Date of Offence(s):	19 August 2002
Brief account of case:	A metal bolt was found in a meal sold and prepared at the above premises. It is believed that the bolt came from a gantry adjacent to the food preparation area.
Date Determined:	2 February 2004
Outcome:	Found Guilty
Penalty:	Admonished.

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Accused:	Ann McEwan (bar staff)
Joint Accused:	David Bennet (licensee)
Address of Premises:	Fat Boab's Public House, 40 Howard Street, Glasgow
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990, S14
Date of Offence(s):	26 February 2002
Brief account of case:	A sample of vodka was deficient of 12.5% of the stated alcohol content.
Date Determined:	24 February 2004
Outcome:	The first accused pled Guilty and was admonished. The second accused pled Not Guilty which was accepted.
Penalty:	N/a.

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Accused:	Despina Perdikou
Address of Premises:	44 Athole Gardens, Glasgow
Legislation:	Civic Government (Scotland) Act, 1982 (Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Order 2000
Date of Offence(s):	11 December 2002
Brief account of case:	Operating an HMO with four people after having been refused a licence.
Date Determined:	23 March 2004
Outcome:	Guilty plea
Penalty:	£350
Other Observations:	Situation under surveillance.

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Accused:	Despina Perdikou
Address of Premises:	44 Athole Gardens, Glasgow
Legislation:	Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
Date of Offence(s):	20 February 2003
Brief account of case:	Not complying with a section 160 notice.
Date Determined:	23 March 2004
Outcome:	Guilty plea
Penalty:	£750
Other Observations:	Situation under surveillance.

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West Lothian Council

Accused:	Haji Mohammed Zahid
Address of premises:	1 Millhaugh Lane, Bathgate
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990. Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995.
Date of Offence(s):	25 April, 2002
Brief account of case:	During a routine inspection a number of out of date and mouldy food items were discovered for sale in the premises. Basic standards of hygiene were poor and there was a lack of basic hand washing facilities. The original hearing took place in May 2003 when sentencing was deferred after Mr Zahid pled guilty. On request of the Sheriff further reports were submitted regarding the operation of the business and Mr Zahid was instructed to carry out food hygiene training. Standards improved significantly and Mr Zahid completed the training.
Date determined:	23 January 2004
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	Admonished.

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Accused:	Kingdom Bakers Ltd, Kirkcaldy
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990
Date of Offence(s):	14 July 2002
Brief account of case:	Sold a bread roll containing a metal bolt to a retailer in Broxburn. The consumer eating the roll broke a dental crown on the bolt.
Date determined:	27 January 2004
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	Fined £1,500.

***

Accused:	Charles McGillveray
Address of premises:	The Gothenburg, Main Street, East Whitburn
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990
Date of Offence(s):	13 June 2002
Brief account of case:	Official sample of Grants vodka found to be understrength after analysis.
Date determined:	16 September 2003
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	Fined £400.

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Accused:	Benny Tomolillo
Address of premises:	Golden Chip, High Street, Linlithgow
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990
Date of Offence(s):	6 December 2001
Brief account of case:	Sold a fish supper, which contained a deep-fried cigarette end.
Date determined:	16 August 2003
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	The Sheriff granted a compensation order of £3.90 - the cost of the fish supper. No other penalty was imposed.

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Accused:	Ajmal Tariq
Address of premises:	Westfield Post Office, Main Street, Westfield
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990. The Food Labelling Regulations 1996.
Date of Offence(s):	22 October 2002
Brief account of case:	During a routine inspection a number of food items were discovered for sale, beyond the 'Use-By' date, in the premises.
Date determined:	15 October 2003
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	£100.

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Accused:	Syed Khan
Address of premises:	Drumgelloch Con. Store, West Main Street, Armadale
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990. Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995. The Food Labelling Regulations 1996.
Date of Offence(s):	14 June 2002
Brief account of case:	During a routine inspection a number of out of date food items were discovered for sale in the premises, including a number affected by spoilage. Shop later sold to new proprietors and now operates as a large chain.
Date determined:	30 June 2003
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	Admonished.

Accused:	Cost Effective Catering Ltd
Trading at:	Staff canteen at Ethicon Ltd, Simpson Parkway, Kirkton, Livingston
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990. Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) 1995.
Date of Offence(s):	11 October 2002
Brief account of case:	During a routine inspection a number of food hygiene offences were noted. Standards not improved during subsequent revisits. Expert Report submitted to Procurator Fiscal to dispose of case. Reporting Environmental Health Officer, Derek Oliver, rebutted the report and accused pled guilty to three charges. Charges constituted personal hygiene facilities being inadequate, in that they were faulty, not operative and processes were not in place to ensure staff used them; failing to ensure that articles and equipment in contact with food were clean and in good repair; and improper storage of food.
Date determined:	8 January 2004
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	£1,000.

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Accused:	Hilditch Inns Ltd
Address of premises:	Croftmalloch Inn, Longridge Road, Whitburn
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990. Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) 1995.
Date of Offence(s):	14 January 2003
Brief account of case:	During a routine inspection a number of food hygiene offences were noted. Mouldy and spoiled food stored for use and general hygiene poor. Pled guilty to charge constituting failing to ensure that the operations of preparation and storing of food were carried out in a hygienic way in that a quantity of food in the walk-in chill and stored among freshly prepared food products was affected by mould and spoilage (taken under Regulation 4(1)). Co-accused accepted not-guilty.
Date determined:	8 December 2003
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	£3,500.

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The REHIS AGM will be held on

Accused:	Arshed Hussain
Address of premises:	Indian Cottage, Hospital Road, Howden West, Livingston
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990. Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995.
Date of Offence(s):	14 January 2003
Brief account of case:	During a routine inspection a number of food hygiene offences were noted. Standards not improved during subsequent revisits with regards to general hygiene measures. Pled guilty to four charges constituting failing to ensure that food was handled or stored or displayed safe from contamination which would otherwise render it unfit for human consumption; failing to ensure that the premises were kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition; failing to ensure that equipment with which food comes into contact was kept clean, and kept in good order, repair and condition; and failing to ensure that food handlers were supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activities. Repeated deferred sentences to consider appropriate sentencing, with Sheriff considering Prohibition under section 11 of the FSA 1990.
Date determined:	5 May 2004
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	Prohibition of Arshed Hussain and £500.

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Accused:	Moin Uddin
Address of premises:	Royal India, 88 High Street, Linlithgow
Legislation:	Food Safety Act 1990, Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995.
Date of Offence(s):	10 July 2002
Brief account of case:	During a routine inspection the premises was found to be operating in a dirty condition. Staff lacked appropriate food hygiene training and instruction, and failed to follow good standards of personal hygiene. Food handling practices were not being properly controlled. Previous warnings had been issued to Mr Uddin. He pled guilty to the charges in July 2003 but sentence was deferred until May 2004.
Date determined:	6 May 2004
Outcome:	Pled guilty
Penalty:	£600.

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20 November 2004, in Edinburgh.

City of Edinburgh Council - Health and Safety

At Tino's, Gyle Shopping Centre Food Court, Edinburgh on 1 July 2002 a 17 year old employee suffered burns when removing waste oil from a deep fat fryer.

At Edinburgh Sheriff Court on 27 June 2003 his employer, Mamma's Pizza Company Ltd, pled guilty to charges under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. The company was fined a total of £5,000.

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On 28 August 2001 a refrigeration engineer employed by Capital Cooling Ltd was badly injured in an explosion at Mamma's Restaurant, 28-30 Grassmarket, Edinburgh. There was confusion over the new European colour scheme for industrial gas cylinders and the engineer was supplied by his employer with an oxygen cylinder instead of a nitrogen cylinder. When carrying out a pressure test on a refrigeration unit, the system was filled with oxygen instead of nitrogen. When an ignition source was introduced the oxygen ignited creating a fireball which caused serious burns to the engineer. An employee of the restaurant suffered minor injuries. The investigating EHOs received assistance in their investigation from an HSE Specialist Inspector of Process Safety experienced in dealing with storage, handling and use of flammable and combustible substances.

At Edinburgh Sheriff Court on 4 September 2003 Capital Cooling Ltd pled guilty to two charges under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (Sections 2 and 3) and was fined £7,500 on each charge making a total fine of £15,000.

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On 24 February 2001 a guest at the Point Hotel, 34 Bread Street, Edinburgh climbed out of an unrestricted window onto a ledge and fell to the pavement below suffering fatal injuries.

At Edinburgh Sheriff Court on 22 September 2003, Atholl Estates (2) Ltd, the owner of the Point Hotel, pled guilty to a charge under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Section 3 and was fined £15,000. The case was taken on indictment.

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On 27 March 2003 an employee of the Globe Deli, 23 Henderson Row, Edinburgh suffered an electric shock when she came into contact with a stainless steel counter which had become live after a cable serving an electric appliance was damaged. There was no earth bonding to the stainless steel counter.

At Edinburgh Sheriff Court on 17 December 2003 the Globe Deli Ltd pled guilty to a charge under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Section 2 and was fined £1,500.

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An employee working for a waste contractor suffered a serious injury when a malfunctioning goods lift trapped his foot as he collected waste glass from the Hotel Ibis, 6 Hunter Square, Edinburgh on 29 May 2002. His foot was partially amputated in hospital as a result of the accident.

The investigating EHOs received assistance with their investigation from an HSE Specialist Inspector (Mechanical Engineering).

At Edinburgh Sheriff Court on 13 February 2004 Accor (UK) Economy Hotels Ltd, the owner of the Hotel Ibis, pled guilty to a charge under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Section 3 and was fined £5,000.

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Reports submitted by The City of Edinburgh Council, Environmental and Consumer Services Department.

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Advance Notice

REHIS
Law Enforcement Course

4/6 March 2005
Scottish Police College,
Tulliallan

PROCURATOR FISCAL -V- B&Q PLC

by Calum Melrose and Maureen Keir

The case was disposed of on Wednesday 25 February 2004 at Glasgow Sheriff Court.

The accused, B&Q plc, pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, in that they failed to conduct their undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in their employment who may be affected thereby are not exposed to risks to their health or safety.

In essence, the case concerned a customer who, whilst walking down an aisle within the B&Q Darnley Warehouse, 21 Leggatston Road, Glasgow, was struck on the head by a large display door. The door, which was located at the top section of racking, was dislodged by a 'Genie' lift operated by a B&Q employee. As the 'Genie' lift was elevated it struck the base of the door dislodging it from its hinges. The hinges were not designed in such a way as to prevent them from becoming dislodged and steps had not been taken to prevent customers walking below persons working at height.

As a result of the head injury, the injured person now has scarring on his head, spasms in his right hand, chronic neck pain and has difficulty in walking.

The accident could easily have been a fatality had the door not struck a display before hitting the customer's head.

B&Q plc was fined £10,000 for the breach of Section 3(1).

The case highlighted the need to ensure that when persons are working at height, the area below must be cordoned off to prevent customers from walking below.

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THE ROYAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND

The Institute was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 16th February 1983, to give effect to the amalgamation of The Royal Sanitary Association of Scotland and The Scottish Institute of Environmental Health. The Institute was Incorporated by Royal Charter on 8th March 2001, following which the Company was wound up.

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland is a Recognised Scottish Charity, Number SC009406.

The objects for which the Institute is established, contained in Article 3 of the Charter, are for the benefit of the community to promote the advancement of Environmental Health by:

a. stimulating general interest in and disseminating knowledge concerning Environmental Health;

b. promoting education and training in matters relating to Environmental Health; and

c. maintaining, by examination or otherwise, high standards of professional practice and conduct on the part of Environmental Health Officers in Scotland.

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland is an independent and self-financing organisation. It neither seeks nor receives grant aid. The Institute's charitable activities are funded significantly by the subscriptions received from its members.

The Institute's affairs are managed by a Council which is elected by members. The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland is a founding member of the International Federation of Environmental Health.

The Institute frequently uses the acronym: REHIS®.

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