**REHIS 2013 Conference**

The 2013 REHIS Conference will be held in the Glynhill Hotel, Renfrew on 16/17 May and will provide an excellent opportunity to discuss and debate the full spectrum of current Public Health issues with colleagues and experts. If you wish to find out more or book a place full details are available on the REHIS website www.rehis.com.

**REHIS communication with the membership**

The Institute will run a series of roadshows across Scotland this year to highlight its role in improving and protecting public health in Scotland and to promote the new requirements for the education, professional practice and examination of Student/Graduate Trainee Environmental Health Officers. The roadshows will be presented in Aberdeen (with video conferencing links to Inverness, Stornoway, Kirkwall, Elgin and Lerwick), Dundee, Dumfries and Stirling on separate dates in May and June.

The roadshows are member-only events. The Aberdeen and Stirling events will be presented as part of the Northern and Southern Centre training events. The Dundee and Dumfries events will be standalone. For more information, a programme and a registration form please visit the REHIS website www.rehis.com.

**Key health messages for shisha users**

Following the article in last month’s Newsletter the following key health messages have been provided by ASH Scotland:

- One shisha session lasting approximately 45 minutes may be roughly equivalent to smoking ten cigarettes
- Use of any product containing tobacco is harmful to health
- Use of any product containing tobacco carries the risk of addiction
- Waterpipe smoking more than doubles the risk of lung cancer, respiratory illness and low birth weight, negatively affects lung
function and is likely to be a cause of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

- Waterpipe products, even the tobacco-free herbal varieties, are not a healthy alternative to smoking cigarettes
- Shisha smoking (including lit, smoked non-tobacco shisha) may result in exposure to harmful levels of hazardous substances.

Further information together with an information note ‘Shisha and the Law’ are available on the ASH Scotland website www.ashscotland.org.uk.

**Enabling provisions for new body: views sought**

Parallel to the Scottish Government’s consultation on the scope and powers of the new food body in Scotland, the FSA has issued a 12-week consultation proposing the establishment of three new legal powers for possible inclusion in the New Food Body Bill. This consultation seeks to gather views from stakeholders about these enabling provisions that are designed to fill possible legislative gaps that have already been identified. It aims to provide a solid foundation for the new body by providing enabling powers that could allow for future legal powers and sanctions.

The three areas the FSA is consulting on are:

- New primary legislation powers to provide a statutory basis for a scheme to enable Scottish Ministers to make, if agreed in the future, any food business operator display the outcome of an official food inspection
- New primary legislative powers to enable Scottish Ministers to create, if required, new enforcement sanctions such as administrative penalties or forms of restorative justice in relation to food/feed law
- New primary legislative powers to enable the detention of any food, where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that it does not meet the requirements of food law in relation to food standards or labelling, similar to those which already exist for foods not complying with food safety legislation.

The FSA consultation supplements the Scottish Government consultation, which concentrates on obtaining stakeholders’ views about the scope and functions of the new body, but also asks for views on any additional powers that stakeholders feel the new body would benefit from. Responses are sought by 22 May 2013 and further details are available at www.food.gov.uk.

**EU agencies to advise on risks from phenylbutazone in horsemeat**

The European Commission has asked the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to carry out a joint assessment of the risks to human health from the presence in horsemeat of residues of the anti-inflammatory drug phenylbutazone. The request follows the recent identification of beef products contaminated with horsemeat and the discovery of phenylbutazone – also known as ‘bute’ – in a small number of horse carcasses intended for the food chain. The European Union agencies will provide scientific advice by 15 April 2013 to help inform decision-making of the European Commission with regard to these recent findings.

In carrying out the joint risk assessment, the two agencies will use all available scientific evidence and consider data and results of ongoing testing of horsemeat in Member States as these become available. Full details are available on the EFSA website www.efsa.europa.eu.

**Consumer Focus Scotland restructuring**

Consumer Focus Scotland is to be restructured to be the voice for consumers on energy, post and water issues. As a result, from 1 April 2013 the healthyliving award will become part of NHS Health Scotland, Scotland’s health improvement agency with a remit to reduce health inequalities across the country. The healthyliving award team will continue to be based in Glasgow. Community Food and Health Scotland (CFHS) will also, from 1 April 2013, become part of NHS Scotland.

**Towards a litter free Scotland**

Litter fines could be increased under plans discussed at a national litter summit in Edinburgh on 20 March 2013. Increasing the fixed penalty
notices (FPNs) for litter and flytipping from the current £50 level is one option being considered to tackle the blight of litter, Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead told participants at the summit. Scotland’s first national litter strategy is currently being developed for consultation from this summer and an increase in the FPN is expected to be part of the wider consultation on the strategy. With Scotland hosting the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup next year the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring the country is looking its best when the eyes of the world are watching. The recent Scottish Household Survey highlights that around a quarter of the population believes litter is a problem in their communities. Further details are available at www.scotland.gov.uk. The summit included participants from the police; COSLA; Zero Waste Scotland; National Trust for Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful and private companies.

**HPA publishes Cryptosporidium investigation findings**

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) has published findings of an investigation into an outbreak of Cryptosporidium infection that affected around 300 people in England and Scotland in May 2012. HPA can confirm that findings of an investigation into an outbreak of Cryptosporidium infection that affected around 300 people in England and Scotland in May 2012 showed strong evidence of an association with eating pre-cut bagged salad products which are likely to have been labelled as ‘ready-to-eat’. The outbreak was short lived and the numbers of cases returned to expected seasonal levels within a month of the first cases being reported. Most of those affected had a mild to moderate form of illness and there were no deaths associated with the outbreak. Further details are available at www.hpa.org.uk.

**Agency invites tenders for E.coli shedding**

The Food Standards Agency is inviting tenders to improve the understanding of the factors which lead to E.coli O157 shedding by cattle and intervention strategies for on-farm control. An international E.coli research workshop held by the FSA in Scotland in November 2011 concluded that there was a need for further studies to address the key knowledge gaps in relation to our understanding of E.coli O157 supershedding by cattle and how this pathogen can be controlled on UK farms. A recent report published by the Agency highlighted that on-farm interventions could help to reduce the public risks associated with E.coli O157 in the UK. It also noted that farmers would be willing to implement controls if further evidence for their efficacy, safety and public health benefit was demonstrated. Full details are available at www.food.gov.uk.

**Agency invites tenders for study on shellfish**

The Food Standards Agency in Scotland is putting out a research call to review the current evidence for the use of indicator shellfish species. This will be for biotoxin and chemical contaminants monitoring in Scottish shellfish production areas. The desk-based research study will be to provide evidence and information on the possibility for the use of a single shellfish indicator species for biotoxin and chemical monitoring in Scotland. The results will inform future monitoring regimes, to ensure that public health is not compromised from the consumption of any shellfish species harvested from classified areas. Full details are available at www.food.gov.uk.

**Dalgety Bay seafood now particle free**

No radioactive particles have been detected in winkles, mussels and cockles from Dalgety Bay since sampling started in February 2012. The monthly sampling will now be replaced by surface monitoring of the mussel bed areas and used to inform the investigations into radium contamination at Dalgety Bay. An investigation into the presence and movement of particles in this environment is continuing. In the meantime, however, the precautionary restrictions on the gathering of seafood will remain in place. The Food Standards Agency will review these restrictions in light of evidence from the ongoing work by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Ministry of Defence (MoD) contractors. Further details are available at www.food.gov.uk.

**FHIS launches in East Ayrshire**

The launch of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS) in East Ayrshire on 25 March 2013 marks the twenty-fourth local authority to join the scheme in Scotland. It brings the number of
Scottish food businesses, listed on the www.food.gov.uk website, to over 30,000 – another significant step in the provision of food hygiene information to consumers choosing where to eat out. The Food Standards Agency in Scotland (FSAS) introduced the FHIS in 2007, in partnership with local authority environmental health teams, and has overseen the steady expansion of the scheme across the country. Currently, around 86% of establishments directly supplying food to the public have achieved a Pass rating, confirming they have complied with food hygiene legal requirements. FSAS Head of Enforcement, Peter Midgley, welcomed the latest addition, saying: “Consumers care about food hygiene and value access to information which helps them choose where to eat out. We look forward to continuing the development of the scheme for the benefit of consumers throughout Scotland.” Full details of the FHIS scheme are available at www.food.gov.uk.

New online guidance makes it easier to understand health surveillance

New online guidance has been launched to make it easier for employers to understand what they need to do to check and protect their workers’ health. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published new guidelines on health surveillance, which is needed where, even after all precautions are taken, there is still a risk that workers may be exposed to chemicals or other hazardous substances. Developed with industry, the clear and simple guidance makes it easier for employers to decide whether their workers need health surveillance, how to go about it and how to use the results. The guidance also makes it clearer when action is not needed, saving lower-risk businesses, such as those that are office-based, from wasting time and money. Past exposure to harmful substances at work is responsible for an estimated 12,000 deaths each year. Further information is available at www.hse.gov.uk.

Edinburgh takes the lead on commercial dog walking in city parks

Professional dog walkers using Edinburgh’s parks and green spaces will be required to register with the Council as part of a new set of park management rules coming into force. The City of Edinburgh Council will be the first local authority in Scotland to manage commercial dog walking in this way and will require walkers to commit to adhering to a code of conduct in order to obtain a free permit. The move comes following concerns raised about the control and supervision of dogs being managed by some professional dog walkers. The eight guidelines in the new code of conduct have been specifically worked up in consultation with both professional dog walking groups and park users. Further details are available at the Council’s website www.edinburgh.gov.uk.

SEPA bathing water report 2012

The 2012 bathing water report was launched on 5 March 2013 and is available on the SEPA website www.sepa.org.uk. The revised Bathing Water Directive requires higher water quality standards and a greater focus on the provision of information so that people can make informed choices. This year has been the first season of sampling under the new regulations, with the revised Bathing Water Directive now partly in force as SEPA moves towards full implementation in 2015. This has required new monitoring parameters, more complex sampling procedures and public information duties both for SEPA and other responsible authorities. This report explains these changes and how SEPA is leading the way in new public information and health protection initiatives.

SEPA highlights changes to Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is raising awareness of a new set of regulations, produced to tackle industrial pollution in Scotland. Developed by the Scottish Government, the Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (PPC 2012) came into force in January this year, replacing the previous regime from 2000, and will be enforced by SEPA. The new regulations implement the requirements of the European Union’s Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) which aims to minimise pollution from various industrial activities throughout Europe. Further details are available at www.sepa.org.uk.
**Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollution**

The WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, Bonn, WHO Regional Office for Europe, has co-ordinated the development of a document which presents answers to 22 questions relevant for the review of European policies on air pollution and addressing health aspects of these policies. The answers were developed by a large group of scientists engaged in the WHO project ‘Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollution – REVIHAAP’. The experts reviewed and discussed the newly accumulated scientific evidence on health effects of air pollution, formulating science-based conclusions and drafting the answers. Extensive rationale for the answers, including the list of key references, will be provided in the final report from the project. The review concludes that a considerable amount of new scientific information on health effects of particulate matter, ozone and nitrogen dioxide, observed at levels commonly present in Europe, has been published in the recent years. This new evidence supports the scientific conclusions of the WHO Air Quality Guidelines, last updated in 2005, and indicates that the effects can occur at air pollution concentrations lower than those serving to establish the 2005 Guidelines. It also provides scientific arguments for the decisive actions to improve air quality and reduce the burden of disease associated with air pollution in Europe. This publication arises from the project REVIHAAP and has been co-funded by the European Union. Full information is available at [www.euro.who.int](http://www.euro.who.int).

**Personality profile**

*from Tom Bell, Chief Executive*

The REHIS e-Newsletter is developing well under the editorship of Jim Thomson and new features will continue to be introduced. One such feature is the personality profile. In this issue and in future issues we will ask personalities from the worlds of environmental health and public health a series of set questions.

The first personality to be profiled is, very appropriately, the Institute’s President, Bernard Forteath. Bernard has served the environmental health profession and service with distinction for many years and few others can equal his commitment, success and dedication to improving and protecting public health in Scotland and beyond.

1. Describe yourself?
   
   I’m a Chartered Environmental Health Officer with over 45 years’ experience and I’ve worked in a number of local authorities in central Scotland.

2. What’s your first, worst and best memory?
   
   (professional career)
   
   My first memory is from my first week as a student with Grangemouth Town Council and a Port Health inspection of the MV Fred Everard. The comments from the crew were hilarious…”there’s so little food on this ship rats just look at the funnel (an indication of the shipping line) and decide not to come on board!” Incidentally they were spot on!

   My worst memory occurred on 24 December 2002. Around 11am one of my colleagues informed me that we had a potential *E.coli* outbreak. By Christmas Day, following a product recall, it turned out to be an isolated case from outwith the area. The worst 24 hours I experienced in over 40 years. I have many good memories of my time in the profession but the one that sticks out was when REHIS was granted the Royal Charter in 2001. It’s easy now to take this for granted but the whole process took years (approximately 20), countless meetings and required copious amounts of patience.
3. **Proudest moment? (personal or professional)**
There are many but being elected President of REHIS three times and also elected as President of the International Federation of Environmental Health for two years were, for me, proud moments. Being President of both organisations was an honour and the opportunity I had, when IFEH President, to tell colleagues from around the World about REHIS, and that we are a separate organisation representing environmental health professionals in Scotland, was satisfying.

4. **Most embarrassing moment? (professional career)**
That’s an easy one. Hopefully Charles Milne does not read this but having to ask one of the slaughtermen to sharpen my knife, when doing a little relief meat inspection, readily springs to mind.

5. **Who influenced you most in your career?**
Two people spring to mind. Before I left school I went to see Tom McGlashan, who at the time was the District Chief EHO for part of the former Stirling County, to find out about a career in Environmental Health. He sold the profession to me and one piece of advice I remember well was ‘never be last in in the morning and never be first away at night’. He did by the way also mention what was required between these two points! The second was Alistair Orr, who latterly was the Environmental Health lecturer at Napier College. Alistair was a consummate professional who enthused the students under his guidance. Nothing was too much trouble for him where the students were concerned and his guidance and advice many held onto throughout their careers.

6. **Greatest achievement? (professional)**
I first became Director of Environmental Health at the age of 30 and remained in that position, with different titles and remits, for 28 years. To say that I enjoyed every day may be a slight exaggeration, budget strategy meetings for example are never much fun, but I have to say the not so good days were few and far between.

7. **What do you do to relax?**
Football, ice hockey and fishing provide some relaxation. In the football season I split my time between watching Queen of the South and St Mirren. In the fishing season I regularly amuse brown trout at a loch near to where I live!

8. **What is your vision for the future of Public Health in Scotland?**
As the local authority environmental health service contracts…in some authorities it is difficult to find out where the environmental health function is located… I think it is essential that some form of reorganisation of environmental health/public health function takes place. I certainly favour closer working with our Health Board colleagues and whether this is within the same organisation or within a reorganised local authority set up coterminous with Health Board boundaries is up for debate. Whatever politicians decide we simply cannot endure another five years of cuts to budgets as some parts of the service are in danger of extinction.

**OSHCR update**
As at 26 March 2013, 2,317 consultants have been approved onto the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants’ Register (OSHCR) and this figure includes a number of Chartered EHO members of the Institute. Further information on the Register is available from the OSHCR website [www.oshcr.org](http://www.oshcr.org).

**Forthcoming events**
- University of The West of Scotland (formerly Bell College) - course - Certificate of Competence in Environmental Noise Measurement, 15 to 19 April 2013
- Food and Health Innovation Service (FHIS) event – ‘Don’t Get Tied up in Legal Knots’, 14 May 2013, Dundee
• REHIS Annual Conference ‘Environmental Health - Apart, Yet Connected’, 16/17 May 2013, Glynhill Hotel, Renfrew

• ASH Scotland 40th Anniversary Conference - ‘Towards a Generation Free From Tobacco’, 20/21 June 2013, University of Edinburgh

• Food and Health Innovation Service Annual Conference, 19 September 2013, Perth Racecourse

• Association of Port Health Authorities (APHA) Conference 2013, 30 November 2013, Newquay, Cornwall

If you wish to feature any Environmental Health or Public Health initiative, event or activity in the REHIS Newsletter, please contact Jim Thomson, Policy/Professional Development Officer, The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland, 19 Torphichen Street, Edinburgh, tel: 0131 229 2968 or jt@rehis.com