REHIS responds to the Scottish Government’s decision to create a new food standards body for Scotland

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government’s decision to create a new Scottish body for food safety, food standards, nutrition, food labelling and meat inspection and takes this opportunity to highlight the positive contribution that Environmental Health Professionals (Environmental Health Officers and Food Safety Officers) working in Scotland’s local authorities make to the improvement and protection of public health.

To see the complete press release visit the website www.rehis.com.

Food Standards Agency appoints new Chief Executive

Jeff Rooker, Chair of the Food Standards Agency, has announced the appointment of Catherine Brown as its new Chief Executive. Catherine Brown is currently the Chief Executive of the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Catherine Brown will take up the post in October. She will succeed Tim Smith, who has been Chief Executive since March 2008.

Catherine has been the Chief Executive at the AHVLA since April 2011 when the two organisations were merged. She had been the Chief Executive of Animal Health since 2008. Before joining Animal Health, Catherine was a Managing Director at BUPA and she has also worked for the NHS and Unilever. Further details are available at www.food.gov.uk.

Re-appointment of Chair to the Health and Safety Executive

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions recently announced the re-appointment of Judith Hackitt CBE as the Chair of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Judith was first appointed as Chair of the then Health and Safety Commission in October 2007, for a period of five years. Following re-appointment, Judith will serve for three further years, to October 2015.

Scottish Food and Drink Federation (SFDF) appoints new Director

Dr Colette Backwell has been appointed as the new Director of the Scottish Food and Drink Federation (SFDF). Dr Backwell is a respected scientist with expertise in food, nutrition, farming and animal health. She has worked at a senior
level with the Scottish Government and Defra and latterly Aberdeenshire Council. Dr Backwell will take up her post on 3 September 2012 at the SFDF’s Edinburgh office.

**Outbreak of Legionella in south west Edinburgh**

The Edinburgh Legionnaires’ disease outbreak has been declared over by the Incident Management Team (IMT). The IMT, which is chaired by NHS Lothian and includes representatives from the Health and Safety Executive, City of Edinburgh Council and Health Protection Scotland, met on Tuesday 17 July to review the latest position. As at 17 July 2012, there were a total of 101 confirmed and suspected cases. All of these cases have links to the south west of Edinburgh and fit the timescales of exposure and the incubation period for developing Legionella-related illness. Detailed investigations into the source of the outbreak continue with further testing and analysis of the environmental samples taken from potential sources being carried out. Lothian and Borders Police and the Health and Safety Executive are jointly investigating the circumstances of the deaths under the direction of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) Health and Safety Division. Further details are available at the NHS Lothian website.

**COSLA appointments**

North Ayrshire Councillor David O’Neill has been elected COSLA President and Councillor Michael Cook from Scottish Borders Vice-President.

**Europe refuses UK extension to meet air quality limits**

*by Iris Coghill, Chair, Scottish Pollution Control Co-ordinating Committee*

The EU has ruled on the UK’s bid for a postponement of the deadline for attaining the annual limit value for NO₂ in 40 air quality zones as well as the hourly NO₂ limit value in three of those zones. The European Commission has accepted the UK’s proposals for zones 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 20 and 23 and agreed to a postponement until January 2013 for zone 10 and until January 2015 for the others. Postponements have also been agreed for zones 9, 11 and 24 provided that the relevant air quality plans are adjusted to ensure compliance with the annual limit. However, the Government plans for 12 zones have been rejected by the Commission and they have refused the UK any additional time to reduce the annual NO₂ limit value in zones 1-3, 5, 6, 12, 14, 17-19, 21 and 22. In addition the Commission does not see a need for a postponement of the deadline for attaining the hourly limit value for NO₂ in zone 21 as reported levels have shown compliance since 2001. Tyneside, Liverpool Urban Area, Sheffield Urban Area, Bristol Urban Area, Bristol Urban Area, Brighton, Worthing and Littlehampton, Birkenhead Urban Area, Preston Urban Area, Swansea Urban Area, Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area, South West, North East Scotland (zone 21) and South Wales are the areas within the UK that are affected by this decision.

Action to manage and improve air quality is largely driven by EU legislation. The 2008 ambient air quality directive (2008/50/EC) sets legally binding limits for concentrations in outdoor air of major air pollutants that impact public health. In the UK like most other member states the main pollutants of concern are fine particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). The 2008 directive replaced nearly all the previous EU air quality legislation and was transposed into law in Scotland through the Air Quality Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2010. Equivalent regulations exist in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The UK Government and devolved administrations monitor and model air quality to assess compliance with the air quality limit and target values set out in the EU legislation. The results of the assessment are reported to the Commission on an annual basis. The UK is divided into 43 zones and agglomerations for the purposes of assessing compliance with the air quality limits. Similar to the Local Air Quality Management process undertaken by local authorities, where compliance is not achieved, the UK is required to produce air quality action plans (AQAP) detailing the measures that will achieve compliance and submit annual progress to the European Commission. The directive contains provision for additional time to be sought by member states to meet limit values for fine particulates and nitrogen dioxide and in their recent decision the EU has rejected the UK’s request for more time in 12 of the 43 zones.
Low emission zones were the centrepiece of the UK Government plans to tackle excess NO₂. For the majority of the zones where additional time was refused, the European Commission was not convinced that the necessary reduction could be achieved as no clear mandate had been given for the implementation of low emission zones and the other measures in these areas. In zone 21 (North East Scotland) the European Commission was concerned that the NO₂ annual limit value used to predict levels after 2010 and before 2015 was not realistic given the actual measurements in 2010. Therefore they could not fully assess whether the necessary reductions could be achieved by 2015. The full implications of this decision are not known nor how it will impact on local authorities located in the affected zones, the UK may face financial sanctions from the European Commission.

Health promotion awards

The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) is calling for applications to the 2012 awards scheme.

Who are the awards for?
The awards are open to all health organisations, local authorities, non-governmental and private sector organisations in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. As health promotion is essentially a partnership endeavour, applications from partnerships of organisations are accepted and are strongly encouraged. The aim of the awards is to recognise achievement in the development and implementation of health promotion and community well-being strategies and initiatives, in support of the health promotion workforce. Further details are available on the RSPH website.

Thank you for promoting National Spring Clean 2012!

by Helen Darvill, Environmental Quality Co-ordinator, Keep Scotland Beautiful

Thank you for helping to tackle the blight of litter in Scotland by promoting National Spring Clean 2012. Thanks to the support of a myriad of charities, businesses and organisations such as yourselves the campaign reached far and wide, engaging almost 120,000 Scots from Shetland to the Scottish Borders. Around 1,100 tonnes of litter were removed from across Scotland in what we estimate is the largest mobilisation of the Scottish public since World War Two. We’d love your support in promoting the campaign next year and will be working hard in the meantime through education and enforcement to help ensure that our beautiful country remains clean. If you, or anyone else would like to take part in a clean up before next year’s campaign we can supply FREE clean up kits, these can be ordered from: www.keepscotlandtidy.org/cleanupkit.asp. Thank you again for your kind and valuable support!

Consultation on the licensing of caravan sites in Scotland

The Scottish Government is seeking views on ways to improve the licensing of caravan sites in Scotland, to help protect the welfare of permanent residents. The Scottish Government principally wishes to improve standards of management on those sites where people live permanently. However, views are sought specifically on the type of site that should be covered by any new licensing regime. The proposals here have been developed jointly with local authority, industry and resident stakeholders. In considering the introduction of an improved licensing regime for caravan sites, this consultation is aiming to gather views on six proposals for tightening the site licensing regime. Views are also sought on the type of caravan site that the new law should apply to. The consultation period ends on 13 August 2012 and full details are available at www.scotland.gov.uk consultations.

SEPA warns against gypsum bedding at Scottish farms

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has published a position statement on the use of recycled gypsum at farm sites. The agency has become aware that gypsum, from waste plasterboard and other gypsum-containing wastes, is being used as animal bedding at farms across Scotland and, following a number of recent livestock deaths in Scotland and Northern Ireland, the statement provides formal guidance on restrictions associated with the material. The guidance highlights how the use of recycled gypsum as animal bedding would require a waste management licence as there is no exemption, within Scottish environmental legislation, for this material to be used in such circumstances. However, due to the associated risk to animal and
human health, it would be unlikely SEPA would be able to grant a licence if it were to be used as animal bedding. Full details are available at www.sepa.org.uk.

**Fine for Invergordon distillery operator following spill to Cromarty Firth**

A Scottish drinks company was fined £9,000 at Tain Sheriff Court recently after a spill from their Invergordon distillery ended up in the Cromarty Firth. Whyte and MacKay pled guilty to carrying on a controlled activity liable to cause pollution of the water environment following the discharge of a quantity of fusel oil to the Cromarty Firth at Saltburn Pier via surface water drainage. The fine was reduced from £12,000 to £9,000 for an early plea. The matter was investigated by SEPA and reported to the Procurator Fiscal. Full details are available at www.sepa.org.uk.

**IFEH Newsletter**

The July 2012 issue of the IFEH Newsletter is now available on their website.

**FSA updates**

**EFSA poultry meat inspection opinion**

The Food Standards Agency has welcomed the European Food Safety Authority’s recent scientific opinion on poultry meat inspection, which suggested that traditional poultry meat inspection may not be enough to fully address the most relevant biological hazards to public health. In 2010 the European Commission asked the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to carry out risk assessments on the relevant hazards of poultry meat inspection to public health, animal health and welfare, and to advise on alternative approaches. The EFSA opinion has highlighted that traditional poultry meat inspection does not enable the detection of the most important hazards to public health (campylobacter, salmonella and ESBL/AmpC gene-carrying bacteria), and recommends improvements to the current system. The FSA has argued for some time that the current system of official meat controls does not address the most relevant meat-borne pathogens of today, which are microbiological and cannot be detected by the naked eye. In 2009 the Agency began a review of meat inspection, aimed at improving public health protection while delivering a more risk-based, effective and proportionate system for official controls on meat. Overall, the FSA welcomes EFSA’s work to improve public health and to provide the scientific basis for the modernisation of poultry meat inspection.

EFSA’s recommendations will be considered carefully by the FSA in the coming months. EFSA’s views, and the views of European member states, stakeholders and international trade partners, will be considered by the Commission before proposing changes to the current regulations. This is a lengthy process and there will be no immediate changes to the current inspection regime.

**Shellfish monitoring annual report published**

The Food Standards Agency has published the 2012 annual report on the monitoring of chemical contaminants in Scottish shellfish harvesting waters. The results are broadly consistent with the data generated in previous years. The monitoring programme analysed 19 samples from the Highland, Argyll and Bute, Shetland Islands and Eilean Siar (Western Isles) local authority areas. Analysis was undertaken to detect the contaminants regulated by Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 as amended, for heavy metals, dioxins, poly-chlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. In the case of dioxins and PCBs in particular, contaminant concentrations were all below the regulatory maximum levels and are unlikely to pose a risk to public health. Similarly, the concentrations of these regulated heavy metals were below the set maximum limits: mercury, cadmium and lead.

The monitoring work was undertaken by the Food and Environment Research Agency on behalf of the FSA. Full details of the report are available at www.food.gov.uk.

“You don’t need luck to communicate well!” EFSA and member states launch risk communications guidelines on Friday 13 July

As part of a joint initiative with national food safety agencies, EFSA is publishing new risk communications guidelines: ‘When Food Is Cooking Up a Storm - Proven Recipes for Risk Communications’. A recognised need for practical guidance coupled with a desire from all participating countries to share learning and
experience to strengthen risk communications within the European food safety system has resulted in these guidelines. EFSA’s Director of Communications, Anne-Laure Gassin explains: “Communicators in public health authorities across Europe often face the daunting task of assessing what to communicate, when and how best to do so. The aim of these guidelines is to provide a framework to assist communications practitioners with this type of decision-making, looking at the different communications approaches in a wide variety of situations that can occur when assessing and communicating on food-related risks and concerns in Europe.” Communicators from EFSA, national food safety authorities across Europe as well as the European Commission work together in the Authority’s Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (AFCWG). The guidelines were initiated as part of an overall aim to share best practices in risk communications. A key aim of the AFCWG is to promote co-operation and coherence in risk communications - one of the key priorities laid down in EFSA’s Communications Strategy - particularly between risk assessors in member states and EFSA. The guidelines published on 13 July, will be periodically revisited and updated with best practice case studies. In keeping with the spirit of this collaborative initiative, all feedback from practitioners is welcomed at: riskcommunications@efsa.europa.eu.

HSE updates

New free tool for managers to assess and improve their management skills - HSE/CIPD developed tool goes live!
The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has launched a free stress management tool, developed with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), designed to help equip managers with the skills to manage positively and prevent stress in their staff. Research has identified stress as a major cause of long-term sickness absence and poor management is one of the top causes of work-related stress. The tool, available on the CIPD/AXA PPP Employee health and wellbeing website, is designed to hold up a mirror to managers so they understand how their behaviour impacts on the people they manage - and provides online learning materials to help them improve their management style. This tool is designed to help people become better managers whose style reduces stress rather than adding to it. Poor management can cause stress for both staff and the manager; relieving that stress makes work a more positive place and delivers benefits for both staff and employers. To find out more about the tool go to www.cipd.co.uk.

Approved Code of Practice consultation - consultation document on the review of Approved Codes of Practice
HSE is seeking views on proposals to review its portfolio of ACoPs to update and improve them as recommended by Professor Ragnar Löfstedt in his 2011 independent review of health and safety legislation. Professor Löfstedt concluded that Approved Codes of Practice (ACoPs) should be simplified to make it easier for employers to understand and meet their legal obligations and so reduce the risks of over-compliance. ‘Reclaiming health and safety for all: an independent review of health and safety legislation’ was published in November 2011 and can be found at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lofstedt-report.pdf. The Government accepted this recommendation and committed HSE to reviewing all of its ACoPs. The Government’s response is at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lofstedt-report-response.pdf. Following the initial phase of the review, proposals for 30 ACoPs were published on Monday 25 June 2012. The consultation document, together with details of the arrangements for the consultation exercise can be found on the HSE website. Consultation ends 14 September 2012. To find out more about the consultation go to www.hse.gov.uk/consult/condocs/cd241.htm.

OSHCR update

As at 25 July 2012, 2,194 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.
Forthcoming events

- REHIS Law Enforcement Course 2012, 7 to 9 September 2012, Scottish Police College Tulliallan
- REHIS Health and Safety Update Course, 11 September 2012, Holiday Inn Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh
- Health Protection 2012, 11/12 September 2012 Warwick University: www.healthprotectionconferences.org.uk
- Certificate of Competence in Environmental Noise Measurement, 10 to 14 September 2012, University of Strathclyde
- SFEOA Food Standards Training and Mentoring Day, 17 September 2012, Bell Library, Perth. To book a place, please contact Moira Malcolm: moira.malcolm@midlothian.gov.uk by 7 September
- RoSPA Scotland, Occupational Safety and Health Congress 2012, 19 September, Hilton Glasgow
- Food and Health Innovation Service (FHIS), 2012 Annual Conference, 20 September, Perth Racecourse
- REHIS Food Update Course, 11 October 2012, Holiday Inn, Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh
- REHIS Southern Centre Witness Familiarisation Courses, 2 October 2012 and 31 January 2013 - details on REHIS website
- REHIS Awards Ceremony 2012, 15 November, Edinburgh
- REHIS Environmental Health Update Course, 16 November 2012, Edinburgh
- REHIS 2012 Annual General Meeting, 16 November, Edinburgh
- The University of Edinburgh 8th Crash Course - Concepts of Epidemiology, 10-14 December, Edinburgh

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