REHIS staffing update

As reported in the January edition of the e-Newsletter Brian Auld, Director of Professional Development, will be moving on from the Institute’s employ this month. The post has been advertised by direct mailing to members and has also been advertised on the Institute’s website www.rehis.com/job/2016/02/director-professional-development-royal-environmental-health-institute-scotland.

The closing date for applications is 19 February.

Robert Howe has returned to REHIS HQ to cover the Director of Professional Development’s remit until a new Director has been recruited.

Angela Flynn, Administrative Assistant (Community Training), is now on maternity leave and Katie Bell successfully completed the competitive interview process and is now covering Angela’s duties on a temporary basis.

I’m sure all readers will join me in sending their best wishes to Brian, Angela and Katie.

Glasgow EHO’s warn illegal meat may still be on sale

Environmental health Officers (EHOs) have warned that it is often impossible to tell whether meat on sale to the public comes from illegal sources.

A report to Glasgow City Council said “some food businesses have not learned lessons from the horsemeat scandal”.

EHOs reported a single case in which a tonne of Halal meat was seized from two Glasgow butchers. They said Glasgow food businesses remain at risk of “food crime” from elsewhere in the food chain. The investigation which resulted in the seizure of suspect Halal meat began in 2010.

A subsequent allegation about illegal sources being part of the Halal supply chain led to the investigation and seizure of the tonne of meat from Glasgow Halal butchers. The meat had been supplied by an unapproved cutting plant in Lancashire.

Lorna Reid, Team Leader with Glasgow City Council said ... “In this instance we established that the meat had been supplied by an unapproved cutting plant so we took enforcement action to remove it from the food chain. It is concerning that, despite this seizure and the publicity of the horsemeat scandal, officers are still finding evidence of poor traceability, leaving businesses and the public at risk of food crime. Our current focus is ensuring that Glasgow businesses at all stages of the supply chain understand their responsibilities in relation to traceability and we will continue to use enforcement action where necessary to remove illegal meat from the food supply chain.”
Runny eggs set to go back on the menu

British Lion eggs safe for all, says Government advisors.

A new report by Government food safety advisors, presented on Friday 29 January 2016, has concluded that British Lion eggs can safely be eaten runny, even by pregnant women, babies and elderly people. The report recommends that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) should now consider amending its long-standing advice – that vulnerable groups should avoid raw or lightly cooked eggs - for eggs produced under the British Lion scheme or a demonstrably-equivalent comprehensive scheme.

A specialist sub-group of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF) has conducted a year-long review to assess improvements in UK egg safety since the last review in 2001 and its extensive report was praised at a meeting of the full ACMSF today.

The report acknowledged the ‘significant efforts’ undertaken by the UK egg industry to reduce Salmonella Enteritidis in laying flocks, which it says has made a ‘remarkable impact’ in reducing the levels of Salmonella Enteritidis infections in humans. It concluded that: ‘There has been a major reduction in the microbiological risk from Salmonella in UK hen shell eggs since the 2001 ACMSF report. This is especially true for those eggs produced under the Lion Code, which comprises a suite of measures including: vaccination, a cool chain from farm to retail outlets, enhanced testing for Salmonella, improved farm hygiene, better rodent control, independent auditing, date stamping on the eggs and traceability.’

It considered that: ‘The very low risk level means that eggs produced under the Lion Code, or produced under demonstrably equivalent comprehensive schemes, can be served raw or lightly cooked to all groups in society, including care homes and hospitals.’

For more information please see the British Eggs Industry Council website www.egginfo.co.uk.

Dog fouling fine doubles

The fine for dog owners who fail to pick up after their pets has been doubled by the Scottish Parliament.

The fixed penalty for dog fouling is being increased from £40 to £80 to bring it in to line with the fine for littering.

The change comes after the overwhelming majority of responses to a Scottish Government consultation on responsible dog ownership said they would support the fixed penalty being raised. The Dog Fouling (Fixed Penalty) (Scotland) Order 2016 takes effect on 1 April 2016. Nearly a third of people experience animal nuisance (dog fouling or animal noise) as a very or fairly common problem, according to the Scottish Household Surveys of 2013 and 2014.

As well as the fixed penalty, the Scottish Government is also considering how to develop a more robust system to tackle the issue of collecting unpaid penalties. Further information is available on the Scottish Government website www.gov.scot.

Keep Scotland Beautiful has welcomed the increase in the Fixed Penalty Notice for dog fouling from £40 to £80 which will come into effect on 1 April 2016.

Derek Robertson, Chief Executive of Keep Scotland Beautiful said: “We welcome the doubling of the fixed penalty notice for dog fouling, a measure supported by 63% of people asked in a YouGov Poll commissioned by Keep Scotland Beautiful in August 2015”.

CoSLA appoints new Chief Executive

CoSLA announced, on Wednesday 26 January 2016, the appointment of a new Chief Executive to succeed Rory Mair, who retires on January 29. Sally Loudon, currently Chief Executive at Argyll and Bute Council, was chosen by CoSLA’s Staffing Committee which comprises the Presidential team and Political Group leaders.
Waste tyre crackdown

Tough new licensing rules are being introduced to clamp down on the illegal storage and disposal of waste tyres. Under current laws, no licence is required to process a small number of tyres. To avoid abuses of the existing system, Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead has now confirmed plans to remove the exemption after a number of serious incidents involving unlicensed operators – including a case where more than 100,000 tyres were illegally stored near Wishaw General Hospital.

He said:

“The illicit disposal and storage of waste tyres is dangerous and costs the taxpayer a fortune to clean up. It is extremely concerning the way the current system is being persistently abused by irresponsible operators, including organised crime gangs which are known to target the waste industry. That is why the Scottish Government is strengthening the legislation so that all waste tyre processing will require a licence. This will help put a stop to illegal dumping and other unsafe practices, which will in turn reduce the risk of large, toxic and potentially deadly fires. Removing the existing exemption should also make it harder for unscrupulous operators to undercut legitimate, licensed companies which responsibly dispose of and recycle waste tyres.”

Further details are available on the Scottish Government website www.gov.scot.

Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report

Scotland’s Chief Medical Officer, Dr Catherine Calderwood, has published, on 20 January 2016, her first annual report. Details of the report are available on the Scottish Government’s website www.gov.scot.

WHO News

ZIKA virus

WHO announced on 1 February 2016 that the recent cluster of neurological disorders and neonatal malformations reported in the Americas region constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This comes after the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee agreed that a causal link between this cluster and Zika virus disease is strongly suspected. It constitutes an “extraordinary event” and a public health threat to other parts of the world.

WHO warning on further flare-ups of Ebola

A new case of Ebola was confirmed in Sierra Leone on 15 January, reflecting the ongoing risk of new flare-ups of the virus in the Ebola-affected countries.

The Sierra Leone government acted rapidly to respond to the new case. Through the country’s new emergency operations centre, a joint team of local authorities, WHO and partners are investigating its origin, identifying contacts and initiating control measures to prevent further transmission.

WHO had stressed in a statement issued the day before (14 January), that Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone remained at high risk of additional small outbreaks of Ebola in the coming months due to the virus persisting in survivors after recovery.

Sierra Leone was still in a 90-day period of enhanced surveillance following the declaration on 7 November 2015 of the end of Ebola transmission in the country. This period is designed to ensure no hidden chains of transmission have been missed and to detect any new flare-ups of the disease. Further information is available on the WHO website www.who.int.

Japan’s food safety commission visits EFSA

Food safety experts from Japan and Europe are benefiting from their deepening scientific and institutional cooperation, stated the chiefs of the Food Safety Commission of Japan (FSCJ) and EFSA. The two-day meeting was the fourth official visit between the two organisations and the first since signing a Memorandum of Cooperation in October 2015. Further information is available on the EFSA website www.efsa.europa.eu.
Commission’s final report calls for high-level action to address major health challenge

The Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity (ECHO) presented its final report to the WHO Director-General 25 January 2016, culminating a two-year process to address the alarming levels of childhood obesity and overweight globally. The ECHO report proposes a range of recommendations for governments aimed at reversing the rising trend of children aged under 5 years becoming overweight and obese.

The Reports 6 Main Recommendations:

- Full details of the report are available on the WHO website www.who.int.

FSS News

FSS agrees to radical measures to tackle Scotland’s diet-related health problems

Food Standards Scotland (FSS)’s Board, at its meeting on 20 January 2016, considered and accepted wide-ranging proposals on measures to improve the diet of the Scottish public.

These proposals range from consideration of a sugar tax to regulation around food and drink promotions. Portion size reduction and tougher targets for reformulation of foods and drinks were considered, alongside a number of other proposals.

These recommendations, which will now be put to Scottish Government Ministers, are designed to tackle head-on the growing obesity crisis in Scotland: if obesity continues to rise at the current rate, it is projected that 40% of the Scottish population will be obese 15 years from now.

Ross Finnie, Chair of FSS, said: “There can be few in any doubt now as to the gravity of the health time-bomb related to poor diet and obesity facing our nation. The FSS Board was clear that as the sole body with statutory responsibility for diet and nutrition its leadership role is vital in affecting the changes in the paper. We know that we have been missing the Scottish dietary goals for the past 15 years, despite the range of changes already made, so the Board’s view is that a raft of alternative, more radical, measures and interventions must be considered and introduced if we are to have the impact that is needed.” Further details are available on the FSS website www.foodstandards.gov.scot.

FSS survey of fish authenticity in foods in schools, care homes and hospitals

Food Standards Scotland has published, on 13 January 2016, the results of a fish authenticity survey in foods procured for schools and healthcare establishments in Scotland. The survey was initiated to investigate the potential for white fish to be substituted with cheaper species in public sector food supply chains.

A total of 26 local authorities participated in the survey and sampled 264 unique fish products from 214 premises across Scotland. Of the unique samples tested, 249 (94%) were fully compliant with legislation, with 15 samples (6%) failing due to the presence of non-declared fish species such as whiting being labelled as haddock. In all cases Local Authorities concluded from their investigations that mislabeling of products was not due to deliberate food fraud, but had occurred due to a breakdown in the suppliers’ quality control systems. Food Standards Scotland also engaged with the relevant businesses and public sector procurement bodies to identify where improvements could be made to strengthen the integrity of their fish supply chains in the future.

Feedback received to date has indicated that a number of improvements have been taken...
forward by fish suppliers to address the issues identified, including the training of staff involved in the packaging and labeling of fish to minimise the mixing of different species during processing.

The sampling programme was undertaken between March 2014 and February 2015 and targeted fish/fish products supplied to the kitchens of schools, hospitals and care homes around Scotland. See more on the FSS website www.foodstandards.gov.scot.

HSE News

Scottish business leaders turn out as Glasgow kicks off ‘working well’ roadshow

There was a good turnout at a Glasgow hotel on Monday 18th January 2016 as Scottish business leaders, worker representatives and regulators met to discuss the how to help more people come home safe and well from their jobs.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) held the first of seven events across Britain at Glasgow’s Grand Central Hotel. More than 100 leading industry figures from organisations such as CBI Scotland, Centrica and Scottish Power discussed shaping the new strategy, which is aimed at helping GB work well.

Gas fitter sentenced after exposing family to carbon monoxide

A gas fitter has been sentenced to community payback after his incompetent installation of a new boiler system at a cottage near Montrose put the tenant’s lives in danger. David Stott’s substandard work on the boiler in the rented cottage exposed a visiting family and the tenant’s family to potentially lethal carbon monoxide. Forfar Sheriff Court heard. On 12 November 2015, as a result of the accused’s failings, the tenant was poisoned by carbon monoxide, endangering his life and leaving him with long term sleeping problems. Full details are available on the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk.

SEPA News

SEPA Chairman retires

SEPA’s Chairman, David Sigsworth, retired from the role at the end of December. He led SEPA as Chairman since January 2008.

New SEPA Chair appointed

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has welcomed the Scottish Government’s formal confirmation that Bob Downes has been appointed as SEPA’s new Chair. His four year appointment began on 1 January 2016. Bob Downes has been a SEPA Board member since 1 January 2008. He has served as SEPA Deputy Chair since 1 January 2012, and chaired the Agency Board’s Audit Committee from 2010 to 2015.

Edinburgh man fined for failing to attend witness interview

An Edinburgh man has been fined £100 for not turning up to provide a compelled witness statement. Martin Forrest pled guilty to failing to attend a compelled witness interview in connection with a criminal investigation being carried out by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). In October 2014 SEPA officers received information that suggested Mr Forrest would be able to assist with an investigation relating to substantial waste deposits near Edinburgh Airport if he was interviewed, which would enable SEPA to progress it. SEPA officers served a letter requiring he attend a compelled witness interview on 4 March 2015 and he was informed that non-attendance would be an offence.

Mr Forrest subsequently never turned up. Further details are available on the SEPA website www.sepa.rg.uk.

Moving up

Congratulations to Martin Keeley, Chartered EHO, Professional Examination Examiner and Past President of REHIS on his promotion to the post of Service Co-ordinator for the Food
& Business Group within Regulatory Services, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Congratulations to Pat Hoey, Chartered EHO and REHIS Southern Centre Secretary on his promotion to the post of Service Co-ordinator for the Environmental Pollution Group within Regulatory Services, West Dunbartonshire Council.

I’m sure all readers will join me in wishing Martin and Pat all the best in their new posts.

**OSHCR Update**

As at 1 February, 2016, 1,809 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).

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**Forthcoming events**

- **REHIS Witness Familiarisation Course**, Friday 19th February 2016, Tulliallan.
- **Environmental Protection Scotland, Resilience Event**, 24 February 2016, Glasgow.
- **REHIS Annual Environmental Health Forum**, 27 / 28 April 2016, Glasgow.
- **IFEH World Congress on Environmental Health**, 3 to 6 May 2016, Lilongwe, Malawi.

**Note:** Always check the REHIS website events portal for up to date information on training events.

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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](mailto:jt@rehis.com).