

RESPONSE FROM HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

29 February 2016

Dear Convener,

HSE Response to Scottish Parliament Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee report “Future prospects for oil and gas in Scotland” (SP Paper 875 18/1/2016)

Para 34 – Operation of the Health and Safety Executive whistleblowing line:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has discussed this matter with OGUK and RMT. The point at issue is wider than the operation of HSE’s concerns line, which everyone accepts should only ever be a last resort for employees.

The wider point is that employees do not all feel confident that if they report a concern about a process, plant or procedure that their concern will be acted upon by local management. Some are also worried that if they raise concerns, even via an anonymised route, the confined nature of an offshore installation and the relatively tightly defined responsibilities of personnel means they will be identified by local management. They are then worried they will be treated unfairly. These worries are currently heightened because of the financial pressures on companies to find savings in the light of the pressures flowing from the recent falls in the price of oil.

All sides agree that the industry is best served by ensuring that employees are engaged in all matters that relate to maintaining safe production.

HSE will consider how it could support any wider OGUK initiative. It will also continue to seek compliance with the Offshore Installations (Safety Representatives and Safety Committee) Regulations (SI1989/971). HSE is also working with Step Change in Safety to secure greater workforce engagement. HSE is currently employing an industry secondee (a previous OGUK Safety Representative of the Year) to assist its work on this topic.

Para 35 – Development of close working relations between the Oil and Gas Authority and the HSE:

The HSE agrees the importance of maintaining close communication with the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA). The existing Memorandum of Understanding between HSE and OGA already secures close cooperation and the sharing of information. The Memorandum will be updated to include the recommended reference to OGA’s commitment to report all concerns about safety raised with its staff to the HSE, when the MoU is reviewed in May 2016.

As set out in paragraph 35, the HSE also agrees that the provision of information to employees is essential and to this end is taking appropriate action as described in our response to paragraph 34.

Yours sincerely

Mike Cross
HSE Director, Scotland and Northern England