

# HSE's Chair pays tribute to George Brechin

The Chair of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has paid tribute to fellow Board member George Brechin OBE, who passed away on Saturday 17 October after a short illness.

Sarah Newton said: "We all feel great sadness about this news.

"In addition to being the senior member of the Board, offering guidance to his peers to help them settle in and make an effective contribution to HSE's governance, George worked closely with colleagues leading HSE's EU Exit Programme, providing assurance to the Board that this immensely important work was continuing at the right pace and delivering its objective of supporting the work to prepare the United Kingdom for a future outside of the European Union. He was also a member of the Board's Remuneration and People Committee; a role which was reflective of his interest in our people.

"George took every opportunity to engage with HSE colleagues. He particularly valued the insight into the work of the various parts of the organisation that he gained from these opportunities. His interest was genuine and he was always very gracious in recognising everyone's contribution to our mission, particularly at Board meetings.

"He will be sorely missed by the health and safety community in Scotland where his connections and understanding of working in a devolved nation made him a brilliant Chair of the Partnership on Health and Safety in Scotland (PHASS). His meticulous attention to fairness and balance (and his good humour) at PHASS events encouraged mutual respect amongst partners from very different viewpoints and constituencies. George's knowledge but above all his commitment made him such a strong leader in HSE's work to engage with others to improve workplace health and safety.

"George epitomised what it is to be a public servant. Starting at the Department of Health in London in 1972, he moved to the NHS in Scotland in 1988, holding three NHS Trust Chief Executive posts before his appointment to NHS Fife. 'Retirement' however did not slow him down. He was also a non-executive Board Member of Food Standards Scotland, Chair of the Scottish Teachers' Pension Board and Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. He was awarded the OBE in 2013.

"HSE and those who benefit from our work owe George a huge debt of gratitude.

"My thoughts, and those of the HSE Board, are with George's family, friends and colleagues, both in HSE and the other organisations in which he served, who had the honour to know him and benefit from his wise counsel."

Mims Davies, the Minister for Employment, said: "George was an influential figure on the HSE Board, having served for over eight years alongside Dame

Judith Hackitt, Martin Temple and Sarah Newton. A Board member who was extremely well respected by all who worked with him and also amongst the wide variety of HSE stakeholders. He will be greatly missed by the HSE Board and the wider organisation.”

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## **HSE and Sefton Council target Liverpool City Region for COVID-secure spot inspections**

Sefton Council is one of many local authorities working with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) checking on businesses to make sure they are COVID-secure.

Sefton is part of the Liverpool City Region that has just been placed in the highest lockdown tier following discussions between central and local government.

HSE inspectors and Sefton Council's Environmental Health officers have been conducting spot checks and inspections on businesses from all different sectors in the area to check they are following government guidelines.

Being COVID-secure means that businesses need to put adjustments in place to manage the risk from coronavirus to protect workers, visitors and customers.

Sefton Council is responsible for the enforcement of health and safety legislation in sectors which includes shops, pubs and restaurants, whereas HSE regulates health and safety in areas such as construction and manufacturing.

By putting in COVID-secure measures to protect employees, visitors and members of the local community, it will help businesses to continue to operate which is key to the local economy.

Sally Nicholson, HSE Head of Operations, North West, said: "Across the country we are working with local authorities, like Sefton Council, ensuring businesses are checked and are COVID-secure.

"All workplaces are in scope which means businesses of any size, in any sector can receive an unannounced check, by us or a local authority.

"If you are contacted by the HSE or your local authority, please engage with us as it is your duty to ensure employees and visitors at a workplace are protected from the virus.

"By making sure that businesses have measures in place to manage the risks, we can benefit the health of local communities as well as support the local and national UK economy."

During the checks, advice and guidance can be provided to help the business to implement work practices that reduce the risk of virus transmission, but where businesses are not managing this, enforcement action can be taken. This can range from the provision of specific advice, issuing enforcement notices, stopping certain work practices until they are made safe and, where businesses fail to comply, prosecution.

Cllr Paulette Lappin, from Sefton Council, said: "As the Liverpool City Region has further lockdown measures in place, ensuring workplaces are COVID-secure needs to remain a main priority for all businesses in Sefton and beyond.

"It is a legal duty for businesses to protect their workers and others from harm and this includes taking reasonable steps to control the risk and protect people from coronavirus.

"Being COVID-secure can help reduce these risks and we want every business in the borough to follow the guidelines that ultimately protects our communities.

"Working with the HSE has enabled us to target the whole of the Sefton area from small businesses to large manufacturers, whether Local Authority or HSE enforced, ensuring all workplaces understand the importance of being COVID-secure."

HSE and local authority inspectors are finding some common issues across a range of sectors that include: failing to provide arrangements for monitoring, supervising and maintaining social distancing, and failing to introduce an adequate cleaning regime particularly at busy times of the day.

For more information on HSE's spot checks and inspections, see [www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/spot-inspections.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/spot-inspections.htm)

For the latest information and safer business guidance, see [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

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#### Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. <https://www.hse.gov.uk>
2. Local Authorities have the same enforcement responsibilities and powers as the HSE for certain types of businesses within their area, including shops, restaurants, licenced premises, offices and warehouses.
3. HSE news releases are available at <https://press.hse.gov.uk>

For HSE's working safely guidance see <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

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## [Transport company fined after employee fatally crushed](#)

A transport company has been fined after a worker was fatally injured when the pallet of stone tiles he was attempting to deliver fell onto him.

High Wycombe Magistrates' Court heard how, on 23 November 2016, an agency driver was carrying out a delivery for Reason Transport UK Limited at Fraser Road, High Wycombe. The driver was delivering a pallet of stone tiles using a tail-lift and a manual pallet truck. He spent several minutes struggling to lift and manoeuvre the pallet onto the truck's tail-lift. When he eventually succeeded in doing so, he lost control of the pallet, which fell onto him, causing him to suffer fatal crush injuries.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the weight of the pallet was recorded as 1,200 kg but the actual weight of the pallet was in excess of 1,400 kg. The pallet was therefore in excess of the 1,000 kg weight limit set by the pallet network for tail-lift deliveries. The

investigation also found that the driver had worked for the company for two weeks and had not received any training for the safe delivery of pallets using a tail-lift.

Reason Transport UK Limited, now in liquidation, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and have been fined £5,000.

After the hearing HSE inspector Stephen Faulkner said: "This was a tragic and wholly avoidable incident, caused by the failure of the host company to provide training to this agency worker on the safe delivery of pallets from a vehicle with a tail-lift.

"Transport companies should be aware of the importance of identifying and managing the risks involved with delivering heavy loads and the need to adequately train new staff before undertaking such deliveries."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)<sup>[2]</sup>
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## [Spot checks and inspections at schools in Scotland](#)

Using coloured spots to highlight frequency touched points and introducing alternatives to staggered start and stop times were some of the examples of good practice carried out by schools in Scotland to ensure they are COVID-secure.

These are some of the examples of good practice discovered by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors after carrying out a programme of COVID-secure school spot checks in Scotland regarding the implementation of school reopening guidance.

Since August, a total of 500 schools have been contacted to check they are

COVID-secure and compliant with the Scottish government's school reopening guidance.

To give a representative sample of schools across Scotland, 16 local authorities were selected for the focus of the checks, and a proportionate number of primary schools and secondary schools were selected in each area. In addition, a sample of Additional Support Needs (ASN) schools and independent schools were also contacted.

Following the initial calls, HSE found around 80% of schools had a good understanding on being COVID-secure. Where levels of compliance were less certain in 100 schools, HSE undertook follow-up site visits.

Harvey Wild, Head of HSE's Transport and Public Services Unit, said: "In our view the Scottish government's school reopening guidance was very good quality, and was viewed positively by schools in what can only be described as very challenging circumstances.

"It appeared to be flexible enough to be implemented appropriately in different settings and adapted to local circumstances ensuring most schools we contacted were COVID-secure.

"The majority of schools in Scotland reacted very quickly to implement new measures. For those schools where compliance was less certain, formal spot inspections were carried out by a team of HSE inspectors.

"This enabled the inspectors to go to the schools and see what COVID-secure measures were in place so they could then offer formal advice and guidance where needed."

All the HSE spot inspections at schools in Scotland were completed by the beginning of October and, based on the inspections undertaken, HSE found no need for any formal interventions requiring improvement. Any areas of concerns were dealt with by verbal advice.

Our inspectors did find some common areas of concern where schools needed to make changes. This centred around social distancing in staff room areas, cleaning regimes and ventilation in school buildings.

For ventilation, most schools were relying on windows and doors being open for long periods of time and HSE's feeling was that schools/local authorities may need to conduct a simple risk assessment of fresh air in schools. In light of this the Scottish Government developed further guidance to assist schools – see [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

Harvey Wild added: "While highlighting some areas of concern to schools, our inspectors also found some novel and new examples of good practice.

"Regarding social distancing, one primary school had considered replacing the two metre lines to separate teachers from pupils with a painting of a river, to help pupils understand the concept of not crossing it.

"Another school introduced creative alternatives to staggered start and stop

times by using multiple exits at the same time. This prevented parents waiting for long periods of time at the school gate.

“These examples show how well most schools have adopted COVID-secure measures, but there can’t be room for complacency. Ensuring a school has measures in place to manage any COVID risks can only benefit the health of the local community they serve.”

For more information on being COVID-secure, visit [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) and for details on spot checks and inspections [www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/spot-inspections.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/spot-inspections.htm)

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