

NON-VERBATIM MINUTES

DATE: Monday 12th July

TIME: 16:00 - 17:00

METHOD: Zoom Meeting

CHAIR: Alison Thewliss MP (SNP, Glasgow Central), Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Working at Height

MINUTES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the APPG for Working at Height.

The Chair explained that falls from height, and falling objects, account for the highest number of preventable fatalities across all sectors in UK industries and that the APPG was seeking to understand the root causes and propose sensible and effective measures to prevent falls.

The Chair outlined how the inaugural report from the APPG had advocated for a confidential reporting body for all near misses that do not qualify for RIDDOR reporting. The Health and Safety Executive have indicated its support for this and have said that the No Falls Foundation is best placed to take on this role.

The Chair spoke of her delight at having representatives from the No Falls Foundation at the meeting considering the organisation has been a long-time supporter of the APPG. She introduced **Peter Bennett OBE, Chair of the No Falls Foundation, Ray Cooke, Health and Safety Advisor of the No Falls Foundation and Hannah Williams, Charity Manager for the No Falls Foundation.**

1. Peter Bennett OBE, Managing Director, PASMA and Chair of the No Falls Foundation

Peter Bennett OBE, who is also a member of the Access Industry Forum that sponsor the APPG, thanked the Chair for the introduction and said that he would be outlining the No Falls Foundation's idea of a No Falls Charter. He detailed that the work the No Falls Foundation was doing to raise awareness of the consequences of falling from height through prevention, research and support. He gave the statistic that more than 10 million people work at height as part of their job, and 99 people fall every single day. Peter detailed that falls from height are the biggest killer in the workplace, according to Health and Safety Executive statistics released the previous week.

Peter continued to say that behind all statistics came people, and that the effects of falls could extend beyond physical damage. He detailed that those affected by falls often extended to friends, family and rescuers. He said that accidents were avoidable as working at height should not be a dangerous activity. Peter explained that falls could be prevented with proper training, sufficient planning, quality equipment and a strong safety culture.

Following, Peter outlined the estimated total financial cost of falls from height was over £0.5 billion pounds through costs to the NHS, benefits to those that are injured and tax losses. He detailed the various financial cost to businesses of falls including reputational damage, Health

and Safety Executive investigations and fines. He posed the question why therefore falls kept happening considering it is not in a business' interest for them to take place. Peter suggested the reasons behind falls include competing health and safety priorities, multiple sources of guidance, difficulties for clients to verify good height safety practices, and there being no forum to learn from accidents or near misses. He particularly raised the issue of near miss falls, saying that many would not be learned about until years later once investigations and, in cases of fatalities, criminal cases had been processed.

2. Ray Cooke, Health and Safety Advisor, No Falls Foundation

Beginning his part of the presentation, **Ray Cooke** detailed that the No Falls Charter was intended to be a standardised action plan for businesses who will commit to striving for zero falls from height. He said that organisations want to prevent falls from height and to do this it was important to remove barriers to reporting and incentivise reporting.

Ray gave the example of the Construction Logistics and Community Safety scheme (CLOCS) a good model which the No Falls Charter should follow. He outlined that the No Falls Foundation was calling on UK businesses to make a tangible commitment towards zero falls.

He spoke of the APPG recommendations for an independent body that allowed confidential, enhanced and digital reporting of all near misses. He spoke of how there needed to be a major review of work at height culture as companies fear investigation and employees fear blame or loss of the job after incidents and near misses take place. Therefore, it was important that there should be no fault or blame reporting.

Ray stressed that the No Falls Foundation would only be happy with zero falls from height. He said that the construction industry was the most at risk from falls, with half of all fatal falls occurring in this sector, and therefore it was important that this was the sector that was started with. He said that designers should be the focus, in eliminating the need to work at height or designing safety measures for those that need to work at height. He did emphasise, though, that other sectors would be considered in drafting the Charter, construction was not the only focus.

Ray said that the Charter will work with companies having to pass a No Falls Audit and pay fees to be a part of the scheme. Those paid fees would be invested to help prevent falls and support those who have suffered a fall. He said that companies would be proud to be a member of the NFC and therefore others would be encouraged to be a part of it.

Ray explained that the Charter had not been drafted yet, but that industry would be consulted on to make sure that it was reasonable and achievable. He said that the No Falls Foundation expected that all contractors would adopt the No Falls Charter and carry out proper risk assessments, provide proper training, and report all work at height incidents and near misses.

3. Hannah Williams, Charity Manager, No Falls Foundation

Hannah Williams stressed that the most obvious way to limit falls from height would be to reduce the need to be at height. She said that the No Falls Charter would unite all stakeholders to work together to limit the need to be at height.

She said that the No Falls Charter would provide an efficient and effective way to influence the height safety practices and provide a standardised action plan. She said that companies who experience near misses would be encouraged into a supportive, constructive and positive environment in which people can learn from the near incident through transparent sharing and discussion. She said that through this, falls from height would be limited through supply chains as much as just for individual companies. **Working at Height**

Hannah said that the No Falls Charter would make a bigger difference, being part of companies' Corporate and Social Responsibility programmes, and supporters would support the charitable work of the No Falls Foundation. She said that it would be something that people would be proud to participate in.

The next steps for the No Falls Charter are to gain founding members that can support the Charter and draft the Charter to ensure it is reasonable and achievable with input from industry. The No Falls Foundation plans to launch the Charter in 2022 and would need it to be reviewed by a panel which is an opportunity for attendees to get involved in the scheme.

Hannah said that the best way to keep updated with the No Falls Charter was to [subscribe](#) to the No Falls Foundation's newsletter.

4. Question and Answer Session

The Chair thanked all three for the presentation and invited questions.

David Thomas, Director, Heightsayfe Ltd asked why the British Standard Code of Practice had been “largely ignored” with few adopting it. Ray asked how many people were aware of British Standards in industry. He said the cost of British Standards would dissuade others from participating and that the standards themselves were not specific or focussed on the sector. He said people prefer to follow standards and codes of practice set by sector-specific training bodies instead.

Gary Walpole, Safety, Health & Environmental Officer, the National Federation of Roofing Contractors referenced the number of accidents that happen on short duration repair work and asked how the No Falls Foundation would educate homeowners and small businesses that would not want to sign up to the No Falls Charter. Peter responded saying the concern of reaching SMEs was a problem that had been explored by the No Falls Foundation. He said that he intended to reach the smaller and micro businesses encouraging them to sign up but they could not be forced to do so. He explained that he hoped that as it was more widely adopted by larger organisations, the No Falls Charter would be passed down to smaller businesses. In addition, Ray said that the Charter would never achieve a 100% success rate of signups from businesses because there were organisations that would try to avoid this kind of a Charter. He said that instead the focus needed to be on those businesses that were more receptive and hoping that following their commitment the Charter “snowballs” to reach other organisations.

Robert Candy, Chief Executive, The Scaffolding Association asked what mechanisms there were for consulting with industry on the Charter, both for the draft and review process. Peter responded saying that there would be a drafting panel and a review panel which needed to be representative of the whole of the sector. He reiterated that Hannah had asked for those that were interested in providing their support to the review to reach out to her.

Ray added an additional point to his response to Gary Walpole's question **Working at Height** about educating homeowners and small businesses considering the higher risk of falls in domestic scenarios. He said the issue would be approached through other methods as the No Falls Charter was focussed at industry.

Derek Maylor, Safety Coordinator, the Communication Workers Union asked about consultation with safety representatives to which Peter said that they were actively seeking views from trade unions and had been reaching out to them.

Alan Plom, an independent Health and Safety Consultant, explained that he had a background in the rural sector and said that he felt attention was being given to managing safety but that it was not reducing the number of accidents. He spoke of how he felt it was good idea to run quick training sessions on the basics for those that are new to the sector.

An attendee suggested that the No Falls Charter might have a bigger take up if there was a reduction in insurance costs for those that had signed up to it. Peter said that the No Falls Foundation would like to be involved with insurance companies but said in the past it had been difficult to get positive engagement from the sector. He said that the insurance sector was concerned by the ask of reducing their premiums.

Mario Wilton from Wilton, CEO, SHE Consultants asked what the implications would be on the current legislation from the No Falls Charter. Ray responded saying that he did expect the Health and Safety Executive to review the work at height regulations at all. He said that the No Falls Charter would be guidance for how people should complete RIDDOR forms to ensure a consistent set of data was being collected. Furthermore, Ray explained that he had formerly worked at the Health and Safety Executive himself and said people often felt that it could be like "banging your head on a brick wall". He stressed they were not asking for enhanced reporting but making reporting an easier process and that nothing within the No Falls Charter would interrupt the work of the Health and Safety Executive.

In addition, Peter stressed that simplified reporting rather than enhanced reporting was the priority.

Dale Banham, owner of RPM H&S, asked whether the No Falls Foundation would be linking the Charter with Mates in Mind to ensure that culture is also encompassed in it. Hannah responded and said that said this was raised in the initial inquiry report. Ray added that Mates in Mind was an organisation that construction companies were working with to improve mental health. He said that the No Falls Foundation would actively consider how mental health could be linked into the Charter.

Claire Griffiths, Editor of Roofing Today, asked whether working at height training should be part of roofing training to which Ray responded saying that **Gary Walpole from the National Federation of Roofing Contractors** was better placed to answer this question. Gary said that it should be included because it was difficult to train homeowners to pick companies that work at height safely because it was unregulated.

In addition, Gary raised the issue of increased stress and fatigue of working at height at the minute caused by material and labour shortages. The Chair said it was an important point.

David Harwood, Proprietor at Harwood Access Training Solutions, asked **Working at Height** whether more pressure should be applied to suppliers to provide equipment that was safe to use. Ray answered and said that guidance would need to come from other enforcement agencies. He said Hire and supply companies were a target for the No Falls Charter.

Jeff Ward, CEO of Guardian Fall, asked whether the scope for the No Falls Charter should also include no falls of tools or objects. Hannah answered saying that equipment was included within the no falls focus and was an issue that needed to be addressed with equal importance. She said that the focus of simplifying reporting would allow for more specific data around more risky tools or sectors. In addition, Ray said that some trades were higher risk than others but said that the No Falls Charter would be an overarching principle for organisations that was not sector specific in its guidance.

Chris Stephens MP (SNP, Glasgow South West) asked what work the No Falls Foundation would do with the Health and Safety Executive. Peter responded saying that he was aware of the criticism that the Health and Safety Executive receives. He said that the No Falls Foundation could not afford to wait for the Health and Safety Executive to allocate more resources towards the issue but instead it would take forwards the Charter much as possible. Ray added that the No Falls Foundation was working with the Science Division the Health and Safety Executive and spoke of interesting discussions about RIDDOR and reporting.

Dale Banham, owner of RPM H&S, asked whether the approach of the No Falls Charter could be similar to a PAS91 compliance approach. Ray said he had not read that approach.

Robert Candy, Chief Executive of The Scaffolding Association asked whether the Charter would be in line with work done by CONIAN Work at Height Group. David Thomas from HeightsayfeLtd's question was also referenced which asked whether the Charter would exploit existing audit structures. Peter responded saying yes to both questions. He said that they would be building on the work undertaken by the CONIAN Work at Height Group but said that the work done by that group was confined to construction. He also said that the No Falls Foundation would be exploring existing audit structures as they wanted to avoid duplicating reporting structures.

The Chair drew the meeting to a close, inviting closing comments from the speakers.

Peter Bennett said that he believed the No Falls Charter would be a 'gamechanger' but stressed the importance of input from across the sector to make sure it was viable.

Following, **Ray Cooke** encouraged people to get involved and **Hannah Williams** re-emphasised her point that people should get involved with the drafting and input for the No Falls Charter.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting and said that the next session would focus on the improvements that could be made for working at height by a digital strategy.