

Construction Leadership Forum
COVID -19 : Recovery Planning Meeting 02
21 April 2020
Telephone Conference Call
13:30 – 14:30

Note of meeting

Present:

Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning

Construction Industry

Grahame Barn – Industry Leadership Group member, Construction Scotland
Bruce Clark - Joint Managing Director, RJ McLeod
Bruce Dickson – Industry Leadership Group Member, Construction Scotland
Ron Fraser – Executive Director, Construction Scotland
Stephen Good, Chief Executive, Construction Scotland Innovation Centre
Hector MacAulay – Managing Director, Balfour Beatty Scotland
Elliot Robertson – CEO Robertson Group
Alan Wilson – Managing Director, Select

Scottish Government and Associated Agencies

Scott Bell – Deputy Director, PDCRD, SG
Joe Brown – Head of Strategic Business Development, SG
Callum Elliot – Head of Collaborative Procurement
Dr Stephen Garvin, Head of Building Standards, SG
Ian Gilzean – Chief Architect, SG
Alasdair Graham – Acting Director of Major Projects, Transport Scotland
Alan Morrison – Health Finance and Infrastructure, SG
Sharon Miller, Manufacturing and Construction, SG
Graham Porteous – Head of Construction Procurement Policy Unit, SG
Colin Proctor – Director, Construction Industry and Delivery, SFT
Peter Reekie – Chief Executive, SFT
Mark Turley, More Homes Division, SG
John McLean - Construction Procurement Policy Unit, SG

Apologies:

Ken Gillespie – Chair, Construction Scotland
Mary McAllan – Director for Economic Development
Richard McCallum – Deputy Director – Health Finance and Infrastructure, SG
Dermot Rhatigan - Deputy Director Manufacturing & Industries, SG

		Action
1	Introduction and Apologies	
	<p>The meeting commenced at 13:30.</p> <p>The Minister welcomed delegates to the second meeting of the Covid-19 : Recovery Planning Forum, the focus of which would be the working groups. The Minister reminded those present that the group's aim is to form a plan for restart and asked them to maintain this focus. Members were also asked to observe previous protocols.</p>	
2	Minutes of last meeting	
	The Minute of the previous meeting was accepted as a true record with no amendments or alterations sought by members.	
3	Actions	
	At the Minister's request, Scott Bell read through the actions of the previous meeting, giving a progress update on each. These will be reflected in the updated Action Tracker, which will be distributed to the members.	
4.	Update on Site Closures	
	<p>Joe Brown provided an update. The key points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social distancing now in confirmed in regulations, reflecting guidance. • There have been changes to types of 'essential' businesses, e.g. Livestock markets, currency business. • Lockdown will be reviewed in 3 weeks – guidance is that all but essential businesses to remain closed. • Working with industry/ trade unions to present comments/ evidence on impacts to businesses whilst pressing UK Government for additional resources/ideas. • No indication of date for sites to re-open, but the First Minister has announced that documents are being prepared regarding exit strategy- this is ongoing (will set out more detailed plans)- grateful for engagement of sub-group 	
	The Minister invited questions.	

	<p>Elliot Robertson made the following comments, regarding return to work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stated that Industry was keen to see what comes out on 27th (three weeks review date stated in 6th April Construction Sector Guidance). • Noted that there are real concerns around supply chain. • Concerned at lockdown prolongation but must get on with a re-start • Understood need to open sites in a safe manner- Robertson have produced an animation setting out how this might be achieved- hopefully this proves that sites can be operated safely. • Hopefully construction can be given essential worker status. Time is important for both the health of the industry and that of its workers- need to be a push for review of 'essential worker' status 	
	<p>The Minister welcomed this work, noting that it was helpful in setting out the way forward. However, any re-opening of sites would be guided by health & scientific advice – this would avoid potentially more damaging 2nd wave of infections. The Minister stated that the SG will continue to do all they can to press the UK Government for additional support.</p>	
	<p>Bruce Clark- noted that there is disparity on advice given North & South of Border. The guidance issued in Scotland is not the same as the regulations. The definition of 'essential projects' requires clarification</p>	
	<p>The Minister asked officials to look into this and tease out what the conflict is and how it could be resolved.</p>	
	<p>Actions: SG to look at any disparity between guidance and regulations on definition of 'essential projects' and provide clarification if required.</p>	<p>SB SM</p>
5.	Safe Operating Procedures Working Group Update	
	<p>Ron Fraser provide the group with an update on the working group, which had its first meeting the previous afternoon. The Key points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal is to show that industry can work safely. • Group is a 50/50 mix of clients and industry- across various sectors. Work of group includes discussing representation. • Actions have been agreed, including gathering and presenting evidence of the ability of working safely on site – 	

	<p>to build confidence of working within the COVID- 19 landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe operating procedures exist- these were published by CS along with SG on 6 April – the Industry is able to respond to new hazards. Need to maintain this document under review (as others are doing). The sub-sub group will look at available advice and keep it under review, and inform if updates are required. • Looking at the rest of Europe and the world to gather ideas. • Key aspects- the gathering of evidence – appropriate procedures are being developed across the piece to get safer procedures to use on site when returning (or ongoing if offered ‘essential worker’ status), including social distancing, etc. • Looked at the sites that have been designated ‘essential’ and seen how they have implemented this. • The Video produced by Robertson is good – but need evidence from sites themselves to see in this practice. • Intend to produce report on return of industry to start with all in procedure in place. Intend to produce a draft by Friday (this will be a very short document). We will continue to develop the document. • We can show procedures to be followed, but this is different to demonstrating their effectiveness, which will come out in the longer term. • The Health and Safety Executive have made COVID-19 a reportable event on site. • Next meeting of the group is on Thursday afternoon (23 April). 	
	The Minister invited questions.	
	<p>Alan Wilson said that it was good to see work progressing, but what of domestic sites, etc.? Noted that he had been in touch with Elliot Robertson to see if they can produce a plan for trades such as electricians, etc. There is also a need to consider apprentices.</p>	
	<p>Elliot Robertson welcome the update, noting that Construction Scotland clearly have consistent message. He noted that the HSE website asked for both essential and non-essential work to continue, which gives a confused message with regards to Scotland.</p>	
	<p>In response, the Minister pointed out that in terms of the HSE, Scotland is a different jurisdiction – public health in Scotland this is a matter for Scottish Ministers to deal with.</p>	

	Ron Fraser noted that individuals in Health have seen & commented on 6 th April docs –as such any changes to this paper could then go to Health via the SG.	
	It was also commented that positive collaboration should be looked at in terms of the existing routes, via workgroups between the SG and the HSE.	
	Scott Bell added that the SG will make sure that they help in any way we can in taking any concerns to Colleagues in Health.	
	The Minister stated the SG would will give any help required in facilitating this. He finished the item by thanking Ron for his efforts.	
	Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Operating Procedure Workgroup to produce draft report by 24/04/20 • Safe Operating Procedure Workgroup to continue to provide updates to the forum • SG to assist representatives in feeding in evidence to colleagues involved with health and safety regarding safe operating procedures 	RF RF SB
6.	Restart Working Group Update	
	<p>Graham Porteous gave an update on the Restart sub-group, which had met on the morning of Friday 17th April. The Key points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The remit of the group is to examine and plan for the issues around restarting the industry following the COVID-19 lockdown (excluding Safe Operating Procedure) • The group discussed what considerations would be needed for an industry re-start and the potential impacts. • Consensus was that the Scottish Construction Industry would like to see an early return to work in Scotland, Many private clients are putting pressure on contractors to restart work and the situation in England is clearly different. • Such a return would require to be mandated by the Scottish Government so that there is no criticism levelled at the sector, businesses or individuals. In current terminology, those working in construction would need to be classified as being “essential” workers. • Ideally, an early return to work should be across the whole industry but a phased returned could be explored. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are potential issues with the supply chain which need to be considered to ensure production is back to normal as soon as possible. • A target date for returning to work should be identified and stated so that the Industry can work towards it and the public made aware of such a date. • The industry considers that provided construction work recommences sooner rather than later and with an appropriate period of notice, there should not be supply chain issues • It was however emphasised that the longer industry is shut down, the greater the damage that will be inflicted on supply chains and construction companies. • It was considered that Sites working remote from the public could be allowed to return to work if they can comply with social distancing guidance. • Travel to and from sites is an important factor but it was noted that this can be managed by using vehicles with appropriate capacity or limited occupancy to ensure social distancing. Care would have to be taken to ensure that vehicle journeys were route specific to and from sites and had no unnecessary stops. • When construction work restarts we must also have guidance for working in people's homes. • There will need to be a positive communication support deployed to support the return. • The group are investigating what can be learned from the approach taken by other countries. • It was noted that Public Bodies as well as Contractors need to be prepared and ready for a re-start. • Building Standards have already taken steps to support the industry. • Construction Scotland explained their recently launched I-Con initiative and how it can provide support • In terms of Future Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is apparent that the introduction of social distancing will reduce efficiency and productivity on sites and the group needs to better understand the impact of this. ○ The Group will need to investigate what will constitute a phased ○ The Group will need to develop a positive communications support. ○ The Group will need to establish a target return to work date • The next meeting of the group is on Friday 24th April. 	
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	The Minister invited questions, but none were forthcoming.	
	Actions:	
	Restart Workgroup to continue to provide updates to the forum	GP
7.	Open Discussion	
	The Minister invited questions from those present.	
	Bruce Clark asked if there was any possibility of early restart for construction?	
	The Minister reiterated that the SG would be guided by the health and scientific evidence and appreciated that industry would like a re-start date but it was not possible at the moment. Data is being monitored and retaining spread is the key to getting public health right. The economy would suffer catastrophic impact should a second lockdown be needed.	
	Alan Wilson note that Select had become aware of the first COVID-19 related suicide of a contractor and asked if anything was being anything to protect mental health?	
	The Minister responded by highlighting that the First Minister has put emphasis on mental health and that everyone needs to do all they can to promote message. Need to ensure that all in a fragile situation are signposted to the appropriate support. The Minister noted that he would be grateful for the message to be passed on. Alan Wilson said that he would be happy to do so.	
	Bruce Dickson noted that across Europe they are prioritising Construction in their restarts and asked the Minister if this would be the case in Scotland.	
	The Minister responded that the SG will look at every sector and are also looking at the responses of other countries. The Key thing is to follow the expert advice. The Minister acknowledged that construction is a priority areas of business, and that it is important that it is 'ready to go' when the evidence supports this.	
	Graham Barn noted that number of new contracts on PCS is notably down, some 46% since the same period in 2019 and 56% down on 2018. It is critical that companies are still invited to tender for work.	
	The Minister emphasised that he understood and this is why he has written to Local Authorities. The Public sector has an important role to play and the SG will do all we can to support this- we will await on analysis of data received back from LA's.	

	It was also noted that Fiona Hyslop MSP was due to give statement on resourcing.	
	It was noted that there is ongoing dialogue with health colleagues in relation to the work being progressed by this group	
	Elliot Robertson stated that he welcomed the opportunity to input to those dealing with health and safety aspects, stating that he felt that if it can be proved that things can be done safely then industry can rise to challenge. Time is, however of the essence, as data suggests that 54% of companies will have gone burst in three months' time.	
	The Minister told the members that he understood the drive to get back to normality ASAP, but that he was wary of a second wave of infections if this was done too early. In terms of what the group is doing it is important to share this and be part of the decision making process regarding restart. The Minister added that he intends to join the restart workgroup if he can, to get an idea of progress.	
	Actions: Alan Wilson to ensure that FM's message emphasising Mental health cascaded to his members, with signposting to available support.	AW
8.	Any Other Business	
	The Minister asked the members if there was any other business to discuss. As there was none, the Minister thanked all the members for their participation, stating that it was important that any difficulties are ironed out to ensure that industry is ready to return as soon as the restart happens.	
9.	Date of Next Meeting	
	The Minister advised the members that this would be communicated to them as soon as possible.	