

Construction Leadership Forum
COVID-19 : Recovery Planning Group
Meeting 04
20 May 2020
Telephone Conference Call
10:30 – 12:00

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

Steven Dillon – Scottish Trade Unions Congress

Ron Fraser – Executive Director, Construction Scotland

Ken Gillespie – Chair, Construction Scotland

Helen McGuire – 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

Dr Stephen Garvin, Head of Building Standards, SG

Ian Gilzean – Chief Architect, SG

Alasdair Graham – Acting Director of Major Projects, Transport Scotland

Professor Roger Halliday - Chief Statistician & Joint Head of Covid Modelling and
Analysis Team for the Scottish Government

Sharon Miller, Manufacturing and Construction, SG

Alan Morrison – Health Finance and Infrastructure, 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:

Elaine Ellis – Skills Development Scotland

		Action
1	Introduction and Apologies	
1.1	The meeting commenced at 10:30	
1.2	The Minister Welcomed the delegates to the meeting and thanked all for their continued work both with this group and the related sub-groups. He welcomed Steven Dillion, representing STUC as a new member of the forum and Professor Roger Halliday, Chief Statistician & Joint Head of Covid Modelling and Analysis Team for the Scottish Government, who had agreed to talk to the group.	
1.3	The Minister acknowledged that everyone was keen to see construction work on sites restart as soon as possible. The Scottish Government is equally keen for this to happen, but it should be when the health advice allows it.	
1.4	In a departure from the published agenda, the Minister Invited professor Halliday to update the group on some of the work he was currently undertaking.	
2	Update From Professor Halliday	
2.1	Professor Halliday thanked the Minister for the invite. He explained that his role involved bringing together a team of expert modellers from across public bodies in Scotland to support the decision making in developing models of COVID-19 patterns in different circumstances to help planning and evaluate options as a member of the COVID advisory groups.	
2.2	In terms of 'R' Numbers, his work involved conducting three types of analysis: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looking at international experience 2. Making evidence based assumptions. 3. Looking at drivers that cause addition transmission; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale of any interventions • The number of people coming into contact • The intensity of contact • How the Virus behaves indoors- activities/travel- strong evidence that virus travels well on public transport. • People are touching communal hard surfaces –this is a developing area of science, but indications are that the virus dies quicker outdoors. 	

<p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p>	<p>His team had looked at various proposals. In terms of construction, the team had looked to Spain where 300 000 had returned to work. Scaled to Scotland this would be around 35000 to have same effect. The data suggested that opening outdoor construction from the beginning of June would increase R rate to mean the top of the range was above 1, if we were to follow the same processes as Spain, presenting a significant risk. However, as the number of people with Covid reduces, the impact on R will not be as significant.</p> <p>It was noted that the longer the current measures stay in place, the less the chance of the virus spreading when lifted.</p>	
	<p>The Minister Invited Questions</p>	
<p>2.5</p> <p>2.6</p> <p>2.7</p> <p>2.8</p> <p>2.9</p> <p>2.10</p>	<p>Members questioned using data from Spain as being analogous to the construction industry in Scotland, due to many differences in operating practices. It was suggested that perhaps Holland or Belgium might be a better comparator. It was also highlighted that the construction Industry in Scotland does not use public transport as its main route to work.</p> <p>It was commented that the construction industry in England had continued to operate and the Professor was asked what impact this had had on the 'R' number there. The Professor responded that he had not seen any data on this from the various academic modelling groups that his team was connected to, and so was unable to provide the group with any information.</p> <p>The members also asked that the professor consider the Site Operating Procedures SOP in modelling as this demonstrated that the industry was keen for a responsible return to work.</p> <p>The Minister reiterated that whilst medical and scientific advisers give ministers advice, the decisions were ultimately up to ministers. He noted that the First Minister was due to give a statement on the easing of lockdown tomorrow,</p> <p>Elliot Robertson commented that virus transmission had been covered in the Site Operating procedure (SOP) which it would be useful if the Professor reviewed.</p> <p>The Minister responded that one of reasons that Professor had been asked to address the group was to hear from them. He added that it was extremely useful to show that the construction industry is looking at responsible return with SOP. He thanked the Professor for his time.</p>	

3	Actions	
3.1	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 Actions Register, which will be distributed to the members.	
3.2	The Minutes of the previous meeting of 5 May were not agreed at this meeting. This will be added to the agenda of the next meeting.	
4.	Update on Site Closures	
4.1	Joe Brown provided an update. The key points were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The updated guidance issued on 1 May, re-iterating that only essential sites should remain open, remains in place. • A route map, detailing the steps for moving out of lockdown will be published tomorrow, to coincide with the First Minister's Speech 	
4.2	Responding to a question, the Minister advised that he was unable to provide any detail on how this would directly affect construction and members would need to wait until the FM made her announcement to parliament.	
5.	Safe Operating Procedures Working Group Update	
5.1	Ron Fraser provided an update on the working group. He advised that the Site Operating Procedures (SOP) working group continues. Over a hundred documents with details of safe operating and onsite procedures have been received, (including those on currently operating 'essential sites' which have been put into a database, which is available for all of the members of the forum to see, as the industry gears up for restart.	
5.2	In terms of the finalised SOP document, Ron Fraser advised that this was currently in the final phase of consultation with stakeholders, and at this stage he was only looking for examples of 'red lines' prior to publishing, with the expectation that non-critical issues can be resolved in the coming weeks. His hope was that barring any such 'red lines' the document could be published in the near future.	
5.3	Ron Fraser highlighted that a key part of the SOP is its dissemination, particularly via small & micro businesses. The	

5.4	<p>Group is due to meet this week, with view to finalising the report.</p> <p>On the topic of essentials sites Colin Proctor added that the NHS boards have been very helpful, particularly in the different and innovative uses of procurement and the use of community spaces to allow social distancing. He also picked up on the point raised at the last meeting, around concerns over on-site behaviours, and had seen examples of those not following protocols being asked to leave sites. He had found all of this engagement to be very encouraging.</p>	
	The Minister invited questions from the group.	
5.5	<p>Steven Dillion raised the issue that the draft SOP guidance, had to his mind, failed to consider some of the comments of the Trade Unions, noting that this would be essential to get buy in from workers. In particular he highlighted a lack of ability for workers to complain if their employer was implementing policies such as social distancing correctly. He also asked why this work was being led by Construction Scotland as opposed to core SG.</p>	
5.6	<p>The Minister responded that SOP ownership should sit with everyone. The reality is that the SG doesn't have expertise out-with the working group, hence it's make up. It was noted that these high levels of co-operation were required in doing what is required to keep us all safe, which has been the main thrust of Government work over a number of weeks. Co-operating in this way ensured that the appropriate experience was being drawn upon.</p>	
5.7	<p>Alan Wilson commented that documents he'd seen, included work around domestic services. He advised that he'd be happy to collaborate in getting this out, by cascading to businesses offices.</p>	
5.8	<p>Elliot Robertson added that he was very supportive of the SOP, that it was a good piece of work, presenting a good foundation for an industry ready to restart, review procedures and police these rigorously.</p>	
5.9	The Minister thanked Ron Fraser for all his work.	
6.	Restart Working Group Update	
6.1	<p>Graham Porteous gave an update on the Restart sub-group, which last met on the morning of Friday 8th May. The Key points were:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scottish Construction Industry remains keen for an early return to work in Scotland. • The Chief Nursing Officer, Professor Fiona McQueen was in attendance and provided insight of the medical rationale driving the lockdown and amongst other things explained when considering restart, the requirement for the R number to remain below one. • Professor McQueen also noted understanding that the construction sector is better placed than other industries to cope with the virus. • The impact on mental health of not working was highlighted • The impact on the economy of all but essential sites remaining closed was discussed • The need for a rapid response from Health Officials to restart proposals was noted and actioned • It was noted by Industry that the furlough system urgently needed to be extended to prevent further redundancies • Industry noted that a timeline for a return to work was paramount • The need to ensure industry guidance was agreed by Trade Unions was noted • RIAS are to be kept apprised of discussions of the restart group • An update on the Construction Dashboard was noted • The group were advised that the First Minister was considering all options available to get the industry back to work but any decision will be based on medical evidence. • The 5th meeting which was proposed for the 15th May was cancelled. 	
	The Minister invited questions.	
6.2	Elliot Robertson highlighted that there had been an indicative date proposed of 11 May which had now passed meaning that there was a very real danger of an approaching a 'cliff edge' involving mass redundancies as the furlough scheme was not sufficient to cover wages in their entirety.	
6.3	The Minister assured the group that the government wants to do all it can to ensure jobs are not lost, but that public health was the key driver in setting a date for the industry to restart.	
6.4	Steven Dillon commented that it was good that consideration was being given to getting trade union approval on any guidance, but noted that there was a feeling that some of their contribution has been omitted. Particular reference was made to the assistance that health and safety reps could provide. He added that the trade unions want the industry to restart, but safely.	

6.5	The Minister noted that the co-operation thus far between all parties has been substantial, involving a lot of effort, for which he thanked all involved. He again noted that a safe restart was key.	
7	Data Working Group Update	
7.1	Ron Fraser gave an update on the Data working group. It was stated that this was a 'virtual group'- there had been a realisation that number of trade bodies were regularly asking their members to fill in surveys to assess the 'temperature' in relation to COVID-19. As such there was a drive to try and bring some commonality to this group, with representatives of the various trade bodies looking to see if a 'core' set of questions can be developed to get a better picture of the current status across the industry. He added that the SG's Office of the Chief Economic Adviser had been involved in the development of this question set.	
7.2	Alan Wilson and Grahame Barn both advised that they were in the process of receiving and analysing results of their respective member's surveys.	
7.3	Ian Gilzean advised that RIAS were undertaking their own survey of members and that he would be happy to ensure that this was fed in.	
8	Skills Working group update	
8.1	The Minister asked if there were any comments on the papers circulated regarding the Skills working group updates.	
8.2	Alan Wilson firstly commented that there is a group within the electrical and mechanical engineering sectors called ELC Skills, involving electricians, plumbers and HGV contractors, who he hoped had been involved in the process. He also raised the point that Skills Development Scotland (SDS) were no longer providing seed funding, which meant that training bodies such as SELECT had to draw upon their own funds in relation to their 3500 apprentices in Scotland. He asked if this could be raised with the Minister for Business, Fair work and Skills.	
8.3	The Minister Advised that this would be raised.	Action
8.4	Elliot Robertson asked if the government could look at point 1 of ILG Report on skills, regarding funding interventions / incentives being considered swiftly, to encourage retention of Apprentices.	

8.4	The Minister advised that this would be looked into.	Action
8.5	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue of SDS no longer providing seed funding for training to be raised with the Minister for Business, Fair Work, and Skills • SG to look at point 1 of ILG Report on skills regarding funding interventions / incentives being considered swiftly to encourage retention of Apprentices. 	<p>JB</p> <p>JB/ SM</p>
9.	Open Discussion	
9.1	The Minister proposed that this be combined with the agenda item 'Any Other Business' and invited questions from those present.	
9.2	Bruce Dickson mentioned that he had previously raised possibility of opening sites just to get materials onto them and asked if there had been any progress?	
9.3	The Minister advised that he had asked for this to be looked at in terms of the SOP.	
9.4	Scott Bell advised that he had been in discussion with Ken Gillespie and Ron Fraser on this and that they were looking to add this to phase 1 of the restart plan. Ken Gillespie commented that the authority of the Scottish Government would still be required before any sites could re-open, even if just to receive materials.	
9.5	Steven Dillon commented that a number of the organisations that STUC worked alongside still felt that they were not included in all the discussions, and that they were keen that they were given the chance to input.	
9.6	The Minister advised that due to the large numbers on some of the existing groups it was not always possible for everyone to be involved, however the government was always happy to listen to all views.	
9.7	Scott Bell commented that a number of organisations that Steven Dillon had mentioned are all part of the CICV forum. He asked if Alan Wilson could connect with Unite to make sure that they are clear on representation through that forum. Alan Wilson advised that he was happy to facilitate this.	Action

9.10	Elliot Robertson – raised the issue of main contractors having to carry the financial burden of stoppages. He notes that supplier relief notes had been produced, but as these are guidance rather than law, there could come a point where main contractors were unable to carry this, with risk increasing the longer sites are closed.	
9.11	Sharon Miller advised that she and Scott Bell have been working on this, They had looked at the RICS work on conflict resolution. She acknowledged that this was a known and complex issues which would probably require work through this group and industry bodies to find a solution. The Minister advised that this would be looked into.	Action
9.12	Elliot Robertson asked In relation to SOP, when was it envisaged that this would be closed off and signed off.	
9.13	Ron Fraser advised, that as per his earlier update, feedback had gone out to organisations, and that he was just waiting to hear back in terms of ‘red lines’.	
9.14	Elliot Robertson wished to follow up on ‘fast track procurement’ to help stimulate the economy in terms of work being available	
9.15	The Minister advised that this work was in progress. Scott Bell advised that consideration was being given to ensuring that this was done in a sustainable way so as not to create any extra issues, for example driving unsuitable pricing. Steps would be taken, but these would be in partnership with industry.	
9.16	Elliot Robertson advised that there are a number of frameworks procured on a national basis that can provide best value to SG. Robertson’s were currently producing a paper on this, which they would be happy to share with Scott.	Action
9.18	The Minister advised that procurement routes would be looked into.	Action
9.19	Alan Wilson that his members had seen also had issues regarding contractual disputes, which was disappointing and that he would share this information with the SG if was able to get permission to do so. He also highlighted the importance of the Green agenda, in terms of renewables etc. in terms of the construction Restart.	
9.20	The Minister thanked all the members for their attendance and concluded the meeting.	

9.21	<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alan Wilson to connect with Steven Dillion to provide clarity on groups that have representation through the CICV forum. • Officials to look at the issue of main contractor being left with most of financial liability due to stoppage on sites. • Elliot Robertson to share internal Robertson's Paper on frameworks/ Hubcos to assist recovery with Scott Bell. • Ministers to investigate Trade Union feedback that appears to be missing from Site Operating Procedures (SOP) document. 	<p>AW</p> <p>SM/SB</p> <p>ER</p> <p>SM</p>
10.	Date of Next Meeting	
10.1	The next meeting will be on 02 June 2020 at 09:00. Details will be circulated prior to the meeting,	