

13 October 2009



Chartered
Institute of
Environmental
Health

To all Trustees and Region, Branch & SIG Secretaries

Dear Colleague

CIEH Scotland Region

The front page article in the edition of EHN of 25 September in relation to the creation of a CIEH Scotland Region was unintentionally provocative and has caused extreme concern amongst REHIS members about our intent to whom I personally and on behalf of the CIEH unreservedly apologise.

Our intent is to provide dedicated educational and professional development support through the establishment of a CIEH Scotland Region to meet our members' changing and specific needs. Any other interpretation of our actions is incorrect.

It is important to understand why CIEH Council has acceded to the petition from its members working and living in Scotland and why we are now providing a consistent UK membership democratic structure.

The world of environmental health is changing rapidly and the view of Trustees is that unless the CIEH moves much closer to its members in the provision of educational and technical support and increases visibility of the benefits to be derived from the holistic environmental health approach, as a professional discipline it will not survive as we know it today into the next decade. The skills and competencies of the profession however are extremely relevant and necessary in the modern world despite the administrative and organisational changes in which the profession operates, particularly in public service, making the identity of environmental health increasingly difficult to maintain. Members are also working beyond traditional boundaries and will increasingly require network support facilities.

The CIEH, in recognising that altering landscape, has been engaged upon a comprehensive change programme to reorientate the profession and the services CIEH provides to support it. This programme was originally prompted following discussions with a number of UK government departments who identified a need to demonstrate increasing specialist knowledge and application. In rising to that challenge we reviewed and fundamentally changed our educational structures.

Our current qualification and professional development routes have as a result adapted current academic thinking and professional development mechanisms. This was done with our University networks through regular meetings. As a result CIEH qualification curricula are now quite different to the purely knowledge based courses previously in place and we believe with the competency frameworks incorporated into our thinking it addresses more appropriately the needs of the future environmental health practitioner and the varying employment they will experience.

At the same time we have been working with the Faculty of Public Health on the defined register for public health practitioners; LBRO, LACORS and the Trading Standards Institute on the skills and competencies required by local authority regulators; the Health and Safety Executive on the RDNA tool for health and safety enforcement personnel which has in turn, generated a project with the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health on defining the competencies for health and safety consultants amongst whom we have many members working in the private sector.

We recognised that the services that local authorities have traditionally provided, upon which our original member networks and the essence of the delivery of environmental health were founded, were being changed by joint appointments, cabinet structures, competency based services and government agency provision. Given the changes that will be brought about through reduced public sector funding the holistic approach to risk management and health gain that we espouse could be undermined. Such administrative arrangements have little regard for traditional professional qualifications or membership cliques and both now and in the future it is the proven and up to date skills and competencies of the professional that will be in demand.

Having altered our educational base in 2006 and in recognising employment changes, we adjusted our member support and administrative structures to focus on regional government boundaries; to change the process by which students could be facilitated to qualify and; empowered our regions to cater for the services and needs of individual members, irrespective of their employment base, to reinforce their educational and competency development more effectively throughout their careers.

We have spent three years getting that organised and in creating regions that catered for all our members and not just those who worked in the local government sector, in readiness for the support mechanisms needed for the future profession to play its rightful role in protecting public health.

As an organisation we have continuously sought to innovate, often against significant opposition, recognising the pace of change and the needs of members in their public health role and we are continuing to invest heavily in educational and professional member support for their future.

As part of the organisational change process throughout 2008 and 2009 we have engaged with members at regional events and have listened to what our members require from the CIEH. One result of that is an extensive organisational review that is currently underway which will re-orientate our HQ structures, mechanisms and governance arrangements to deliver to those requirements. It recognises that our members work in an increasing variety of roles and occupations and that while professional support and services can be provided remotely, such remote support cannot entirely deliver what members will require in terms of peer to peer contact and networking opportunities dedicated to our new competency led educational requirements.

We have noted that the pressures for change is not readily apparent through the whole international environmental health community and it is certainly not our wish to force change in others where change is not required but that does mean that our members will increasingly demand support from the CIEH if they cannot access it through kindred routes as they may have done in the past.

Our mission, recently reaffirmed is in "leading, inspiring and delivering a safe clean and healthy world". Our agendas are specifically designed to work to achieve that in a variety of different ways through our networks promoting environmental health.

In 2006, we met with CIEH members in Scotland, we met with them again in June this year and we asked, as we have done with all members, what they wanted the CIEH to provide to help them in their professional journey, given the current and future landscape. Their response was; not to be regarded as overseas members but to be treated with equivalence in terms of other members in the UK; to have the ability to network with CIEH colleagues working in Scotland through a formalised CIEH organ; to have the ability to design and attend appropriate workshops and training events that were specifically aligned to our new educational and competency based approach.

A petition from members was subsequently received and they made it perfectly clear that the establishment of an administrative region in Scotland was to focus on the needs of CIEH members, such a group would not be seeking to compete with REHIS for membership or to engage with policy makers or politicians. We believe that there is no threat to REHIS or any other membership body operating in Scotland by our actions, which are solely designed to provide CIEH members with the dedicated support they require and have asked for.

The principle question Council considered was one of equality of access to services by members and given what I have described above, they agreed that such services should be provided and agreed administrative arrangements to facilitate that happening. That process is now in train and a CIEH administrative region has been established. We are in the process of providing support to that region through elected members of a management board. It will be for them to determine how they will utilise CIEH resources to support members resident in Scotland, but it will also give them a voice on CIEH Council.

None of this is designed to upset REHIS or their members despite the reaction to the article, or to have a detrimental effect on them. The CIEH is providing services for its members exclusively. We do not intend to engage with government in Scotland or provide an alternative voice. We are not intending to go on a recruitment drive or attract members away from REHIS and despite the strength of feeling generated by our actions we wish to continue to work with REHIS and the whole international environmental health community in the way we have always done.

The question of how does our decision affect the role of REHIS in the IFEH. Article 3 of the ruling statutes governs membership and restricts membership to only one organisation from each country, it does however allow the IFEH Council to apply its discretion. The CIEH has no intention of damaging or usurping the valuable role that REHIS plays within the UK or Internationally through IFEH. If it is required, the CIEH will support the application of IFEH discretion through a resolution recognizing the continued contribution of both the CIEH and REHIS within the UK as full members. We believe that our actions to provide equality to our members within the United Kingdom, is entirely consistent with our aims and objectives and of those of the IFEH and with other membership bodies and should not in any way interfere with the international community of environmental health that has been established with REHIS as a founding partner.

Finally and with reference to the EHN article. REHIS were made aware that the creation of a CIEH Scotland Region was a possibility in June this year. Regrettably that was met by a

clear objection by the REHIS management Board. Despite our long standing relationship and shared interests no organisation has to right to interfere with those of another organisation and the question of equality overruled any external objection or reaction in the minds of Council members. I approved the EHN article and the words attributed to me stressing the long standing relationship with REHIS and the fact that the CIEH will always regard REHIS as strategic partners and kindred spirits in the advancement of Environmental health. The article as some have incorrectly suggested, does not imply full consultation with REHIS as there was nothing to consult on, I was fully aware of the REHIS position. I clearly stated that I had written to REHIS to advise that we were going to offer services through a regional structure. The use of the editorial device, aimed entirely at CIEH members to illustrate that we do act on what our members say, can and has been interpreted as being provocative for which I have unreservedly apologised as it was not meant or intended to be interpreted in the way it has been.

To summarise and conclude, the CIEH has created a Scotland region. The purpose is to cater for the specific and changing educational needs of existing and future CIEH members resident in Scotland. It is not the purpose to usurp or compete with the valuable role that REHIS plays in the UK or in the international community. This development is part of a much broader strategy to realign the educational services and support the CIEH provides to our members wherever they work with the aim of better supporting their continued contribution to improvements in public health. It is also part of the realignment of the CIEH to realise the changing face of environmental health delivery and to achieve our mission through new thinking and new interventions. I regret the way the announcement has been interpreted by REHIS and its members and that it has given rise to unnecessary concern. I have asked the editor of EHN to not publish inflammatory letters that we have received and we will be responding in full to any formal correspondence from REHIS and to individuals as and when received.

I trust this lengthy letter provides the background to the decisions taken and the reasons behind the establishment of the Scotland region by the CIEH.

Yours sincerely



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