



NEWSLETTER

International Federation of Environmental Health

January 2009 Edition

Happy New Year/ Bonne Annee/ Is-Sena t- Tajba/ Feliz Ano – Nuevo to all Members of the IFEH

On behalf of the Council and the Board of the Federation may I take this opportunity to wish all IFEH members around the world a Happy and Prosperous New Year. Much of what environmental health professionals do on a day to day basis is, unfortunately, taken for granted so I hope that 2009 will bring you and your colleagues much success, together with proper recognition by your government, as you go forward in the fight to improve public health standards in your country.

News from Regional Groups

The European Federation of Environmental Health (EFEH) met in St Julians, Malta on Saturday and Sunday, 25/26 October, 2008, at the invitation of the Malta Association of Environmental Health Officers (MAEHO). The meeting was attended by representatives from Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta and Sweden. The new Chairman of the group is Dolerita Mifsud and the Secretary is Hadrian Bonello, both representing the MAEHO. The next meeting of this group is due to take place on the 25/26 April 2009 in Lithuania.

Eric Foskett Award

The Eric Foskett Award for 2008 was presented to John Stirling, the retiring Editor of the magazine Environment and Health International, by the IFEH President during the recent Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland Annual Awards Ceremony held in Edinburgh at the end of November 2008. John was the first IFEH Editor and, since 1998, has successfully produced two issues every year. The ceremony was attended by the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland and members of the Scottish Parliament. As previously reported John hands over to Hadrian Bonello whose first edition will be published in the spring of 2009.

Association of Public Health Inspectors – Cyprus

At the end of November 2008 the Association of Public Health Inspectors Cyprus (APHIC) held their 20th Anniversary Conference at the Columbia Beach Hotel, Pissouri, Limassol.

The APHIC was formed in 1988 with the purpose of safeguarding public and environmental hygiene, creating liaisons and cooperating with other Associations around the world. The Association has been twinned with the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) since February 2006. Mr George Georgallas, Head of Health Services and President of the APHIC, is an Honorary Vice President of REHIS.

The Conference was attended by over 100 delegates from business and government, as well as from the environmental health and veterinary professions. Presentations included papers on Allergenic Substances in Foodstuffs, Nutrition and Health Claims, Sampling Plans for Mycotoxins and Tobacco Control. Cyprus is about to set up a Food Standards Agency and two papers were presented by colleagues from Ireland on how food control is carried out in that country.

The Conference ended with the APHIC Gala Dinner that was attended by over 200 guests including the Minister of Health, Dr Christos Patsalides and Dr Androulla Agrotou, Director of Medical and Public Health Services.

Environmental Health Officers' Association of Ireland

The 9th October 2008 was an important milestone in the history of Environmental Health Officers' Association of Ireland (EHOA). That day saw the opening of the EHOA's new office in Bray, County Wicklow, Ireland. The building was opened by Liz McManus TD, a local Bray politician. Mr Gerry Heraghty FEHOA, who was the longest serving Chairman of the EHOA and after whom the office is named also took part in the opening ceremony. Many IFEH members will know Gerry from way back...a good colleague and friend.



Liz McManus TD and Gerry Heraghty

The Officer Board and Central Council of the EHOA were joined by many friends and colleagues from near and far to celebrate the opening of Heraghty House. Members of the EHOA, REHIS, Northern Ireland Centre of the CIEH, the Office of Tobacco Control, the Health Service Executive, the Food Safety Authority, Ash Ireland, the Food Safety Promotion Board and the National Hygiene Partnership were present at the opening.

The official opening of Heraghty House was the culmination of a number of years of discussions and property viewings which ended with the successful purchase of 4 Carlton Terrace, Novara Avenue, Bray in 2006. Since then the procedure of going through planning permission, major renovations, refurbishments, fire proofing and redecoration has been overseen by the EHOA's Project Manager, Ms Deirdre Fitzsimons.

Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland

The Annual General Meeting of the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland took place on Thursday 20th November when Colin Wallace took over from Robert Howe as President. The Senior Vice President is Rod House and the Junior Vice President is Alistair Thomson. Martin Henry remains as Honorary Treasurer of REHIS. A number of other changes took place on the Institute's Council as a result of the retirement of Mike Halls, John Stirling, and John Frater. The REHIS representatives to the IFEH are Bernard Forteach, John Beveridge, and Colin Wallace.

Uniquely Singapore

The next Council meeting and AGM of the IFEH will be held in Singapore on the 18 and 19 July 2009. Our colleagues in the Society of Environmental Health - Singapore are arranging an interesting programme to complement the Federation meetings, and we hope that there will be a large turnout from member organisations. If you intend travelling to Singapore do try to spend a few days sightseeing in this truly magnificent city. For more information go to www.visitsingapore.com.

Land of the Midnight Sun

Some comments from Sweden on current issues in the Environment and Health Protection sector by Kia Regner, IFEH PRO.

Climate issues are, of course, high on the agenda and the Climate conference in Poznan, Poland, has been well covered in the media. There is a political debate about a new direction in Sweden's (and some other countries) approach to combat climate change. A new and intensified effort is put on supporting third world countries to develop their technology instead of putting more stress on domestic activities. However, many local authorities have very ambitious programs to adapt their own activities to a more climate friendly level.

The financial crisis in the world has certainly also hit Sweden and as always when money is scarce, attention is first given to short-term basic needs. Many feel that environmental issues may soon find themselves seriously downgraded while others debate that this is a golden opportunity to develop new technologies and support the development of new and environmentally sound infrastructure. Time will tell as always. One can only wish that our own car makers had taken steps a long time ago.

In the wake of the financial crisis, of course, there are serious budget cuts in the public sector and it might well be that environmental health work will have to stand back again. The rather positive position we have had for some years now seems rather shaky.

Christmas with all its emphasis on food and drink has put some extra focus on the food manufacturers and their (sometimes) manipulation of 'traditional' food with different additives not often forbidden but still unnecessary and 'hidden' under the secure headings of old fashioned or traditional or homemade to make us feel safe and sound.

Your colleagues from YMH in Sweden wish you a Happy New Year.



Environmental Health Australia

The EHA National Conference will be held from 11-13 November 2009 and it is also planned to conduct the National Environmental Health Educators' Forum on the day before the Conference, writes Jim Smith, National President. This will provide an opportunity to examine further the future directions of environmental health education both within the local and international contexts. Importantly, with acute work force shortages there is an opportunity to examine and implement the EHA Mentorship Scheme to assist our graduates make the transition from university to practitioner.

The National Conference is being organised by our Tasmanian Branch and will be held in the fair and delightful City of Hobart. Already the organizers have been in contact with our Canadian colleagues so we can promote the 2010 International Congress in Vancouver. Apparently we may receive a hockey stick to be given away during the Congress promotion at our Conference. All we will need is the ice and given climate change we might be waiting some time! There are unsubstantiated rumours that there have been requests for other promotional material such as Moosehead beer!

EHA has also embarked on a workforce project funded by the Queensland Government that will look at the development of a Local Government Environmental Health Workforce Resource for the Management of Organizational Risk. This project has come about because of some uninformed environmental health employment decisions being made by some local authorities. The consultants have been appointed and the project will be completed by the end of the financial year.

Funding has also been received for EHA to develop a Food Act Legal Management Course. This course is nationally accredited i.e. participants are required to meet specific learning outcomes and undergo appropriate assessment, and it will be delivered for the first time in February 2009. It is planned to deliver the course regularly after an evaluation has been conducted. Other training opportunities are under discussion and 2009 promises to be busy and productive.

Fishing for Litter

A project to clean up the seas around Scotland over the next three years was launched earlier this month. Fishing for Litter aims to clear the sea of litter. Rubbish that is trawled up as part of normal fishing activities is disposed of on land, and this is achieved by providing large hardwearing bags to the boats so the waste can be easily collected and deposited on the quayside. Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead highlighted the excellent work KIMO UK (Local Authorities International Environmental Organisation) and Scottish fishermen are undertaking to clean up the seas by launching the new Fishing for Litter 2008 project. Scotland's fishermen, who take part in the project voluntarily, are already reporting the benefits of fishing in cleaner seas having removed 117 tonnes of litter from the seabed. The successful project has been operating in a network of 15 harbours in different parts of Scotland allowing the 110 registered fishing vessels to land and collect new bags since 2005. The project benefits both the environment and the fishing industry. Litter causes problems to wildlife such as seabirds, through entanglement and swallowing and marine debris can damage fishing gear and catches. Further information on this project can be found on the Scottish Government's website www.scotland.gov.uk/News/2008/12/10110723

Finally the next issue will be published in April 2009. If I could have any news from your organisation by the first week in March that would be appreciated. My thanks go to Tom Bell, Jim Smith, Kia Regner, Jennifer Shorten, Andrew Forteath and Henning Hansen who have assisted in the production of this issue.

If you wish to feature any news from your organisation in the next IFEH Newsletter, please contact: Bernard Forteath, President, Email: president@ifeh.org