

Scottish Affairs Committee Health and Safety inquiry

1. Scottish Chambers of Commerce are pleased to have the opportunity to feed into the Scottish Affairs committee's inquiry into Health and Safety in Scotland. Below, we present some brief comments on the issues that the inquiry addresses, but we look forward to having the opportunity to discuss these in more detail with committee members.
2. We are pleased that the Committee has already been in contact with Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce regarding the specific health and safety issues faced by the oil and gas industry. We welcome the Committee's recognition that different industries have different health and safety priorities and carry different levels of risk. This reflects the key recommendation of the British Chambers of Commerce Health and Safety report of May 2011, which called on behalf of Chambers across the UK for proportionate, industry-specific health and safety regulation.
3. The Scottish Chambers of Commerce are specifically concerned that low-risk businesses are not burdened with excessive costs due to fear of falling foul of health and safety legislation if they do not comply even with regulations that may be disproportionate or irrelevant to their business.
4. The different agencies responsible for implementing business regulation, including health and safety legislation, should ensure that their reporting systems are coordinated and simplified in order to reduce the costs to businesses and other organisations that must comply.
5. Health and safety regulation does impose significant costs on business. However, the BCC's report found that the perception of the burdens of health and safety regulation often outstripped the actual costs. This perception gap poses a particular barrier to small low risk firms to taking on their first employee. Encouraging such employment is a priority policy for both the Scottish Government and opposition parties in the Scottish Parliament; information addressing misperceptions about the burdens of health and safety regulation must improve in order to break down this barrier to job creation in Scotland.

6. The comments above represent a summary of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce's main concerns about the issues the Scottish Affairs Committee's inquiry is addressing. I hope that these comments are helpful in moving the Committee's inquiry forward. Please do get in touch if we can be of any further assistance at all.

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