

SEC *fo*CUS

GROUP

Voice of the Specialist Engineering Contractor

*The members of the
SEC Group are:*

Association of
Plumbing and Heating
Contractors

British Constructional
Steelwork Association

Electrical Contractors'
Association

Heating and Ventilating
Contractors'
Association

Lift and Escalator
Industry Association

SELECT

SEC GROUP PRIORITIES IN 2004

Whilst SEC Group is involved in wide-ranging issues concerning the specialist-engineering sector; it is necessary to prioritise the workload. To that end the following activities represent SEC Group's priorities for the immediate future. These priorities are, of course, always under review.

SECURITY OF PAYMENT

- Phasing out Retentions in Public Sector
- Continue pressure on Treasury/Office of Government Commerce to phase out retentions on government projects;
- Produce report on survey of local authority retention practices;
- Campaign for all public sector contracts to provide for:
 - (i) **Ring-fencing of retentions**
 - (ii) **Recovery of retentions by supply chain on satisfactory completion of work.**
- Widening of campaign to embrace more industry organisations.

Insolvency Protection

- Parliamentary campaign (eg Early Day Motion) to highlight impact of construction insolvencies and to advocate greater protection for SMEs.
- To liaise with House of Commons Trade & Industry Committee on problems experienced by SMEs following upstream insolvencies;
- Continue consultation with DTI for funding for study on insolvency law and practice in construction (as recommended in 'Accelerating Change' Report);
- Seek alternative payment mechanisms for public sector projects (e.g. project bank accounts); Develop standard letter (endorsed by SEC Group and other parties) for members – other than LEIA and BCSA – to use when bidding or quoting for work. The letter will seek confirmation that arrangements are in place to protect retentions from insolvencies upstream.



Improving Payment Practices

- Payment should commence with start of work; not with start of work on site.
- Campaign for all public sector bodies to insist that a criterion in selection of first line contractors is the previous payment record of the contractor;
- Monitoring the implementation of the Better Regulation Taskforce's recommendations on better payment practices for the supply chain (Treasury has accepted the recommendations);
- Produce SEC Group report on review of the Construction Act for the Construction Minister.

IMPROVING PROCUREMENT PRACTICES

- Consult with industry adviser in Prime Minister's Policy Directorate;
- Monitoring of implementation of Better Regulation Taskforce's recommendations to improve SME access to public sector contracts;
- Promote project team integration particularly through Strategic Forum for Construction:
- Regional seminars on project team integration;
- Continue close consultation with Office of Deputy Prime Minister on SEC Group Report on 'Construction Procurement – is Local Government applying Best Value?' and recommendations therein;
- Seek House of Commons Local Government Select Committee inquiry into above report;
- Promote rationalisation of statutory and quasi-statutory pre-qualification requirements and vetting procedures.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Take forward SEC Group Health and Safety Strategy;
- Roll out SEC Group Site Safety Certificate;
- Develop health and safety standard for qualification schemes;
- Promote changes to CDM Regulations that:
- Encourage early appointment of members (as part of an integrated team) to influence management of health and safety risks, and
- To endorse (through the Approved Code of Practice) use of reputable qualification schemes.

COMMUNICATION

- Updating and development of SEC Group website (www.secgroup.org.uk);
- Quarterly publication of Parliamentary Newsletter;
- Regular publication of Focus and Briefing;
- Press briefings;
- On-going contact with Opposition spokesmen for industry matters and dialogue with MPs having interests in construction, engineering, SMEs and allied matters.

For further information on all aspects of SEC Group and its activities contact:

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