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FOD Deputy Director

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Date: 31st March 2023

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter dated 17th February to Sarah Albon Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and your Regulation 28 report to prevent further deaths following the inquest touching on the death of Jamie Paul Woods.

I have been asked to respond as I lead the operational teams which undertake interventions and investigations on farms in South-West England.

As you have identified the panels in this instance were not installed in accordance with the recommended fixings and an alternate arrangement was used to attach the panels a one end. The panels had provided a walling solution (to segregate the collecting yard from the storage area of the barn) for a considerable period and it appears that any deterioration in the structural integrity of any fixings and/or any instability in the wall was not obvious or recognised by the farm partnership or any other party.

The circumstances associated with this instance appear to be an isolated bespoke fabricated solution which in the experience of the HSE is not replicated widely within agricultural buildings. Traditionally concrete panels are a fixed solution and not moved or routinely repurposed. The HSE enquires looked at the wider use of the pre-cast panels on the farm which were found to be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Where installed correctly concrete panels have been shown to have a considerable longevity. There is no history indicating any concern as to the integrity and structural stability of concrete pre-cast components used as a walling solution where they have been installed with the manufacturer's prescribed fixings and attached firmly to steel uprights. The panels however can

only be loaded on one side as their integrity and strength is provided by load on the panels being transferred to the steel structure rather than relying on the tensile strength of the fixings.

The HSE recognises the risks associated with buildings and promote this through guidance and working with wider industry stakeholders. The current guidance on the HSE web pages and through "gov.uk" extends to building work and maintenance that farmers may undertake themselves and includes managing contractors who undertake building work (including contractor selection/planning the work). Although pre-cast panels are not specifically referenced it includes the need to keep buildings in good repair and offers guidance on assessing and managing the risks on farms and sourcing competent advice.

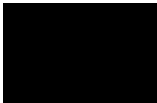
The HSE engages with a wide range of industry stakeholder and intermediaries to promulgate key messages and increase the awareness of the risks to health and safety in Agriculture. One part of this work is the distribution of timely messages following incidents. In February 2021 the HSE's national agriculture team promoted information relating to building integrity through the Farm Safety Partnership (FSP*) chairs and Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC**) members. This included the need to keep farm buildings in a safe condition and properly maintained and the importance of periodic structural checks The FSPs have a rolling programme of activities and building maintenance and work at height is regularly promoted. HSE will continue to look for opportunities to help farmers manage and control the risks on their premises, including those arising from building integrity.

HSE uses a blend of health and safety interventions in agriculture to tackle the high injury rates. For example, the published HSE workplan includes the targeted inspection of farms including those with beef and dairy cattle in conjunction with HSE funded training to help farms prepare for the inspection. This covers key topics including risk assessment, building maintenance, work at height and the risks from falling objects.

HSE's work in the agriculture sector is regularly reviewed to reflect emerging issues and concerns in response to learning and recommendations following incidents. We update guidance where necessary and use briefings update industry and HSE inspectors. Further to your report we are exploring how we can promote the key aspects with the FSPs and AIAC.

I hope that this response provides you with the necessary assurance that the HSE recognises the risks associated with farming activities, strives to prevent further ill health and injury, and will take proportionate action following your recommendation.

Yours faithfully



FOD Unit 9- Head of Operations HSE Bristol

***FSP:** The aim of each Farm Safety Partnership (one in each home nation) is to increase awareness of farm safety and to reduce work related fatalities and injuries on farms. The FSPs are made up of key stakeholders with an interest in farm safety and they use their communications and memberships to get timely information and farmer focussed messages to those working in agriculture.

****AIAC:** HSE's Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee works to better understand and identify the risks to the health and safety of farmers and farm workers. The AIAC membership includes the HSE, National Farmers Union, National Association of Agricultural Contractors, Unite the Union, the Institution of Occupational Safety & Health, LANTRA (leading awarding body for land-based industry training in GB), National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, and Land based colleges aspiring to excellence (Landex)