

Fao Head of Service
Highway Management
All English Local Highway Authorities

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Dear Head of Service,

Future arrangements for accreditation, QA and Audit of SCANNER survey vehicles

I am writing to inform you of changes in the arrangements for the accreditation, QA and Audit of automated road condition survey vehicles to the SCANNER specification. As a result of these changes your authority will have to decide how to commission the quality auditing necessary to ensure that your condition surveys meet the requirements of the SCANNER specification.

All SCANNER surveys are required to be carried out in compliance with an Accredited and Audited regime, defined in the SCANNER specification. As you will be aware, the Department for Transport has provided funding of over £1m previously in arranging a contract with TRL to act as Auditor on behalf of local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland. This contract supported the provision of an accreditation service for new vehicles and an annual re-accreditation service for accredited vehicles. The Department's funding provided the cost of setting up the service and identifying suitable test sites, with survey contractors paying TRL to use these services and recovering their costs through their commercial survey rates. This letter is to inform you that the contract supporting the provision of these accreditation services has now ended.

The Department is aware that TRL are continuing to offer a fully commercial independent accreditation service to the survey contractors, which the current accredited survey contractors have agreed to use. Therefore vehicles will continue to be accredited to the current SCANNER specification.

The DfT contract also funded the provision of an Independent Auditor (TRL) in order to verify that the quality assurance requirements of SCANNER are being met. TRL ensured that contractors were meeting these requirements by checking on a sample basis. TRL also carried out detailed investigations of any technical issues they identified or that were brought to their attention by local authorities, by the survey

contractors, or by the Department. The contract supporting the provision of these Audit services has also ended

To ensure that the Auditing of SCANNER data continues to be applied, the SCANNER User Guide and Specification has been revised to make it clear that the audit is a requirement for the collection of valid SCANNER, and that it is the responsibility of the client commissioning the surveys (i.e. the local authority) to commission an Independent Auditor to undertake the audit on their behalf. It also states that, where a client does not choose to commission an Independent Auditor, the survey contractor must commission these services on behalf of the client, and include the costs within their commercial fee rates.

The SCANNER User Guide and Specification has also been amended to give guidance on the requirements for the Independent Auditor, to inform any client that decides to commission the service separately from the SCANNER survey contract. The new SCANNER specification was published on the Pavement Condition Information Systems (PCIS) website (www.pcis.org.uk) in April 2011.

Unless local authorities specify in their requests for tenders that they will be commissioning their own Independent Audit, survey contractors bidding for any new SCANNER survey contracts will include the audit costs in their response to any tenders for surveys issued after April 2011. Where local authorities have commissioned multi-year contracts, the survey contractors will need to increase their rates to meet these additional costs, and will be contacting local authorities to agree how this increase should be accommodated. This was foreseen in the current SCANNER User Guide and Specification, which states:

“...there may be further changes to the Survey Specification in future years. Therefore some flexibility should be built into tendering and contractual arrangements, where contracts cover more than one year’s survey and/or more than one class of road...”

(Volume 2, Chapter 2 Procurement, paragraph 2.1.6)

The cost of providing the audit service on a sample basis, including the technical investigations, has been less than £1 per km surveyed in recent years. Therefore the additional cost of Independent QA and audit provided by a survey contractor on a sample basis is likely to be between 2% to 5% of the current cost of surveys. However, the cost of providing the service on an individual basis to a local authority might be significantly greater, should an authority select this option.

To provide continuity in service, you may wish to note that TRL has offered to set up a fully commercial independent service to enable local authorities and accredited survey contractors to commission QA and Auditing. However, the Department is in no way endorsing the provision of the services by TRL and it will be for your local authority to decide.

In previous years, the National Indicator figures have been submitted through DCLG’s Hub. As this no longer exists, the figures will now need to be provided directly to DfT. To make it as simple as possible, Transport Statistics will add two extra boxes (one for Principal roads and one for Non principal classified roads) to the

web forms which are used for the Carriageway Work Done and Skidding Resistance returns. These surveys will be sent out in September or October as they have been in recent years requesting 2010/11 data.

If you have any queries about this, please contact Stephen Reynolds (stephen.reynolds@dft.gsi.gov.uk). Similarly, if you are unsure if your authority has been receiving these survey forms, please contact Stephen who will ensure that we use the correct name and email address.

Yours sincerely,

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