

Minutes of UKRLG held on 9 July 2020 held via Microsoft Teams

Stephen Fidler	Department for Transport
Lila Tachtsi	Highways England
Gary Kemp	Department for Transport
Mark Kemp	Hertfordshire County Council representing the UK Network Management Board
Hugh Gillies	Transport Scotland
Mark Stevens	Suffolk County Council representing ADEPT
Garry Sterritt	Transport for London, UK Asset Management Board
Darren Thomas	Pembrokeshire representing CSS Wales
Andy Falley	Welsh Government
David Denner	Welsh Government, representing UK Lighting and Technology Board
James Bailey	Staffordshire Council representing UK Road Board
Conor Loughrey	Department for Infrastructure, Northern Ireland
John Lamb	LGTAG

1) Welcome, introduction and apologies

Apologies were recorded for Liz Kirkham. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2) Minutes and Actions from last meeting ([link here](#))

Justin Ward said that Liz Kirkham had proposed including BOF Grand Challenges as part of Away Day in mid-late September.

Action: Justin Ward and Stephen Fidler and Board Chairs to develop the programme and date for the event

3) e-Scooters and highway defects

Garry Sterritt raised a discussion point: with trials imminent he was interested to know what others are doing in terms of reviewing their highway safety inspection/defect guidance. Garry said that e-scooters are potentially going to become a large component of the transport network; noting that - due to wheel size, air pressure, and speed - this has resulted in TfL considering their defect levels, inspection levels and risk-based approach in light of the new vehicles coming in.

Mark Stevens said that he has pulled together a first draft of an ADEPT policy position for e-scooters. Mark Stevens said that, with the diameter of the wheel on e-scooters being far smaller than a bike, it would mean a greater maintenance focus on the inner metre to metre and a half of road surfaces. There were issues for how to manage this, particularly regarding the inspection/maintenance processes and additional funding needs irrespective of whether there was an emphasis on mandatory cycle lanes, possibly in conjunction with advisory ones. James Bailey said that ADEPT live labs involved trials of e-scooters and noted that the footways and cycleways group led by David Kinsey could be a useful focus for UKRLG to consider e-scooters and highways maintenance.

Action: Mark Stevens to share draft ADEPT document on e-scooters with James Bailey for sharing with the David Kinsey as Chair Footways & Cycleways Group

Mark Stevens said the document he had developed was about setting up a range of policy positions for e-scooters for ADEPT. John Lamb said that Dave Kinsey is chairing a LGTAG group on the issues and said that UKRLG can be used as a binding group on this. John added that would be very helpful to ensure to bring on board Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as, for example, the focus on Active Travel was very strong in Wales. Conor Loughrey and Andy Falley noted that e-scooters had not become a significant issue yet in Northern Ireland and Wales.

Stephen Fidler said he was interested in using the pilots to evaluate the evidence base. Mark Stevens said that ADEPT is also developing a policy position on Active Travel. Mark added that e-scooters could be part of a solution for home-to-school travel and also for inter-modal travel (i.e. you can take an e-scooter on a train fairly easily).

Mark Kemp noted that the place and movement function was important and the process undertaken in this area could be useful. Mark Kemp noted that the Rees Jeffrey Fund had shown an interest in place and movement function so there could be benefit in engaging with them also.

Action: Two-page document for list of maintenance impacts (for inspection and maintenance) that would be used to advise that DfT could use as part of the monitoring of the e-scooters pilots – involving Mark Stevens, James Bailey and David Kinsey and Garry Sterritt – by end July – circulate via UKRLG for comment and sign-off by UK Roads Board

Garry Sterritt said that in London there will be trials in September. Garry said that UKRLG could issue a two-page guidance document by end of July noting that authorities need to consider the following when trials are being operated. Garry said that TfL said that a number of workshops have been held in advance of the trials – e.g. should a defect bigger than 15mm depth need to be addressed? A lot of authorities are undertaking e-scooter trials so there could be benefit in undertaking this. Mark Kemp said that there was a parallel with the security guidance and the importance for an audit process to underpin this.

4) Security Guidance

Mark Kemp noted that the guidance was to discharge action from London Bridge and Borough Market coroners' report.

Mark Kemp noted that these documents are advice so the question is how to disseminate the guidance. The Reading incident was something that could not have been designed out. Mark Kemp said that as lockdown is eased then authorities need to be cognisant of risks (with tables and chairs out on the highways).

The other document CPNI advice for RLG is potential guidance that could be shared/used by UKRLG in light of security/Covid-19.

Action: Publish document on UKRLG website - Justin Ward and Mark Kemp

Action: DfT and Devolved Administrations to draft letter to support sharing of guidance

5) Approval of winter guidance - James Bailey - this has been agreed via email, but was at the meeting for final approval.

Action: Justin Ward to inform NWRSG that the Guidance was approved

6) Updates from Board chairs (minutes online for reference - [link here](#))

UK Roads Board – James Bailey noted a couple of points highlighting the project on SCANNER unclassified road network and the VOCAL roads group that has been developed is progressing well and fits well with the DfT concept of a single data set. The NWSRG are looking at a more cost-effective method for support but this did highlight the wider issues of pressures on local authorities. The documents produced do require maintenance so that is a factor. James Bailey noted that the support to sub-groups should be factored into the Away Day alongside maintenance.

Action: Wider funding support, maintenance and update of guidance and UKRLG wide support for Boards and Sub-Groups to be added to Away Day Agenda

UK Lighting & Technology Board – David Denner said the last meeting was well attended with a focus on Covid-19. Safety issues now on HEA website that is represented on the Board. The State of the Nation (on LED lighting uptake) is moving slower than expected and this has been a frustration for the project. Garry Sterritt said that SALIX had a request for the payment of the first invoice and David Denner said that payment was likely to be made and would confirm with Garry.

Action: David Denner to check progress milestones for the State of the Nation research report by SALIX

David Denner said the update to the Management of Electrical Equipment was now more than 10 years' old and needed either updated or retracted. Stephen Fidler asked if there was any support required for the State of the Nation report in terms of securing data. Gary Kemp said that he had received a request from Lindsay McGregor to write to all the electricity suppliers that was undertaken two weeks' ago.

Action: DfT to work with David Denner and Lindsay McGregor to work to support the State of Nation (Lighting) research in terms of efforts to secure the data from electricity suppliers

UK Network Management Board – Mark Kemp provided an update on the last meeting noting that social distancing and transport networks was a focus. The other aspect was the security focus for the work. The next meeting will focus on decarbonisation of transport. Mark Kemp said he was pleased to hear the announcement from Grant Shapps on taking forward Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act.

- Parapet document – Network Rail – finalising this
- Working on BICS qualification and looking at the basic system – whether the qualification is what we are looking at
- BOF Grand Challenges – will be delayed – possible for UKRLG Grand Challenges stimulus for how UKRLG work – possibly in September for remote – Liz happy to lead this element for workshop
- SAVI – workshop with suppliers – will mention that Liz and Keith Harwood will run a session on this

Mark Kemp highlighted the issue of excessive charges from the Canal & River Trust to highway authorities for undertaking works.

Action: Liz Kirkham to take noted of concerns around the charges for the Canal & River Trust for highway authorities

UK Asset Management Board – Garry Sterritt said that TRL was due to update on the economic evaluation toolkit. The wider piece on the State of the Nation review and information collated on the backlog. Garry asked if there was an opportunity for sharing this externally, at least with those who had provided information. The report for year one had been submitted to DfT and the statisticians are undertaking a review on this.

Wider resilience review

John Lamb said that UKRLG is aware of the Resilience commissioned by the Department of Transport back in 2018. The review considered directly the severe weather of 2015 -2018. John said there are over 20 areas noted for specific attention – many of which DfT are now supporting roll action in advance of formal report publication. The report recommendations have been sense checked against the 2019 / 20 flooding and there are no notable changes but some useful contemporary examples.

The final report was peer reviewed by a group identified by DfT to provide high 'check and challenge' – this then led to a formal beta test of the resilience course in January. The course has been delayed but we will be starting to warm up councils to dates for late 2020 / 2021 albeit staying fleet of foot in light of any second wave.

COVID-19 has shown that across the sector there have been some very resilient highways authorities, some that have been fragile and some anti-fragile and very innovative. Some councils stopped undertaking highway works for the entire Q1 of the year and this is likely to have impacts that need to be understood; both for the course in terms of how resilient we are and where we need to support teams. Some form of 'de-brief' is always required after a major incident and we do need to understand how the sector might facilitate this to provide some factual insight as well as provide a cathartic exercise as we move back to 'near normal' activities.

To further note: only a section of UKRLG have seen the report (including devolved assemblies), the process to get the report formal release is less relevant than acting on the key findings – ie the Resilience Course - but we do need to consider the formal publication, and COVID-19 impacts on resilient highways is currently being considered against the report recommendations

Action: John Lamb to share draft Resilience Review document with UKRLG

7) Research Programme

Justin Ward said that Steve Berry had confirmed funding for research that DfT is not in a position to fund any new research for this financial year. Justin Ward added that DfT will consider research as part of the Spending Review. James Bailey said that he had thought that it had previously been agreed to top-slice funding for research; adding that there was some risk that the UKRLG could lose purpose and drive without the support for research going forward.

Hugh Gillies added that in Scotland the work now is a balance of Covid response and back to business-as-usual. David Denner said that the business-as-usual was important – i.e. refreshing the Codes of Practice, for example DMRB has been updated so we need to link through to that. The Group agreed that there is a need to return to business-as-usual and get the UKRLG research back on track in the future. The Group think that the research programme should continue going forward as this will help with addressing business-as-usual and also emerging issues around Covid-19.

8) PIARC Special projects Lila Tachtsi said that the UK had done well both in suggesting topic areas for Special Projects and in winning the work and Justin Ward asked for any email suggestions for useful future topics.

9) Review of Covid-19 issues

Hugh Gillies said that Transport Scotland was moving back to business-as-usual. Lila Tachtsi said that Highways England was starting getting people back to work, with a return in September and what this will look like then. Safety tours and site visits and supervision are also being focused on. Black lives matter has been a focus for Highways England. Lila added that network traffic was back to normal.

James Bailey said that the response from the sector has been excellent and thanked Mark Stevens for the Safe Operating Procedures. James added that the political support has been fantastic. James added that the town centre recovery has gone well. James highlighted a couple of aspects that could be improved noting that early engagement with authorities would be helpful in terms of delivery of some policy aspects such as the Emergency Active Travel Funding.

Andy Falley said that in Wales the lock-down restriction of a five-mile travel limit had only recently limited. Andy added that travel levels were rising. Andy said people are encouraged to work from home with a maximum level of 40% as there is a desire to lock-in the benefits of working from home. The desire to reallocate road space for active travel is also something that Wales is keen to capitalise on the benefits of.

Conor Loughrey said that in Northern Ireland traffic levels are now up to about 20% below pre-Covid levels now and added that industry is back largely to normal and return to work is being focused on now.

Mark Stevens gave an update from ADEPT saying that there was a good response from the sector. He added to the point raised by James Bailey on the Emergency Active Travel Funding – the speed at which everything had to be delivered was a challenge. Mark Stevens said Suffolk had already had plans in place for walking and cycling. Mark said that it was good that the sector was considered a key worker sector and the transport network was vital to the Covid-19 response adding that there had been good engagement nationally and internationally (through PIARC).

Mark Kemp echoed what Mark Stevens said that DfT have been in quite a difficult position in terms of the speed of the announcements going out. Mark focused on traffic 20% down on normal traffic volumes but don't have peak in morning and afternoon but has more of a steady level throughout. Mark wondered how much this was due to a change in working patterns. Mark added that school transport travel patterns will be a focus going forward.

Hugh Gillies reflected on how decision makers have understood the importance of the road network.

10) Date of next meeting

19 November but with efforts to have an Away Day back in September. Hugh Gillies noted that the November meeting appeared to be a long way away. John Lamb said there might be benefits in having a shorter meeting in early September (perhaps for an hour).

Action: Justin Ward to discuss with Stephen holding a shorter UKRLG meeting w/c 7th September