

UK Roads Board minutes from 5 February 2021 – held on Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Present:

James Bailey (Chair)
Chris Cranston

Jason Jenkins

Donal Morrison
Andy Pickett
Tim Barnes (for Richard Morgan)
Arash Khojinian
Martin McMahon
Gary Kemp
Donald Morrison
Mark McPeak
Amanda Richards

Justin Ward

Representing:

Staffordshire County Council, representing ADEPT
Devon County Council, representing the National Winter Service Research Group
Bridgend County Borough Council representing CSS Wales
Transport Scotland
Footways & Cycletrack Management Group (FCMG)
Welsh Government
Highways England
Transport for London
Department for Transport
Transport Scotland
Infrastructure Northern Ireland
Surrey County Council, representing the Road Condition Management Group (RCMG)
CIHT (Secretariat)

1) Introduction, apologies

Apologies were recorded for Douglas Hill.

2) Sub-group updates

National Winter Service Research Group

Chris Cranston provided an update on the treatment of footways & cycleways in the final section of the NWSRG Guidance. Chris noted this was a very pertinent issue at the moment and highlighted that funding for treating this part of the network was a challenge for local highway authorities.

Chris said there was a good suite of case studies within the document, adding that some of the treatment methodologies are still in their early stages.

Action: UK Roads Board approved the NWSRG on the Treatment of Footways & Cycleways. James Bailey/Justin Ward to secure approval/sign-off from the UKRLG of the Guidance

Chris said that IHE were now providing the Secretariat for the NWSRG (previously undertaken by TRL). The Governance arrangement of NWSRG had been updated but Chris said that he did not consider that the UKRB would have any concerns with this. Chris said that another group called A New Winter Group had been set-up by some TAG members.

Action: UK Roads Board members approved the updated NWSRG Constitution

Chris said that NWSRG was working with the Hemmings Group. The Highways Award has added a winter award. Chris said that there was research underway with East Riding of Yorkshire, Highways England and Transport Scotland.

Chris highlighted the issue of Red Diesel and asked for clarity. Gary Kemp's understanding from the consultation was that the relief – as from April – would cease. Gary said the results

of the consultation were not yet confirmed. Chris acknowledged this saying clearly it goes with the carbon agenda; but this provides an issue for costs for local authorities.

Chris said there were elections for a variety of positions for NWSRG and welcomed the strong participation from national and local authorities.

James Bailey congratulated Chris Cranston for his Chairmanship of NWSRG and all the success that he and group has achieved during that time. James thanked Chris on behalf of the UK Roads Board.

Road Condition Management Group

Amanda Richards said the RCMG met very recently. There was a discussion around the DfT Road Condition Review. Amanda noted that the focus on Covid had led to some delay but DfT had met with survey companies and were looking to establish a new regime for the 2022-23 financial year. Amanda said that the transition to any new arrangements was still under discussion. The review was considering broader aspects including drainage assets and the scope of the review was also relevant in terms of a consistent UK wide approach. Amanda said that RCMG had offered support to DfT for the review.

Andy Pickett asked if the review covered footways and cycleways; and, if so, offered support from the FCMG to the review.

Action: Gary Kemp to speak with Ashley Singh from within DfT Statistics to consider how to involve FCMG into the review on DfT Road Condition

Andy asked if DfT could attend the next FCMG about the review.

Action: Amanda Richards to put DfT (Ashley Singh) in contact with Andy Pickett about the DfT Road Condition Review

The next item was on SCANNER were Amanda noted there was some variance on the results relating to texture. The data will stay as is for 2020 but clients will have the opportunity to have their data reprocessed if required (as reprocessing the whole data set was not taken forward due to resource implications).

Amanda noted that new technology was now available that more accurately records cracking (and as a result captures more cracking) and this would have an impact on the indicator results if it is implemented. The SCANNER Liaison Group and RCMG will be reviewing the implications prior to making a decision on this.

The final update included a consideration of the Constitution but it was concluded that this would be more appropriate after the DfT Condition Review was concluded.

Footways & Cycletrack Management Group

Andy Pickett highlighted the Gear Change policy work by DfT last year and as such the increased focus on cycling and walking. Andy noted that there was an issue of revenue funding for managing these new networks. Andy noted that the FCMG was considering a research project on reviewing condition surveys of footways & cycleways, another project on levels of service for cycling on carriageways rather than dedicated infrastructure, a project on tree roots and footways, and skidding resistance for cycleways, and reinstatement standards for cycleways.

Another issue that the FCMG was looking at was the implications of e-scooters on the

network and the Group has engaged with DfT and Sustrans on the set Active Travel England and how to work with the Group.

Andy then noted that the terms of reference were being considered and there was a need to refresh them taking account more of the role of asset management of walking and cycling infrastructure in encouraging active travel and potentially also to reflect the needs of e-scooters etc.

Andy Pickett noted that the FCMG had been producing input in the NWSRG guidance (see above).

Andy concluded noting that with virtual meetings now taking place the scope of membership could be expanded to include more Groups – these included Scotland.

Action: Donald Morrison to work with Andy Pickett on representation from Transport Scotland on the FCMG

Action: Arash Khojinian to work with Andy Pickett on representation from Highways England on the FCMG

Jason Jenkins asked about EV charging points and issues of cables on the footways and asked if the FCMG was looking at this issue. Jason said that local authorities in Wales were dealing with this issue. Arash flagged the issue of research and said that Highways England has a £800m designated fund designed to work collaboratively with the sector. Arash said that he would be happy to work with members from the UKRB to explore the possibility for joint research projects.

Action: Andy Pickett to highlight potential projects (e.g. skidding resistance on cycleways) to Arash Khojinian from Highways England

Chris Cranston said that someone from Highways England was embedded within the NWSRG and that where possible joint research was being considered.

Asset Management

Donald Morrison said that UKAM met yesterday and the focus was on the new work that the Board have been asked to undertake for DfT for the next Spending Review (for 2022/23 – that would be a multi-year settlement). DfT, led by Jennifer Raynor, have asked the UKAM to make the case for a long-term funding settlement.

The State of Nation report undertaken last year was considered useful, but clearly asset condition/asset data would be very helpful. Donald added that producing case study material would also be useful in terms of the wider economic benefits (in terms of employment/jobs/GVA). The non-quantifiable benefits would also be factored into the work.

Donald said that the timescales were tight and needed to be concluded within 6 months. Garry Sterritt is planning monthly meetings and next steps involve monthly meetings.

Donald said that this project had an impact on all the Boards. Other issues briefly covered were the State of Nation report that would be updated. There was no update from HAMFIG. There was a brief update on the self-assessment criteria questionnaire from DfT. There will be new non-scoring questions this year around biodiversity and sustainability but with the intention for these to be scored questions from next year onwards.

Amanda Richards asked if the State of Nation report had been published. Donald said that the work was concluded; James Bailey added that his understanding was that the report had not been published.

Mark McPeak said that Northern Ireland has undertaken extensive research on evaluating requirements for maintenance and an Audit Report.

Action: Mark McPeak to send details of the Audit Report and maintenance research by Northern Ireland – to send to Donald Morrison

Action: Justin Ward to share the CIHT Improving Local Highways Review with Donald Morrison for the work by DfT on the case for a longer-term funding settlement for highways maintenance

3) Actions on flooding/drainage

James Bailey noted that the last meeting did focus on flooding and drainage.

Action: Amanda Richards to share a short briefing from the Surrey CC flooding and drainage team covering issues above – starting point on what is out there and the challenges [completed]

Arash Khojinian noted that Highways England was dealing with flooding issues. Gary Kemp said that DfT was concerned about drainage in terms of understanding the asset and its condition was an issue.

James Bailey noted that this was a local issue and that with increased rainfall there was an issue for highway authorities. Section 58 claims under the Highways Act were also an issue.

Donald Morrison highlighted that Transport Scotland had been looking at flooding – internal vulnerable locations group had been established to look at this (and other disruptions). Donald said that the inventory of the drainage asset was one aspect to look at but looking at where flooding occurs would be more pragmatic in the risk-management process i.e. a priority-based approach dealing with the high-risk sites.

Donald said that TS had produced a disruption risk-assessment tool that has been put out through the supply-chain to record both the location and timing of flood instances. The tools have been provided and this enables how to tackle the sites (i.e. mitigating measures). Once the TS Operating Companies provide the details of remedy measures at the high-risk sites will then enable TS to identify the budget required.

Chris Cranston said this was a key issue for the highways sector and that austerity had had an impact on how to manage the issue. Chris said that recently there has been major rainfall followed by low temperatures and that this was having an impact on the network. Chris said that fundamentally keeping the network in a good condition has been eroded with a lack of funding.

Jason Jenkins added to the discussion saying that the highways drainage asset interfaces with other drainage assets. Jason said that the note circulated from Amanda Richards was useful for identifying other bodies involved with the issue of flooding.

James Bailey concluded that flooding and drainage was a wicked issue given ageing infrastructure and given climate change. James noted that inviting John Lamb to the work on drainage would be useful.

Amanda Richards noted that there was an issue of managing public expectations during flooding.

Action: Donald Morrison to share the work by TS on flooding

Action: UKRB reps to consider how to address the issue of flooding

Action: James Bailey to contact John Lamb about flooding issues

Action: To set-up Terms of Reference for work on flooding considering representation and potential funding support

4) Ash dieback

Gary Kemp said that he had been working with Defra on Ash Dieback and that this is a major issue to highway authorities and landowners. Gary Kemp said he had reached out to members of the UKRB to identify good practice from a local authority perspective of how to deal with Ash Dieback. Gary Kemp thanked Chris Cranston for his input to the review and Gary said he would share that with Defra.

Chris then provided the Board with an overview of the details of how Devon CC are managing the issues of Ash Dieback and particularly how they are working with landowners.

Gary Kemp said the Forestry Commission was heavily involved with the work also. Gary said that Defra are trying to get Ministers to allocate additional funding.

Gary Kemp asked for a bit more information on road closures. Chris Cranston said that Devon CC put information on the website and the co-ordination team tried to manage road closures. However, Chris said that landowners have not been coming forward.

Action: Gary Kemp to share the Ash Dieback briefing from Chris Cranston with Defra (including reference to the advice on Devon CC regarding road closures)

5) UKRB mins

Action: James Bailey to look at sharing ADEPT Engineering Board summary for lessons of Covid uploaded

6) UKRLG mins

The minutes were noted.

7) Any other business

Incentive element – DfT – this will be coming out shortly as will individual allocations to highway authorities. Gary Kemp highlighted thanks to local authorities for how they have managed the winter issues so far with flooding and snow events and that this has supported key things such as the roll-out of the vaccine. James Bailey added that under such a challenging period he added thanks to the highway authorities across the UK.

James added a final word of thanks to Chris Cranston.

No further business was recorded.