

Minutes of 64th UK Bridges Board meeting held on 17 February 2021

Liz Kirkham	(Chair) ADEPT/Gloucestershire County Council
Hazel McDonald	Transport Scotland
Richard Fish	Bridge Owners Forum
Jason Hibbert	Welsh Government
Satbir Gill	Hounslow Highways representing TAG
Neil Loudon	Highways England
Keith Harwood	Hertfordshire County Council, ADEPT Bridges Group
Nicola Head	Transport for London
Gary Kemp	Department for Transport
Fred Hartley	Canal & River Trust
Hugh Brooman	LoBEG
Bob Humphreys	CSS Wales, Gwynedd Council
Colin Hall	Network Rail
Nick Burgess	London Underground
Colin Ferris	Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland
Andrew Strang	SCOTS/Perth and Kinross Council
Stuart Molyneux	Salford City Council, representing Metropolitan Councils
Kevin Dentith	ADEPT/Devon County Council
Justin Ward	CIHT (Secretariat)

1. Welcome, introduction, apologies

Liz Kirkham welcomed everyone to the meeting, no apologies were recorded.

2. Making the case for future highways investment

Keith Harwood gave a presentation on the work on Making the case for future highways investment being led by the UK Asset Management Board. Keith said that DfT had asked the AM Board to complete the work in 6 months and that this will be used to inform the future funding settlement. The proposal is to make the case for infrastructure investment and the output of this will be aimed at HM Treasury.

There will be a Task & Finish Group that will be meeting every two weeks. This will involve a high-level policy alignment in terms of decarbonisation, levelling up, air quality, mega-trends and for all road users (walking, cycling, public transport). An example for the bridge sector could be how to manage scour and equating how much needs to be allocated to address this. A key aspect to the report will be case studies – illustrating both the good and bad.

Liz Kirkham asked if this was only for English-funding. Keith said it was but that case studies would be welcomed from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and added that this would be only for English Authorities, but could be developed at a later stage for wider application.

Action: Liz Kirkham and Kevin Dentith volunteered to join the Task & Finish Group supporting the work on Making the case for future highways investment

3. Carbon Management Toolkit

Satbir Gill said that different companies use different toolkits for calculating carbon. Satbir said that an industry-wide, UK-wide approach to calculating carbon would be welcomed.

Richard Fish said that this had been discussed at BOF. One consideration was that this could be an extension of the SAVI toolkit. Keith Harwood said that carbon would be a useful addition to the SAVI toolkit but that this would not be detailed enough for what Satbir was proposing. Liz Kirkham said that this is not just about bridges, but that if there is a tool developed by UKRLG – then this needs to be used for all assets. Liz asked Gary Kemp for an update on research funding. Gary Kemp said that DfT will provide an update shortly.

Action: Gary Kemp to raise within DfT the proposal for the development of a Carbon Management Toolkit

Jason Hibbert said that the Welsh Government is looking at evaluation carbon as embedded in structures.

Action: Liz Kirkham will propose to UKRLG a workshop on Carbon Management Toolkit for the highway sector

4. National Flood Resilience Review

Fred Hartley noted the National Flood Resilience Review related to bridges. Liz Kirkham asked for a view from DfT following the review of bridges that were critical (noting the security sensitivities around this).

Action: Gary Kemp to investigate if information can be shared about which bridges were identified as critical in a DfT study on flood resilience

5. Network Rail position regarding managed deterioration of bridges

Andrew Strang said that Network Rail bridges that carry local authority roads that were assessed 20 years ago (and considered fine to carry 40 tonne loads). Andrew said that from recent assessment the bridges were identified as weight restricted. Any remedial action would require investment – the cost of which is borne by the local authorities. Andrew said that the issues of work being required could relate to asset deterioration. Andrew said that Network Rail has highlighted a cost-sharing protocol – e.g., for strengthening works.

Deterioration on a bridge will relate a wide range of factors – environmental, weights and so on. Andrew said that the view from Network Rail that it is all the local authority's responsibility to bring the bridge up to strength needs reconsidered and proposed the cost-sharing protocol required a review.

Nicola Head said that TfL have a direct example of this with Network Rail that echoed the issues that Andrew had highlighted in Scotland. Fred Hartley highlighted parallels with the obligations that the Canal & River Trust have in how they work with Highway Authorities.

Richard Fish noted that any decisions were still based on a document between CSS and Railtrack which dated from the late 1990s and suggested that an update to reflect the current position was long overdue. He also suggested that this was another document that might be included in Item 12 on "ownership" of bridge management codes and standards.

Colin Hall said that Network Rail are using the current document as that is what is there, and that Network Rail are focused on the safety of the rail network and its associated assets. Colin said that he would be open to reviewing the protocol.

Gary Kemp asked if there could be a request to DfT writing out what is required and what would be intended.

Action: Liz Kirkham to write to DfT (with input and examples from Andrew Strang and Nicola Head) to share with UKRLG (for DfT) on the cost-sharing protocol that Network Rail operates to when liaising with highway authorities needs to be updated. Fred Hartley asked if CRT could be included in the discussions of the protocol update as DfT has inked CRT protocols with Network Rail and will provide some similar examples if needed. Liz Kirkham will include reference to CRT in the letter.

6. BICS update and Survey results

Hazel McDonald highlighted that there had been a recent Steering Group meeting (in future there will be meetings every six weeks). There have been comments about printing the whole e-portfolio (that are being looked at) and other updates between the manual and modules. The first tranche of renewals is also underway (e.g. keeping up to date with current practice, evidence of inspections carried out). An assessor event is due to be held in March.

Action: Hazel McDonald to share latest statistics on progress through BICS with UKBB members

Action: Hazel McDonald to share BICS survey results with Lantra and update to UKBB members on headline results

Neil Loudon said that Highways England was moving forward with the scheme within HE. Kevin Dentith said that the survey results were a little low (at 31). Bob Humphreys was a bit disappointed what the questions were asking. Hazel McDonald said that the purpose of the survey was to find out, if the competencies did not suit people then 'why was that?' and that was the purpose of the survey.

Liz said that this provided a good starting point to demonstrate that the competencies were right and that then it was the process of assessment and recording that needed improving. Kevin Dentith highlighted the alternative schemes are being reviewed favourably (as there are three other schemes out there). Hazel said that there is a BSI coming out shortly on building safety and this might be expanded for wider safety competency schemes. Hazel said that any scheme has to be able to stand up in court should an authority have to defend itself when scrutinised on the competency of its bridge inspectors.

Kevin said that he was aware of the BSI standard that was being developed. Hazel said that Kevin Dentith should ensure that the alternative schemes that satisfy the requirements for competency schemes.

Andrew Strang said that all the three alternative bridge inspector schemes are agreed to be acceptable alternatives at the last ADEPT Bridges Group.

Action: Leads on alternative scheme to confirm numbers that have passed their system and that their scheme is compliant with the BSI building safety standard (that incorporates safety competencies more widely)

7. RAC Foundation survey 2020

Kevin Dentith said that survey had received 211 responses (98%) covering 85,000 bridges. Kevin said that questions had been added on bridge collapses that is really useful; but what it has flagged up are disappointing results –sub-standard bridges is the main concern of the RACF, but more concerning is scour assessments are down on past years, also some bridge owners are not inspecting their bridges at all (9% of owners and 2717 bridges)

Principal Inspections numbers are also low and KD thought some authorities were not using capital funding when they could be.

There were 10 bridges collapses (7 in Aberdeenshire) in the last year. There were 30 partial collapses across the UK last year.

The conclusions from the survey were that this provides a national picture of the bridge stock, but that it does require further analysis.

Kevin noted that the ADEPT Bridges Group would like to establish a working group to analyse the survey and provide feedback to bridge owners on the survey. Liz asked if there was any question on Covid? Kevin said that some of the inspections might not have been carried out due to Covid.

Neil Loudon asked so how you use this data what is the plan for how you use the data in terms of funding for maintenance (related to the item 2 above).

Action: Kevin Dentith to consider how to use the RAC survey results on bridge condition for the work on Making the case for future highways investment

The Board members noted that issues all press handling involved with the study. Kevin said he had highlighted for greater investment, that did not come out in the final press announcement following the survey.

Action: Kevin Dentith to ask UKBB members for questions for the 2021 RAC Bridges Survey

8. Bridges 2021, conference and awards scheme

Richard Fish said that this will be a virtual event on 26-27 May and will use DigiLounge software as the 'virtual venue'. This will be limited to 800 delegates with a modest cost for attendance.

On the awards Richard noted this is a new innovation this year with a number of categories. This is all online at www.bridgeawards.co.uk Awards judges are mostly members of the UKBB. There is also a BOF lifetime award for bridges in the UK – voted upon through nominations from BOF members.

9. Accessibility of UKRLG, UKBB documents

The Board noted issues of the new website hosting with issues of security errors. Justin noted that he was aware of these and said that this would be fixed shortly.

Action: Justin Ward to work with Keith Harwood on UKBB website content to ensure that there was sufficient coverage of content on the site

Action: Justin Ward to update UKBB members on UKBB website once the fix on the SSL issue had been resolved

10. Research funding options

Richard Fish suggested that alternative research project funding options could be considered rather than being totally reliant on DfT. Gary Kemp said that the DfT team was going to look at funding and review past UKRLG research bid submissions.

Action: Liz Kirkham to raise issues of future funding at UKRLG

11. Consistent Element Inventory – LoBEG/TfL

Hugh Brooman said that this had been updated creating bespoke infrastructure element inventory types to create more precise BCI indicators. Work has also been undertaken to develop this for more complex structures.

Liz Kirkham asked about software providers adding that a form of open data would be beneficial. Nicola Head agreed in principle.

Action: Nicola Head and Hugh Brooman to investigate how the consistent element inventory could be shared and possibly adopted more widely e.g. - by ADEPT Bridges Group/SCOTS/CSS Wales/NI

12. Ownership of National Bridge Management Guidance

Richard Fish highlighted various pieces of work/documents/guidance/standards that needed better coordination on a UK wide basis. Keith Harwood said that with more parties involved it makes it more difficult to agree to something. Keith said that either you try to get everyone together to do something, or someone leads a piece of work and then there is a wider question of expanding/adopting this more widely.

Action: Richard Fish to expand the thinking on Ownership of National Bridge Management Guidance at a future meeting

13. ADEPT Bridges Group

Kevin Dentith said that the Bridge Strike Prevention Group had not met for the last 15 months but a new Chair of the BSPG is due to take over and re-establish the work.

Highways England Local Authority Boundary document was nearly finalised.

Kevin confirmed ADEPT's Chief Operating Officer, Hannah Bartram, has a meeting arranged with Richard Parry, CEO of Canal & River Trust to discuss charges imposed on Local Authorities when maintaining Highway structures.

Action: Kevin Dentith to confirm approval of the Highways England Local Authority Boundary document with Neil Loudon

14. Bridge Owners Forum, minutes and update

Richard Fish said that the minutes were now online from the October meeting but the January meeting had focussed on competency issues with input from Alastair Soane and Bill Harvey.

15. Minutes of last meeting

An action was carried over on BOF Grand Challenges in the UKRLG pages in Transportation Professional.

Action: Justin Ward to include reference to the BOF Grand Challenges in UKRLG pages in Transportation Professional

The other actions were completed.

16. Minutes of UKRLG

These were noted.

17. Suicide prevention

Kevin Dentith raised this issued noting that in his authority there were two major structures that had been locations that had been sites and as such the parapet has been increased in height (this has resulted in a decrease in incidents). Kevin Dentith said Devon CC is looking to work with ADEPT to produce a good practice guidance document on suicide prevention at bridges and this may include Highways England guidance.

18. AOB

- **Temporary Bridges website**

Jason Hibbert asked for an update.

Action: Neil Loudon to put Jason Hibbert and Hazel McDonald in contact with the lead on temporary bridges within Highways England (noting this was for unplanned issues)

- **Local highway authority maintenance allocations**

Gary Kemp said these had been published last week.

- **Carbon Management Toolkit**

Satbir Gill proposed an update on this would be beneficial in Transportation Professional.

Action: Justin Ward to look to include reference to working on a Carbon Management Toolkit

19. Date of next meeting

19 May 2021