

Minutes of 65th UK Bridges Board meeting held on 19 May 2021

Liz Kirkham	(Chair) ADEPT/Gloucestershire County Council
Hazel McDonald	Transport Scotland
Richard Fish	Bridge Owners Forum
Jason Hibbert	Welsh Government
Alistair Dore	Wakefield representing ADEPT
Neil Loudon	Highways England
Keith Harwood	Hertfordshire County Council, ADEPT Bridges Group
Nicola Head	Transport for London
Fred Hartley	Canal & River Trust
Bob Humphreys	CSS Wales, Gwynedd Council
Colin Hall	Network Rail
Nick Burgess	London Underground
Andrew Strang	SCOTS/Perth and Kinross Council
Gary Kemp	Department for Transport
Satbir Gill	Hounslow Highways representing TAG
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. Apologies were recorded for Hugh Brooman (LoBEG) and Colin Ferris (Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland).

2. BICS update and next steps

Hazel McDonald gave an update on the Lantra BICS scheme. Hazel said that the scheme manual and user guide is now on the website. There will be a Steering Group meeting tomorrow that will include a focus on a range of elements including the results of the survey conducted. Consideration of making the process for candidates who only carry out GIs simpler was also highlighted. Other aspects from the update from Hazel included issues such as renewals (for those who have been on the scheme for three years) and options for spot audits. The fees for the modular approach are being considered, they need to be visible to all candidates, not just new registrations.

Neil Loudon said the interface between Lantra and the users and marketing of the scheme was important and possible additional support to Lantra to move forward was being considered.

Kevin Dentith provided an update on uptake from authorities on a range of bridge inspector competency schemes (Lantra, ADEPT, Perth & Kinross, CSS Wales, Other). Liz Kirkham noted that although only 2 people are listed as completing the BICS scheme when in fact 65 had completed the scheme. Kevin Dentith noted that this was due to the survey being only completed by Local Authorities. Liz suggested that a footnote was put on the number to help with an indication that the uptake was higher than might otherwise be perceived.

3. Research – update on existing projects

Bob Humphreys gave an update on the Masonry Arch Assessment Guidance noting this was being developed by CIRIA. The Steering Group will receive a final document for final sign-off with a potential publishing date in Autumn, but Bob noted this is to be confirmed.

PIARC Overloaded Vehicles – Hazel McDonald noted the survey is complete and with the consultant but there is no date for publication yet.

Kevin Dentith said that he had a conversation with Brunel University on Masonry Bridge Arch design guidance (as funding is available).

Richard Fish noted two potential areas that could be worth considering for securing funding: the Horizon 2020 EU programme – the UK is eligible given that we now have Associate Country status with the EU – is one programme worth being aware of. The other is COST - Cooperation in Science and Technology – another EU programme – that is mostly targeted at academics and research associates.

Neil Loudon noted that Highways England moon-shot approach has gone out for ideas for managing post-tensioned structures and will look at other aspects such as scour in the future.

Liz Kirkham said that she had raised the issue of funding at UKRLG and noted that a meeting is due to take place with DfT in June on this topic.

4. Ownership and management of National Bridge documentation

Richard Fish had prepared a short paper which had highlighted the various documents available for bridge managers. He had concerns that there might be issues of overlap and fragmentation with regard to ownership and reviews which could lead to a potential risk for the bridge community. Following this there was a discussion around a range of issues such as who is responsible for maintaining and updating guidance in addition to where the documents are held. Liz agreed giving an example of not having clarity on which version of the bridge condition indicators should be used.

Liz suggested there might be a piece of work to identify and collate the existing guidance and have a standing item on the agenda of the UKBB on knowledge and standards.

There was a discussion of building more of a knowledge hub in terms of content, building on an example that ADEPT had developed.

Keith Harwood noted that the Highways England guidance documentation is freely available and requested that the same approach could be adopted by Network Rail (that has a paid subscription approach). Colin Hall said he would investigate this.

Action: Colin Hall to inquire if Network Rail guidance documentation could be freely available

Action: Justin Ward to consider a ‘knowledge hub’ for bridge documentation to provide links to other documents. UK Bridges Board members to provide links to appropriate documents to Justin Ward

Action: Kevin Dentith will look at ADEPT reinstating the knowledge hub and also making ADEPT members aware of what information/guidance is available

Action: Liz Kirkham/Justin Ward to add a standing item on the agenda of the UKBB on knowledge and standards.

Richard Fish said a key point is not only maintaining the content but also possible gaps in awareness in the industry; adding that smaller organisations and budget cuts have led to restrictions on networking that is further limiting the ability to find out what is going on in the

industry. Richard said he would welcome the chance to see a knowledge hub which might ensure that all documents are kept up to date.

Nicola Head said that LoBEG is updating guidance and briefing UKBB was underway but formalising the approach would be useful. Liz noted this could be completed with an item on the agenda for UKBB meetings.

5. BOF

Richard Fish said the theme of April's meeting was carbon and included a good set of presentations from the Environment Agency, Highways England, Welsh Government and Rochester Bridges Trust on activities moving towards net zero and carbon evaluation. BOF had noted that carbon could be considered as an overarching Grand Challenge and were possibly looking to develop a best practice guide on carbon.

Richard highlighted the Bridge Conference (26th/27th May) and the Awards ceremony on the same evening of the 26th and encouraged members to attend.

Liz Kirkham noted that carbon is a major focus now and noted that Satbir Gill had raised the issue of a carbon calculator. Liz had raised this at the recent UKRLG, but that this was rather overtaken by the proposal from ADEPT for Live Labs 2 looking at carbon. Liz noted that Live Labs 2 is currently being considered.

Neil Loudon highlighted a couple of other activities - DfT through their Transport Research and Innovation Board - had conducted a workshop looking at carbon and the DfT Decarbonisation Strategy is due to be launched soon. Neil noted that doing things in a consistent way and agreeing methodologies was going to be important to avoid fragmentation.

Satbir Gill highlighted that the carbon management toolkit was due to be considered by Gary Kemp for DfT funding support. Gary Kemp said that he will confirm the position shortly.

Jason Hibbert noted that following the recent elections the Welsh Government Transport will now be a division within the Climate Change Ministry so the focus on climate and carbon will be key going forward. Jason said that there has been a lot of work done to identify embedded carbon in the structures stock and there is consideration of this work being incorporated into SAVI to quantify the carbon (in a similar way to the way it does for value). Hazel McDonald said there was a similar arrangement with the Scottish Government creating a Ministerial position of Carbon, Energy and Transport and expected a focus more on maintenance than new infrastructure.

6. UK Bridge Governance: Status Quo or Rethink?

Richard Fish introduced the short paper he had prepared for the previous meeting not only on governance but also questioning whether there was a need for a more independent challenge to Governments on bridge matters.

Liz Kirkham asked for comments and Kevin Dentith responded noting that the UK Bridges Board had a function of providing this but noted that BOF and ADEPT can challenge but UKBB should provide overall direction.

Neil Loudon agreed that it is about influence giving an example that the government is going into a Comprehensive Spending Review, noting that this is about identifying the needs for structures and putting a value on that. Neil said this is about the funding required and making the case for that. Liz Kirkham said that several UKBB members are supporting the

UK Asset Management Board on the project Making the Case for investment in transport infrastructure assets.

Jason Hibbert agreed with Richard's point on Independent SAGE during Covid and said that has been very useful in the national emergency. Jason did not think there would be similar interest in bridges for an independent group to be set up. Jason considered that the role of the National Infrastructure Commission (there is one in Wales that is remitted by the Welsh Government) should be to provide a challenge on what infrastructure exists, what condition is it in and what risks does it pose, before determining what new infrastructure is required.

Nicola Head said that UKBB report into UKRLG and the UKRLG should offer the challenge and agreed with others that there should not be another independent body. Liz agreed and said that members of the UKBB are willing to challenge and do not always agree.

Richard Fish responded to the point on influence noting the importance of Ministers in terms of the decision-making powers and allocation of funding. Richard noted the National Infrastructure Commission – as mentioned by Jason – and said that was a good observation but was not sure how independent that was.

Richard Fish noted the option for a Government Chief Bridge Engineer perhaps could be appointed – like the role of Chief Scientist – adding that it is only when bridge collapses occur that the political and public focus is given to bridges. Richard noted in 2018 that 43 died due to the Genoa Bridge Collapse and this year there was a collapse in Mexico City (26 people killed). Richard Fish asked how to avoid a major bridge collapse in the UK.

Neil Loudon said that all the UK transport infrastructure assets is ageing, and the vulnerable structures need to be given not just more funding, but more about identifying and prioritising risks.

Keith Harwood said that he was a representative on the UK Asset Management Board and said that the focus on structures was a little limited.

Kevin Dentith said that there was a need for further thinking on the issue raised by Richard Fish.

Action: Kevin Dentith, Richard Fish, Liz Kirkham, Neil Loudon to further discuss UK Bridge Governance: Status Quo or Rethink

7. ADEPT Bridges Group update and feedback – Kevin Dentith

Kevin Dentith noted the following for the update:

- Guest Presentation – Rhinophalt – a means of prolonging life of surfacing and improving waterproofing which could be useful on bridges
- Safety Item – Problem PI on railway bridge using scaffold on electric line, SCOSS told safe to work, power was off, bonding engineer advised power was not off, removed team and challenged competence of SCOSS Aware that CROSS UK now amalgamates SCOSS and CROSS
- NR – awaiting outcome of discussion around NR responsibility under BE4 and their requirement to maintain at a lower level than current 40t
- Abnormal Loads – no report but a presentation with CASCADE planned for September meeting

- How are people working in current COVID situation? Options for future working arrangements and meeting attendance – a desire for face to face at Westminster but may not be possible
- BICS alternatives – good to see 100 LAs have now stated they will be using a scheme. Disappointing that we don't have one common scheme but one size doesn't fit all but we should be pleased with raising the importance of competency
- Canal and River Trust – after a lot of hard work we believe we are close to agreeing a Guidance document and evidence across the country that CRT are providing evidence-based bills which is reducing the charges to LAs
- Fluoropolymer paint system in use – more engineers are looking to use this longer lasting paint system to minimise traffic disruption
- FRP bridges – many starting to use this material and comparing WLC with traditional materials - presentation in September
- Knowledge Hub – would like to see if this can be rekindled
- Sharing of the 14 ABG meeting minutes to all ADEPT members for knowledge sharing
- Protect Duty consultation - Gov survey for at risk sites including bridges
- Discussion around Deterioration Modelling and use of accelerometers to assess frequency of structures, could identify locked bearings – presentation for September
- ToR Tenure of Chair, Secretary and Vice Chair up February 2022
- Drew Retiring
- September meeting – with the number of presentations identified earlier we are planning a one-day conference as part of our September meeting

Liz Kirkham noted that Drew Strang was a great support and contribution to the UK Bridges Board.

8. UKRLG update

Liz Kirkham noted that the UKRLG meeting had focused mainly on the ADEPT Live Labs 2 proposal (see earlier point on this) and the Historic Rail Estate. There was a discussion on EV charging and potential for overhead charging on Highways England and, as such, the structural element of holding the wires.

9. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were noted that Gary Kemp and Satbir Gill needed to be included in list of attendees and to complete a sentence in one paragraph as highlighted by Richard Fish.

The following actions were carried over:

Action: Gary Kemp to investigate if information can be shared about which bridges were identified as critical in a DfT study on flood resilience – not available but under consideration

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.

Drew Strang responded to the above issue saying the cost sharing protocol needs to be updated. Liz Kirkham asked for the case studies that Drew referenced to collate to DfT and UKRLG.

Action: Drew Strang to share case studies (with appropriate redactions) with Liz Kirkham on cost sharing issues with Network Rail

Fred Hartley said there is a statutory position on this and asked about what was clear with legal agreements in the process. The Board members discussed the issue further noting issues of funding.

Gary Kemp observed that given there were issues of costs on authorities that this was factored into the work by the Asset Management on the case for future funding.

Action: Keith Harwood/Liz Kirkham to raise the issue of costs on authorities that this was factored into the work by the Asset Management on the case for future funding

10. AOB

Access planning group – Neil Loudon said there was a useful webpage and asked that Colin Hall share the link to the page.

Action: Colin Hall to share the link on access planning details with Justin Ward

Website – Keith Harwood said that the new site looks more modern, but some content was not on the past site – if there is any material that should be on the site then let Justin Ward know.

Keith Harwood noted that SAVI was produced a year ago for cost but asked for members' views on updating for carbon also. Jason Hibbert said that Welsh Government was covering the cost of the carbon quantification functionality and Liz was content for this to proceed.

Drew Strang said that the UK Bridges Board was very helpful and has enjoyed his experience on the Board. Liz Kirkham thanked Drew on behalf of the Board.

Liz informed the Board added that she will be standing down from the role of Chair, and from the Board. She said that she had really enjoyed the time on the Board, working with such a dedicated and enthusiastic group. Stephen Fidler, Chair of UKRLG is responsible for appointing a new chair for the Bridges Board and may be asking for expressions of interest shortly.

11. Date of next meeting

15 September.