

UK Roads Minutes for 29 October 2021 – held on Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Present:

James Bailey (Chair)
Carol Valentine (for Richard Stacey)

Jason Jenkins

Stuart D'all (for Douglas Hill)

Andy Pickett

Martin McMahon

Mark McPeak

Donald Morrison

Amanda Richards

Kyle Fairbairn

Representing:

Staffordshire County Council, representing ADEPT
Kent County Council, representing the National Winter
Service Research Group

Bridgend County Borough Council representing CSS
Wales

Perth and Kinross Council

Footways & Cycletrack Management Group (FCMG)

Transport for London

Infrastructure Northern Ireland

Transport Scotland

RCMG

CIHT (Secretariat)

1). Introduction, apologies (10:30 – 10:35) - JB/KF

James welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were recorded for Justin Ward (CIHT), Douglas Hill (Angus Council for SCOTS), Richard Stacey (for NWSRG), Richard Morgan (Welsh Government).

2). Minutes and Actions (10:35– 10:45) - JB

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed for accuracy. Previous actions not covered on today's agenda:

Item 2 - Justin to chase up John Lamb on DfT resilience reports and infographic.

Item 4 - Andy Pickett looked to draw up some names on walking and cycling.

Item 6i - James Bailey to share Covid response work by ADEPT

[Highways and Covid-19 response spreadsheet.xlsx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Item 6ii - Justin to circulate Covid response by PIARC to board members –

<https://www.piarc.org/en/order-library/34613-en-COVID-19:%2520initialimpacts%2520and%2520responses%2520to%2520the%2520pandemic%2520from%2520road%2520and%2520transport%2520agencies>

3). Code of Practice – Current Status and What is Next? (10:45 – 11:00) – JB

James Bailey asked for Board Members thoughts on the status of the Code of Practice as it has been 5 years since last review.

Jason Jenkins referred to the process for updating the document and it was recalled that with regards to a previous matter relating to trees a proposed revision was developed by UKRB and recommended to UKRLG. Those amendments were approved and recorded on the website where the document is hosted.

Andy Pickett would like to know what local authorities have used from the code of practice and it was suggested that a survey of local councils may be useful.

Amanda Richards added that active travel, climate change and technology need to be implemented into code and changes made.

Donald Morrison noted that in Scotland authorities have interpreted the code to suit their specific needs, no longer fixing certain defects due to not causing injury or loss of life. This can have issues with elected members and public.

Amanda asked if the code aligns with cyclists needs and whether something needs to be added for cycleways and defect intervention levels. All agreed that there is difficulty in classification of repairs for cycleways and that further guidance and training material is needed for practitioners to understand needs of cyclists. Martin McMahon suggested that it could be built on a management hierarchy on different modes.

James and Jason both queried the need for guidance or seeking out best practice on how a risk based approach can be applied across different assets groups to inform budget setting.

Action: CIHT (Justin) to draft a new survey to help establish the status of the Code of Practice within local highway authorities, identify areas of greater/lesser value for practitioners and priorities for review. Look at Atkins survey design (HMEP) for inspiration.

4). Future Business Planning - Approach to development of future business plan/constitution of UKRB – (11:00 – 11:15) - JB

James raised the issue of ambiguity around the future UKRLG agenda, its constitution and what this meant for UKRB. He explained that a UKRLG Away Day is being planned for early in 2022 to review things. This includes seeking clarity of the DfT sees for UKRLG e.g. as a network of expert advisors, innovators and volunteers to help move the UK highways agenda forward. It would be likely to include a review of the the constitution.

Amanda also highlighted the fragmentation and complexity of different national and regional groups and the overlap between them. It was agreed that clarity of UKLRG purpose and how it fits in to these networks is needed.

In parallel with the above “Top Down” review, it was agreed that UKRB should also embark on a “Bottom Up” review of what Members (and devolved LHA’s that UKRB represent) need from UKRB. Discussions took place around the holistic purpose of roads and their economic and social value.

ACTION: Further UKRB business planning to be progresses with a view to informing and merging with UKRLG review.

5). Subgroup Updates (11:15 – 11:35)

- **RCMG – Amanda Richards –**

Met in October, DfT updated that they are looking to appoint a technical author and steering group for the road condition standards review. English road stats for 2 years published next month, concern over new experimental statistics DfT are publishing in terms of that may follow from members, press etc. Agreement that there needs to be sufficient information provided with experimental statistics. Visual survey subgroup without a chair for some time, however Kully Boden from Derby City has recently taken on the role – need to reassess purpose of the group. Slight majority favoured online meetings going forward.

- **FCMG – Andy Pickett**

David stepping down as chair of group, so search is on for replacement. Would be good to look for someone with asset management and active travel interest.

Few developments since last meeting. Looking to redefine role and purpose of group. Not much to update because of this.

- **Asset Management – Donald Morrison**

Donald was not present at the last meeting, but the recent focus has been on DfT project commission for demonstrating highways maintenance case. This is now concluded and has been submitted to DfT. The aim is to add to UKRLG Website, covering 5 areas: investment scenarios in 5 areas, public value framework in 13 areas, extensive case studies of good practice, analysis of condition levels, scenario analysis. This is a comprehensive piece of work, no time scale for publishing to UKRLG website.

Brief discussion on DfT's self-assessment incentive funding had taken place and DfT waiting until after spending review. Economic assessment toolkit trial taking place in a few local authorities.

HEMP questionnaire published on UKRLG website, asking local authorities to fill out and inform to what needs prioritised and updated.

Looking for new chair of asset management board, call out closes at the end of today (29/10/21).

- **NWSRG – Carol Valentine (for Richard Stacey)**

New guidance now available on the revamped website.

The group is working closely with the Hemming Group and looking to carry out face to face training, working on winter academy – in early stages. Looking to get a standardised winter training course.

A cold January and February is forecast. Concern over further covid restrictions, flu-epidemic, availability HGV drivers and fuel availability - particularly in light of red diesel

being withdrawn. LHAs having to delve deep into supply chain to HGV driver get cover, but generally struggling to complete with other sectors.

Last year was the first time a winter service award was given. Very successful and would like to have more nominations in future.

Meetings still taking place virtually and attendance is very good. Reviewing arrangements for the future. Membership is growing across sector, which could in part also be attributed to new website.

Working with LCRIG is providing opportunities for improvement e.g. using the strictly highways platform to run training, etc.

Cold comfort is going ahead this year.

Applied for UKRLG funding for 3 research projects and looking forward to an update on this. Includes carbon reduction in winter service and resilience.

Exercise at reviewing business plan, done prep work but need to bring it together.

PIARC winter conference is going ahead – group will be doing a poster session at this on the research that has been carried out by NWSRG.

Jason Jenkins asked for details about joining for Welsh local authorities. Stuart D'all expressed interest as well for local authorities.

Action: Carol to send link for joining NWSRG - https://nwsrg.org/about/memberships_subscriptions

Action: Kyle to asking for what's involved in UK Bridges board chair role to send to Carol. * Post meeting note: Hazel McDonald has been appointed as chair of UKBB.

6). Winter resilience 2021/22 (11:35 – 12:00)

Prior to the meeting Richard Stacey had raised the following four Winter Resilience matters. Discussions followed on items 3 and 4.

1. The winter forecast from DTN gave strong signals for a winter not dissimilar to 2010/1962 (i.e. very cold Jan and Feb 2022) – Potential risk there that all devolved countries needs to be mindful of.

2. Covid 19 escalation leading to further lockdowns, movement restrictions, labour shortage

3. Risk of Flu pandemic

A lot of risk around the availability of people but business continuity plans generally in place for this.

4. HGV driver shortage

Salt restocking constraints – Stuart discussed that salt has been delivered 6 weeks late and HGV driver shortage has caused difficulties. Gritter driver issue has also been neglected over commercial lorry use. Stuart said that many LHA's are on the edge of their resilience, with a challenging winter ahead. Donald highlighted that a nation pool had been set up on a mutual aid basis, with local authority drivers plus Trunk Road drivers – 50 on standby this winter, learned from previous severe winters e.g. 2010.

Salt stockpiles are generally good as lessons learned from past. Good availability to local authorities and trunk roads. Conscious of driver shortage, looking to enhance service on winter trunk roads next year so this could have a great impact on plans.

Mark McPeak gave a NI update. Driver procurement not a problem there but the age of the gritter fleet is concerning and many are struggled to get replacement parts in time. Work on a 1-year budget provides difficulty on procurement too. NI doesn't have enough funding to do any gritting at start of the year, they need to bid for it. A real lack of resource money there. Salt not an issue to find, as local salt north of Belfast.

Jason provided an update for Wales. Driver issues only in some authorities and not throughout whole of Wales. Many authorities have worst case scenarios salt levels. Salt a little bit late due to procurement rather than supply issues. Red diesel is something that comes up in a lot of discussions in Welsh Gov – as duty on fuel can help with budgets.

7). Winter Service Sustainability (12:00 – 12:15) – Richard Stacey

Prior to the meeting Richard Stacey had highlighted the following three Winter Service Sustainability matters for future discussion.

- **Red diesel**
- **Carbon reduction**
- **PIARC International Winter Congress – national approach and participation –**

James Bailey said conversation around this will be picked up at the conference.

8). Research bids update (12:15 – 12:20) – Amanda Richards

Amanda is leading on UKRB research bids. Instead of boards competing for UKRLG funding it will be divided up amongst the boards. Funding available in new financial year. UKRB currently has 14 research projects/bid totalling to around £605k. UKRLG Funding unlikely to cover this so will need to explore funding partners, which would also provide added leverage value in terms of prioritising. Donald to share link of projects from SCOTS.

Action: Justin to reach out to Arash from Highways England and see about confirmation if there is info on their current research programme for Highways for bids to see if there is a link up with UKRB projects.

Action: Amanda to get in touch with NWSRG on funding bids.

9). AOB (12:20 – 12:30) – All

Amanda asked if the meeting will stay virtual for next year, James said that more beneficial to keep virtual but suggested getting together in person every so often for a more detailed meeting. Can keep the format fluid. Jason proposed opportunity for a hybrid meeting at CIHT for some members who want to and other who don't. Plan for next meeting to be virtual, plan for the exception rather than the norm.