

UK Roads Board Minutes for 17 June 2022 – held on Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Present:	Representing:
James Bailey (Chair)	Staffordshire County Council, representing ADEPT
Richard Stacey	Hertfordshire County Council, representing the National Winter Service Research Group
Jason Jenkins	Bridgend County Borough Council representing CSS Wales
Andy Pickett	Footways & Cycle track Management Group (FCMG)
Martin McMahon	Transport for London
Donald Morrison	Transport Scotland
Mark McPeak	Infrastructure Northern Ireland
Amanda Richards	Surrey County Council, representing RCMG
Arash Khojinian	Highways England
Isobel Wilson	CIHT (Secretariat)

1) Introduction, apologies

Apologies – Gary Neill, Kyle Fairbairn, Gary Kemp, Matthew Eglinton

2) UKRLG ‘Strategic Planning’ Update

James Bailey gave an update from the UKLRG Strategic Planning Meeting (held over the 8th/9th June). He summarised that the feedback from individual groups was that they felt that UKRLG was fragmented and didn’t have a clear direction. Overall, there seemed to be a strong appetite to reinvigorate UKLRG and going forwards the group should aim to be bolder, but without changing the overall structure of the group. Going forward UKRLG should have more of a coordinating role to influence the sector. To do this they should set out the priorities of what needs to happen in the sector and use the boards to ensure that objectives are met. It was also noted that the title of the UKRLG is ambiguous and so there are plans to change the ‘L’ in UKRLG from Liaison to Leadership.

More detail on the meeting can be seen in the UKRLG – Strategic Planning document that James circulated.

Feedback/comments from UKRB on this:

Martin raised the point that in the future there will be a lot happening in the alternative fuelled vehicle space, this will be a point of interest for the group, especially around how much space is used on the highways and the condition of existing assets (road signs, road markings etc). He asked if UKRB should be more vocal about how the group can enable emerging technologies when it comes to the UKRLG Strategic Plan?

James agreed but questioned where this should sit as this is a very complex issue. He questioned if LAs should be making their own bespoke solutions or if there should be national standards. Additionally, if there are national standards who would

be responsible for producing them - as EVs contribute to the Net Zero Agenda should this sit under a climate change banner? Should it be a note from DfT? Martin agreed it could fall under climate change but noted that there will be a lot of impact on road infrastructure (particularly with installation and maintenance) and the responsibility of this should be considered so that adequate plans can be made. Andy Pickett noted that it should be considered within a broader context, and that UKRLG needs to be agile to adapt to the big change that we will see over the next 10-15 years.

Richard Stacey also highlighted that national standards would be very helpful when it comes to EV charging.

Arash Khojinian brought up that National Highways have been given £900 million for EVs and that the group should take advantage of that when it comes to national standards. He also questioned how platooning will work and that NH are doing some research in this area.

Amanda noted that UKLRG's future plans to be more of a leadership group will mean they should be well positioned to help on this issue to provide guidance on this issue. This was echoed by Andy Pickett.

Separately Donald Morrison asked if funding for research programmes or other tasks (e.g. Asset Management board have had funding in the past for projects) was brought up in the strategic plan. James said that it was touched on but no numbers were agreed. He also noted that the reinvigoration of UKLRG should be used as a catalyst to put in long term research plans.

Actions:

- James to pass this feedback onto UKRLG, especially regarding clarification over research funding models.

3) UKRB Business Plan Update

James circulated the UKRB Business Plan (Version 1.1 with Amanda's comments), which is now ready for final sign off.

Comments/feedback:

Amanda recalled previous UKRB discussions around the need to review highway drainage guidance and whether there is a need for a highway drainage sub-group. It was proposed that a task and finish group might be the right way forward. Amanda added that LGTAG would be happy to work with UKRB on this.

It was also brought up that the one-page document doesn't give enough detail, and that each sub-group could also provide their own plan-on-a-page documents which would cover priorities in more detail. These could be hyperlinked to the sub-group plans which are hosted on the UKRLG/CIHT website.

Actions:

- Everyone to give their comments on the business plan by the end of the month (June 2022).
- James to add to the first bullet point regarding purpose from the strategy day.
- James to add point about highway drainage/ task and finish group, but this will be open ended – subject to UKRLG sign-off and resources allocated to it.
- James to add linkage to sub-group plans and ask Justin to add this to UKRLG agenda to sign this off and put on CIHT website.
- Sub-group chairs to produce plan-on-a-page documents for their groups

4) Draft UKRB Research Priorities

Historically there has been a long list of research priorities that UKRB want to cover. The final shortlist (currently fifteen on the list) is almost ready but needs a final review. James, Gary, Andy and Amanda to meet separately to finalise the top six research priorities which will then be circulated to the UKRB. Individual UKRB members will then vote on the research priorities they want to be put forward, with the top three being given to UKRLG.

Richard suggested that footways and cycleways be put forward. This was acknowledged but it was also brought up that this would be a costly project.

Actions:

- James – put a date in the diary for separate meeting between himself and Gary, Andy and Amanda.
- James – circulate shortlist of six research priorities (first couple weeks in July) for UKRB members to vote on.

5) Subgroup Updates

• **DfT Update**

No update as Gary and Matthew weren't present.

• **National Winter Service Research Group**

• There was a very successful cold comfort event where NWSRG ran a workshop and have been asked to do so again. They are also supporting the APSI, ANWERP and LCRIG conferences as well.

• They have had more people asking to join NWSRG, of note, someone from Ireland has asked to join due to the clear guidance that NWSRG produce.

• Highlights from report:

COVID cases have gone down but it was acknowledged that it could become a problem in the winter again. The red diesel withdrawal had an impact and LAs fuel prices have immensely gone up which could cause a massive funding issue for LAs.

Comments/feedback:

Amanda asked if guidance on footway/cycleway gritting could be provided.

Actions:

- Richard to circulate guidance on footway/cycleway gritting.

• **Road Condition Management Group**

The RCMG met in May. Here they discussed the future of the visual survey sub-group. There was a general agreement that there is merit in having the group to discuss the technical aspects of visual surveys. However, the DfT technical review has suggested that visual surveys won't be part of the new standard. Despite this many groups (NI, Wales) still use visual surveys and so there is a need for the group. RCMG are going to discuss re-establishing the terms of reference for the group going forward.

The DfT statistics team announced that annual data collection process has started and they will publish their results later in the year. It was noted that London has not had any scanner surveys for three years due to lack of funding from TfL.

In regards to the Conditions Standards Review, BSI are working with DfT on this and put a tender out for a technical author for the standard which closed in May. The new measure will be outcome based so will likely use a red/amber/green style of classification, instead of providing treatment-based

outcomes. They will set up a steering group in the next few months to gather a wider consultation for the review. They are still anticipating that the standards will be completed by the end of 2023. At this time there will be dual running of the existing and new standards to give contractors time to update their processes to meet the new standards. DfT have said they will look into including visual surveys within the review.

Feedback/comments:

Martin raised the point that TfL are part of a government funding settlement, the next funding package is due next Friday and TfL are still in consultations about what this package will look like. Once this has been announced they can confirm which programmes will/won't be funded.

- **Footways & Cycle track Management Group**

There have been a couple of FCMG meetings since the last UKRB meeting. The first was a meeting with three guest speakers, including Nick Tyler from UCL who spoke on PEARL. There was also someone from DfT who spoke about data plans concerning footways and cycleways – however their current focus is on carriageways. This gives FCMG a window of opportunity to do the groundwork on footways to feedback to DfT before they start work in this area.

There was also a more recent meeting (around 20 attendees). This included a presentation from XAIS on their mobility scooter-based footway survey which included AI analysis of imagery and LIDAR technology. The main focus of this meeting was to report the results from the FCMG survey which largely confirmed priorities on where to focus efforts. This included a desire for improved communication (guidance on CIHT website is difficult to find). The survey received a positive response for FCMG to have their own dedicated website to make guidance published by the group more visible. It was also shown that the priority of FCMG should be to provide best practice guidance. It was established from discussions around the survey that future guidance should include a cycle lane hierarchy and notes on how to manage rural footways. There is a desire for webinars to be set up periodically.

Feedback/comments:

Amanda suggested it would be better to get involved with external seminars rather than set up webinars yourself. She also mentioned that UKRLG are looking into reviewing their website so it would be of interest to hold off on work there until any announcements from UKRLG are made.

Mark commented that in NI they have received funding for cycle schemes connecting towns and cities but are lacking criteria on what should be prioritised and requested information on this.

Arash mentioned NH are developing a footway maintenance standard and suggested it would be good to work with FCMG on this.

Actions:

- Andy to circulate slides on survey to UKRB and to have a separate discussion with Mark, perhaps involving his colleague Clare Mulvenna who represents INI on the FCMG to establish exactly what's needed?
- Arash and Andy to set up a separate discussion over footway maintenance and possibly include Gary on this too.

- **Asset Management**

Asset Management Board met last Friday which was the first meeting with Neill Bennett as the new chair and Janvi Shah as the new vice chair. Discussion involved a survey that Atkins did on HMEP products (awareness, usage and future needs). The survey received 23 responses from LAs. Feedback included priorities for future updates on the E-learning toolkit, highway asset management and highway drainage assets. At the moment HMEP products are mainly hosted by Atkins but going forward there is the desire for this to be hosted by UKRLG/CIHT. In terms of asset evaluation Sarah Shreeves has been brought in to investigate solutions to resolve delays in the publication of local highway authority financial statements. A new guidance bulletin has been shared with asset management board and they are looking for confirmation on assumptions authorities make on use for life and effects of depreciation on the network and temporary changes made to LA accounting code. Generally the Asset Management Board was happy with the document but will pass their feedback back to Atkins.

The Asset Management board also discussed a brief which had been circulated on the terms of reference for the asset management board. The business plan that was shared as part of this highlighted the main aims and objectives of the group. These were broken into various themes: policy framework, environment, finance, human capital, communication strategies and research.

Areas where more work is needed were also highlighted such as the asset management competency framework, road condition data collection, asset management systems (bespoke or off the shelf data management/ asset evaluation tools).

Finally, the long-term challenges facing the board were discussed such as climate change and carbon reduction resilience, as well as the skills and resources shortage.

Feedback/comments:

Jason commented that in Wales they haven't done anything to do with an asset valuation for four-five years. He asked if there were plans to re-introduce this? Donald responded that previous deadlines kept being pushed back and that the new guidance bulletin will aim to simplify the asset valuation process and provide consistency when it is reintroduced.

Amanda asked if the asset management E-learning toolkit is available (which was also raised by Mark). Donald said he would look into this.

Actions:

- Donald to check if there is an issue with the asset management E-learning toolkit and circulate this with the board.

6) UKRLG Minutes

UKRLG minutes have already been circulated so no need to discuss in this meeting.

7) UKRB Minutes

Richard clarified that he works for Hertfordshire County Council not Devon.

Updates on actions from previous meeting:

Gary was to share information on how Falkirk fuel their maintenance vehicles. The board was unsure if this has happened so this action will be carried forward.

Andy was to share the survey from FCMG, which he did. He also shared the presentation with the results from the survey which can go out with the minutes from this meeting.

Kyle/Justin were asked to circulate the survey through UKRLG channels which they did through a news briefing.

Gary was to share SRRB research areas. The board was unsure if this has happened so this action will be carried forward.

Amanda was to look at synergies from research programmes from NWSRG, which she did.

Justin/Kyle were asked to layout a code of practice survey-on survey monkey by the next UKRLG meeting so the board can review. This has been done and Isobel can circulate this.

Actions:

- Gary to share information on how Falkirk fuels their maintenance vehicles.
- Gary Neill to share SRRB research areas.
- Isobel to circulate code of practice survey.
- Isobel/Kyle amend mistake on previous meeting noted referring to Richard working for Devon County Council.

8) Any Other Business

Mark asked if there was a diagram which showed how this board fits within the overall UKRLG structure. James mentioned that John Lamb shared a diagram on the strategy day.

Martin stated that due to changes within TfL he now has a broader remit for asset planning and strategy, so his time for roads and highways related work is much more limited. He therefore proposed that he steps down as a representative from TfL and will find someone else takes his place. The board members thanked Martin for his contribution to UKRB and for seeking a future successor.

James commented on the convenience of having this meeting on Teams in terms of time efficiency, but it was noted that the social side of in-person meetings will be missed. It was discussed that the group could aim to meet at in-person conferences in the future to get the social benefit of seeing each other face-to-face.

Actions:

- James to share the notes and diagram that John Lamb produced at the strategy day.
- Martin to find a colleague at TfL that can replace him on the UKRB.
- Justin/Kyle to circulate a list of upcoming conferences and ask the group to cross-reference which ones they plan to go to.