

UK Roads Board Agenda for 18 March 2022 – held on Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Present:

James Bailey (Chair)

Richard Stacey

Steffan Jones

Gary Neill

Andy Pickett

Martin McMahon

Gary Kemp

Mark McPeak

Amanda Richards

Matthew Eglinton

Arash Khojinian

Kyle Fairbairn

Representing:

Staffordshire County Council, representing ADEPT

Hertfordshire County Council, representing the National Winter Service Research Group
Gwynedd CBC representing CSS Wales

Footways & Cycle track Management Group (FCMG)

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Transport for London

Department for Transport

Infrastructure Northern Ireland

RCMG

Department for Transport

Highways England

CIHT (Secretariat)

1) Introduction, apologies (James Bailey)

Apologies were recorded for Arash Khojinian, Jason Jenkins, Douglas Hill and Donald Morrison.

2) Subgroup Updates

DfT Update

In response to questions asked by James Bailey in advance of the meeting Gary Kemp discussed if the current funding model was sustainable. He suggested that it was currently, but noted that long term there could be challenges.

Future role of LTP was discussed. Gary explained that DfT are doing a lot of work with local authorities to update local transport plans. The incentive scheme will roll forward with some tweaks, with the challenge fund not continuing.

On where does levelling up sit with all this, Gary said that levelling-up funding is in addition to the DfT funding. The majority of transport levelling up funding bids are assessed by DfT. There is an avenue for local authorities to use levelling up funding to do straight forward maintenance programmes, but any levelling up funding must address pedestrian, cycle and bus usage.

In response to a question from Justin Ward, Gary was unsure but thought it unlikely in the context of wider financial challenges that there will be any changes from DfT funding in spring statement.

Amanda Richards discussed how the shift to sustainable transport hierarchy will be a big overhaul for the way in which maintenance is done.

James Bailey acknowledged that the 3-year settlement from DfT is a step in the right direction. However, he asked Gary to ensure DfT and Treasury realise that the grant funding remains inadequate to enable adequate or optimum whole-life-cycle maintenance and also to highlight that the single-year settlement for local government is then a barrier to local highway authorities having the confidence to consider locally financing prudential borrowing for capital maintenance.

National Winter Service Research Group

- Richard Stacey noted that NWSRG is developing the work with Hemming Group on presentations and workshops at Cold Comfort. Additionally, Richard said that Awaiting to hear from UKRLG on funding for research bids.
- Considerable increase in Membership applications from Authorities across the UK following changes to the funding model.
- Business Plan continues to be developed with external assistance.
- The developing relationship with LCRIG is already increasing Group's visibility and showing signs of increasing reach and influence.

Members have raised concerns in the following areas:

- Rises in Covid cases and its potential impact on the winter service.
- Red diesel withdrawal for winter service putting extra pressure on already reduced budgets due to Covid, members appreciated the pragmatic approach to enforcement.
- Carbon reduction in winter service still a big issue as many LA's declaring climate emergencies.
- Waiting to hear on funding but research into climate change and effect on winter service and weather patterns, resilience, hence funding bids submitted.

Gary Neill pointed out that there is a trade of between price and climate when it comes down to fuelling road maintenance vehicles. HVO

Action: Gary to share information on how Falkirk fuels their maintenance vehicles.

Road Condition Management Group

Amanda Richards gave an overview of the group:

DfT Road Condition Review

DfT provided an update on the Road Condition review to the January meeting of RCMG. BSI has been contracted to work with DfT on the review and are appointing a technical author. A scoping working group will be set up with the first meeting anticipated to be in April 2022. Stakeholder consultations have taken place with organisations including TRL and survey suppliers with regards to data requirement, LA's, systems suppliers and systems auditors with regards to interoperability and RCMG and VSSG regarding data coverage.

RCMG and VSSG LA members were also asked to provide views on the new burdens that the change in survey requirements may bring as below;

- a) Development and introduction of a new 'technology-neutral' data standard for road condition monitoring, replacing the existing UKPMS standard which mandates a single form of technology (SCANNER) to assess local road condition.
- b) The scope of the new data standard will incorporate local A, B, C, and U roads, with all road monitoring to be carried out by approved automated technologies only (CVI / DVI will not be considered for approval).
- c) Proposal to move from voluntary to mandatory declaration of 'full spectrum' of the percentage of roads categorised, replacing the existing requirement to declare only roads where maintenance should be considered (Red roads).

DfT's view is that there should be no significant new burdens on LA's for the reasons below;

- a) Opening up the market will still enable those LAs which benefit from SCANNER to use SCANNER, whilst those which use non-SCANNER technologies will be free from being required to use a mixture of surveying technologies to fulfil local and national requirements. Competitive pressures and open markets may be expected to improve quality and potentially lower costs (although opinion seems to be that SCANNER surveyors may not have margins to cut prices further). Risks are whether this approach may raise SCANNER operating costs and/or risk pushing SCANNER out of the market.
- b) Requiring LAs to monitor U road condition using approved technologies and to requirements established by the standard may increase LAs' spending on U road monitoring. We expect that the standard will still provide more cost-effective solutions per km monitored as a single technology could be used for all roads, with a positive

step-change in speed, accuracy, and ability to monitor a larger proportion of the U road network. We are initially proposing requirement of 10 % annually / 66% over four years as a baseline proposal (replacing existing 25% annually / 90% over four years).

c) This should entail no new burdens as we believe LAs collect this information already.

Common themes in the responses provided to DfT included;

- Concern over CVI/DVI and other visual surveys such as AEI not being considered for approval could increase costs to LA's rather than reducing them.
- 66% coverage over 4 years as a baseline for U Roads means it could take up to 7 years for full U Road survey coverage and therefore maintenance decisions will be made using out of date information in some circumstances
- A comprehensive programme of training will be required

DfT commented that once the new standards in place they would like RCMG to continue provide a forum for road condition monitoring stakeholders to share information, including updates on the annual benchmarking and accreditation and to act as a steering group for regular updates to the data standard.

2 DfT Statistics update

DfT Road Condition Statistics for 2020 and 2021 were published in October 2021. The publication included;

- New experimental statistics: the Road Condition SCANNER data report, April 2017 to March 2021
- The latest published annual statistics for Road Conditions in England to March 2020 and to March 2021
- A new interactive map which can be found at the following link - Road Condition Explorer

(dft.gov.uk)

Analysis carried out by DfT has identified the following;

- Rural roads have higher RCI's than urban roads
- There is some indication that larger authorities have higher RCI's than smaller ones
- The South East has the highest proportion of "red" roads

Amanda also discussed that LGTAG have a conference on 8th of June in London, in person.

Footways & Cycle track Management Group

Gary Neill gave an outline of the last meeting and discussed how he is now chair of the group. Gary said that they had three presentations from UCL, Healthy Streets and DfT at their last meeting, additionally, the group have developed a survey on what the direction of the group should be going forward.

Andy Pickett showed the group the survey during the meeting. Justin Ward discussed the reference to the website and said that the website on the survey should be changed from CIHT to UKRLG. Additionally, Justin mentioned if a question on guidance for planning cycling infrastructure is working or not, and what changes should be made to future guidance.

Action: Andy Pickett to share the survey from FCMG

Action: Justin/Kyle to distribute survey through UKRLG channel

Asset Management

No update as Donald Morrison gave his absence.

3) Research Programme

Amanda Richards gave an update on the research programs, with: 10 proposals from SCMG, 2 potentially joint with RCMG; 3 from winter group; and 1 put through from RCMG on skid resistance. Another one is a UKRB wide program on drainage, with current guidance being around 10 years old now. The total cost of the research proposed is estimated to be around £750,000.

Justin Ward said that when the funding was being scoped out with board chairs that the UKRLG's aim was that it should be distributed amongst subcommittees instead of as a UKRLG wide programme. Gary Kemp agreed with Justin, but Amanda added that where there were synergies on projects that boards should work together. Gary Kemp said that funding should be announced before UKRLG meeting in April. Additionally, James mentioned that any projects should be cross-referenced with National Highways research projects first and see if there are any tie-ins, as well as any other funding bodies in Scotland.

Gary Neill shared the areas the SRRB are looking at, such as standard carparking spaces and EV charging.

Andy Pickett mentioned that perhaps it is appropriate to review how all the groups can take a more coordinated approach when looking at research programmes. James mentioned that the sporadic nature of the funding can take away the momentum of research programmes.

Action: Gary Neill to share SRRB research areas.

Action: Amanda to look at synergies from research programmes from NWSRG.

4) Code of Practice – LA Survey (James Bailey)

James Bailey discussed that it has been 6 years since the last update to the code of practice and how at the last meeting it was agreed that a survey needs to be developed on how to update the code of practice.

Justin discussed how the Lighting Board also are looking to update the code of practice. Amanda mentioned how the incentive fund mentions updates to the code of practice.

Action: Justin/Kyle to layout a survey on survey monkey by the next UKRLG meeting so they can review. Keep it brief, but scope for more detail with a hopeful release in May.

5) New UKRB Business Plan (James Bailey)

James discussed how the UKRB purpose needs to be reviewed in the context of the current UK roads sector networks. Therefore, a new business plan will allow the UKRB to identify where it now sits and how it complements other groups. James shared an emerging draft of a new UKRB (plan on a page proposal), which has been developed with the sub-group chairs, providing a short-medium term plan for UKRB until an update from UKRLG. The plan included:

- Purpose
- Membership
- Objectives and Priorities
- Communication and Engagement
- Sub-group priorities
- Resources

Group agreed on the look and content of the plan so far with only some minor adjustments made.

Action: James to circulate the plan to group and chairs of sub-groups to add a few words to capture their work.

6) UKRLG Minutes

No points of note to mention from previous minutes.

All actions covered off.

7) UKRB Minutes

All items and actions covered from previous actions.

8) Any Other Business

James mentioned proposed that the next UKRB meeting could be in person or Hybrid, but to review this closer to the time.

Date of Next meeting: 17 June 2022