

UK Bridges Board meeting held on Teams on 23 June 2022

Hazel McDonald, Chair, Transport Scotland
Nick Burgess, London Underground
Hugh Brooman, LoLEG
Gary Kemp, Department for Transport
Anil Kumar, Transport for London
Fred Hartley, Canal & Rivers Trust
Colin Ferris, Department for Infrastructure NI
Neil Loudon, National Highways
Donald MacPherson, SCOTS
Richard Fish, Bridge Owners Forum
Satbir Gill, TAG
Colin Hall, Network Rail
Stuart Molyneux, Metropolitan Authorities
Keith Harwood, ADEPT
Osian Gruffydd Richards, CSS Wales
Kevin Dentith, ADEPT
Justin Ward

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

Hazel McDonald welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were recorded for Jason Hibbert from Welsh Government, Nicola Head from TfL and Bob Humphreys from CSS Wales. The Board welcomed Kumar Anil (for Nicola Head) who is representing TfL and Osian Gruffydd Richards (for Bob Humphreys) representing CSS Wales.

2. Update on research

a. Current submissions – Hazel McDonald

Hazel McDonald thanked Keith and Richard for their work on research. It was noted that the Board was requested by UKRLG to prioritise the research proposals identifying the top three, and this was submitted to UKRLG/DfT. Hazel noted that the current information suggests Boards would be distributed funding equally; adding that Hazel McDonald could work with the Scottish Roads Research Board (SRRB) for framework procurement. Hazel asked what options existed for National Highways for procurement and Neil Loudon said there is a framework to use, so this is also possible.

Hazel McDonald presented the prioritised list of research proposals that the Board had decided upon.

Satbir Gill asked about the carbon management toolkit and he noted that this was a cross-cutting priority across all the Boards and was important for the sector. Satbir, noted that, of all the three proposals that is the top priority. Hazel McDonald noted that the UKRLG, at their planning review, noted the importance of climate action and sought to establish a Board focused specifically on that.

Action: UKRLG to note the point on carbon management toolkit

b. Dissemination of Assessment of Masonry Arch Bridges – Bob Humphries

Hazel McDonald noted an event on 30 June event at ICE focused on this and that the report is freely available on the CIRIA website. The EPSRC work with a variety of Universities, led by Matthew Gilbert, was also noted. The Board noted updates to standards that would include reference to the new guidance on Masonry Arch Bridges.

Neil Loudon said that the CIRIA guidance is out now so people can use this. There were some concerns about the current MEXE approach – in that the view was expressed there was a need to move away from MEXE - but that this will require the revision of CS454 and the work by Matthew Gilbert.

Fred Hartley noted the need to update CS454 following this CIRIA guidance publication, the potential impact on Canal and Rivers Trust and Network Rail and the cost sharing protocol.

Action: Neil Loudon to ensure Technical Project Board consultation on the CS454 review with Overseeing Organisations before next UK BB meeting in Sept.

c. New/emerging projects – All

Neil Loudon noted that the next stage of the Inspection Manual update had commenced and that this was a substantial piece of work. It was expected that this would take up to 2 years to complete. Richard Fish said that a pro-forma was being developed by BOF to record new and emerging research projects and that this would be shared.

3. Survey questions on Code of Practice – Hazel McDonald

The Board noted the draft survey, that this was focused on the content related to the section on bridges.

Action: All – review draft survey questions by <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/57ZTJYL> 30 June 2022 - comments to Hazel McDonald and Justin Ward

4. BICS and alternative schemes updates – Neil Loudon/Richard Fish

Hazel said that the BICS report had been received today from Lantra noting numbers are going up slowly. Neil Loudon gave a presentation on BICS, noting in light of Grenfell there is a stronger focus on competence and BICS provides an excellent framework for both clients and contractors. Richard Fish said that alternative schemes for inspectors, that there are a lot out there (CSS Wales, there are good points on that); but Richard questioned whether other schemes are independently assessed and quality assured? BICS covers all the requirements of the competence standard emerging from the Building Safety Bill. Neil Loudon noted that funding support for inspectors was being explored currently in National Highways.

Osian noted that only two authorities in Wales had undertaken to use BICS and securing support from senior managers was difficult. He recognised that BICS is the standard we need and the CSS Wales scheme is an interim step in the right direction.

There was a discussion about further expansion of the scheme to include Network Rail inspection requirements and that this is being explored by the Steering Group.

Action: Hazel McDonald to write to Stephen Fidler to explore how DfT can encourage wider support to the BICS scheme to increase engagement with the scheme by Local Authorities.

5. Cost sharing Rail track CSS – Matthew Eglinton

Hazel McDonald said that she has written to Stephen Fidler and that Stephen agreed that a review was required. Hazel said that idea will be to have an initial discussion with DfT about how to move this forward noting there is a legislative aspect to this. Fred requested that CRT be involved in the discussions and noted that the revised protocol could consider using similar approaches as outlined in the Code of Practice Well-managed Highway Infrastructure with reference to CRT and boards.

Action: Fred Hartley to be involved in the discussion about cost sharing for Rail track CSS

Action: Hazel McDonald to progress meeting with DfT and agreed representatives to review Railtrack/CSS cost sharing protocol.

6. Bridge guidance and governance – Keith Harwood

Keith Harwood said that a task and finish group had been set-up and he reflected that a large list of guidance used has been drawn up. Keith noted that some guidance was not readily available, there is contradictory guidance out there, some are out of date, some are reliant on subscriptions. In conclusion, the long list would be reviewed and actions accordingly taken. Keith suggested that the list review would initially be about identifying gaps and solving them and wider issues of branding, hosting, etc., would be addressed subsequently.

Neil Loudon noted that the Standards for Highways website includes archived documents dating back to 2001, with older documents available on request. The Board noted awareness of standards was a factor, i.e., you don't know what you don't know.

Richard Fish noted a suite of documents related to a specific problem would be valuable and noted a book by P Dawe on historical bridge loading is available on ICE Virtual Library

Action: Keith Harwood to include a terms of reference for prioritizing the importance/relevance of what is wanted/needed

Action: Neil Loudon to explore whether a comprehensive list of historical documents is available on request from the Standards for Highways website (for information prior to 2001)

Action: Colin Hall to share list of Network Rail guidance and advice Network Rail https://global.ihs.com/csf_home.cfm?&csf=NR [completed]

Action: Keith Harwood to share the list of bridge guidance used within the sector to UKBB members for feedback by 15 July

7. Special Order vehicle movements, heavy load grid. ADEPT member concerns – Keith Harwood

Keith Harwood said this was being discussed at ADEPT and noted a concern about pressure on local authority road network from special order vehicle movements where assessments were only available for HB loading, not SO vehicles. Keith noted that the Heavy Load Grid was very out of date and asked if support could be provided to local authorities to undertake the required assessments.

Neil Loudon noted that there is a lot going on with this, with a number of initiatives underway around increased loads (working with DfT on these); concluding that the heavy and high load grid does require a review. Richard said that this poses a potentially very serious risk to bridges citing an example of a bridge collapse in Italy due to an abnormal load.

The Board noted the importance of structural reviews, i.e., to make sure these are undertaken. Keith Harwood highlighted that there was a group (Abnormal Loads Liaison Group) that more focused on enforcement of abnormal loads and there was noted a potential value in reinvigorating this group.

Action: Keith Harwood to explore potential for the Abnormal Loads Liaison Group to be reinvigorated

8. Boundary Issues – Neil Loudon

Neil Loudon said this was still with the publication team and he was pressing for this. It is a key priority to get this published.

9. Updates

a. SCOTS update

Donald MacPherson provided an update.

b. ADEPT

Keith Harwood noted liaison with other groups was a key focus and said that the work with the Canal & River Trust following the development of the guidance document had gone very well. A focus on links with the Public Rights of Way group, who focus on smaller bridges, was underway.

c. Asset management

Keith Harwood said that the Board met recently under the new Chair, Neill Bennett with a focus on agreeing the new business plan supported by sub-groups. There was a point noted on accounting for highway asset and CIPFA (i.e., it appears that historic costs are being used now, as opposed to gross replacement costs).

Hugh Brooman said that LoBEG was seeking a new Chair and chair of asset management.

d. BOF update

Richard Fish said that the net zero should be on the UKBB agenda and follow up from the net zero bridges group presentation should be progressed. BOF had focused on this at the recent meeting. Richard said that the NZBG was being liaised with at BOF.

10. UKRLG

Hazel McDonald said there have been a couple of strategic away days, one in Leeds, and one in London. Focusing on what is the strategy for UKRLG. Hazel noted that there have been a lot of changes since the Highways Act, and it was recognised that more focus was required with devolved administrations, success planning and resilience.

There was a discussion on a vision statement and the UK Roads Liaison Group is now called the UK Roads Leadership Group. UKRLG recognised that there is a need for a Board focused specifically on climate and carbon to advise the other Boards. There will be a refreshed terms of reference and a need for new business plans. There will be a task and finish group on what research is out there, and one on skills/competency/diversity & inclusion. Other aspects included a review of the Code of Practice to refresh the document.

11. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were noted.

Action carried over: Overloaded vehicles meeting to be set-up by Hazel McDonald

There was a discussion of the BCI system (TfL and LoBEG have worked on variations of this) but the Board agreed there was a need for a single UK-wide document highlighting that this was on the research list. The Board noted that risks for delays for funding meant that alternative options for delivering this would be worthwhile.

Neil Loudon said that National Highways have commissioned work on their structures metrics and better ways of representing the BCI scores would be useful (to link to actions needed as opposed to ratings such as 'poor') but that this was a work in progress. Hazel asked if there was scope for linking to the work by National Highways.

Action: Hugh Brooman and Nicola Head to share latest version of BCI document with Keith Harwood

Action: Hazel McDonald to write to authorities formally seeking agreement that the BCI document is owned by UKBB and updated with agreement of UKBB members.

Action: Neil Loudon to liaise with Keith Harwood on BCI scores work by National Highways

Action: Justin Ward to work with Richard Fish on BOF Grand Challenges and Rochester Bridge Trust carbon work coverage in Transportation Professional

12. AOB

a. Temporary Bridges

Gary Kemp gave a brief update on BridgeCat saying that Matt Eglington and GAIST had a meeting recently on next steps. A proposal from GAIST is expected in 3-4 weeks for DfT consideration.

Gary Kemp said on temporary bridges: following a meeting with DfT procurement on temporary bridges 2 – populating the portal with supplier information – was moving forward. A single tender action has been agreed with an aim of delivery by October of the project in time for storm season. The Board thanked Gary for progressing this.

b. Parapet protocol with Network Rail

Action: Hazel McDonald to work on progressing the work on the Parapet protocol with Network Rail

c. UKRLG case to treasury for spending case

Action: 8th July comments on the document to Hazel McDonald

Action: Colin Hall highlighted Network Rail's guidance note on how they deal with outside party structures and their impact on the railway. Colin to share for comments views/awareness

Action: Hazel McDonald to set UKBB meeting dates beyond Sept 2022.

13. Date of next meeting

15 September 2022