

UKRLG 13 March 2023 – held on Teams

Stephen Fidler – Chair and Department for Transport
John Lamb – UK Adaptation, Biodiversity and Climate Board
David Denner – Welsh Government, Chair of UK Lighting & Technology Board
David Porter – Infrastructure Northern Ireland
James Bailey – Staffordshire County Council and Chair of UK Roads Board
Ewan Wallace – Aberdeenshire Council representing SCOTS
Neill Bennett – Derbyshire County Council and Chair of UK Asset Management Board
Janvi Shah – National Highways and Vice Chair of UK Asset Management Board
Hazel McDonald – Transport Scotland and Chair of UK Bridges Board
Matthew Eglinton – Department for Transport
Lila Tachtsi – National Highways
Andy Falley – Welsh Government
Mark Stevens – representing ADEPT
Mark Kemp – Hertfordshire County Council and Chair of UK Network Management Board
Sue Percy - CIHT
Justin Ward - CIHT

1. Introduction, welcome and apologies

Stephen welcomed everyone to the meeting, apologies were recorded for Stewart Leggett (Transport Scotland), Darren Thomas (CSS Wales).

2. Future skills

Janvi Shah led a discussion/workshop on the role of UKRLG in future skills/competencies.

There was a poll ran on 'What sort of skills and competency training should CIHT lead on'.

Sue Percy, CEO of CIHT then gave a update on skills. Sue noted a recent survey from CBI highlighting labour and skills shortages now rank as the highest concern alongside concerns around inflation and cost of living concerns. 94% of firms surveyed had skills shortages and investment in training is down.

Transport for the West Midlands have found that annual demand is going to be 124,000 required each year in engineering (across the whole of engineering). Research by the Highways Sector Council has shown 50% of the workforce are mid-career joiners.

Brexit is having an impact, as is the transference to other sectors (e.g. rail, housing, construction) – so there is a huge skills and labour shortage issue. Sue highlighted that nine in ten workers will need new skills by 2030 according to research.

The challenges specifically for the highways/transport sector are around the perception of the sector, career progression within the public sector, movement of people within the sector for the private sector, and a perception of a male dominated sector. The package of the wider job were also highlighted as important – the values of organisations, flexible working and so on. The Highways Sector Council has been looking at a project around 'brand highways' to attract young people (particularly those who are interested in environmental issues and technological innovation). To monitor the sector, Sue highlighted that CIHT is undertaking a bi-annual survey on the workforce.

Sue concluded by saying that the question should not be just on 'what skills are required' but there is a need to tap into the wider issues highlighted above.

David Porter highlighted that there is a larger political buy-in issue and the perception of the roads sector, perhaps being perceived negatively. There is a need to have an understanding of the wider context within the sector: we need to underline the absolute necessity of the sector to the UK. Neill Bennett said that - within the next five years - there is a necessity to address issues within the local highways sector, as there could be a real crunch there in terms of securing people into that sector. Andy Falleyn highlighted that the Roads Review has now been completed in Wales which has addressed uncertainty that has existed in Wales; addressing these challenges does require people to make the changes within the sector and this requires the supply-chain to support that (with the right skills in place).

Andy said that maintaining assets going forward is essential – fixing an existing bridge or culvert will require more thinking. Andy said that the language used needs to be changed within the sector and the context has changed but the sector needs to be clear that the sector offers a major opportunity in supporting changes in how people live and work (e.g. active travel, mode shift – need to be considered mainstream now).

Stephen Fidler asked about the focus for UKRLG should be on the public sector side of the industry compared to wider skills in the private sector. Lila Tachtsi highlighted that National Highways has been keen to learn from other sectors (e.g., aviation) and has reflected that the highways sector does lead in very important ways, but there is a need to share this more widely and be more ambitious in sharing the good work. Sue Percy highlighted a very positive response to what has been said.

Action: Sue Percy to feedback results from the UKRLG skills session to a session on skills with DfT [taking place shortly after the meeting]

Ewan Wallace highlighted work inks with the Director of Education within local authorities enables connections to be made. Aberdeen Council has been working on graduate apprenticeships. Matthew Eglinton said that the sheer variety of the roles within the highways environment needs to be highlighted. Neill Bennett said that there had been a major incident over the weekend in Derbyshire following severe weather has highlighted the importance of the sector to communities.

There was an exercise to explore future skills and competency requirements that UKRLG would take account of.

Action: Janvi Shah/Justin Ward to identify next steps for UKRLG in terms of spotting the gaps, identifying future requirements and UKRLG's role within all of this (both UKRLG role both in influencing or developing work)

3. UKRLG Communication Strategy

David Porter noted that the shift from 'liaison' to 'leadership' is important and that the revised Mission and Vision help articulate the unique role that UKRLG plays within the sector.

David then ran through an outline approach for a communication strategy for UKRLG saying that he would like to see the work of the Boards better communicated.

John Lamb highlighted the wider market segmentation for UKRLG: firstly communication for the 100 people who serve across our Boards; secondly the wider network of constituent Bodies; thirdly - people who come to the website for Codes and Guidance.

David Denner said it is important to target our sector. There were suggestions of having a forward plan for communication outputs from each Board would be helpful. There were points made on Highways UK and visibility at this for UKRLG. It was noted that UKRLG twitter to be more visible even when meetings are taking place and topic areas.

David proposed that the UKRLG website works for the purposes of UKRLG and proposed that the hosting arrangements in place remain. Following a discussion, this was agreed.

Action: David Porter to consider feedback from the UKRLG members and take these into account

4. Update from members

Andy Falley gave an update on the Roads Review in Wales and highlighted that the sector can play a key role in addressing major challenges going forward.

5. Code of Practice – survey results

Hazel McDonald and James Bailey presented an update on the Code of Practice. Lila Tachtsi said she could bring in some lessons from DMRB on the process for managing updates and content delivery. Stephen Fidler agreed that a more responsive, flexible approach to updating the Code would be beneficial in terms of the format of the document.

Action: Stephen Fidler, Matthew Eglinton and Board Chairs to agree next steps for the Code of Practice with Board Chairs

6. Minutes of last meeting and UKRLG strategy plan

Stephen Fidler highlighted the research funding approach and procurement was progressing well via LCRIG. LCRIG are a community interest company and are working with the Transport Technology Forum (TTF).

7. UKRLG member and Board updates

John Lamb gave an update on the ABC Board with challenges of ageing infrastructure. Matthew Eglinton highlighted the National Underground Asset Register was another component for the sector.

Hazel McDonald said that the RAC Foundation research on bridges is due to be released shortly and gave updates on Board activities.

James Bailey gave an update on the UK Roads Board highlighting a change to the NWSRG constitution and said that Gary Neil is stepping down as the Chair of Footways & Cycleways Group. Changes in markings for CE markings was also highlighted.

Janvi Shah gave an update on the UK Asset Management Board.

David Denner said the last meeting of the UK Lighting & Technology Board was well attended, whilst pushing for younger members to attend the meetings. David highlighted links with Live Labs and how the energy crisis is affecting every part of the industry now. David said there was industry interest in updating the Code of Practice on the Management of Electronic Traffic Equipment was being explored.

Action: Board Chairs to ensure links with Live Labs programme – DfT to liaise with ADEPT

Mark Kemp highlighted that the Network Management Board had engaged with ORR and suggested other Boards could benefit from that.

Action: Board Chairs to consider getting updates from ORR

Mark Stevens gave an update on the Engineering Board saying that Active Travel England had attended the meeting; OZEV and EV charging roll-out; and feasibility of larger vehicles.

Action: Lila Tachtsi said that CEDR is running a workshop on Eurocodes – invite Hazel McDonald to the session

Stephen Fidler said that DfT had put material out on Thursday, including the HS2 details and delays to some road schemes.

AOB

There was no AOB.