

## **UK Roads Leadership Group meeting (hybrid) held on 6 June 2023**

- Stephen Fidler, DfT and Chair UKRLG
- John Lamb, Chair UK ABC Board
- David Denner, Welsh Government - Chair UK Lighting & Technology Board
- Lila Tachtsi, National Highways
- Mark Kemp, Chair UK Network Management Board
- Hazel McDonald, Transport Scotland - Chair UK Bridges Board
- James Bailey, Chair UK Roads Board
- David Porter, Department of Infrastructure Northern Ireland
- Darren Thomas, CSS Wales
- Neil Bennett, Chair UK Asset Management Board
- Matthew Eglinton, DfT
- Mark Stevens, ADEPT – attended at Board updates.
- Ewan Wallace, SCOTS
- Justin Ward, UKRLG Secretariat
- Isobel Wilson, CIHT – left after item 2.

### **1. Introduction, welcome and apologies**

Stephen Fidler welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were recorded for Hugh Gillies (Transport Scotland) and Andy Falley (Welsh Government).

### **2. CIHT's Green and Blue Infrastructure**

Isobel Wilson from CIHT presented CIHT's work on Green and Blue Infrastructure. Mark Kemp highlighted the impact of funding constraints for the highways sector for not progressing with adopting GBI. In terms of guidance - how to use biodiversity - Mark highlighted that advice on funding in guidance would be useful (e.g., around biodiversity net gain). Hazel McDonald said that CIRIA is aiming to produce guidance on the asset management of GBI. David Porter said that terminology was important – blue green can be used, as can green *and* blue and that might focus the importance of the focus on schemes. Matthew Eglinton noted that the maintenance of GBI was an important point and effective cross-departmental working on this agenda including DfT, DLUHC.

Mark Kemp noted that most authorities have declared a climate emergency (or something similar) and have targets around biodiversity and natural resources over the next 10 years. Mark said it is more about guidance and funding.

Lila Tachtsi said the asset management point is important and said asset classes had been published by National Highways that included the soft estate. Lila said National Highways has looked at this now as an asset.

Darren Thomas said there is access to green infrastructure funding in Wales for local authorities (on top of the drive for active travel and 20mph limits coming shortly). Darren highlighted that there are also dark skies in Wales.

Stephen highlighted the importance of a UK wide perspective. Ewan Wallace said that a definitive set of guidance (bringing together the various elements together) to understand the latest position on green and blue infrastructure. Ewan said that, as such, there would need to be version control on this.

Ewan Wallace said that the Scottish Government and COSLA are setting up a joint climate intelligence group and some work on flood resilience due coming shortly.

John Lamb said that naturally the report fits within the ABC Board and the new structure of UKRLG can fit within this. John said that there is also 'grey' in the mix. There is work that LGTAG and CIWEM have done. John Lamb suggested looking at leveraging funding from Live Labs that are involved with Plantlife that might be worth taking account of. David Denner said that within Wales a draft has gone up on the Nature Recovery Plan and will be published shortly. David Denner said that the professional leadership and guidance for the sector could be useful. There is the Code of Practice and this could be another important document within this.

**Action: Stephen Fidler, Mark Kemp to focus on cross-departmental director general local government with ADEPT members – UKRLG members to contribute views that should be shared for this**

**Action: Lila Tachtsi to share the asset class on soft estate by National Highways**

**Action: Agreed that a collaborative project between UKRLG and CIHT on guidance for highway specific standards on GBI was worth progressing**

**Action: Agreed that the ABC Board would provide the leadership on the work**

**Action: UKRLG to help with the scope on the guidance (picking up best practice, a UK-wide approach, asset management approach)**

**Action: Consider funding within other research priorities for UKRLG/ABC Board**

**Action: Link to CIRIA – John Lamb/Hazel McDonald to explore the links with this**

### **3. Member updates**

David Denner gave an update on the Welsh Government – main message that intend to issue a statement on roads prior to the summer recess. The Roads Review response is being completed and a review on maintenance in Wales by Matthew Lugg has been published recently. A key recommendation is to adopt the Code of Practice Well managed highway infrastructure i.e., recommends a move to properly assessed risk-based asset management policy and consideration of the character of the highways asset or how that may change and how that may influence future maintenance.

David Porter said that the in Northern Ireland, as there is no devolved government, there are challenges with maintenance funding (e.g., consulting on switching off all the street lighting and only focusing on emergency repairs on the highways).

Hazel McDonald noted there have been changes within the Scottish Government with a new First Minister and Cabinet. The road safety framework and safe systems are being worked on currently. An approach to climate change and resilience is due to be published shortly with the aim of having an adaptation plan this year. Hazel also noted that Scotland's first Low Emission Zone (LEZ) had been launched in Glasgow on 1st June, and the 20mph trunk road review had been completed and TS are working with Local Authorities on implementation. Ewan Wallace noted that the annual conference of SCOTS had taken place recently.

**Action: Ewan Wallace to share Sheriff Report on a recent highways case**

Lila Tachtsi said that National Highways are doing a lot of work with smart motorways. Work is underway preparing for RIS3. An environmental sustainability strategy has been published recently. Lila said that National Highways asset management progress has been positively reported on by ORR (but have not yet adopted the risk-based approach in the Code of Practice). Lila said there is a new asset management system that reports now on ride quality (customer satisfaction now part of the measure). Road to Zero harm is also in focus, and a key priority area. Lila has set up a taskforce dealing with legacy drainage assets (not designed to current standards).

Stephen Fidler noted Lila Tachtsi was leaving NH and recorded Lila had made a significant contribution to UKRLG and thanked her for this.

Stephen Fidler provided an update on DfT and highlighted forward planning that is underway and said that funding, within inflationary pressures, was constrained currently. Mark Kemp highlighted that there was a degree of political uncertainty within context of recent elections; and, as such, programming new schemes was a challenge. As such, having flexibility to shift between schemes was important. Matthew Eglinton highlighted the skills conference tomorrow by LGTAG – the sheer scope and breadth of skills required was significant.

#### **4. UKRLG Board updates**

UK Asset Management Board – Neil Bennett said the next meeting was this week. The main activity is focused on delivery of the business plan (currently focusing on using internal Board resources). Neil said that he is trying to secure a nomination for Vice Chair given that Janvi Shah is leaving National Highways (to a non-highways role).

UK Bridges Board – Hazel McDonald said that a cost sharing agreement with the Canal and River Trust and highway authorities was being worked on. There has been work looking at hosting new guidance on the new Bridge Owners Forum website. The RAC Foundation survey was published in February on bridge condition. The BICS support letter from DfT was welcomed and Hazel thanked Matthew Eglinton for this. Mark Kemp highlighted a piece of work linked to decarbonisation around the amount of steel required for reinforcement for bridge work and said that Keith Harwood is working on this through the Transport Innovation and Research Group.

UK Roads Board – James Bailey said that the next meeting was this afternoon. James said that David Kinsey was now the Chair of the FCMG. James said that he has been Chair of the UK Roads Board for seven years and was aware of the term that was set for three years. James added that given the new Boards: is there a need for the Roads Board going forward? Could the sub-groups fit elsewhere within the new Boards (Asset Management and ABC). John Lamb reflected on links to other bodies and suggested more time and consideration around the future of the Roads Board was worth thinking about more.

**Action: James Bailey and Justin Ward to develop a paper for options on the future of the UK Roads Board (with a range of options: retain, remove, revise) in consultation with other Board Chairs [checking how current members would think about this and where responsibilities would go]**

ADEPT Engineering Board – Mark Stevens said that there was good attendance at the last meeting and flagged a Haringey Case.

UK Adaptation, Biodiversity, and Climate Board – John Lamb said that there have been a series of recent meetings with an aim to be as practical as possible (and making links to other bodies such as Plantlife). On issues around adaptation they are looking at the tell-tale

signs (bridges, structures, retaining walls, landslides) of the early warning signs of climate change. John Lamb highlighted the differences between approaches around adaptation across the UK i.e., with differences across the Devolved Administrations. Stephen Fidler said he was keen to learn from other administrations on this.

UK Network Management Board – Mark Kemp said that ORR had presented at the last meeting and there was a paper on safe systems.

UK Lighting & Technology Board – David Denner highlighted that skills, energy costs, and the East Riding Live Labs were in focus at the recent meeting. David said that the Code of Practice is now five years old and required attention.

## **5. Research and Code of Practice**

Stephen Fidler highlighted frustrations that the plan with LCRIG had not come to fruition - as the delivery mechanism to support the delivery of UKRLG research commissioning. There was a discussion around exploring the links between Live Labs and wider lessons being translated to good practice for the UK highways sector. Stephen Fidler said that – specifically for the review of the Code of Practice – could be a direct commission by DfT on behalf of UKRLG. Matthew Eglinton said that for Live Labs 2 the funding goes direct to Local Authorities for this.

Lila Tachtsi said that the Codes of Practice did bring the sector forward massively and needed an ongoing review. Lila said that National Highways would be pleased to support UKRLG on the work. Stephen Fidler said that a longer-term call off contract (or annual review process) would be valuable for the Code of Practice.

John Lamb said that considering SME's in terms of commissioning for an update of the Code of Practice was worth it.

**Action: Matthew Eglinton/Justin Ward – choices and options for taking the Code of Practice forward (in terms of scale of work, who wants to be involved) - for paper at the next meeting**

**Action: Explore East Riding Live Labs 2 for links to work UK Lighting & Technology Board**

**Action: UK Board Chairs to identify key priorities and work on procurement routes (including scope of work) - £80k - £100k per Board (for financial year 2023/24) and willing Local Authority to lead procurement**

## **6. Governance**

Stephen Fidler said that there was a need for more clarity on the process for appointing Chairs and Vice Chairs and how this is managed in practice and having this very clearly outlined.

**Action: Option d was agreed as a temporary decision but with a more limited time period of six month (for changes in employment status for Board Chairs from public to private sector) to allow to sequencing replacement of Chairs**

**Action: David Porter and Justin Ward to refine options presented and share with UKRLG members for agreement for members to feedback on (perhaps via a poll).**

## **7. AOB**

There was no further business and the meeting concluded.