

Minutes of the Bridges Board Meeting, held in Room S2, Great Minster House, 21 November 2001.

Present:

David Lynn Warwickshire CC/CSS (Chair)

Ian Holmes DTLR
Gerry Hayter HA
James Hardy HA
Andrew Cook DTLR

Raymund Johnstone Scottish Executive
Mike Swanson Scottish Executive
Ronnie Wilson DRD Northern Ireland
Andy Phillips National Assembly for Wales
Jim Irons SCOTS
Evan Pugh Welsh Association of Technical Officers
Greg Perks CSS
Steve Tart Manchester CC (representing met. authorities)
Brian Bell Railtrack
Frank Paine LOBEG
David Yeoell LOTAG

Secretariat: Andrew Oldland, Chris Hudson

1. Minutes of previous meeting

Item 3.3 – the Board agreed that “closures” should be changed to “operating restrictions”.

2. Matters arising

Description of non-highway authority bridge owners

Board members agreed that the phrase “private bridge owner” is inappropriate to describe all non-highway authority owners. There are three types of bridge owner: highway authority public, non-highway authority public and private. Railtrack are the biggest private owner and are represented on the Board.

Action – Secretariat to note.

New Chairperson for Roads Liaison Group

Margaret Clare will be replacing Alan Pickett as Chair of the Roads Liaison Group. This will take place in January 2002.

Institution of Civil Engineers representation

John Collins (NAW) was not present at this meeting. He is taking forward this issue.

Distribution of meeting dates and minutes

The Secretariat will send all Bridges Board members a list of the 2002 meetings for the Roads Liaison Group, Roads Board, Bridges Board and Lighting Board. DTLR agreed to send notes of RLG and Board meetings by e-mail to all Board members.

Action – Secretariat to send out appropriate list and notes.

3. Amendment of Bridges Board Terms of Reference

It was agreed that these will be revised in accordance with the RLG recommendations that key tasks of the Board should be shown separately, and that the Board's powers to secure funding for research projects should be clarified.

Action – DTLR to produce a revised version and circulate this to Bridges Board members.

4. Representation of Bridges Board Chair on RLG

The Board agreed that the Bridges Board Chair should become a permanent member of the RLG.

5. Progress on bridge management systems and Code of Practice

Code of Practice for Bridges (Paper BB1)

The Bridges Board have been tasked with taking forward the work on bridge surveys, inventories and management systems.

The target date for introduction of the inventory is June 2002, Code of Practice and management system to be introduced by the middle of 2003.

Brian Bell (Railtrack) considers the target date of June 2003 unrealistic for introduction of a management system.

DTLR have made a funding bid for production of the Code. If the bid is approved, a steering group with project manager will need to be set up to produce the Code.

The Board agreed that the Code should be based on service delivery and should also incorporate benchmarks.

David Lynn will discuss this issue with Ian Holmes. Ian Holmes will produce a paper on this for the January meeting.

Action: Ian Holmes to produce a paper setting out plans for development of a Code of Practice for bridge management.

SMIS (Paper BB2)

James Hardy (Highways Agency) gave a presentation of the SMIS system.

SMIS takes account of new business drivers in HA and new bridge management procedures. It takes data from BA 81 inspections.

SMIS provides a “whole life” assessment of bridge maintenance need and the facility to prioritise work on a risk basis. When fully operational it will be able to produce treatment recommendations and optimised bridge maintenance programmes, using selected criteria.

The bridge maintenance programme can be produced for up to 30 years ahead. SMIS provides the facility for the maintenance programmes to be produced on a whole life cost basis.

SMIS will also be able to provide a co-ordinated inspection system which could be used for performance indicators on bridges. It works by having a central database to which all HA staff have access.

The facilities currently available are the basic inventory system and an ad hoc query facility. The other phases are planned to be in place by February 2002.

The HA intends SMIS as a core tool for their managing agents. SMIS will link with other HA databases including the abnormal loads database.

Bridges Board members made the point that a 30 year bridge management programme would be subject to unknown variables such as traffic management considerations.

The question was asked by whether the core SMIS system could accommodate the abnormal load database (including local authority bridges). To do this LAs would need access to SMIS.

Local authority bridge management system

It was agreed that DTLR and local authorities should agree authorities' data needs and develop a suitable bridge management system.

Bridge Board members agreed that a basic version of SMIS might be appropriate for local authorities, although local authorities need to prioritise bridge maintenance programmes on a much shorter timescale than the HA. It may also be difficult for local authorities to populate a version of SMIS with appropriate data.

Bridges board members agreed that "core" version of SMIS (with "add-on" facilities as appropriate) could be considered as a possible basis for a local authority bridge management system.

Bridge Performance Indicators

DTLR intend to introduce Best Value performance indicators for bridges, in the Best Value consultation paper for 2003/04.

A bridge performance indicator would need to work from a consistent bridge management system.

The highest level indicator would inform the road user as to whether a given bridge is performing its function. At a wider level an indicator would measure progress against 10 Year Plan Targets.

The Highways Agency are planning to introduce indicators for their network, based on safety, availability and condition of structures.

The CSS paper was considered by the HA but the proposed indicators in this paper were considered more suitable to local roads, and were not adopted by HA as a key performance indicator.

It was not thought appropriate that local authorities and the HA should use the same performance indicators. Vicky Hogg at HA is preparing a paper setting out proposed HA performance indicators for bridges.

Railtrack stated that they already have an indicator for use by the Rail Regulator. Brian Bell suggested that future performance indicators for bridges should be linked to the type/age of bridges.

The Board agreed that the local authority bridge indicator should focus on the highest level i.e. availability to the public. It should also indicate authorities' ability to manage their bridge stock.

Local authorities are looking to DTLR for guidance on the way performance indicators are to be used, as the Roads Liaison Group are pushing this issue forward. DTLR stressed that the indicator, in addition to providing information to the public, should act as a tool which bridge maintenance engineers should use to make the case to local politicians for adequate funding for bridge maintenance.

The type of indicator that could be used as a Best Value indicator would need to be related to a local authority's bridge stock as an entity, rather than to individual bridges.

It was suggested that the proposed local authority indicator based on ability to carry 40 tonne vehicles be weighted to take into account traffic volumes.

The Welsh Association of Technical Officers (WATO) have introduced two indicators for bridges in Wales. The first is based on the number of square metres of decking needing attention (split into the different classes of road).

The second indicator is the number of bridges needing attention. If the cost is over £100 per square metre needing maintenance, the bridge is included in the indicator result.

Action – David Lynn to carry out further work on the development of an indicator for bridges. This will include consideration of the work already done by Railtrack, WATO and the City of Westminster.

Action - DTLR to consider submissions on bridge performance indicators forwarded to DTLR by Board members. These will be discussed at the next Board meeting.

Calculation of bridge maintenance backlogs

DTLR need to determine the bridge maintenance backlog in order to ensure funding in the 10-Year Plan is correctly targeted. To determine the backlog it will first be necessary to decide on the optimum condition for bridges. This will depend on the condition recommendations decided for the Code of Practice.

The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not included in the bridge maintenance backlog calculation for England although they are caught in the same spending round. They will need to carry out their own work in determining the backlog.

Status of the Bridge Owners' Forum

The Bridge Owners' Forum has agreed to work with the Bridges Board, supplying technical advice where required, but it will not take its whole direction from the Bridges Board, because of the broadness of its sphere of interest.

The Terms of Reference for the Bridge Owners' Forum will be amended accordingly.

Action: DTLR will draft a letter of acceptance to the Bridge Owners Forum which will be shown to the Bridges Board Chairman, who will approve it and send it to the Bridge Owners' Forum.

Safety Requirements for Bridge Approaches

DTLR and the Highways Agency will jointly take forward the provision of advice on this issue. The Railways Inspectorate report on the Selby incident is now almost complete.

Abnormal load database (issue raised by Andrew Cook, VSE).

Andrew Cook's division have put in a bid to the Treasury for development of an abnormal load database, which would cover England, Scotland and Wales. Hauliers will be able to access this database when planning their route.

DTLR Ministers have approved the bid and it is now being considered by the Treasury.

The question was raised about the haulier's indemnity to the bridge owner, and whether this still applies when the haulier is instructed to take a certain route by this database. Andrew Cook will deal with this issue separately.

The proposed abnormal route system will be provided free to local authorities by DTLR. DTLR would also provide funding for the population of the database.

DTLR suggested that, in the interests of consistency, the abnormal load database, when operational, could be extended to become a database for all

local authority bridges. It would still also serve its function of being an abnormal load database.

It was acknowledged that a number of local authorities already have bridge databases. It may be difficult to modify these to meet a common specification and the Board thought that in some cases it may be easier for authorities to adopt the new national system rather than modify their existing system to meet the national specification.

Distribution methods for funding

Distribution methods for funding future LTP capital allocations for bridges in the 2003/04 LTP allocation will be discussed at the Bridges Board. The formula must be agreed by next March; this means that it must be discussed at the January 2002 meeting.

Action: DTLR to produce a paper outlining a formula for discussion.

Any Other Business

The Highways Agency are setting up a research programme to appraise the results of Stage 2 assessments on post 1960 concrete bridges.

Bridge Owners Forum members are considering a change proposed by Railtrack to their BD 21 assessments.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Bridges Board will take place on Wednesday 30 January 2002.

DTLR
Roads Policy 3
27 December 2001