

Minutes of the 26th Meeting of the UK Bridges Board

Meeting held at LG5, Great Minster House, on 17 October 2008

Present:

Greg Perks	CSS/Northumberland CC (Chair)
Paul Foskett	DfT
Neil Loudon	Highways Agency
Ronnie Wilson	DRD (NI) Roads Service
Tudor Roberts	Transport Wales
Bill Valentine	Transport Scotland
David Yeoell	LOTAG
Graham Cole	CSS/ Surrey County Council
Campbell Middleton	Bridge Owners Forum
Rod Howe	British Waterways
Brian Bell	Network Rail
Ian Bucknall	Network Rail
Bob Flitcroft	CSS/Lancashire County Council
Satbir Gill	TAG/London Borough of Hounslow
Stuart Molyneux	Metropolitans / Salford MBC
Pam Williams	Consultant/CIPFA project
Andrew Oldland	DfT (Secretariat)

1. Apologies, new members and introductions

The Board welcomed the following new members: Neil Garton Jones (CSS Wales), Stephen Pottle (TfL), Neil Loudon (HA), Satbir Gill (TAG) and Ian Bucknall (Network Rail).

Apologies were received from Richard Fish, Edward Bunting, Graham Bessant, Stephen Pottle and David Mackenzie. Greg Perks was standing in as chair for Richard Fish.

2. Note of last meeting and matters arising

Note of the last meeting

Brian Bell stated that he had sent the Secretariat a copy of his amendments to the 23 June minutes, concerning Items 4 and 9. As these had not yet been circulated by the Secretariat, it was agreed that a copy of the minutes, with Brian's amendments, should now be circulated.

Action - Secretariat

Matters arising

Security of Road Tunnels and Bridges - It had been agreed to invite Mike Wilson (HA) to the October UKBB meeting, to discuss issues arising at the Security of Road Tunnels and Bridges stakeholder group meeting. Howard Owen from the HA was due to attend this meeting of the UKBB, but sent his apologies. The Board will consider inviting Howard Owen to a future meeting.

UK Bridges Board Business Plan

After the 16 July UKRLG meeting, it was agreed that the UK Roads Board plan should be used as a template. Greg Perks has done some further work on the UK Bridges Board plan.

Tunnel Operators and Geotechnical Asset Owners Forum

The Geotechnical Asset Owners' Forum took place on 8 June. Edward Bunting from DfT attended the forum.

3. Presentation on CIPFA/HAMFIG work

See Paper UKBB 16/08

Introduction of new accounting guidance

HAMFIG (the Highway Management Financial Information Group) have now started work with CIPFA to develop guidance that replaces the existing asset valuation guidance. The HAMFIG work is jointly funded by CIPFA and the Government. The formal consultation on the guidance will take place in June 2009. It is intended that the new version should be launched in October 2009.

Once the Government responds to the CIPFA report on accounting mechanisms, there will be project group set up including DfT, the devolved administrations, and the audit bodies. The group will deal with the issue of implementation of the new guidance as part of developing a Statement of Recommended Practice for auditors.

Bill Valentine from Transport Scotland has already volunteered for this group.

Transport Wales will consult internally to decide who they will send to this group.

Action - Tudor Roberts

Satbir Gill (TAG) has also volunteered to serve on the group.

A research specification for a project to compile additional advice to authorities on asset valuation of bridges and structures has been agreed and will be let shortly. DfT is willing to fund this research. There is now a need for a project steering group to manage the project. This would be a short-term group which would meet three or four times. Stephen Pottle has already volunteered to serve on this group.

The HA's asset management system (IAMS) is intended to produce information to support the Comprehensive Spending Review, but can also be

used for managing assets. The system is linked to a depreciation model. HA have already contributed to the work of HAMFIG and it was suggested that HA could also contribute to the new research project.

LOBEG has a methodology linking the depreciation, cost and condition of structures assets. It was suggested that the new research project could consider LOBEG's methodology. Some UKBB members thought that this would not be suitable as it is not component-based, but relates depreciation back to gross replacement cost.

Some concern was expressed that depreciation calculations, under IFRS methodology, could be very time-consuming, especially for smaller authorities.

It was noted that there would now be a number of different groups considering accounting guidance. These would include HAMFIG, the separate CIPFA project group to be set up to implement the accounting changes, the steering group set up to manage the project described above, and the UK Roads Liaison Group asset management working group (formerly the CSS/TAG asset management working group, which is now a sub-group of the UK Roads Board). The UKBB considered it important that the remit of each group should be clearly defined.

4. Presentation of Bridge Owners Forum Annual Report

See paper circulated at the meeting.

Campbell Middleton (BOF Chair) expressed his thanks to the Highway Maintenance team at DfT for the progress they had made in moving research proposals towards procurement in recent months.

It was noted that the issue of DfT acceptance of BOF recommendations for Single Tender action still needs to be resolved.

BOF have expressed a wish for better communication between DfT and BOF, especially where project proposals have failed to win approval for DfT funding. Lessons learnt recently and proposals subsequently made should improve communications going forward.

On behalf of the UKBB, Greg Perks thanked BOF for their work during the past year.

Some UKBB members were concerned that DfT was providing insufficient funding for research. Campbell Middleton's view was that a fixed percentage of the annual highways maintenance budget should be earmarked for research. In his view, this would reflect the position in the rail industry where 1% of the maintenance budget is given to research

DfT's explained that all proposals for the introduction of or changes to funding were subject to scrutiny and clearance procedures. Therefore any proposal

should be backed up with a business case. The new procedures to be put in place for research project bids for 09/10 would provide a framework for considering proposals put forward.

DfT mentioned that central Government support to local authorities for Highway Maintenance had increased significantly within the past 10 years.

5. Research Priorities

See Paper UKBB 10/08

UKRLG will consider the broad policy areas set out in Paper UKBB 10/08 and develop research themes from these, as a result of discussion at UKRLG.

In January – February 2009, DfT will consolidate the detail of the research proposals. DfT intends to write to the Board Chairs shortly after the November UKRLG meeting, advising the Boards which research themes to pursue.

Local authority asset management information will also help make the case for research (e.g. on whether bridges are deteriorating).

.Dr Middleton agreed to contribute to a paper which UKBB could take to UKRLG, setting out BOF's research priorities for bridge research, the current budget awarded, and referring to the rail industry's 1% figure. BOF would consider the DfT research framework so that its proposals could be set out in that context.

BOF and UKBB members were requested to submit information, in bullet point form, to Greg Perks, who would then collate these into a paper.

Action – Greg Perks¹

Paul Foskett advised that the DfT highway maintenance team would be willing to discuss this paper with Greg when he has produced a draft.

Tudor Roberts (WAG) raised a question about progress regarding phase 2 of the Decision Support Tool project Paul Foskett advised that this matter had been raised at the recent BoF meeting and when he agreed to look into it and report back to BoF.²

Action – Paul Foskett

6. Commuted sums for highway maintenance

See Paper UKBB 08/08 and draft final report (UKBB 08/08A).

The Board was asked whether, in their view, it was now appropriate to review the guidance, given that the housing market is now falling and the guidance may place extra demands on housing developers.

¹ Greg Perks has subsequently forwarded this paper to DfT.

² Paul Foskett subsequently updated the BoF Secretariat on this project on 10 November.

UKBB agree with the publication of the guidance, but noted that the report presented to them does not appear to be the final report. Paul Foskett agreed to look into this matter.³

7. Design and Maintenance guidance for local roads

See Paper UKBB 09/08 and draft final report (UKBB 09/08A).

The Board were asked to agree with the Project Steering Group, that the report produced by the consultant (Atkins) is a useful document.

The Board agreed, with the recommendation that, if any of the specific research projects mentioned in the report took place, a project steering group should be set up to manage these.

The guidance would have similar status to the Codes of Practice, and would not be legally binding. Atkins have carried out a Cost/Benefit assessment on this implementation of the guidance, and the assessment looks favourable. The guidance would cover the whole UK when issued.

It was noted that Northern Ireland was not mentioned in the Atkins report. DfT agreed that the report would be amended to take account of this.

Action - DfT

8. Revenue Support Grant

See paper UKBB 11/08

The Board was asked to comment on two questions

- Whether it is appropriate to include bridge-related data input in the highway maintenance Relative Needs Formula (RNF).
- Whether the present formula reflects local authorities' current spending on bridges.

On the first question, the Board were in favour of some bridge related data being included in a revised RNF.

On the second question, the Board did not think that the items taken into account in the formula were the cost drivers that authorities would use to determine bridge maintenance expenditure.

Other comments were that current local authority data on retaining walls was poor, and guidance on the recording of retaining wall data should be included in the update for the bridges Code of Practice.

³ Subsequent to the meeting, he is able to advise that a number of small drafting changes would be made to the document presented to the Board, but essentially that version the Board saw was the final document.

9. CSS/Network Rail Group Update

See Papers UKBB 12/08, UKBB 12/08A and UKBB 12/08B.

Bridgeguard 3 Programme

The paper shows the figures for the progress and remaining cost of the Bridgeguard 3 programme and the funding split between local authorities and Network Rail (NR).

It was reported to the board that issues that could impede the completion of the programme were funding constraints, and political constraints in local authorities. The Board were advised that the CSS were to take action to stress the need for interim emergency measures.

It was agreed that an informal meeting should be set up involving DfT, NR, and local authority representatives to consider the work undertaken so far.

Action – Paul Foskett to set up this meeting with Bob Flitcroft (CSS) and NR.

Authorities with a large number of PTSI structures have stated that they would like to see the completion of the PTSI programme. The UKBB agreed that the appropriate forum for discussion of this issue is the CSS/NR liaison group. Bob Flitcroft agreed to take this issue forward.

Action – Bob Flitcroft.

It was agreed that the CSS/NR liaison meetings (rather than UKBB meetings) were the appropriate forum to discuss the content of the agreements between NR and local authorities with regard to the Bridgeguard 3 programme.

Vehicle Incursions

NR wishes to extend the detailed monitoring of identified vehicle incursion sites, to make it nationwide. The information gained from this monitoring would be considered within NR, and also reported on at UKBB meetings.

Ian Bucknall (NR) stated that he is committed to supporting the 50:50 funding split for vehicle incursion work, between NR and local authorities. CSS are also content with the 50:50 funding split. However, there have been some issues in Wales regarding the cost sharing split.

10. Code of Practice Update

The Board agreed with the items identified by the consultant for correction when “Management of Highway Structures” is updated, and also with the consultant’s proposal for establishing links with other documents before the full update takes place.

Board members also suggested that the Code could contain advice to authorities on recording retaining wall data.

11. Any other Business

ESDAL

Board members were concerned that local authorities were not being given sufficient encouragement to use ESDAL (Electronic Service Delivery of Abnormal Loads, the abnormal load routes data system) and that, although the system remains available to authorities and contains a lot of useful data, it could fall into disuse.

Bridge Performance Indicators

The point was raised that there were no specific bridge-related performance indicators in Appendix A of the Highways Efficiency Toolkit published by the Highways Efficiency Liaison Group (HELG). Some board members would be in favour of this type of indicator being included in the Toolkit, but it was noted that not all authorities would be able to report on such an indicator due to poor inventory data.

RLMP5/DfT

31 October 2008