

MINUTES FROM THE 5th MEETING OF THE ROADS LIAISON GROUP BRIDGES BOARD.

Meeting held at Great Minster House, 3 July 2002.

Present:

David Lynne	Warwickshire CC (Chair)
Steve Pearson	Derbyshire CC/CSS
Greg Perks	CSS
Raymund Johnstone	Scottish Executive
Ian Holmes	DfT Roads Policy
Andrew Cook	DfT VSE
Chris Fox	DfT TRU
Gerry Hayter	Highways Agency
Ronnie Wilson	DRD(NI)
Frank Paine	LOBEG
Jim Irons	SCOTS
John Collins	Welsh Assembly
Alan Dray	Railtrack
Ken Duguid	Transport for London
Andrew Oldland	DfT (Secretariat)
Chris Hudson	DfT (Secretariat)

1. Apologies

These were received from Evan Pugh (Ceredigion CC), Steve Tart (Manchester City Council and David Yeowell (Westminster City Council). Brian Bell (Railtrack) was represented by Alan Dray.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

It was agreed that Alan Dray's name should be added to the attendance list.

Brian Bell said that rivet shear "may lead to departure from standards" and not "a change to the bridge assessment codes" as stated in Section 2 of the minutes.

3. Matters Arising

Vehicle Incursions on Railways

A revised draft of the guidance on cost sharing has now been circulated to the working group that deals with protocol. DfT want to put the final draft to Ministers by the end of July.

The general consensus is that the 50-50 split in costs between highway authorities and Railtrack is fair.

But it will also be proposed in the submission to Ministers that, where directly related track costs and management costs can be identified, Railtrack will cover the track costs (e.g. track possession) and the local authority will cover the management costs (e.g. traffic management).

4. Report on progress by Bridge Management Sub-Group

The Bridges Board agreed that this sub-group was to be set up to take forward the work on production of a Code of Practice and Management System for local authority bridges by the summer of 2003.

The Board agreed that this work needs to be accelerated as it is now three months behind schedule. The sub-group has not yet met.

Action - David Lynn will contact David Yeowell, as soon as possible, to arrange the first meeting of the sub-group (to take place, preferably, the week after the Bridges Board July meeting).

5. Discussion of the work of the Esdal workshop held at the Highways Agency.

Funding has now been approved by HM Treasury for the computerised abnormal load route system.

The advertisement for contractors for the abnormal load route system is now to be placed in the Official Journal of the European Communities. As the work is to be done over this and the next financial year, it will be necessary to move quickly.

DfT and the HA have been considering whether the database to be developed for the abnormal route system could also provide local authorities with a facility for recording data on all their bridges, as part of a bridge management system. It is possible that some of the Treasury funding could be used to meet the costs of the local authority database facilities.

The Board recognise that a lot of work will be needed to enter all the information on local road bridges onto the database, and that this issue was one that should be urgently addressed by the sub-group.

The Highways Agency is keen to explore whether its bridge management system (SMIS) could be adapted to form the basis of the abnormal load route system and also the local authority bridge database.

As a result of the Edsal workshop, the HA have produced a paper setting out the advantages and risks involved with using the SMIS system.

The Board agree that the abnormal load system should cover the entire UK mainland (Northern Ireland have their own system). As the Treasury funding covered England only, the Scottish and Welsh devolved administrations have agreed in principle to make a contribution.

It is envisaged that the Edsal system will link up with the database (which will also be used by local authorities for bridge management) and also with other systems providing route planning information.

The Bridges Board's intention is that the Bridge Management sub-group should be represented at the CSS Bridges Group September meeting.

Action - Andrew Cook will prepare a briefing note of progress on the Edsal system for David Lynn, for discussion at the next meeting of the CSS Bridges Group in September.

6. Research

The issue of consistency, throughout the four RLG boards, in the production and selection of research projects, is something that needs to be raised (under "Matters Arising") at the next Roads Liaison Group meeting (9 July).

Action – Secretariat to raise this

The Board recognises that research should be prioritised in accordance with the overall need of the national bridge stock.

Research into parapets and masonry arch bridges has already been recognised as a priority. Asset valuation and performance indicators are also subjects which the Board recognise need further research.

The Board recognise the need to appoint a project manager to produce a costed list of research items in time for the next internal bidding round within DfT. When the project manager is appointed, a formal process for evaluating research proposals should also be developed.

Action – the Board to consider appointment of a project manager

It was also agreed that the way in which research work would be disseminated among local authorities and other bridge owners should be considered.

Action - Ian Holmes, Gerry Hayter and Steve Pearson will draw up a Framework Strategy for research in time for the October meeting of the Bridges Board.

Some concern was raised about how issues in need of research would be identified, and also whether the Board could be made aware of research that was already on-going and in the public domain.

It was also suggested that results of existing research should be brought together so that the Board could access it easily.

The Highways Agency have indicated that they are reluctant to assess proposals for research work that is relevant to local authority structures. HA's role in respect of non-trunk roads is not presently defined in the HA Framework Agreement. They suggest that the Bridges Board could help clarify HA's role in connection with local authority bridges.

The Board regards the Bridge Owners' Forum as the most suitable group to identify research issues. The Forum has been considering research, but may not yet have produced a definitive list of subjects.

Action - Ian Holmes to contact Campbell Middleton and request that a formal report on the work of the Bridge Owners' Forum be prepared in time for the October meeting of the Bridges Board. This should also cover the CIRIA paper on Masonry and Brick Arch Bridges. He will request that the next meeting of the BOF take place in time for this deadline to be met.

The Bridges Board have indicated that they would back a bid to DfT for funding for the Bridge Owners' Forum.

Action - DfT will look into the issue of financial support for the Bridge Owners Forum.

7. Bridge Performance Indicators

The HA have commissioned W S Atkins to carry out work to consider possible performance indicators for bridges. This exercise requires input from bridge owners including local authorities (in the form of answers to a questionnaire). At the time of the meeting, some local authorities had not responded.

Action - Gerry Hayter to write to those bridge owners who have not yet responded to the Highways Agency questionnaire on Bridge Performance Indicators.

8. Weight Restrictions on Bridges

Greg Perks and Brian Bell have drafted guidance to highway authorities on the assessments necessary before the signing of weight restrictions on bridges is altered. The current signing is being altered due to the new "Road Traffic Signs" regulations.

The Board agreed that the guidance should state that an engineer's assessment is "essential" rather than "recommended".

Action – RP3 to feed this change through to the section of DfT responsible for issuing the guidance.

9. Any Other Business

It was noted that some bridge owners consider that the risk assessment methodology produced by the post-Selby working groups pays insufficient attention to the condition of bridge parapets.

10. Date of Next Meeting

This will be held on 3 October 2002, in Room H3, Great Minster House.

DfT Roads Policy Division
4 July 2002