

NOTE OF THE 20th MEETING OF THE UK BRIDGES BOARD.

Meeting held in Highland Council Offices, Inverness, 14 June 2006.

Present:

Richard Fish	CSS Cornwall CC (Chair)
Greg Perks	CSS/Northumberland CC
Awtar Jandu	Highways Agency
David Mackenzie	SCOTS
Dana Skelley	TfL
Bill Valentine	Scottish Executive
John Collins	Welsh Assembly Government
Ronny Wilson	DRD (Northern Ireland)
Rod Howe	British Waterways
Bob Flitcroft	Bolton MBC
Jim Moriarty	London Underground
Dave Ambrose	WATO
Ian Holmes	Department for Transport
Andrew Oldland	Department for Transport

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Graham Cole, Alan Dray, David Yeowell, Paul Foskett, Edward Bunting and Chris Hudson.

2. Note of last meeting and matters arising

Note of last meeting

Page 6 - management of sub-standard structures - publication of revised standard (BD 79) - the action point is for Awtar Jandu rather than Richard Fish.

Matters Arising

Item 7 - Management of Highway Structures

Implementation survey for the code of Practice - at the time of the last meeting, 30 responses had been received. Now 41 responses have been received.

Item 9 - Any other business

The action to recruit a representative from the metropolitan authorities is still ongoing.

The Surveyor bridge conference was held in March and was successful. The next conference will be held next March, at the East Midlands conference centre.

It was noted that Tunnels were not on the UKRLG agenda. The Board agreed that the idea of a Tunnels sub-group, reporting to the Bridges Board, should be progressed.

Action - Board Members

3. UKRLG feedback

Maintaining a Vital Asset - Some authorities have reported that this booklet was difficult to obtain. However, it can be ordered from DfT publications.

A Welsh language version has been published. It was suggested that a Gaelic version may be necessary. David Mackenzie agreed to look into whether the Highland Council could assist with translation.

Action - David Mackenzie

Traffic Management Code of Practice

The Board noted that this had not been produced. DfT reported that the possibility of producing such a code is still under discussion.

Assessment methods for masonry arch bridges

The Bridge Owners' Forum (BOF) decided that there should be an independent peer review of what has been decided by Bill Harvey and colleagues.

BOF decided that Bill Harvey's criticism of BA16 should be responded to by the HA. BOF will consider the HA response.

Action - Awtar Jandu to liaise with Cam Middleton (BOF Chair) on this issue.

4. UK Bridges Board Strategy (to include UKBB 5/06 and Greg Perks' note)

Greg Perks' note looks at Bridges Board topics, whether done, in hand or ongoing. The note allocates topics for the next meeting and the February/March 2007 meeting.

It was noted that the current UKRLG research bid has not yet been approved, because it is still in the process of being considered by the DfT Chief Scientist and by Ministers. DfT do not foresee any problems with the UKRLG's bids.

Next year's bids will need to go through the same approval process. Members suggested that further research on masonry arch bridges should be considered as a bid for next year.

Other issues concerning the work programme were discussed as follows:

Progress on implementation of the Code of Practice - the Board would like to share best practice between represented bodies.

The Board agreed that this should be brought forward to the 4 October 2006 meeting.

Asset Valuation - it was agreed that this should be brought forward to 4 October 2006, as authorities are required to put a valuation on their network in March 2007. Authorities would appreciate more guidance on who they need to be reporting this to. At present, DfT are discussing arrangements with the Treasury.

The chartered accountancy body, CIPFA, have not yet agreed to renewals accounting for highways in local authorities.

Action - Greg Perks will amend the strategy document and send to the Secretariat.

The Secretariat will send it out, requesting comments. The finalised document should be ready to send to UKRLG next March.

Action - Secretariat

5. Research

2006/07 projects

Outcome of the 2006/07 bids has not yet been announced by DfT. DfT expect the funding bids to be met in full, and advised the Board to work on that basis and to set up project steering groups now.

Progress on current projects

Dry stone walls research - The Steering Group met on 24 January 2006.

A workshop was held in Manchester in March. This was well attended by contractors and clients. A two month extension to the programme has now been granted.

A draft report is expected to be produced in July this year. This will be considered at the 17 July steering group meeting.

Myles O'Reilly provides a link between the Bridges Board project and the Bath University project into research on dry stone walls, as he is involved in both projects.

The Steering Group would appreciate any photographs of retaining walls around the UK.

Bridge Performance Indicators - See note from Atkins on Performance Measures for Highway Structures

The project is developing indicators on availability and reliability of the bridge stock. The Scottish Executive have already carried out some work on this and have provided some feedback to the Atkins project.

The target date for finalising the documents is June 23. A small steering group has been set up with representation from Mark Young, CSS. They will circulate the documents as a final work, if requested. To date, there have been only 10-12 responses to the consultation, although there has been a long consultation period.

Most local authorities are concentrating on producing a result for the bridge condition part of the indicator. They regard this as a higher priority than the availability and reliability indicators.

Because of current DCLG policy on indicators, it is unlikely that the bridge indicator will be accepted as a future Best Value performance indicator.

However, DfT are encouraging all authorities to complete Transport Asset Management Plans. It is intended that these will incorporate indicators of asset condition and management. These indicators could also be used for future funding allocations.

The Asset Management Plans could also link with the Decision Support Tool, which provides guidance on the maintenance of assets at minimum whole life cost.

Assessment Methods for Masonry Arch Bridges - See under Item 3 - UKRLG feedback.

Decision Support Tool project.

Atkins have been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to produce a bridge management system. The Atkins work could be built on to

produce a decision support tool which would have a common application to any asset management system, and could be used UK-wide.

The WAG system informs users of the optimum year on which work should be carried out on an asset, and what the financial implications would be of not carrying out the work at the optimum time. The central decision support tool now needs to be developed to broaden the scope of the system from the original WAG bridge management application.

TfL agreed to meet the cost of a project, 50:50 with DfT, to broaden the scope of this system to make it UK-wide.

The Welsh Assembly (WAG) consider it more appropriate that DfT lead the project, and the Assembly will contribute expertise that they have already gained.

The Board agree that a steering group should now be set up for the project.

Action - Board members

A chair for the group needs to be appointed (Edward Bunting was considered). The Board also thought it useful to include some local authority representation on the steering committee, to ensure that the scope of the system would be broadened for local authority use.

6. CSS/Network Rail Liaison

Prioritisation

UKBB 4/06 is a note of the meeting which took place on 8 March 2006. This was a joint meeting of the Prioritisation sub-group and the CSS/Network Rail liaison group. The programme has now slipped from the original timetable. The second draft of the prioritisation document should be finalised by the end of July.

The validation process via comparison with the LOBEG system is still due to take place. Kevin Andrews from Westminster Council has agreed to take this forward. The desired outcome is that the same prioritised list of schemes will be produced by both systems.

Brian Simcoe (Network Rail) will comment of the second draft of the prioritisation system by the end of August 2006. The second draft will be considered at the next UK Bridges Board meeting on 4 October.

There are a number of issues still outstanding. These will be presented by Bob Flitcroft at the next meeting of the prioritisation meeting. If there continues to be delay by Network Rail in resolving these, Richard Fish will seek a meeting

with Network Rail, with the intention that issues will be resolved at a senior level and filter down to the prioritisation sub-group.

The outcome of the meeting between Richard Fish and Network Rail will be reported to DfT.

Action - Richard Fish

It was reported that the poor communications with Network Rail could have been caused by a recent reorganisation, and that the problems may be temporary. Improvements in communications have already been noted at local level.

Track Possession Costs

There is also concern among Board members that local authorities are having to meet large cost increases as a result of Network Rail track possession costs. In some cases, the track possession costs are exceeding the costs of the actual work, even where disruption to rail traffic is minimal. This situation is arising in a number of parts of the UK. The Welsh Assembly report that Welsh authorities are experiencing the same problem. In addition, vehicle incursions are not seen as a problem by Network Rail.

The Board consider that a simplified assessment and prioritisation system would contribute to the resolution of this problem. It was suggested that the BE4 assessment is superfluous, and that BD21 would suffice on its own. Another suggestion was that the entire assessment process should be managed by one organisation (possibly Network Rail) although this arrangement would apply only to Network Rail-owned bridges.

The Board were in favour of cases of excessive costs from Network Rail being documented and collated. As a last resort, the Rail Ombudsman or Office of the Rail Regulator will need to be consulted.

7. Management of Highway Structures - ongoing review

It was suggested that the UKRLG website could be used to record comments on the document. The Secretariat agreed to look into this.

Action - Secretariat

8. Highway Measurement - Presentation from Mike Bordiss

Mike Bordiss presented "Making Measurement Work".

See document to follow.

9. Local Transport Plans/Asset Management Plans

The Board recognised the need for an asset management indicator for bridges. An indicator of availability and reliability is considered the most accurate indicator of customer satisfaction.

This type of indicator would also be meaningful to elected members.

This indicator would form part of a Transport Asset Management Plan, and would be very useful in assisting local authorities to determine service levels for bridges and structures.

The Board note that service levels are on the agenda for the next UKRLG meeting. Also, the concept of service levels for bridges and structures has been identified as an issue in the in the proposed Bridges Board work programme.

Board members proposed that a sub-group should be set up to deal with asset management for highway structures. Dana Skelley volunteered to lead this group. She will send out a note to Bridges Board members asking for volunteers to join the group.

Action - Dana Skelley

DfT offered to provide secretariat support.

10. Any Other Business

Tunnels Directive - this should be in place by November.

Welsh Association of Technical Officers (WATO).

This has now been re-branded as CSS Wales.

Arrangement of Meeting Venue.

The Board wished to thank David Mackenzie for arranging the meeting venue at the Highland Council offices.

Ian Holmes' Retirement.

Ian retires on July 13. Board members thanked him for his contribution to the Board's work since its inception in 2001.

RLTSF3/DfT
26 June 2006