

Notes of the Bridges Board meeting held at DTLR Headquarters, Eland House, on 12 September 2001.

Present:

David Lynn	Warwickshire CC/Chair
Ian Holmes	DTLR
Gerry Hayter	Highways Agency (HA)
Raymund Johnstone	Scottish Executive
Thomas Collins	National Assembly for Wales (NAW)
David Yeoell	LOTAG
Steve Tart	TAG
Frank Paine	LOBEG
Steve Pearson	CSS, Derbyshire CC
Greg Perks	CSS, Northumberland CC
Brian Swan	SCOTS
Ian Bucknall	Railtrack

Secretariat:

Andrew Oldland	DTLR
Chris Hudson	DTLR

The following issues were discussed:

1. Introductions and Membership

1.1 The Roads Liaison Group met on 5 September. The Roads Board met for the first time on 29 August and the Lighting Board is due to meet for the first time on 20 September.

1.2 The Lighting Board will include representatives from professional bodies and lighting industry associations.

1.3 It will be for the Bridges Board to decide whether to invite members from appropriate professional and industry bodies to join the Board.

1.4 Railtrack is already represented by a member on the Bridges Board. The meeting considered whether other private owners should also be represented. The concern was raised that too many members could make the Board unwieldy.

1.5 The Board considered the issue of representation by private bridge owners and professional organisations. The following action was agreed:

1.6 **Action** - Ian Bucknall (Railtrack) agreed to contact the Bridge Owners' Forum to ask them to choose a representative from the private bridge owners, to sit on the Bridges Board.

1.7 **Action** - Thomas Collins agreed to find a representative from the professional organisations.

1.8 Thomas Collins added that he was a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), and could represent this organisation in addition to the NAW, subject to approval from the ICE.

1.9 The Board recognised that the professional organisations might have a role to play in the setting of technical standards, and that representatives of some of these organisations could act as "consultant" members rather than full board members.

2. Drafting/approval of terms of reference for the Board

2.1 The Board agreed the following changes:

2.2 In the draft Terms of Reference, the order of items should be changed so that the original items 3 and 4 are reversed.

2.3 The third indent of the new item 3 should include reference to Board's role in setting UK policy on bridges and structures.

2.4 The fourth indent of the new item 3 should refer to "usage" in addition to "maintenance management".

2.5 Reference should be made to the fact that research requirements would need to be ratified by RLG.

2.6 It was agreed that the role of the Board in relation to standard-setting on trunk roads needs to be clarified. DTLR explained that the Board has been set up to develop bridge/structure policy on all UK roads including trunk roads.

2.7 At present, trunk road standards are produced by the HA. Some Board members consider that there is insufficient interface between DTLR and HA in relation to local roads, and also that the devolved administrations and local authorities are having to accept trunk road standards determined by the HA, without being given the opportunity to influence those standards.

2.8 In the light of the above, the Bridges Board's terms of reference should emphasise that the Board is a forum in which all members have an opportunity to influence standard-setting.

2.9 In item 5 of the Terms of Reference, the first sentence should be changed to "The Board will address the planning, prioritising and co-ordination of a programme of activity....etc."

2.10 The Bridges Board agreed to identify the appropriate sub-groups referred to in Item 5.

2.11 The Board agreed that items 6 and 7 of Terms of Reference were too specific and should be removed from the Terms of Reference and placed under a “Key Tasks” sub-heading.

2.12 In item 8, the phrase “proper management of budgets” should be changed to “management of budgets”.

2.13 Some members considered that the draft terms of reference for the Group were too detailed, and should concentrate on high-level policy issues rather than including key tasks. The Terms of Reference should make clear the fact that the Board should be the forum for deciding UK policy for bridges and other highway structures.

2.14 DTLR explained that the RLG and Board structures will operate by RLG setting the policy framework at the highest level for roads, bridges and street lighting, with the Bridges Board making policy within that framework.

2.15 Some Board members were in favour of the chair of the Bridges Board being a permanent member of the Roads Liaison Group (RLG). However, RLG envisages that chairs of the three Boards will sit on the RLG on an “ad-hoc” basis when specific issues are being discussed.

2.16 Board members were in favour of the relationship with the RLG being “two-way” with ideas being passed upwards from the Bridges Board to the RLG.

2.17 The Bridges Board agreed to bear in mind future changes in the use of the transport network when considering policy.

2.18 It was agreed that the Board should set targets and standards without initially considering the financial restraints affecting some authorities. However, the Board recognises these restraints and would consider producing guidance to help such authorities move from their present standards to the standards recommended by the Board.

3. Best Value Performance Indicators for bridges and other structures

3.1 The Board agreed the need to begin the development of Best Value Indicators for bridges and structures, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England. Scotland has no Best Value regime as yet, but local authorities in Scotland are producing statistics which could be used in future indicators.

3.2 An indicator measuring the number of bridges capable of carrying 40 tonne vehicles is being proposed in the BVPI consultation paper for England relating to 2002/03. The present consensus in England is that indicators should be easy to understand by the general public.

3.3 CSS are conducting research into performance indicators for bridges. Railtrack are also conducting research into indicators based on the effect that bridge closures would have on rail journey times.

3.4 Parag Das (formerly with HA) has been carrying out work for the HA on asset condition indicators.

3.5 Thomas Collins stated that he was in favour of indicators which would measure the residual life of bridges and structures.

3.6 Action - Board members agreed that they will let the Secretariat have details of any on-going research on performance indicators, in advance of the next Bridges Board meeting.

4. Local Authority Code of Practice for Bridge Maintenance

4.1 The need for this code has been recognised by the Roads Liaison Group. Codes of Practice for Carriageway and Footway Maintenance and Street Lighting already exist. The Codes are not a compulsory standard but reflect best practice.

4.2 Action – DTLR will set out a paper for the Bridges Board, outlining how the Codes of Practice for highway maintenance and street lighting were developed.

4.3 Action - The CSS representatives agreed to identify names of people who could take forward the development of a code of practice for bridge maintenance, including a potential project manager.

5. Bridge Management Systems

5.1 The Bridges Board agreed that, before a bridge management system could be introduced, a framework should be identified which could be recommended to all authorities. At present, suitable software packages can not be purchased “off the shelf”.

5.2 A consistent method of inspection and testing is an essential part of a bridge management system. At present, neither this nor a unified inventory system exists.

5.3 The Board agreed that a project group should be formed to examine the issue of a national bridge management system. It was suggested that WS Atkins could be used as consultants under an existing contract which they have with CSS.

5.4 Gerry Hayter suggested that the HA’s bridge management system (SMIS) could be offered to devolved administrations and local authorities as a starting point.

5.5 Action - HA to produce a paper outlining the SMIS system and a demonstration for the next Board meeting

5.6 Action – CSS will provide information on the work being carried out by WS Atkins, at the next Bridges Board meeting.

5.7 Action - British Waterways Board (BWB) have already have a management system for their bridges. DTLR will approach them for details of this.

6. Liaison between private bridge owners and local authorities

6.1 It was recognised that problems that occur in liaison between highway authorities and private bridge owners have been mainly local problems.

6.2 The Board agreed to promulgate the message that highway authorities and private bridge owners should meet regularly to discuss problems at local level.

7. Calculation of backlogs for bridge maintenance

7.1 The Roads Liaison Group have agreed that a method of calculating the backlogs in bridge maintenance should be developed. DTLR require a backlog calculation for England for the forthcoming spending review. The devolved administrations may need to make similar calculations.

7.2 Data collection is not taking place consistently, and this problem must be addressed before backlog calculations can take place. The Board agreed that timescales should first be set for collection of accurate data.

7.3 The Board will consult Railtrack for information on the maintenance backlog on their highway bridges, with a view to incorporating this in the calculations.

8. Role of Highways Agency – especially in standards for local roads.

8.1 Concerns were raised that that the views of devolved administrations and local authorities had not been taken fully into account by HA in the standard-setting process. One of the purposes of the Bridges Board is to remedy that situation.

8.2 The HA's role in contributing to the standard-setting process carried out by the Bridges Board will be discussed in a later Board meeting.

9. Bridge Owners' Forum

9.1 The Bridge Owners' Forum was set up to co-ordinate research. The Bridges Board's role is to deal with policy on bridges and structures. Bridges Board members consider it important that the respective roles of the Owners' Forum and the Bridges Board are clearly defined.

9.2 The RLG will be looking to the Bridges Board (along with the Roads and Lighting Boards) to make research suggestions. To do this, research proposals from the Owners' Forum would need to be channelled to the RLG through the Bridges Board. To formalise this arrangement, the Owners' Forum would need to become a research sub-group of the Bridges Board.

9.3 Action – Bridges Board to ask the Bridge Owners' Forum to consider becoming a research sub-group of the Bridges Board.

10. Any other business

10.1 Safety requirements for bridge approaches

10.1.1 Working groups to consider this issue were set up by HA and by the Health and Safety Executive after the Selby incident. Local authorities are looking to the HA group to issue recommendations on standards for bridge approaches, but none have been issued as yet.

10.1.2 The bridge approach may not be covered by bridge standards as it may be considered part of the carriageway rather than part of the bridge.

10.2 Membership of Roads and Lighting Boards

10.2.1 Board members expressed the wish to see lists of the membership of the other Boards. The Secretariat agreed to circulate these.

10.3 Approval of meeting notes

The Board agreed that this could be done by members informing the Secretariat of any required alterations to the notes, by a set deadline.

11. Date of next meeting

11.1 The Secretariat agreed to circulate meeting dates for the remainder of this year and for 2002.