

ROAD MAINTENANCE STRATEGIC ACTION GROUP

4 December 2014, Scottish Parliament

Minutes of Meeting

Attendees

Derek Mackay MSP, Minister for Transport and Islands (Co-Chair)
Councillor Stephen Hagan, COSLA, Spokesperson for Development, Economy and Sustainability (Co-Chair)
Roy Brannen, Transport Scotland, Director, Trunk Roads and Bus Operations
Donald Morrison (DM), Transport Scotland, Head of Asset Management, Finance and Technical
Steven Feeney (SF), Transport Scotland, Road Policy Manager
Carron Flockhart (CF), Transport Scotland, Road Policy Officer & Secretariat
Elsbeth King (EK), Scottish Road Works Commissioner
Colin Mair (CM) Improvement Service, Chief Executive
Bill Barker (BB), SCOTS, Vice Chair
Jim Valentine (JV), SOLACE
George Eckton (GE), Cosla
Kieran Jackson (KJ), Cosla

Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The Minister for Transport and Islands welcomed all present to the fifth meeting of the Road Maintenance Strategic Action Group (SAG). The Minister confirmed that he would co-chair the SAG meetings with Cllr Hagan.

Item 2 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated to SAG members for comment following the last meeting on 17 June. The attendees agreed that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting.

2.2 SF noted that there was one action from the last meeting: for Transport Scotland to share trunk road condition benchmarking methodology with SCOTS. DM confirmed that a meeting had been held with SCOTS and that the methodology had been shared. DM informed the Group that Transport Scotland are working on a road maintenance vision and that this work will be shared with local authorities at the appropriate time.

2.3 The Minister asked SF to provide a brief summary of the UK Government's Road Investment Strategy which was announced on the 1 December. SF informed the Group that:

- The announcement builds on the DfT's Action for Roads (2013) which highlighted the roads challenges and set out detailed plans to improve management of the network.
- £15 billion is to be invested to tackle road issues between 2015/16 and 2020/21
- Smart motorways will be used to expand capacity and regulate the flow of traffic

- Strategically important A roads will be upgraded to expressways; and
- 80% of the trunk road network is to be resurfaced by 2020/21.

2.4 SF noted that the Scottish Government has committed to connect all cities by dual carriageway by 2030 and is delivering the largest transport infrastructure programme Scotland including the Queensferry Crossing and M8 improvements. Additionally, it is estimated that £210 million will be invested in maintaining our existing road network between 2015 and 2021.

2.5 The Minister agreed that ensuring the existing road network is well maintained should be given equal importance to delivering vital new infrastructure projects.

2.6 The Minister highlighted the importance of constructive partnership working between national and local road authorities through forums such as the SAG.

Item 3 – Road Collaboration Board

3.1 CM informed the Group that an update paper and highlight report have been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. CM noted that the update paper covers the process of the Governance First initiative; the strategic focus for the RCB's next work programme; and developing the national/local partnership. The following points were made:

The Governance First projects are in place and at various stages of development. The RCB have held a number of engagements across the country to promote collaboration and end explain the importance of getting governance in place first. In addition, CM advised that a briefing note would be circulated to elected members in January 2015. Cllr Hagan noted that Local Government was keen to collaborate but highlighted the need for elected members to be kept informed. Cllr Hagan also noted that collaborative partnerships already existed in the form of RTPs, and that these should be considered as an option within the Governance First programme.

- Resource issues over the next 5 years within the service are likely to lead to skills drainage. The RCB is planning to create a collective and consistent skills database to ensure the necessary skills and capacity is available over time.
- Audit Scotland has indicated that they will look at RAMPs when they come to next report on the NRMR. CM noted that authorities need to model and project the financial requirements if their RAMPS are to be delivered.
- The Board held an away day in November and agreed key strategic issues that should be addressed in the next work programme. CM noted that the RCB has focused on collaboration between local road authorities and that greater collaboration between Transport Scotland and local road authorities should be explored.
- RB confirmed that there is provision in Transport Scotland's Fourth Generation Operating Company contracts for collaboration and whether there is further scope for collaboration will be considered as the Fifth Generation contracts are developed.
- CM is meeting with Transport Scotland in December to discuss the outputs of the away day including national/local collaboration.

Action: Colin Mair to meet with Roy Brannen to discuss the Road Collaboration Board.

Item 4 – NRMR Monitoring and Evaluation Report

4.1 CF informed members that Transport Scotland and SCOTS had previously agreed a two stage approach to monitoring and evaluation the implementation and effectiveness of the 30 NRMR initiatives. The interim monitoring report, which was circulated to members in advance of the meeting, monitors the extent to which the initiatives have been implemented. This will be followed by a second report which will evaluate whether the anticipated benefits of each initiative have been realised.

4.2 The interim report links each initiative back to the original objective of the NRMR – to deliver efficiently managed roads for all within the budgets available, and to identify opportunities for innovation, collaborative working and the sharing of services. The report also seeks to show how Audit Scotland's recommendations have been taken on-board.

4.3 CF informed members that the majority of initiatives have been completed or are in progress. For example, the Scottish Roads Research Board (Transport Scotland, SCOTS, the Scottish Road Works Commissioner) is now well established with 43 joint research projects having being commissioned to date. In addition, all roads authorities now have Road Asset Management Plans in place which set out current and future maintenance work plans.

4.4 However, 7 initiatives have been identified as requiring further action by Transport Scotland or SCOTS. Specific action plans are being produced for each of these initiatives to ensure they are sufficiently progressed before the evaluation stage commences. These initiatives include the establishment of a Transport Scotland, SCOTS, Health and Safety Executive and Law Society Engagement Group to ensure better understanding and communication between technical and legal parties involved in the road maintenance industry. In addition, Transport Scotland is to undertake a review of the SCOTS key performance indicators to determine whether it would be appropriate for Transport Scotland to adopt some of them.

4.5 RB commented that the report shows some very positive developments and highlighted initiative 9.

4.6 The Minister asked members of the Group to consider how the Group would continue and what the focus would be following the evaluation of the NRMR initiatives. SF suggested holding one-to-one meetings with the SAG members before the next meeting to discuss the future of the Group.

4.7 GE noted that the implications of procurement reform should be discussed at a future meeting.

4.8 The Minister suggested that the SAG may wish to meet before the next scheduled meeting in June in order to up the pace of the projects.

Action – SF/CF to arrange one-to-one meetings with SAG members to discuss the future of the Group.

Action – Members to consider whether a meeting before June would be beneficial.

Item 5 – Stakeholder Group

5.1 BB informed the SAG members that the Stakeholder Group last met on 17 November and noted that the meeting had been poorly attended. The discussions centred on the NRM Monitoring and Evaluation, the results of the NHT Public Satisfaction Survey and the production of a stakeholder engagement strategy.

5.2 CF explained that a road maintenance stakeholder engagement strategy is being produced to help the Stakeholder Group re-engage with key stakeholders and to help improve public perception of how our roads are managed and maintained. The strategy will focus on three strands:

- Targeting specific groups of stakeholders – inviting representatives of identified stakeholder groups, for example, the freight industry and cycling groups, to attend future Stakeholder Group meetings to discuss the importance of well-maintained roads to their sector and to address any specific concerns.
- Regular and improved communications – a quarterly newsletter is planned which Stakeholder Group members will be encouraged to contribute to. The newsletter would be circulated by email to the stakeholder list and will be published on the Transport Scotland website.
- Proactively seeking media opportunities – the Stakeholder Group members will work with communications colleagues to plan good news stories with a road maintenance focus.

5.3 SF highlighted the importance of monitoring whether public perception actually changes. SF suggested that online pop-up surveys are carried out at key points throughout the year to. Visitors to the road maintenance pages of Transport Scotland and SCOTS webpages would be asked to answer one or two questions to gauge their views.

5.4 EK noted that Scotland is world leading in respect road works and that there are some very positive stories to tell. EK confirmed that she would be very keen to engage with the stakeholder engagement work.

5.5 Members agreed that communication is currently a problem as the media regularly report on maintenance issues such as potholes and road users tend to only notice poor road conditions. Members agreed that the Stakeholder Group should press ahead with the strategy to address these presentational issues.

Item 6 – AOB

6.1 EK provided an update on the the current position and next steps with the Strategic Consultation on Works on Scottish Roads which the Government carried out last year.

6.2 The analysis of consultation responses was published on 14 October 2014. A total of 50 responses were received. This included responses from 30 roads authorities and related bodies, 13 utility companies and related organisations, six 'other' organisations which had no affiliation with either of the two main groupings, and one individual.

6.3 While there was unanimity on some issues providing a steer on those proposals that would and would not receive support from the road works community, responses to most other questions fell along predictable lines showing the divergence of opinion between road authorities and utility companies.

6.4 This was a very wide ranging consultation. Given the breadth of the topics covered and consultation responses received, further engagement and consultation may now be necessary to help develop specific legislative proposals. Many of the proposed changes require primary legislation and there is no obvious vehicle to take this forward at this time. In the meantime, officials will continue to engage with stakeholders to develop and refine policy options.

6.5 Cllr Hagan and the Minister agreed that it would be useful to have a paper at the next meeting on the issues around long term damage fees for utility companies.

Action: EK to provide a paper on long term damage fees for the next SAG meeting.