

# Strategic Action Group (Meeting 1)

Date of Meeting 15th  
November  
2012

## Minutes of Meeting

### Attendees

**Keith Brown MSP** Minister for Transport and Veterans - (Co-Chair);  
**Councillor Stephen Hagan** COSLA Regeneration & Sustainable Development spokesperson - (Co-Chair)  
**Roy Brannen** Director, Trunk Road and Bus Operations, Transport Scotland (TS); **Donald Morrison**, Head of Asset Management, Finance and Technical, TS; **Steven Feeney**, Road Policy Manager TS; **Ewan Wallace**, Chair of SCOTS; **George Eckton**, Team Leader, Environment and Regeneration Team, COSLA; **Katie Green** Policy Officer, Development, Economy and Sustainability, COSLA; **Colin Mair**, Chief Executive, Improvement Service; **Jim Valentine**, Perth and Kinross Council, SOLACE Representative; **John Gooday**, Scottish Road Works Commissioner; and **Raymond Convill**, Road Policy Officer, Transport Scotland Secretariat.

### Item 1 - Welcome and Introductions

As co-chair, **Mr Brown** welcomed all present. He provided opening remarks for this first meeting of the Road Maintenance Strategic Action Group and thanked those present for their work on the National Roads Maintenance Review (NRMR) to date; endorsed the Strategic Framework as the means for directing future improvements in roads maintenance in Scotland; and advised that the focus of the Stakeholder Group would be to implement and evaluate the 30 identified initiatives. He further added that the Strategic Action Group would oversee and aid implementation of all initiatives; consider the outputs of the Shared Service and Shared Capacity Improvement Board and publicly own the Strategic Framework and ensure its delivery.

Mr Brown also said that the prospect of more joined up working had created some nervousness among local authorities. However, the Group agreed that all involved accepted the potential benefits.

Co-chair **Councillor Hagan** provided a COSLA perspective on the Governance arrangements. He welcomed the scope for partnership working and the variety of views to be factored in, and advised that roads authorities would be stronger in the future by working together. Councillor Hagan added that road maintenance funding would always be an issue, but it was an area which would continue to provide a "Spend to Save" benefit.

### Item 2 - Outline of Strategic Framework.

Steven Feeney provided a short presentation illustrating the importance of the Strategic Framework, and how it provides the basis for current and future work of the various proposed Groups. The Group noted that the framework promotes efficient delivery, partnership working and innovation. Steven Feeney further advised that the framework includes developments to embed best practice, and enhancements to strengthen the case for additional

investment. The Group agreed that the framework would be key to delivering the vision set by Leaders.

### **Item 3 - Road Maintenance Strategic Framework –**

For this first meeting the Group discussed 4 papers which set out Governance arrangements for work which has flowed from the Road Maintenance Review, and the terms of reference for individual Groups involved.

#### **Paper (i) – Overarching Governance (with diagrammatic representation)**

Roy Brannen introduced a paper which highlighted the proposed structure of the Groups. The paper showed a two-tier collaborative arrangement which involved a Strategic Action Group supported by a Stakeholder Group, working in tandem with a central resource to take forward a shared capacity/shared services programme. The structure also set out a Communications Group to disseminate information and a research Board which would report to the Stakeholder Group.

Roy Brannen advised that other UK delegates had expressed some envy at the structured position Roads Authorities in Scotland had achieved. He further advised that the Roads network is a platform for growth in the Scottish economy, and an asset that is often not made enough of. The Group agreed that the Communications Group provided an opportunity to set out this position. They also agreed that the Research Board could disseminate findings quickly and cost effectively across Scotland.

**Conclusion** – The Group agreed the proposed overarching governance arrangements, noting the relationships between the different Groups, facilitation arrangements, and the creation of a Communications group, resourced by a combination of existing Transport Scotland and SCOTS staff.

#### **Paper (ii) – Strategic Action Group**

Roy Brannen introduced the paper and advised that the Group's role would be to oversee the partnership working on road maintenance; the development of collaborative approaches on strategic issues; and publicly own the Strategic Framework for Change and its delivery.

The Group noted that the suggested priorities for 2013 are broad given that the 30 initiatives have yet to be delivered and evaluated. They agreed with this approach, and advised that the Stakeholder Group should ensure all initiatives are robustly evaluated. Steven Feeney advised that following evaluation, specific future priorities could be set and specific initiatives agreed. The Group agreed with this approach.

**Conclusion**: The Strategic Action Group confirmed it was content with the proposed terms of reference and 2013 priorities for itself and for Transport Scotland to provide resource support to the Strategic Action Group.

#### **Paper (iii) Shared Capacity/Shared Services Improvement Board (SCSSIB) – Terms of Reference**

Colin Mair introduced the paper and advised that Option 30 of the NRMR had recommended a dedicated central resource be created to support the development of shared services and shared capacity in roads maintenance.

Colin Mair suggested that the Improvement Service (IS) host the SCSSIB and provide knowledge management and analytical support. He further advised that it would also include representatives from Scottish Futures Trust, Audit Scotland, SCOTS, SOLACE and Transport Scotland, augmented by private partners who had substantial experience of shared arrangements.

The Group noted that the IS cannot fund the programme support team. Ewan Wallace explained that preliminary funding discussions had been held but further clarity would be required over the role of the SCSSIB before SCOTS could commit funding. Jim Valentine added that any contribution from SOLACE to SCOTS would have to follow an existing approval procedure. Steven Feeney also advised that Transport Scotland had an existing offer of 1x graduate resource for the programme support team.

Mr Brown stated that the work could deliver significant savings and benefits across roads authorities and that he was keen to see benefits achieved as quickly as possible. Mr Brown further advised that the Scottish Government had no intention of a “grab” on local authority roles. He highlighted Tayside Contracts as an example of good practice, and one which was in local authorities’ interests. Both Mr Brown and Councillor Hagan also stated that they would continue to put forward the argument for more funds for roads maintenance within Government, explaining steps to improve efficiency were key.

The Group agreed that the first meeting of the SCSSIB would discuss funding given the need for appropriate project staff to be in place to drive the work and manage the graduate resources provided. In addition, it would agree an outline work programme for the year ahead.

**Conclusion** The Strategic Action Group approved the proposed arrangements for the SCSSIB, but noted that clarification of available funding would follow. **[Action point: E Wallace to clarify SCSSIB funding arrangements.]**

#### **Paper (iv) - Stakeholder Group – Terms Of Reference**

Ewan Wallace introduced the paper and advised that the objective of the Stakeholder Group would be to underpin the work of the Strategic Action Group. He further advised that the Group would work within boundaries created by the Strategic Framework for Change. This would foster, monitor and report on initiatives contained within the final NRMR report and any subsequent initiatives generated, more specifically ensuring:

- The initiatives are progressed, implemented and deliver best value across the sector and avoid duplication of effort;
- Continued collaboration on the initiatives, ensuring any potential problems and barriers (including policy and legal barriers) are identified and solutions formulated; and

- The evaluation of road authorities performance in implementing the initiatives, identifying how they achieve their results and promoting good practice, including international best practice, across the public sector on road maintenance.

The Group noted that a key task for the Stakeholder Group would be evaluating the implementation of initiatives and providing advice for the Strategic Action Group on key current and emerging aspects of road maintenance and of business improvement. Ewan Wallace advised that its diverse membership can provide a public facing perspective on road maintenance.

Roy Brannen added that in evaluating initiatives, individual roads authorities would not be identified. The Group agreed with this approach. It also agreed that if the Stakeholder Group is unable to resolve specific issues, these can be referred to the Strategic Action Group. The first meeting of the Stakeholder Group is scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> December.

The Group discussed when to hold a stakeholder event. To help maintain momentum among the road maintenance industry, stakeholders should meet again, to learn about progress made, and of future plans. An existing Spring date in the SCOTS calendar, or November 2013 (one year after the new arrangements) were both proposed. Roy Brannen offered the Traffic Scotland Control Centre (co-located with the Forth Replacement Crossing, Contact and Education Centre) at South Queensferry as a suitable venue. **[Action point: E Wallace to confirm date of stakeholder event to Roy Brannen.]**

The Group discussed stakeholder and road user expectations of roads maintenance. Donald Morrison advised that it was important to manage these by focussing on tasks and improvements, and not a particular backlog figure. Mr Brown agreed on the need to be realistic about what can be achieved and to make judgements about maintenance.

Jim Valentine asked whether DfT should participate in the Action Group. Roy Brannen said that UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) would be an effective forum for discussion of issues raised, but ideally with SCOTS participation.

John Gooday agreed on the importance of the new Groups, but considered that contact with practitioners was vital for any long term project. To that end, he proposed a website / forum with opportunities for updates and engagement, and to flag up problems and identify solutions. One option would be the Road Maintenance Section of the TS. **[Action Point: S Feeney to provide update on potential use of TS website.]**

**Conclusion** -The Group agreed the arrangements for the Stakeholder Group.

#### **Item 4 - Progress Update – Initiatives**

Donald Morrison provided a short update on progress on the 30 initiatives, by the main themes involved (eg asset management, integrated services, etc). By the end of the Review, nine initiatives were already either complete, or,

with agreement, would be taken no further forward (eg winter maintenance service which focuses on resilience). All local authorities in Scotland have now implemented the SCOTS suite of KPIs. Implementation of the remainder is ongoing: the new Governance arrangements are designed to ensure completion.

Work on the asset management via RAMPs has moved on significantly and this will feed into road conditions. With the Shared Capacity/Share Services Improvement Board established, this would give momentum to that batch of initiatives. Good progress was being made on the remaining group, eg LEAN.

With regards the balance between adhering to standards and avoiding “gold plating”, Mr Brown cited recent work on electrification of the Paisley Canal Railway Line where imaginative contracting has considerably reduced project costs and timescales. **[Action point: D Morrison to update Stakeholder Group on Paisley Canal Electrification contract efficiencies.]**

An initiatives update will be fed into the Stakeholder summit,

**Conclusion** – The Group noted that nine initiatives were now complete, and that satisfactory progress was being made on the remaining initiatives.

#### **Item 5 - Any Other Business**

No other items were raised.

#### **Item 6 - Date of next meeting**

The Group's next meeting will take place at **9:30am on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013** in Central Edinburgh. Venue to be confirmed.

#### **Action points:**

- (i) E Wallace to clarify SCSSIB funding arrangements**
- (ii) E Wallace to confirm date of stakeholder event to Roy Brannen**
- (iii) S Feeney to provide update on potential use of TS website**
- (iv) D Morrison to update Stakeholder Group on Paisley Canal Electrification contract efficiencies.**

**Trunk Roads and Bus Operations  
Transport Scotland  
December 2012**