

STRATEGIC ACTION GROUP

20 June 2013
Committee Room 3, Scottish Parliament

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
Colin Mair Chief Executive, Improvement Service
Jamie Fowlie Team Leader, Development, COSLA
Elsbeth King Scottish Road Works Commissioner
Jim Valentine Perth and Kinross Council, SOLACE Representative
Sally Hartley Road Policy Support Officer, Transport Scotland Secretariat

Item 1 - Welcome and Introductions

As co-chair, **Mr Brown** welcomed all present to the second meeting of the Road Maintenance Strategic Action Group. The Minister thanked everyone for the hard work which has flowed from the National Roads Maintenance Review, and is, in turn, allowing the road network to be managed more efficiently.

Item 2 – Actions from Previous Meeting

Roy Brannen (**RB**) talked through the actions from the first meeting of the Strategic Action Group held in November 2012.

The Group noted that the first action relating to the funding of the Shared Service and Shared Capacity Improvement Board would be covered under Item 4.

Ewan Wallace (**EW**) confirmed that the proposed stakeholder event is planned to coincide with the Road Expo event scheduled for 6/7 November 2013.

Steven Feeney (**SF**) advised that the potential use of Transport Scotland's website was being considered as part of a wider communication strategy aimed at improving the public perception of road maintenance. **SF** further advised that stakeholders had been asked to provide views on the proposed strategy, and that these views are being actively considered.

The fourth action point from the previous meeting related to potential synergies and lessons to be learned from Paisley Canal Electrification contract efficiencies. Donald Morrison (**DM**) advised that the Paisley Canal Electrification had delivered significant savings through departures from international standards. The group noted that this was a potential area where savings could be delivered.

Item 3 –Audit Scotland Audit Update

SF introduced a paper setting out the key points from Audit Scotland's recent Audit Update report, the media reaction to the publication, and an outline of how this was handled.

JV commented that there has been a lot of work undertaken in the last 12 months which is not apparent in the final report.

RB advised that Audit Scotland wanted to see a reduction in the deficit and that the stakeholders group was the appropriate forum to continue to manage stakeholder expectations in this regard.

In addition, **Mr Brown** advised that discussions had been held with TS officials to look to establish a vision to address the road maintenance backlog.

Item 4 – Shared Capacity Shared Service Improvement Board

Paper A – CM introduced a paper updating the group on recent Shared Capacity Shared Service Improvement Board (SCSSIB) discussions. This focussed on two points:

- the initial work programme for the SCSSIB; and
- creating the funding basis for a central team to support the programme.

CM advised that initial work had focussed on ensuring an accurate information base which included the distribution of assets, plant, equipment, staff capacity and skills on "quick wins".

CM advised that £150,000 will be made available each year for the next two years, to commence from 1 September 2013.

Paper 4B - EW produced a paper which identified the funding necessary from each Local Authority for the SCSSIB

It was agreed to endorse the funding position as agreed by the Board and at the SCOTS Seminar of 17 May

Item 5 – Local Government benchmarking Framework

CM provided an overview of the new benchmarking framework for Scottish Local Government, developed by SOLACE.

CM advised that this work had been on-going for over 2 years, and that the data, which has been agreed at Finance Director level, is around 98% reliable.

The group noted variations in the maintenance cost per kilometre between LAs. **CM** advised that costs varied for a number of reasons, including a reduction in road spend if, for example, overall road maintenance budgets had been reduced in a specific LA area.

Item 6 – NRMR Initiative Progress – Update

EW provided an update on the initiatives which had flowed from the Review. **EW** also highlighted the on-going work of the Scottish Road Research Board, their full programme of research for the coming year, and that the pilot work around linking public perception surveys to actual information would begin in July 2013

The group noted that 36% of the initiatives were complete, with 54% still progressing.

SF updated the group on responses to the Strategic Consultation on Works on Scottish Roads. **Mr Brown** emphasised that this is a key piece of work aimed at ensuring disruption to road users as a result of utility repairs is minimised. The group noted that SCOTS had encouraged all LAs to respond to the consultation.

Item 7 – Priorities and Next Steps

SF introduced a paper setting out the existing group priorities and suggested next steps.

SF advised that it had been 12 months since the Road Maintenance Review and existing SAG priorities should be reviewed. The group discussed and agreed that the existing priorities should remain in place, to be reviewed in summer 2014.

RB noted that evaluation was crucial in order to meet the 10% efficiency target. The group noted **SF's** comment that Audit Scotland had made clear that the benefits of the initiatives flowing from the NRMR must be captured, and agreed that this is to be promoted.

SF advised that a workshop aimed specifically at agreeing an approach to evaluation had taken place on 11 June.

Mr Brown recommended that transparency is crucial to the implementation of initiatives, with a progress chart to be produced and made publicly available. **JV's** suggestion for the progress report to be circulated to SOLACE was agreed by the group.

Action: Ewan Wallace to advise Stakeholder Group

Item 8 – AOB

Mr Brown advised that the minutes from these meetings will be published online

Action: Steven Feeney to take forward

Item 9 – Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is yet to be finalised, but in holding with the bi-annual timescale, it will be in November 2013. Members will be notified once agreed.