

UK ROADS LIAISON GROUP

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RLG update

● Martin Low, City Commissioner of Transportation from Westminster, has been appointed as the Chairman of the UK Network Management Board.

Martin takes over from Derek Turner who outlined his challenges for the Board a number of years ago:

"Our strategic priorities will include reducing the impact of congestion and tackling accessibility, safety and security issues. Technology is key for improving reliability and what drivers experience on road networks.

"Intelligent Transport Systems are no longer discussed as an innovation that is coming. Urban Traffic Management and Control and Sat Nav have arrived and we need to fully understand the implications and opportunities for networks. The development will be interoperability and a change to getting information from the car, to the roadside and back to the car".

Many of these challenges will remain but Martin will bring some new business plan priorities – such as addressing emerging issues such as cycling safety – that were previously not part of the Board's agenda.

Asset management – the 'how to' guide is now out

The UK Roads Liaison Group has endorsed and taken ownership of the new 'Highway infrastructure asset management' guidance funded and developed through the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP). Justin Ward asks the key questions.

Why is asset management important?

Asset management has been widely accepted by central and local government as a means to deliver a more efficient and effective approach to management of highway infrastructure assets through longer term planning, ensuring that standards are defined and achievable for available budgets. It also supports making the case for funding and better communication with stakeholders, facilitating a greater understanding of the contribution highway infrastructure assets make to support economic growth and the needs of local communities.

What changes have taken place recently to make it so important?

There are a number:

- Publication of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy 'Code of practice for transport infrastructure assets' providing guidance on how asset management must be implemented for local highway authorities to meet Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) requirements
- The Audit Commission report 'Going the distance' recommending that local highway authorities in England should adopt the principles of asset management when making investment decisions in order to optimise the use of available resources
- The 'Potholes review' published in 2012 found that asset management has not been embraced consistently across all authorities in England, although it is clearly understood that a more preventative approach to maintenance and long term planning is likely to reduce the occurrence of potholes
- Audit Scotland's reports on maintaining Scotland's roads recommended that councils gather better information on the number and condition of road assets to support the allocation of maintenance budget through an asset management approach
- Scotland's 'National roads maintenance review' published in June 2012 recommended a number of options for improving highway maintenance. These rely on the implementation of robust asset management practices

So asset management has become more visibly important?

These reports provide a greater focus on asset management. Although the principles of asset

management have been accepted, highway authorities throughout the UK have adopted a wide ranging approach to their implementation.

Many authorities have successfully adopted asset management but others are still at an early stage. Where asset management has been successfully employed, the demonstration of leadership and commitment from senior decision makers in supporting an asset management approach has been fundamental.

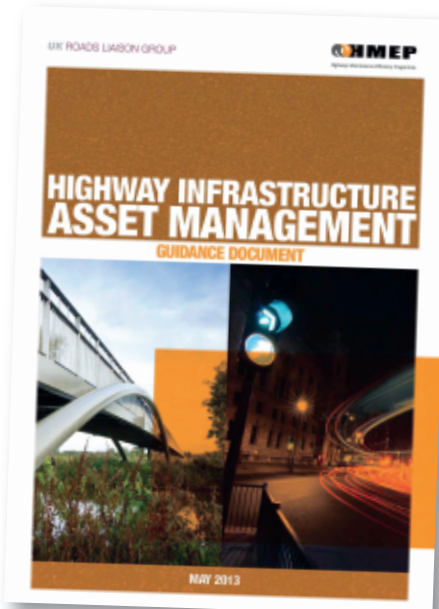
Who produced the guidance?

In England HMEP has recognised that better guidance and information is required if local authorities are to consistently benefit from the potential that asset management offers. HMEP has prepared this guidance for local highway authorities to support the adoption of asset management principles and enable implementation of the benefits of long term planning. This will support a more effective and efficient approach to the management of highway infrastructure.

At the UKRLG meeting in April, the group agreed to endorse and take ownership of the guidance document.

Where can I view the guidance?

The document will be published on the UKRLG website alongside the Codes of Practice shortly. The Guidance is complementary with the Codes of Practice.





Local authorities now have extra help in implementing asset management with new guidance

Who is the guidance aimed at?

This guidance is aimed at all of those involved in managing highway infrastructure, including asset managers, senior decision makers and practitioners. Support by senior decision makers is an important factor in the implementation of asset management, as are the knowledge and skills of those responsible for planning the management of the asset.

This guidance is not intended to replace approaches that have been successfully adopted by local highway authorities, but to provide the basis for a consistent approach and understanding of the implementation and delivery of the benefits associated with asset management.

Does the guidance have any recommendations?

There are 14 recommendations which are presented as the minimum requirements to achieve a reasonable level of benefit from asset management.

The recommendations can be met through adopting a basic approach to asset management; however, further benefits may be achieved through adopting more advanced practices. As a basis for providing a consistent approach to implementing this guidance and its recommendations, the Framework for Highway Infrastructure Asset Management has been introduced. This sets out the activities that support asset management as:

- context of asset management
- asset management planning process
- enablers to support implementation of asset management

Together they provide a framework to further progress the asset management journey and support the benefits of taking a long term view of the management of highway infrastructure. They also support making the case for investment.

How should authorities use the guidance?

Authorities should review their current asset management practices against the recommendations in this guidance.

Where additional activities are required to meet the recommendations, authorities should develop an Implementation Plan and may also wish to make the case for additional investment. This will require the support of senior decision makers.

The approaches that may be adopted by highway authorities to meet the recommendations will vary from authority to authority based on a number of factors including resources and the role their highway network plays in the local community.

This Guidance sets out an approach that local authorities may adopt to deliver the outcomes from asset management.

Is the guidance prescriptive?

The approach presented is not prescriptive or the only approach. It is evidence based from case studies which are included, describing lessons learnt and good practice from the implementation of asset management. There is also advice for those authorities which are at an early stage of implementation or have just started on the asset management journey to ensure that they have the information available to maximise the potential benefits of such an approach and make the case for investment.

So the guidance should be helpful?

Yes, it is practical, easy to follow and up to date with the latest thinking. The document brings together all other guidance documents and covers all the highway assets. It addresses issues that slowed implementation in the past and provides a common framework for good asset management. Finally, it is suitable for all levels of asset management maturity.

Will using the guidance save money?

CIPFA estimate a modest 5% efficiency improvement through AM principles, but those that have mature systems can achieve 15% saving. This is important for local highway authorities as they can achieve quick wins to make savings to their budgets by adopting different techniques and working practices – depending on the asset information they have available.

Does it fit with any international standards?

Internationally, the draft ISO 55000 on asset management is due to be published in 2014, which will provide a series of high level requirements that may be applied to all physical assets. This standard will eventually supersede PAS 55 'Optimal management of physical assets'.

This guidance does not replace PAS 55. Those authorities that seek to practise asset management at a more advanced level may consider adopting the accreditation and maturity approach promoted in these standards. This will provide a means of demonstrating to their stakeholders their competency to undertake asset management and stewardship of their assets.

What are the recommendations?

Without going into the detail of the recommendations, the themes are as follows:

- Highway infrastructure asset management framework
- Making the case for asset management
- Communications
- Leadership and commitment
- Asset management policy and strategy
- Competencies and training
- Performance management framework
- Risk management
- Asset data management
- Asset management systems
- Lifecycle plans
- Performance monitoring
- Works programming
- Benchmarking

Who wrote the guidance?

The project was guided by a technical working group chaired by Matthew Lugg and involved comprehensive consultation with the highways sector.

The project was led by HMEP support consultant, Atkins. Lila Tachtsi who worked on the guidance for Atkins says: "Deteriorating networks, reduced budgets and increased public expectations over the last few years mean that we have had to re-think the way we manage the highway infrastructure". To read more go to www.ukroadsliasongroup.org