

UK ROADS LIAISON GROUP

The Lighting Board is one of four boards of the UK RLG:

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This article is one of a series profiling RLG and its boards. The Lighting and Bridges Board have already featured in previous issues of *Transportation Professional*. A profile of the Network Management Board will follow in December.

RLG news

● Members of the **UK Bridges Board** are meeting on 14 October. On the agenda is a presentation by John Carpenter of SCOSS – the Standing Committee on Structural Safety: www.scoss.org.uk. The Bridges Board has also prepared a draft policy on 'Response to Emergencies'.

● Invest to Save schemes, the '500 Watt rule' and liaison with OFGEM and EDF energy have all been on the agenda for the **UK Lighting Board** to help support lighting authorities; and in its early stages is an exercise in highlighting the experiences of EDF's rent-a-jointer scheme within Kent County Council.

● An emerging issue being considered by the **UK Network Management Board** is the highways sector's greater use of Intelligent Transport Systems; in particular communication between in-car SatNav units and road side equipment.

Roads Board: progress for whole networks

The Roads Board and its sub groups are continuing to develop more efficient ways of managing entire road networks for all UK authorities.

Highway authorities are adopting a new approach to managing their road networks for greater efficiency – largely due to the efforts of a few key groups of engineers. These include the UK Roads Board and its sub committees which have played a major part in introduction of asset management to highway engineering; and whose work continues to develop invaluable advice and guidance.

Highway asset management has been in gestation for the past 10 years or so and is now the preferred method for informing better short and long term investment decisions. Strong support has come from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Her Majesty's Treasury.

A key figure within the collective effort thus far has been the current Chairman of the Roads Board Matthew Lugg. He was involved in initial work on a framework for highway asset management through his role with the County Surveyors' Society (CSS). He joined the Roads Board at its inception in 2001 and has been a champion of asset management for the good of the overall highway maintenance cause ever since.

"For the Roads Board, key output has been the codes of practice and asset management, with which we are making enormous progress," Mr Lugg says. "We have moved on from initial guidance to more comprehensive supporting documents for highway authorities and endorsement has come from central Government. A lot of people are involved in various sub groups."

Describing himself as "a bit of a workaholic", Mr Lugg is also director of Highways, Transportation & Waste Management at Leicestershire County Council (where he is responsible for around 1000 staff and a £100M budget), as well as Vice President of CSS and Chair of the CSS Engineering Committee.

The extent of the Roads Boards' sub groups and links with other committees (see diagram top right) reflects the cross-industry nature of asset management and the depth of work involved. The approach applies to every item of road, cycle and footway networks. It brings in a whole new way of managing these from a financial point of view and it is underpinned by gathering – and using appropriately – information on the value and condition of each asset.

The Roads Board is not only concerned with asset management. Its sub groups each have their own ambitious three year business plans (see box). But asset management is key given that it embodies process for doing things more efficiently and for giving those that hold the purse strings authoritative evidence of the necessity of adequate funding.

"Industry's established means of demonstrating the condition of roads, the ALARM (Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance) survey, was not good enough as a convincing



Chairman of the UK Roads Board Matthew Lugg

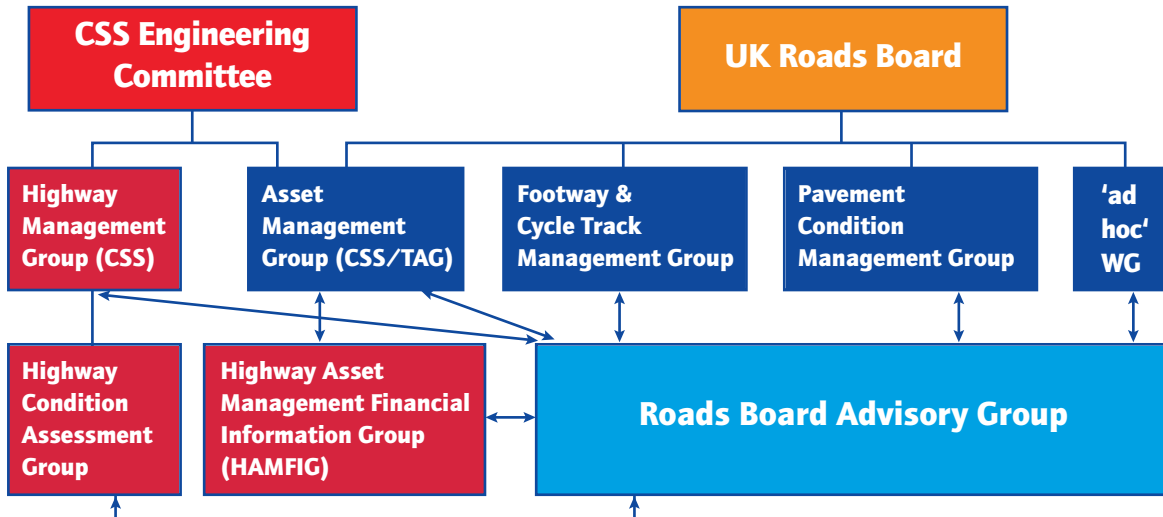
argument for Government because it was principally based on a straw poll of engineers views," Mr Lugg says.

Government endorsement of a more systematic alternative came earlier this year in the form of a letter from the Treasury supporting a review of highway asset management by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (*Transportation Professional* March 2009). The letter came with announcement of £32M of additional DfT funding to help authorities build their inventories and a clear message that asset management should be adopted with Whole of Government Accounts – both of which need assets valued by their capital value and cost of maintenance instead of the sometimes meaningless cost of total replacement.

"Some have commented that highway management is becoming a job for accountants, but it is very important that engineers keep hold of the process of valuing assets," Mr Lugg says. "Asset management is all about knowing what you've got and what condition it's in and then making informed decisions."

"Funding is a key issue for the local authority roads sector and we still have to deliver efficiencies. The asset management approach gives a better understanding for where best to use the money available."

Other tangible results are coming from the Roads Board's work with DfT on indicators of highway condition and authority performance. Government has gradually reduced these in line with its policy of lessening Whitehall directives towards local government, but, says Mr Lugg, the roads sector needs condition and performance measurement, even if



The UK Roads Board has three sub groups: the Asset Management Group; Footway & Cycle Track Management Group; and the Pavement Condition Management Group. When needed it will also establish 'ad hoc' working groups for specific tasks. The Roads Board interacts with the Highway Asset Management Financial Information Group, the CSS Engineering Committee and the Roads Board Advisory Group.

indicators are used voluntarily: "Otherwise the work generally will not happen," he says.

"The current very narrow approach of looking only at surface condition is not the best way, neither is the present BVPI (Best Value Performance Indicator) system focusing on the worst, red condition roads. It is better to focus on those shown at amber."

With the Roads Board's advice, DfT is considering a replacement for the National Road Maintenance Condition Survey, which was last carried out in 2005. A Roads Board sub group is working on a footways condition indicator for highway authorities and with CSS a national assessment of unclassified roads – the 'mini scanner' project – is under way, all of which will feed back into highway asset management in one way or another.

"When this is embedded in Whole of Government Accounts we will be able to sit down and model various scenarios of funding and consequences, from 2011/12 onwards," Mr Lugg says. "Local authorities have been immune to cuts thus far, but we will be planning for reductions in spending in that term."

Xtra-info:

www.ukroadsliasongroup.org/roads



Asset management: great breadth and depth of work is involved applying the approach to every road asset

The UK Roads Board (with CSS and ICE) has produced revised guidelines to help local authorities reduce amounts paid out in highway claims – reported to be worth between £100M and £500M a year. "It is essential that local authorities are aware of the importance of following the 'well maintained highways' approach," says Roads Board Chair Matthew Lugg. "The new guidance gives latest advice and notification of changes in legislation." The revised claims guidance is available at www.ukroadsliasongroup.org/liaison/practice.htm

The UK Roads Board members are:

- Chair – Matthew Lugg**
- Edward Bunting** – Department for Transport
- Phil Cadenne** (Cardiff City Council) – CSS Wales
- Chris Capps** (Cambridgeshire County Council) – CSS and chair of the Pavement Condition Management Group
- Pat Docherty** – Northern Ireland Roads Service
- Kevin Fuller** (Hampshire County Council) – CSS and chair of the Footway & Cycle Track Management Group
- Les Hawker** (Transport for London Street Management) – London Technical Advisors' Group (LoTAG)
- Richard Morgan** – Welsh Assembly Government
- Donald Morrison** – Transport Scotland
- Adam Oljenik** (Perth & Kinross Council) – the Society of Chief Officers of Transport in Scotland
- Anthony Radford-Foley** (Bracknell Forest Council) – TAG
- Lester Wilmington** (Devon County Council) – CSS and chair of the Asset Management Group
- Ramesh Sinhal** – Highways Agency
- Gary Warner** (London Borough of Bromley) – LoTAG

Sub groups taking issues to task

Work of the UK Roads Board has been split between its sub groups:

- An information strategy for promoting network asset management as well as cycling, walking and street scene issues tops the business plan of the **Foot & Cycle Track Management Group**, whose work overall is applying more engineering rigour to the management of footpaths and cycleways
- The Board's **Asset Management Group** has developed 'quick start' asset management guidance and a specification for computer software for calculating depreciated costs of replacement. It has also produced guidance on levels of service, life cycle planning and risk management. Its work for the next three years will concentrate on supporting authorities' asset management plans
- The **Pavement Condition Management Group** has a remit to oversee and direct the UKPMS and SCANNER support contract. This includes development of deterioration modelling and condition rules for SCANNER and visual survey data. The group is also developing scheme prioritisation rules taking in whole life costing for effective asset management