

Efforts made to strengthen asset management skills

Competent professionals play an essential part in managing the road network well, for the benefit of the economy and society.

UKRLG recently published an Asset Management Competence Framework designed to help highway authorities implement the recommendations of the group's Code of Practice 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure'.

In particular, recommendation 15 states: 'The appropriate competencies for all staff should be identified. Training should be provided where necessary for directly employed staff, and contractors should be required to provide evidence of the appropriate competencies of their staff'.

Identifying, developing and documenting the competencies required across the highway service promises to help highway authorities manage both their physical and intellectual assets effectively and efficiently, as well as ensure that other elements of the Code of Practice are met.

Research has revealed that a variety of approaches are being used by different highway authorities to manage the skills, competencies and training requirements of their staff.

In response, the UK Roads Liaison Group Asset Management Board produced the Asset Management Competence Framework, which is now freely available to access on the UKRLG website.



↑ Well run roads benefit society

The framework has been developed so that highway authorities can:

- Identify competence requirements;
- Define generic highway roles and responsibilities, specifying the different levels of competence required;
- Set out the competence – in particular the knowledge and experience – required for each generic role and level, including any key review cycles for updating/maintaining competence and;
- Have a template to document and track competencies.

The implementation of a consistent framework with defined roles, competencies and competence levels will help highway authorities identify whether staff are suitable for the role they have; or alternatively provide an indication of the training or experience which may enhance their capabilities.

Further benefits of the competence framework include:

- Allowing highway authorities to identify commensurate training needs in order to meet the requirements of all roles;
- Assessing whether staff conducting a specific role are sufficiently competent for the specific role;
- Assessing whether a sufficient level of competence exists among all the staff in the authority;
- Allowing staff to identify progression routes and any gaps in training or experience;
- Providing an assessment of whether staff in the team can contribute to another part of the organisation;
- Enabling succession plans for the workforce; and
- Enhancing staff's employability and enabling freedom of movement within the industry.

↓ Continued training of people is a must TFL



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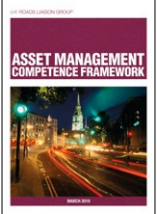
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Justin Ward (JW) speaks with John Paterson (JP, pictured) from Atkins – a member of the SNC Lavalin Group – who was the lead consultant on the Asset Management Competence Framework project.



This is an edited transcript of the conversation; to listen to the full interview visit the Podcasts section on the CIHT website.

JW: Explain what this framework does

JP: This framework responds to demands from the sector. Since publication of the Code of Practice in 2016 – and the move for authorities to be adopting that – the UKRLG had been engaging with the sector.

As part of the feedback there was a clear desire for additional support regarding skills and competencies.

This framework has been developed with support from the UKRLG Asset Management Board, the Department for Transport and Transport for London.

JW: There is quite a breadth of roles covered within the framework. Can you explain these roles and why they were included?

JP: Some of the roles are probably not going to be a great surprise in an asset management competence framework: asset management leadership, asset management delivery, and asset management inspections.

A couple of areas we have built in include flagging up the political and senior decision maker role: that is a vital role and has a great bearing on how effectively asset management is enabled. Other areas we have identified are risk, legal and insurance.

JW: How are the competency levels in the framework defined?

JP: Using an industry standard approach in terms of levels: starting with awareness, moving on to knowledge, experience and ultimately proficiency at the highest level.

JW: There are a number of competence areas. Could you explain more about these and how they link to the job roles?

JP: We have 10 competence themes which range from legislation and procurement through to themes of asset management, governance,

policy, strategy, information and data. There are also softer aspects included such as customers and communications.

Within this there are 43 individual competencies. We have also defined requirements into a number of individual roles associated with asset management and also a minimum level we would expect an authority to have.

JW: The framework has an Excel tool; why is this?

JP: This provides the opportunity to track competence at an individual level or alternatively at highway authority level, to really understand the level of competence throughout the organisation. That might include competencies available through their supply chain partners.

JW: What could the wider benefits be?

JP: There are a number of benefits here that we expect authorities and individuals to realise from using the framework.

First of all, it is to identify what competence they should have for the role they are doing and if there is a need for training, support or personal development. It also helps understand the level of competence across an authority.

Improving drivers' experience through roadworks

Following extensive research with motorists, Highways England launched the 'Roadworks: a customer view' document that demonstrates 20 principles for improving the customer experience at planned roadworks.

Highways England's network management solutions team leader Freda Rashdi – a representative on the UK Network Management Board – recently provided an update to the Board. Freda highlighted work on travel demand management and the need for roadworks information to be accurate and relevant.

Customer frustrations can exist where there is no visible activity at a works site, so we need to find ways to explain why work is taking place, it was said. Exploring ways to reduce the time roadworks take and seeking shorter lengths of roadworks are being investigated.

The timeliness of information is vital, and customers are said to prefer electronic signage and trust that the messages they display are more up to date compared to information on a hard sign. The use of multiple media channels to get information out about roadworks is also encouraged.

Board chair and Hertfordshire County Council's director of environment and infrastructure Mark Kemp said: "It is great to



↑ Highways England is working to reduce driver frustration through temporary works ALASTAIR LLOYD

share what is happening on the strategic road network with local authorities.

"I was pleased to be able to share work that Hertfordshire and Essex have developed with Ringway, Ringway Jacobs and roadworks.org to send sat-nav providers live traffic updates from the roadside that help drivers avoid congestion and road closures."

Live updates on road closures are sent from the roadside or from a transport control centre

directly to sat-nav systems, which enables routing to be updated more rapidly and helps drivers to divert to an alternative route before encountering a road closure.

This offers the ability to communicate road closures via sat-nav devices in real time, influencing driver behaviour and route choice.

Getting the latest reliable information on roadworks straight to customers is, therefore, really important.