

## UK ROADS LIAISON GROUP

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**RLG update**

● The **UK Bridges Board** published 'Guidance on the design, assessment and strengthening of masonry parapets on highway structures'. Masonry parapets are designed to provide protection for road users. This guidance document is designed to bring up to date previous advice on the design, assessment and strengthening of masonry parapets, drawing together guidance previously available in BS 6779:1999 Part 4 and in research papers, and bringing the terminology used in line with that used in BS EN 1317-2:1998 and BS EN 1996-1-1:2005

● The **UK Lighting Board** has recently published a lighting policy framework to assist lighting authorities in formulating a formal lighting Policy for the first time, or when revising an existing policy. The advice is that a policy document should be a high level, non technical statement of the authorities overall objectives for the street lighting service. The policy may then be supplemented by other more technical documents relating to lighting standards, operational standards and lifecycle planning. The framework is available as a free download from the UKRLG website and was drafted to complement the 'Guide to development of lighting policy (TR24)' available from the Institution of Lighting Professionals.

# Training the winter decision makers

No formal training and national accreditation for winter service decision makers currently exists but a newly developed course is expected to go live in winter 2013-14.

Individuals responsible for the operational decisions made during winter will soon benefit from a nationally recognised accredited training course due to be launched in 2013. The course will improve knowledge and awareness and promote the making of better decisions. A spin-off from accreditation will be that holding this could help a decision maker's evidence in court when defending an authority's actions following a road accident during winter.

Decision maker training has been perceived of late as increasingly important. At the UK Roads Board's request the accreditation scheme has been brought forward for early completion in the National Winter Service Research Group's (NWSRG) amended business plan. Core competencies for the training have been developed by Tony Bemrose (Norfolk County Council) working with Chris Cranson (Devon County Council) in their capacity as steering group members on the NWSRG.

Current training for decision makers relies on job shadowing and local training but with experienced winter practitioners leaving the profession these methods can no longer be relied upon. Furthermore, according to NWSRG steering group member Adrian Runacres, authorities have experienced difficulties recruiting winter decision makers. The new training and accreditation scheme hopes to address these two issues.

Discussions are being held with the Institution of Highway Engineers (IHE) about holding a national register of accredited winter decision makers and also accrediting training companies or individuals that deliver the training. The scheme will include assessment in the core competencies and then demonstration of competence in decision making over a winter period.

The current proposal is that IHE will fast track applications from established practitioners who can demonstrate substantial experience, permitting them to

become trainers/mentors for the course. The eight core competencies are expected to be completed in a minimum of four days (see table below).

### Winter service decision maker competency standards:

1. Highway law & policy
2. Winter record keeping
3. Road meteorology
4. Decision making
5. Monitoring weather overnight
6. Using plant (including snow and calibration)
7. Snow response
8. Winter communication (including media management)

A good starting place for anyone wanting an overview of winter service training issues is the training part of 'Well-maintained highways (WMH)' Section 13 as this has been the basis from which the course content was developed. The section was updated in November 2011 following the publication of David Quarumby's winter resilience report that highlighted concerns around training for winter service operations.

As there are already City & Guilds qualifications for winter service drivers and duty supervisors, a training course for the decision maker means that all the key people involved with winter service operations that require training will soon be able to receive it.

Tony and Chris drew on personal experience to develop the course competencies. Both have been involved in winter decision making and winter policy for many years with their respective authorities. Tony's authority is responsible for the decision to treat 3200km of road within three hours across the whole of Norfolk. Last year the county council made the decision to go out 74 times; and has averaged 97 winter outings over the last five year.

A core element to the course, not surprisingly, is focused on decision making. The course will refer to 'WMH Winter Service' Appendix H decision matrix and treatments options and will also focus on the effect of forecast confidence on decisions. Tony says: "Every time I take the decision to go we send out 57 drivers, with six loader drivers also involved, four duty supervisors, 300t of salt, the fuel...what happens if my decision is a wrong one?"

A ballpark figure for each operation is around £40,000. Wrong decisions can be made just because someone did not interpret the weather forecast information correctly. In constrained economic times authorities just cannot afford to make the wrong decisions.

"In severe weather conditions on the one hand the



Accreditation should attract new personnel



Making the decision to send out the snow ploughs is a big responsibility when each operation can cost £40,000

police will be advising people not to drive and on the other we are sending our drivers out into very difficult conditions," Tony says. At the back of a decision maker's mind must be highway law and policy. Consideration will be given to the Highways Act 1980, an authority's local policies and procedures and codes of practice such as 'Well-maintained highways'. Also they need to be mindful of the Police Road Death Investigation Manual, "an extremely good read," according to Tony; this helps a decision maker understand what the police will do if there is a death on the highway.

This is particularly important if there is a suggestion that the fatality might be the result of the authority's actions and therefore has implications under the Corporate Manslaughter & Corporate Homicide Act. The course will also refer to the past court case of *Goodes v East Sussex County*

Council that considered if the authority acted correctly in regards to its winter service obligations.

Winter record keeping is very important for any winter service decision maker and can also be of particular importance in regard to insurance claims or legal defence. If an accident occurs and a case goes to court, for example, the defence would be reliant on the records available. Decision makers also need to understand the equipment they have at their disposal – a key component of a winter operation and a reason for one of the modules from the course focusing on using plant.

Norfolk salts all its main roads and at least one road that connects each village to the treated network (in all the county pre-salts 34% of its network). Making the public aware of the winter route hierarchy and when treatments will take place is therefore an important component of its winter

communications strategy. With an above national average number of retirees in Norfolk, the radio may be more appropriate for this group than the use of social media.

Developing a snow/severe weather response is vital and, according to Tony, is crucial in towns such as Wells-next-the-Sea on the north Norfolk coast where help and assistance from local towns and parish councils plus the provision of grit bins allows for good resilience planning and self help strategies.

Understanding weather will form part of any training scheme for winter decision makers. There are two course components on this: Road meteorology and monitoring weather overnight. As Tony explains: "If someone comes away from the training and understands climatic zones better they might be able to use resources and budgets more effectively." **Justin Ward**

## Peer Assist Review launches of highway authority winter service delivery

The purpose of the peer review service is to provide assistance to English highway authorities currently struggling to achieve the delivery of an effective and modern winter service. The review will identify the specific and general barriers which have prevented these authorities from following best practice guidance.

In February 2012 the UK Roads Board signed off its support for the NWSRG to offer a Peer Assist Review service to local highway authorities covering their winter operations. Planning since then has been under way to develop an at-cost service

(expected to be around £4000) for a such a review.

Peer Assist Review will be undertaken by a team consisting of highly experienced and well respected former local authority winter service engineers, managed and guided by a risk management specialist with extensive experience of the review process. The process will lead to the production of a 'Recommendations Report' which will be technically reviewed and approved before submission by nationally recognised NWSRG experts.

Adrian Runacres, a steering group member involved

with the development of the service said: "What I love about the NWSRG is its amount of expertise available, from practitioners to scientists and manufacturers. Once we understand the detailed issues from the Peer Assist Review we can tap into a huge amount of expertise from the steering group members and provide this to the authority in the 'Recommendations Report!'"

To register your interest in either scheme please contact Adrian Runacres [nwsrg@trl.co.uk](mailto:nwsrg@trl.co.uk) and highlight in the subject field 'Decision-maker training' or 'Peer-to-peer winter service review'.