

Be willing to engage openly says UK roads ambassador

Graham Pendlebury – the recently retired local transport director at the Department for Transport – is focused on helping to strengthen the UK's ties with international partners. Justin Ward reports.



↑ Graham Pendlebury will lead a UK delegation to the World Road Congress in Abu Dhabi in October BESTPHOTOPLUS – SHUTTERSTOCK

As the UK looks to forge new relationships in a post Brexit world it is interesting who the Department for Transport has chosen to help build these networks.

Graham Pendlebury, who until the end of May was director of local transport at DfT, is now working part time to focus on the UK's presence at the World Road Congress in Abu Dhabi later this year.

This comes two years after he was appointed senior Government official (UK First Delegate) to represent the UK at the World Road Association (also known as PIARC).

It was an astute choice to elect Graham to take over from former First Delegate Roy Brannen (now chief executive of Transport Scotland) and his openness to engage with others and listen has strengthened the UK's international presence.

Graham is also known for his inclusivity and his ability to involve others, so it is perhaps not surprising that he now has an international brief to take these qualities

forward. He also has extensive overseas experience from previous roles at DfT.

Graham is personally committed to developing the UK's relationship with PIARC and he sees networks such as the UKRLG and the National Committee of the World Road Association in the UK as key to this.

"We at the DfT re-activated our engagement with PIARC," Graham says. "Roy did a great job, but was not always getting enough support from all parts of the UK. I wanted to rectify that."

Graham has found that countries right across the world share similar problems to the UK. He says that officials from France, Germany, America, Japan and China have all told him they also face issues around how to maintain infrastructure and are looking to address challenges such as whether they have the right skills to cope with new technologies.

For the UK there is so much we can learn from others and for Graham this is why being more engaged with PIARC and having a bigger presence at the World Road Congress can only be a good thing.

Graham will continue to work for the DfT until the end of October in order to deliver the UK's presence at the next World Road Congress in Abu Dhabi from 6 to 10 October. The event is expected to attract 5000 delegates and 40 transport ministers and there will be 300 exhibitors, including the UK.

Marshalling the UK's presence is now a core focus for Graham. "We have got great innovative companies here and the work that is done by the various transport organisations provides an opportunity to showcase what we are doing," he says. "Let's face it, it is a competitive world so we have to make sure we have the same if not better visibility than our competitors."

I ask Graham what advice he would give his younger self and he responds with a broader perspective. Looking back at the civil service and the Department over the last 30 to 35 years, he says it would have been to not have such a 'bunker mentality' and be more willing to engage with communities of expertise and

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Graham Pendlebury

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Minor structures guidance published by lighting group

Highway managers responsible for the upkeep of street furniture including lamp posts, traffic signal poles and signs are urged to consult a new asset management toolkit produced by the Institution of Lighting Professionals.

Its guidance note 22: 'Asset Management Toolkit: Minor Structures' (ATOMS) was launched on 12 June and is available to download for free at the ILP's website.

ATOMS was supported by the Department for Transport and produced in association with the UK Lighting Board, Highway Electrical Association and Transport for London. It has been developed following the UKRLG's 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' Code of Practice to help everyone with a responsibility for such assets to effectively manage them in line with the code.

The document updates and supersedes ILP Technical Report 22 'Managing a Vital Asset: Lighting Supports', which is now withdrawn.

The main points of ATOMS are to confirm that columns supporting luminaires, signals and CCTV are now defined as minor structures and are to be considered, assessed and managed as such.



↑ Columns featuring signs and lighting units are covered by new guidance YORKMAN – SHUTTERSTOCK

A column condition index has been developed and the document also advises how an asset owner can develop an assumed residual life value for the lighting column, allowing them to plan and budget effectively for the future.

UK Lighting Board chair David Denner said

the new document gives an "opportunity to align the inspection and testing of lighting assets with those of other highway assets as minor structures".

To download the document, visit theilp.org.uk/atoms

delivery partners in a much more candid way to build trust.

"The more you have a shared ownership of issues and work together to solve problems, the better." His advice would have been: 'Don't be so buttoned up: be willing to engage with other partners'.

I get the sense from seeing Graham in meetings that he is universally well liked. He might not always say what you want to hear but his openness, honesty and candid nature mean that he gains the trust of whoever he is speaking with. This strength has been an asset when chairing the UK Roads Liaison Group.

He thinks that the UKRLG is unique in Government and this is demonstrated

↓ Delegates from the UK at the last World Road Congress in Seoul in 2015



by its longevity. The group continues to secure good participation from all the devolved administrations, Transport for London, Highways England and from different tiers of local government across the UK.

More recently UKRLG has acted as a conduit for developing a UK wide research programme and Graham says that too is possibly unique in Government; not only sharing research but also procurement processes to make it less burdensome for any one authority.

UKRLG's products, Graham hopes, have been very useful for practitioners but so too is the UK wide collaboration. He sees the network of relationships as also of vital importance, saying: "I think transport is one of the best areas in Government for doing that."

Graham adds that the UKRLG has been flexible in how it thinks about transport as new technologies have emerged and has adapted to these shifts. Specifically, he sees the Code of Practice 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' as demonstrating quite a significant shift with the move to the risk based approach that is becoming well embedded in the sector.

CIHT provides support to both PIARC

and the UKRLG both in terms of logistical and technical support. In Graham's view CIHT is one of the success factors in UKRLG and PIARC and the relationship with the Institution is one that is unique within the Department and more widely within Whitehall.

The directorate which Graham was responsible for within the DfT is a major contributor to the Government's economic growth and localism agendas and is accountable for around £2.5Bn a year of public expenditure. Graham has a Master's degree in history, and is a continuing policy fellow at the University of Cambridge's Centre for Science & Policy.

Graham has noticed during his 35 year career the huge impact EU membership has had and how it started to take up more time of professionals. He says it will be interesting to see how this pans out in the future.

Environmental standards and harmonisation of technical standards were major areas of influence from the EU, so the process of untangling the UK from Europe will, he notes, take a long time. On this Graham sounds an upbeat note, saying: "Our adherence to high standards will continue whatever the future political framework is."