

RCMG Newsletter 3

April 2016

Note from the Chair

The Road Condition Management Group (RCMG) has made a number of steps forward over the past few years. As well as the business as usual activities which include carrying out the annual health check of UKPMS systems and governing the accreditation and development of condition surveys, we have also had success in bidding for research funding to improve SCANNER surveys and data. These areas are discussed in more detail below along with information from other bodies that use road condition data such as DfT and CIPFA.

Information about the RCMG, UKPMS and condition surveys can be found on the [UKRLG website](#) which has replaced the PCIS website.

If you would like further information or would like to be further involved or informed about the tasks that the RCMG is working on, please contact me or the individual groups using the details at the end of the newsletter.

Amanda Richards

SCANNER research

In January 2016, a research project commenced which is looking into the further development of SCANNER surveys. The work is being funded by the DfT, with contributions from SRRB (Scottish Roads Research Board and CHiCs (Consortium for Highway Condition Surveys) and managed by the UKRLG (UK Roads Liaison Group).

SCANNER was originally implemented as a development of the surveys carried out on trunk roads since 2000. A programme of research supported by the DfT was carried out between 2003 and 2007 to undertake the development of SCANNER, to address the data collection requirements of local roads and to deliver new types of parameters more focused on these roads. The research also delivered the RCI definition. Following several years' experience in the delivery and use of SCANNER and calculation of the RCI, the new research was commissioned to identify where improvements might be made.

The research is being led by TRL, in partnership with Linhay and Hyperion Consultancies, and guided by the SCANNER Development Group and the RCMG. The research will cover three areas: How can the consistency of SCANNER data be improved? Do SCANNER surveys deliver the parameters required? Is the RCI appropriate as a tool to meet Local Authority reporting and management requirements?

Improvements in the consistency of the SCANNER measurements will focus on rutting and cracking. For example, developments in technology could offer the potential for improvements in the measurement of road shape that are used to calculate rut depths, and there may be scope to introduce these to SCANNER.



Cracking is the most challenging of the SCANNER measurements to carry out and there is a need to improve the consistency across the survey vehicle fleet so that more confidence can be gained in the data collected in different authorities and years.

The investigation into the use of SCANNER parameters in the RCI includes a consultation with selected authorities to seek their views on the measurements and the use of the SCANNER data. If you would like to participate in the consultation please contact Emma Benbow at TRL (ebenbow@trl.co.uk).

Road Conditions in England 2015

On 24th March 2016 the Department for Transport published the statistical release Road Conditions in England 2015, which forms part of the Road Network Size and Condition statistical series.

The key findings from the report include:

- In 2014/15, local authorities reported that 4 per cent of the principal 'A' road network in England should have been considered for maintenance, the same as the previous year and one percentage point lower than in 2007/08.
- For non-principal classified 'B' and 'C' roads, 7 per cent of the network should have been considered for maintenance in 2014/15. This was a decrease of one percentage point from 2013/14 and is a lower figure than all previous years for which data have been collected.
- In 2014/15, 7.5% of the principal 'A' road network across England received maintenance treatment. Over the same period, 3.9% of the minor road network ('B', 'C' and Unclassified roads) received maintenance treatment.
- In 2014/15, £4.6 billion was spent on the maintenance of roads in England. Of this, £1.0 billion was spent on trunk motorways and 'A' roads and £3.6 billion on local authority managed roads.

The release, infographic factsheet and publication tables can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/road-conditions-in-england-2015>

Further information and guidance for the published statistics can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-network-size-and-condition-statistics-guidance>

Regular readers of any Department for Transport statistics may also be interested to know that the Department has recently launched a dedicated Twitter feed for its statistics. Followers of this feed will receive links to all Department for Transport statistics publications as they are released, as well as a selection of key findings and links to other statistical work within Government in the coming months. The feed can be found by searching for @DfTstats on Twitter or via the following link:

<https://twitter.com/dfstats>



SCANNER QA and quality scores

Many users of SCANNER will be familiar with the high level of Quality Assurance (QA) that is applied to the surveys. The SCANNER specification includes requirements for accreditation of all vehicles, regular QA checking by the contractor and ongoing external audits carried out by TRL, as the independent SCANNER auditor. The process is comprehensive but also, as might be expected, presents challenges. For example, a survey vehicle undergoing accreditation may pass the tests, but there are minor areas where it would be desirable to enhance the device (rather like an advisory item on a vehicle MOT). The challenging requirements to carry out and deliver data from QA tests for checking may also sometimes be missed. TRL and the SCANNER Contractor's Liaison group have therefore developed a scoring system to measure the level to which contractors are delivering the requirements of the SCANNER Quality Assurance process. The Quality Scoring applies a system of demerits. For example if an advisory item is not addressed, a regular QA check is missed, or data is delivered for audit late, then a demerit is awarded. These are weighted and summed up across all vehicles operated by each contractor to provide an overall Quality Score for each contractor.

The SCANNER Quality Score measures the level to which the SCANNER contractor has met the delivery and monitoring requirements of the QA process, it does not reflect the quality of the data delivered by any device operated by that Contractor. It has been developed to reassure authorities that the QA processes are being applied.

TRL has worked with the contractors to apply the scores in a trial over the last 24 months and the [results are available on the UKRLG website](#). These scores will be updated quarterly. If you would like further information on the SCANNER quality score, see the website or email TRL at scanner@trl.co.uk.

Visual Condition Surveys

UKPMS visual inspection surveys provide valuable data that can assist local authority engineers in identifying and prioritising maintenance. As local authorities introduce asset management principles, the need for accurate, reliable information will become even more important; having accredited UKPMS inspectors as part of your team helps to maintain confidence that data has been collected to the required standard. The UKPMS Inspector Accreditation scheme is the only qualification endorsed by the UK Roads Board and it is recommended that all your surveyors are accredited.

A review is being undertaken of the UKPMS User Manual by the Accreditation Scheme Assessors to bring the document up to date. The principal aims of the review are to;

- provide improved explanation in the text and diagrams where necessary
- replace defect photos with clearer images where necessary (and to fill some gaps where defect photos do not currently exist)



- bring all separate technical notes under one document and highlight when notes are no longer valid
- address any errors in the current document which have been highlighted since the last revision

The updated user manual will be available through the [Asset Condition](#) section of the UKRLG website.

DfT toolkit on benefits of maintenance - The Highways Maintenance Appraisal Tool (HMAT)

The Highways Maintenance Appraisal Tool ([HMAT](#)) has been developed by TRL and CH2M Hill in a research project for DfT. The objective of HMAT is to provide a model that shows how changes in local road condition resulting from different spending levels on carriageway maintenance will impact overall maintenance costs and costs to users and society. HMAT can be used to assess the quantifiable costs and benefits of different levels of road maintenance funding by considering the principal quantifiable impacts of road maintenance on users:

- User time and vehicle operating cost impacts from carriageway condition, traffic growth and vehicle speed.
- Embodied carbon, user time and accident impacts from maintenance treatments and traffic growth.
- Jobs in road maintenance due to the amount of maintenance carried out
- Accident impacts related to the allocated budgets.

HMAT was developed to work with currently available data and to be easy to use by a range of users. Analyses with HMAT comply with the DfT WebTAG Transport Appraisal Guidance and align with the HMEP Lifecycle Planning Toolkit for predicting carriageway condition and maintenance need. To aid the comparison of analysis outcomes, the Aggregated Outputs Module summarises the results and compares them with a user selected base case.

In developing HMAT the research included analyses of a range of scenarios including constant, increased and decreased maintenance budgets, steady state network condition and the effect of changes in the input data on the sensitivity of the model. These have demonstrated that HMAT delivers outcomes that are consistent with expectations, and is capable of examining the direct and indirect costs associated with road maintenance.

An earlier TRL study for Scotland concluded that “for every £1 reduction in road maintenance funding, there is a cost of £1.50 to the wider economy”. In the DfT study for local roads in England, analyses using HMAT have shown that potential savings of between £2.70 and £4.30 can be achieved for every £1.00 increase in direct maintenance costs.



2015 UKPMS Annual Health Check

The Annual Health Check (AHC) was introduced in 2005 to provide assurance that accredited systems continue to meet core UKPMS requirements. The AHC for 2015 provides a test of compliance with the 2015/16 requirements as used by local highway authorities for reporting in 2016.

The 2015 AHC has been implemented by the RCMG's appointed Accreditors, Linhay Consultancy and Hyperion Infrastructure Consultancy, and is fully funded by the UKPMS Developers.

All five accredited UKPMS systems have successfully completed the 2015 AHC:

Confirm (Pitney Bowes Software)	version 16.00a.AM
Insight (Symology)	version 3.6.4
MarchPMS (Yotta)	version 4.8
Bentley UKPMS¹ (Bentley Systems)	version 4.5.5.0 & 4.7.1.0
WDM PMS (WDM)	version 4.9.0

As certain elements of the AHC are optional, users should check the [Current AHC \(2015\)](#) on the RCMG website for their system. A certificate may be downloaded as evidence that the system version has met the requirements for the 2015 AHC and this also provides information about any notes and restrictions for the system version.

The accreditation of new versions is announced via Twitter. Follow @UKPMS to hear when UKPMS system versions have passed the Annual Health Check or keep abreast of other UKPMS Annual Health Check news.

Preparations for the next AHC (to cover the requirements for 2015/16) are now getting underway.

Following a request by the Highways Asset Management Financial Information Group (HAMFIG), the timetable for the UKPMS Annual Health Check is being brought forward by two months so that system versions are released slightly earlier in the year, in good time for the preparation of financial information. Starting with the 2016 AHC the new timetable will be:

Months	Task
February to April	Gather requirements
May to July	Prepare Annual Health Check materials
August to October	Annual Health Check carried out by Developers
November to January	UKPMS system versions released to users

¹ Formerly Exor PMS



The interim accreditation process will continue to be used to accredit UKPMS systems between full Annual Health Checks.

Highways Network Asset – Valuation is Changing!

For some years now we have been used to creating asset management-based valuations of our highways network asset for the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) which are published each year by HM Treasury. However local authorities own accounts have continued to be prepared on an ‘historical cost’ basis (based on what we’ve spent on the roads in the past rather than what it would cost to repair or replace them) which tends to undervalue them by a significant amount.

That changed on 1st April 2016 with new accountancy rules introduced which mean that, going forwards, local authority accounts will use the same process as WGA to determine the value of their highways network asset. While this means each authority will only need to prepare one valuation for its roads, not two, it means that the asset management based valuation will now be subject to audit and so will come under much closer scrutiny than previously, especially in the first few years. UKPMS will have a key role to play for most authorities in gathering and processing some of the data so, if you’ve not already done so, we’d recommend that you talk to your accountants as soon as possible about how you’ll implement the changes.

To give a bit more detail, the [Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17](#) (Accounting Code) issued in April 2016 will see local authority highways networks measured at Depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) instead of historical cost. This measurement will be in accordance with the methodologies specified in CIPFA’s *Code of Practice on Transport Infrastructure Assets* (Transport Code). The Transport Code is based on the key principle that the same data should be used for asset management, financial management and financial reporting, thus ensuring effective use of assets.

CIPFA/LASAAC (who set the Accounting Code) considered stakeholder and consultation feedback and as a result has introduced transitional requirements such that the new accounting policies will be applied from 1 April 2016, with **no** requirement to restate the information in the preceding year (i.e. from 1 April 2015).

The Transport Code has been updated and was consulted upon during March. Whilst the principles and measurement requirements will not change, the name of the Code has changed to the Code of Practice on the Highways Network Asset (HNA Code) and it reflects CIPFA/LASAAC’s decisions. The format has changed with the paragraphs in bold forming the HNA Code with explanatory statements in standard type. This has been done ensure that the key elements of the HNA Code are highlighted and the appropriate links made with the Accounting Code.

CIPFA has also issued the first two of a series of Briefings in this area which can be found on the [Highways Network Asset](#) section of the website. The first briefing covers CIPFA/LASAAC decisions on the changes to the measurement requirements for the Highways Network Asset and the second covers the consultation on the HNA Code.

CIPFA is engaging with key stakeholders such as the external audit community, where assurance on the accounting estimates is a key issue. In order to manage the risk, save costs and reduce duplication, CIPFA have sought funding from the Department for Transport to commission a central assurance process of the centrally provided supporting information. This will provide a foundation for local authorities to enable



them to demonstrate that the valuation estimates are reasonable. The process will also support the work of auditors in determining what additional audit assurance they may require.

The Guidance Notes to the HNA Code are also being updated and early Accounting Guidance is also in the process of being finalised and it is hoped that these publications will be issued along with the HNA Code in summer 2016.

The HAMFIG supporting materials to assist practitioners with their 2015/16 valuations have been updated and are available on the [CIPFA website](#).

Contact details

You are welcome to pass a copy of this bulletin on to anyone else who may be interested in the subject.

If you wish to be added to (or removed from) the circulation list, please email your details to us at ukpms@trl.co.uk.

We welcome your comments and questions at ukpms@trl.co.uk

The UKRLG website is at <http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup/>

If you require further information about: you can contact us at

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