

ADEPT Bridges working group update September 2020

The Bridges Group had a Teams meeting on September 10th with 24 attendees. It went very well and this format looks to be with us for the foreseeable future – huge savings in travel costs and officer time not to mention reduced carbon footprint.

- Technical Presentation – the meeting started with a presentation (as has become customary) – this time it was on Flouropolymer paint systems – we ensure these are technical presentations and not a hard sell from a supplier.
- The Group has collaboration links with network rail where issues can be addressed and best practise shared; the Chair has invited two other organisations who we interact closely with, Highways England and Environment Agency, to join the Group. An engineer with the EA has been identified and will be invited to future meetings; HE are looking for a suitable person.
- There was some disappointment expressed about access to minutes and information from the Bridge Owners Forum and a request for easier/better access to BOF information will be raised at the next BOF meeting in October.
- TfL (and others) raised an issue with Network Rail - there is some consternation about the way NR interpret the requirements of BE4 – example came from TfL where a structure previously rated at 40t has been allowed to deteriorate, lateral ties have corroded, and NR advise they can allow a structure to deteriorate until the load capacity reaches the BE4 requirement, in this case 24t. NR have since stated that because the bridge meets their statutory duty under the 1968 Transport Act, they have no obligation to maintain these tie bars and keep the bridge rated at 40t. The inference being they could let everything deteriorate to a condition level which would mean the bridge would pass a BE4 assessment only if they wanted. They further state that any repairs to the bridge to reinstate the capacity to 40t would need to be funded by TfL. Liz Kirkham summarised reporting that the UKRLG had noted the 1980 Highways Act was potentially out of date. Liz will take up with UKRLG.
- Abnormal Loads Liaison Group– some members voiced concern about lack of noticing of abnormal load movements and that Streets of Engineering Difficulty (SEDs) are either being ignored or organisations are not aware of them. The Abnormal Loads Liaison Group have arranged a planning meeting for October 6th when this matter can be raised. Members of the Bridges Group and UK Bridges Board are encouraged to attend.
- Covid-19 – a long discussion took place about how people were getting on working remotely – generally some good comments about lack of commuting, better work/life balance but some are also feeling isolated and missing the social interaction of office life.
- DMRB Review – many at the meeting stated they were unable to view HE’s webinars – Neil Loudon of HE advised and he will look into. Those who have viewed the webinars were very complimentary.
- Bridge Inspector Competency. There remains very poor take up of the LANTRA BICS scheme – CSS Wales have developed their own scheme and 30 inspectors will soon be certified through it. Two other schemes referred to as Perth & Kinross (Scots) and Devon/ADEPT are also being developed.

- Canal & Rivers Trust – With the support of ADEPT’s president and chief operating officer attempts have been made to resolve the ongoing issue of CRTs belief that they can charge Local Authorities for undertaking highway bridge inspections; they have also proposed very high hourly rates for CRT staff to approve safe working procedures and other documents related to the bridge inspection work. We have asked for justification of the seemingly excessive hourly rates of CRT staff without success – through Hannah Bartram we provided CRT with the charge-out rates for various grades of staff with several LAs. There has been no response to date – CRT rates are in the order of 2.5 to 3 times greater than LA staff charge-out rates.
- Suicide Prevention – new guidance from Samaritans has been distributed recommending signs such as letter of hope and personal messages/flowers are not attached to bridges as it highlights the location as a suitable site for someone in distress who may want to take their own life.
- HE/LA Boundary – one item raised by South East about responsibility of binder course now we don’t use red sand asphalt – Kevin Dentith raised with Mark Maynard (HE) who will amend guidance document but HE’s view is that the binder course will remain the responsibility of the LHA. The final guidance document is with HE for distribution.
- RAC Foundation Survey – this now annual event will be coming out later this month/early October. The Foundation has been in contact with the Bridge Group chair regarding the questions. In order to be able to view ‘trends’ they were advised the main core questions should be the same each year but two additional ones will be added this year regarding Covid and its impact on efficiency and a new question on bridge collapses.