

Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee

REPORT TO NORTHERN ROADS COLLABORATION JOINT COMMITTEE – 18 MAY 2018

NATIONAL ROADS COLLABORATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

1 Recommendations

The Joint Committee is asked to:

- 1.1 Note the progress being made nationally through the Roads Collaboration Programme (RCP); and
- 1.2 Note the input from the RCP in assisting to develop collaborations in the Northern area.

2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 The Roads Collaboration Programme (RCP) was established in 2013, following the 2012 National Road Maintenance Review, to provide a dedicated national resource to facilitate and lead on the development of collaborative activity between all Scottish Roads Authorities.
- 2.2 Roads Authorities in the North of Scotland have a long history of collaboration going back to before 1996, including sharing of contracts, resources, mutual aid and knowledge. Whilst some of these arrangements have been formal, many have been less so and have tended to be relatively small scale compared to the scale of the overall Roads Service across the North of Scotland.
- 2.3 At a national level, The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) have collaboration as a core purpose and have over many years developed formal collaborations and shared services on behalf of the 32 Local Roads Authorities, such as the work on the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey and the Road Asset Management Project.
- 2.4 The 2012 National Road Maintenance Review highlighted the importance of authorities working together and sharing more, to improve service efficiency and reduce costs.

http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/roads_collaboration_programme/Option-30-Report.pdf

- 2.5 The RCP was subsequently established to provide dedicated national support to Authorities to develop collaborations, particularly in voluntary cluster groups.

<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/roads-collaboration-programme.html>

National Roads Collaboration Programme

- 2.6 The RCP is overseen by a Programme Board with representatives from COSLA, SOLACE, Transport Scotland, SCOTS, and the Improvement Service. The programme has the following aims:
- 1) To support the design and delivery of existing Roads Authority initiatives to share services/capacity within Roads Services;
 - 2) To develop existing shared initiatives further, considering the potential to widen the scope of what could be shared, widen partnerships, remove/manage barriers to change, escalating the business case design stage to drive forward a faster pace of change;
 - 3) To identify new opportunities for collaboration between the 33 Roads Authorities and to develop these;
 - 4) To encourage and support communication cross-authority boundaries via a number of channels to promote the sharing of best practice, innovation and expertise, and regular revisiting of further opportunities for collaboration and shared services development;
 - 5) To encourage the consistent use of roads related data, maximising the potential to use the data to drive improvement; and
 - 6) To support Local Authorities and their partners to establish sound governance arrangements for shared initiatives that meet all EU procurement guidelines.
- 2.7 The overall output of the programme was expected to be a portfolio of delivered and planned collaboration initiatives that see Local Authorities and Transport Scotland working together across organisational boundaries, implementing improved ways of working and service delivery.
- 2.8 The ability of Local Authorities to work together is considered essential, to deliver efficiencies whilst providing essential resilience in this vital frontline service for Scotland's communities. The key issues facing Local Roads Authorities in the next 5 years include:
- 1) Reducing/constrained budgets (including replacement of core revenue with short term capital investments);
 - 2) Declining condition of all roads assets;
 - 3) Dilution of senior managerial expertise and professional input;
 - 4) Reducing skilled workforce and emerging single points of failure;
 - 5) Reduced access to specialist equipment and services;
 - 6) Increasing public expectation through social media etc; and

- 7) Ongoing focus from Audit Scotland on sharing of services.
- 2.9 These are very much reflected in Audit Scotland's 2016 Roads review (http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2016/nr_160804_maintaining_roads.pdf) and in the response by the Scottish Government/COSLA Strategic Action Group as published on 31 January 2018 (http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/roads_collaboration_programme/sag-auditscotland.pdf). Audit Scotland have confirmed that they will shortly be seeking further instruction from the Accounts Commission regarding this response, following recent discussions with each of the RCP partners.
- 2.10 The National Transport Strategy (NTS) review team is considering a wide range of issues including future governance and maintenance of the country's road network. The RCP programme Board is liaising with the NTS team to ensure that the NTS work recognises the expectations of the Accounts Commission and Auditor General on this matter and properly reflects the central role of road maintenance within the transportation sector.
- 2.11 The RCP Board has considered the commitments made in the response report to Audit Scotland and reviewed the programme's work priorities for the remainder of this year. Discussions are continuing with the SCOTS Liaison Committee to consider potential areas of direct assistance from the RCP team to some of the national SCOTS projects. This could increase the scope and effectiveness of collaborative development work.

Governance First

- 2.12 Following discussions between Moray Council senior roads officer and Burness Paull (RCP legal advisors), options for sharing Moray Council dredger have been explored and legal opinion provided that have allowed the Item 7 on the agenda to be brought forward. The approach being developed will be relevant to other resource sharing should officers/Members decide to take other such resource-sharing initiatives forward.
- 2.13 Across the country, collaboration activities are at different stages of development, viz:
- 1) **Northern** – This Joint Committee meeting of 18 May (the first in Scotland) and various collaborative activities progressing.
 - 2) **ELBF (Edinburgh, Lothian, Border and Fife)** – Shadow Joint Committee met on 23 February. Members seek recommendations from officers on what they need the Members to do for discussion at 8 June Committee. It will be proposed that the Committee meets twice yearly, remaining as an informal Committee until such time as collaborative projects require ratification from a formal Committee. Senior officers will meet every second month, with 4 technical officer working groups meeting monthly to engage specialist staff to lead new developments.

- 3) **Forth Valley** - Senior officers meeting to explore collaborative initiatives.
- 4) **Glasgow City Region** – Officers have confirmed no further action for the moment across the City Region. Dunbartonshires and Inverclyde are still developing a shared roads service. Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire have approval to proceed, with Inverclyde as Lead Authority. East Dunbartonshire likely to be informal partner. Other service areas (such as waste, fleet, and grounds maintenance) will be explored shortly for potential integration into the new shared arrangement after 2019.
- 5) **Tayside** – Local review and change programme ongoing.
- 6) **South West** – Ayrshires discussing joint roads project under the emerging national enterprise and skills review.

Workforce Review

- 2.14 Routes to Leadership course started on 14 March with a first cohort of 15 aspiring roads managers from across the country. This will conclude in November 2018.
- 2.15 Meetings have been held with all 6 participating universities for the Graduate Apprenticeship (including UHI), level 10 (honours degree level). Summaries of each offer have been collated into a single information document for Councils. Generic job profile and job specification have been created, to further assist Councils, whilst ongoing introductions are being made as Universities and Councils make contact with the RCP team. The initial tranche of new Graduate Apprentices in Civil Engineering will begin their courses this autumn.
- 2.16 The RCP team took part in the validation panel for University of West of Scotland's graduate apprenticeship programme for civil engineering, providing input as a potential employing organisation on behalf of all Councils.
- 2.17 Running alongside this is the potential involvement of Councils with the national Foundation Apprenticeship programme in which senior school students engage with employers through work experience opportunities.
- 2.18 Engagement is growing with the Developing Young Workforce network, via Skills Development Scotland. Interviews, case studies, and videos are being prepared to put onto career-advice media. This will require closer discussion at local level between roads and education colleagues, to support various local career awareness initiatives. Some pilot work is underway in West Lothian between the roads and education authorities there.
- 2.19 Work towards a collaborative/Training Academy approach to operative and technical training is continuing. A Training survey has been issued to all Councils to determine needs and interest.
- 2.20 Work is ongoing to tackle equality issues within the road sector. EQUATE Scotland ran a webinar for senior officers on 21 February, which covered

unconscious bias. Further opportunities to raise equality awareness are being provided throughout the year.

Collaborative Network Management

- 2.21 The Scottish Road Network Management Forum, involving senior local and trunk road officers from SCOTS and Transport Scotland, included their action plan in the published Audit Scotland response report.
- 2.22 Consideration is currently being given to three potential areas of additional collaborative asset management work:
- 1) What is the value of local road maintenance to our communities (already a commitment within the Audit Scotland response);
 - 2) What might the creation of a national Major Route Network (MRN) look like and do to help? (paralleling work in England). This could put selected major local roads on a par with trunk roads; and
 - 3) What opportunities could be gained from looking at roads asset management plans across multiple council areas?

Procurement

- 2.23 Scotland Excel have been approached regarding their future plans but have still to provide their short to medium term aspirations for national road commodities for further discussions with officers and subsequently to this Joint Committee.

3. Implications and Risk

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required in relation to this update report on behalf of the RCP. The report does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 3.2 There are no staffing and financial implications on any of the partner Councils associated with this report.
- 3.3 No Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter.

Ewan Wallace
Lead Officer

Report prepared by Angus Bodie, Programme Manager, Roads Collaboration Programme
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