

A sharing approach

The Highways Agency's asset support group, which brings together its senior leadership and roads' maintenance suppliers, is breaking down boundaries and sharing best practice. The group will become even more important with the arrival of Highways England in April and the goal of delivering £15 billion investment in motorways and major A roads

At a time of record investment in roads, having an open dialogue with suppliers cannot be underestimated – and neither can sharing that dialogue to improve overall delivery.

With £15 billion committed by government to the Highways Agency until 2021 to modernise, maintain and operate 4,300 miles of motorways and A roads, much of its focus will be on getting more from the supply chain.

And the asset support group (ASG) is just one of the ways the Agency is

harnessing important dialogue and ideas with its suppliers to help reach its objectives.

Made up of tier one suppliers, senior Agency officials and its network delivery and development director (NDD), David Brewer, the ASG has recently been reformed.

Meeting every two months, directors from road maintenance suppliers such as Connect Roads, AOne+, EM Highway Services, Carillion, Skanska, Balfour Beatty, URS, Amey, BAM Nuttall, and Connect Plus, are able to engage



"The group is geared up to work with the Agency"

David Brewer

in direct dialogue with the senior Agency leadership.

David Brewer said: *"The group is very enthusiastic and geared up to work with the Agency to meet our capital delivery programme; drive forward workforce safety improvements such as implementing impact protection vehicles to eliminate live lane crossings"*



Members of the asset support group have renewed their commitment to eliminate live carriageway crossings for road workers



on foot, as well as share best practice and innovative ideas within the sector.

"I'm confident that we can achieve this by working collaboratively together."

Currently, the ASG's focus is on completing delivery of a £1.065 billion capital delivery programme - the largest in NDD since 2009 - by the end of this financial year. By the end of January 2015, delivery was up by 55 per cent compared to the same point last year although more still needs to be done.

Additionally at its last meeting, the ASG renewed its commitment to eliminate live carriageway crossings on foot by road workers who do so to retrieve signs for temporary traffic management. This is one of the highest risk activities for road workers and plans are being developed to ensure the goal is achieved.

James Haluch, Highways Agency service director for EM Highway Services said: *"For a supplier like EM Highways, the ASG provides a unique opportunity to collaborate and discuss with peers, as well as senior Highways Agency officials including in procurement."*

"We can discuss the current issues and future opportunities to more effectively manage the strategic road network."

"The culture of the group is very much open sharing and removing organisational boundaries so we deliver a better service more safely for our road workers and customers alike. For example current topics include how we reduce carriageway crossings, which are already near zero, to zero including for smart motorway all lane running sections."

"More strategically, how we develop consistent outcome measures, aligned to the Road Investment Strategy: Performance specification, so each organisation, whether on the A30 in Cornwall or the M25 DBFO, has a clear line of sight from the front line and through the wider supply chain to what Highways England needs to deliver in the coming years."

Sharing best practice

Going forward, Highways England will lead the ASG as it plays a key role in driving and sharing best practice in the highway maintenance industry. This will

help it meet its new goals - including taking a more customer-focused approach to maintenance - and packaging roadworks even more so to reduce disruption to road users.

It also aims to become better at delivering projects and programmes to give better value for money for the taxpayer.

Andy Jamieson, managing director of AOne+, said: *"The asset support group meetings are very important to service providers as we hear first-hand from senior staff the key and emerging issues for the Highways Agency."*

"Recent meetings have discussed the changing client role for the Highways Agency as it makes the transformation to Highways England and the need for the sector to gear up for growth."

"This dialogue is vital for service providers as we align our businesses to support Highways England going forward. The meetings frequently generate open and informative discussion with challenges from both sides but always in a collaborative manner which benefits the group as a whole." ☺

For more information about the asset support group, please contact the chair, **Matthew Sweeting** at Matt.Sweeting@highways.gsi.gov.uk

A record amount of money is being spent on the road network

