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Hello and welcome to the Spring 2019 Renew magazine.

It has been a year of change at the RSTA as Dr Howard Robinson stepped down as Chief Executive at the end of 2018, after almost 10 years, during which the RSTA went through transformational change, resulting in a much larger member organisation, a library of technical guidance on specialist treatments, and strong links with stakeholders right across the UK highways industry.

It is my privilege to have been appointed as the new Chief Executive to build on these successes as we take the organisation forward and continue to work tirelessly for our members and highways clients. As a former RSTA Chairman, Director and member, I’ve been engaged with the RSTA for the last 8 years before formally joining the team last summer.

The next year will see us continuing to develop the Asset Management group in the RSTA. Traditionally our advice, guidance and training has been streamed into specific treatment sectors, but what asset managers and highway engineers are telling us is that guidance that transcends traditional boundaries is what they need to ensure they achieve best value in long term asset management plans, by intervening in a timely manner with the right process at the right time. Such guidance may result in a plan for a highway requiring different surface treatments at different stages in the pavement life from preservation in the early years, through to in-situ recycling when reconstruction is required.

It’s an exciting time as we extend our links and work collaboratively with client organisations, such as the Local Councils Roads Innovation Group (LCRIG), having just delivered a technical training and innovation day in Blackpool in March; the first of its kind working together. Highways England have asked for active engagement with us in seeking out innovative treatments for their network, using the RSTA as a portal to access innovative treatments from our member organisations.

We will of course continue to deliver on our traditional values that have made the RSTA the well-respected organisation that it is today: strong technical committees, wide engagement across the industry, and clear impartial technical advice.

So, to existing members, I look forward to working closely with you in the years ahead. For organisations who are not yet part of the RSTA, come and join us as we help to maintain the UK highway networks in a safe and serviceable condition through working together and sharing knowledge.
The RSTA was invited to give oral evidence to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee inquiry into local roads funding and governance. The Committee recognised that the wide membership of RSTA and their direct involvement in maintaining the road network means that the association is well-placed to explain the negative impact of decades of under-investment in the local road network and to forward recommendations as to what can be done to address the situation.

The evidence focused on the fact that the local road network is the country’s greatest infrastructure asset. It comprises 183,000 miles, represents 98% of the total road network and is worth over £340bn. A well-maintained local road is essential for the national economic prosperity of the country. It is the prerequisite link to the national road and rail network, to the ports and airports, between peoples’ homes and places of work. Despite the vast majority of journeys being taken using the local road network, government has failed to match the expenditure provided to maintain the national road network with that provided to maintain the local road network. Strategic road network maintenance receives 53 times more funding per mile than local roads.

Successive Chancellors have failed to do the maths and understand the economic folly of spending an average £52m2 to repair a pothole against the £2.50m2 to surface dress and maintain a road and so prevent the pothole from forming in the first place. The Autumn Statement announced £28 billion for improving the strategic road network against £1.2 billion for local roads. The local road pothole backlog alone is over £9.3 billion.

In particular, RSTA explained to the Committee how the use of surface dressing for preventative maintenance has fallen by 50% over the past 30 years, and it has fallen 20% in the last two years. If authorities cannot afford to do surface dressing, what are they doing apart from filling potholes? Filling potholes is not effective asset management.

Filling potholes is not effective asset management.

RSTA went on to explain that the replacement cost of the local road network is about £300 billion however, the combined spend within authorities is about £3bn a year. Half of that is not even on roads; it is on bridges, street lighting and so on. So only a mere 0.5% of the replacement cost of the road network is spent on its upkeep.

It is expected that the Committee’s findings and recommendations will be made available later this year.

The Pothole Index, the RAC’s most accurate long-term indicator of the health of the UK’s roads, remains stubbornly high at 2.5. This means drivers are still two and a half times more likely to suffer a pothole-related breakdown than they were when the RAC first started analysing its data in this way 13 years ago in 2006.

In the third quarter of 2018 the index was at 2.63, so the latest figure is a slight improvement on that as well as representing a third successive quarterly fall. The record high for the RAC Pothole Index figure was 3.5 in Q1 2010 when motorists were 3.5 times more likely to breakdown due hitting a pothole as they were in 2006.

The poor state of local roads was identified to be the issue of greatest concern in the RAC’s 2018 Report on Motoring with 42% of 1,808 drivers surveyed citing this as one of their top four concerns compared to 10% in 2017. Two-thirds (66%) also said the condition of local roads had deteriorated in the last 12 months which represents a worrying increase on 2017 when the percentage was 51%.

In addition, an RAC Freedom of Information request to the 212 councils in England, Scotland and Wales responsible for roads found 512,270 potholes were reported for repair in 2017 to 161 authorities – an increase of 44% on two years earlier.

Councils paid £2.8m to drivers for damage caused by potholes in 2017/18, according to new figures.

Data obtained by Confused.com reveals that Surrey County Council paid out the most in compensation at £446,812. The figures also show that 905,000 potholes were reported to councils in one year, the equivalent of almost 2,500 per day.

The South East was the most prolific region in the UK when it comes to potholes with 143,000 potholes being repaired in 2017/18 at a cost of more than £12m.

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WJ SAFETY STRATEGY NOMINATED FOR TWO AWARDS

RSTA member, the WJ Group is celebrating being shortlisted for two awards on the back of one submission for its proactive approach to raising safety standards in its industry.

The company’s strategy is called Transforming Roadmarking Sector Safety Standards and has been shortlisted in the championing safety category within the Highways England Awards. It was also considered high quality enough for the judges to shortlist it for the Chairman’s Award: Excellence in Safety category.

The safety awards nominees are required to show improvements in health and safety through collaboration, communication and commitment to create significant change.

Craig Williams, WJ Group health & safety director, commented: ‘Our sector needed a step change and we decided some time ago that for us good enough was just not good enough.

‘It is a continuing journey of behavioural change, but we can already see that the improvements do benefit the sector, the wider industry and the road user.’

The Chairman’s special award recognises the company, project, team or individual that has shown substantial improvement in health and safety.

Kier appoints new health and safety role

Kier Group has appointed Steve Crofts as its head of safety, health and environment (SHE), a newly created role at Kier Highways.

Crofts joins Kier to help bring in new ideas and health and safety techniques from previous roles in the wider infrastructure sector, with a focus on major projects across Kier Highways including smart motorways and its maintenance of Spaghetti Junction.

Crofts has spent almost 20 years working in health and safety positions, most recently as head of health, safety and wellbeing at Thames Tideway.

In this position, he was key in delivering an SHE induction process, which included an immersive, interactive experience designed to ensure attendees left the day understanding the full implications of their actions.

Before working on Thames Tideway, Crofts was head of health and safety improvements at Crossrail, where he relaunched and embedded the Target Zero philosophy across the supply chain.

1st Annual (2019)
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Government plans for advanced trials of autonomous vehicles to progress the introduction of self-driving cars by 2021 could be scuppered by the poor state of the local road network.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has announced that, although by law autonomous vehicles must have a driver or operator when being trialled on a road, it is ready to provide “the support and facilitation” to enable advanced driverless vehicles to be tested on public roads with a view of introducing self-driving cars on UK roads by 2021.

The proposed benefits of self-driving cars include less accidents, improved use of road space, reduced congestion and pollution and more efficient fuel consumption. The vehicles would be equipped to ‘read the road’ and replicate the instinctive human ability to simultaneously observe, analyse, decide and react to every potential different road scenario such as potholes and reduced skid resistance.

“The deterioration of the local road network due to decades on under-investment means that that rather than a vision of fast, smooth, well-spaced self-driving cars, the reality will be that potholes will cause the vehicles to switch to slow safety mode and signal constant warnings of approaching poor road surface conditions”, said Mike Harper, RSTA chief executive. “The road surface will need to be maintained in top condition to prevent long slow convoys of autonomous vehicles in safety mode.

The future vision of autonomous self-driving vehicles is enticing but it is undermined by the prosaic reality of a deteriorating potholed road network that can barely cope with the traffic of today let alone the traffic of tomorrow.”

RSTA has welcomed proposals to develop a five-year funding settlement for local roads similar to that provided for the national road network.

A business case is currently being worked on. It will examine the possibility of the Department for Transport (DfT) securing a long-term combined capital and revenue settlement. Such a settlement has long been resisted by the Treasury to provide the capital funding and will also require the support of the Ministry of Housing.

Communities and Local Government who provide local authorities with the revenue funding for local roads. Neither funding streams are currently ringfenced but the ringfencing of Vehicle Excise Duty from 2020 for strategic roads suggests a dedicated fund might be possible for local roads too.

RSTA has long argued for a confirmed, long-term funding settlement for the local road network. This would provide a necessary level of certainty that allows local authorities to plan and implement long-term road maintenance programmes rather than play a never-ending game of pothole catch-up.
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ONE STOP SOLUTION IS BOTH PREVENTION AND CURE

Failing roads are a constant drain on resources with preventative maintenance programmes being the only real cost-effective solution.

Constricted funds have seen highway authorities prioritise sites, often with quick-fix, temporary solutions, with no real financially viable long-term options available or in place. To address this, a ‘one-stop’ solution has been developed by Hitex International Group members’ Hitex Traffic Safety, L&R Roadlines and Somerford Equipment. Their BBA/HAPAS accredited TexBand range offers a solution that is not only financially viable, but long-term can improve the overall standard of the road – not just defects and potholes.

"From working collaboratively as a group to give our clients the best possible support and commitment, we have come across our one stop solution almost organically," said Michael Littleboy, Director of L&R Roadlines. “Maintenance on a stretch of road will, in most cases, not only require crack and pothole repair but, re-marking, re-studding and more. This process can mean road disruptions for days waiting for various providers to complete each part of the works. Based around our permanent TexBand system, we combine trained L&R operatives’ skills, innovative Hitex products and Somerford engineered equipment we can provide our clients with our ‘one stop’ solution. Providing a permanent solution, we aim to get the road back open as quickly as possible sometimes within one shift saving on many associated costs such as program scheduling and traffic management.”

The current annual DfT spend of about £1bn is matched with at least £500m by councils on reactive repairs. Through these reactive repairs the public have witnessed potholes being temporarily patched, only to have failed again months, sometimes weeks, later. However, it is not only the repair of the road that a council has to take into consideration. In addition, there is the replacement of road markings, replacement of road studs, traffic management and the impact of road closures to local area.

Furthermore, there is the cost to the local economy. Research has estimated that, on average, businesses affected by poor road conditions lose over £8,000 a year on vehicle damage and increased fuel costs. One third of businesses also lose about £15,000 each per annum because the poor condition of local roads can reduce competitiveness. These considerations can lead to the need for ‘temporary solutions’ to get roads open and running as quick as possible.

The proof is in the pudding. TexBand has been used by local authorities and maintenance contractors since 2007 with outstanding results. Hitex has a plethora of site results and case studies that prove that the TexBand system is indeed a permanent solution. Not only for repairing road defects, but also for the prevention of future road deterioration. The early detection and treatment of smaller, more superficial failures in the road surface leads to major efficiencies over the lifetime of the asset.

The TexBand and the Hitex one stop solution offers local authorities a cost effective, prevention and cure. It provides a pro-active maintenance system that is viable long-term option for local authorities as they struggled with a massive backlog of maintenance.
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In 2004, when Matthew Lugg OBE took to the stage at the ADEPT Engineering Conference, held up the Cambridgeshire Asset Management Policy and told everyone this is the future for local authority maintenance, many people thought this was the latest box ticking exercise.

Later in the decade when austerity came rushing in Asset Management became the tool to get the most from sweating your asset. One of the main reasons for the up-take of Asset Management was that with austerity came the exit of experience. Anyone over the age of 50 was offered a package to retire and most took it. So, the day after the maintenance engineer’s leaving do the maintenance the contract for gully cleaning was up. The trouble was nobody knew how many gullies we had, the same for signs, even road surface materials – we knew we had these things but how much? And in what condition? The departure of the maintenance engineer saw the departure of a wealth of knowledge and information.

Information is key to finding out what assets you have and the condition they are in. With the advent of the Highway Incentive Fund, the role of the highway asset manager has become essential in using the new software solutions that did the job of the old maintenance engineers. This sees sophisticated equipment measuring every bump, pot hole, rut and crack while people are walking and driving around the roads inputting what they see into a handheld device – type of road surface, condition, etc. All this data is fed through some very clever algorithms written by very clever IT specialists and the outputs are everything you need to maintain your road. Which bits need fixing now, which bits need fixing next year, what the value of your infrastructure assets is, its depreciation value and how much money you still need.

So why isn’t the local authority road network improving? Two reasons as far as I can see.

Firstly, I state the obvious – we don’t have the funding that is needed and have not had since 1997 when the Highways Agency (HE now) took trunk roads away from local authorities and with them a far bigger percentage of the funding than was justified.

Secondly, it’s important recognise that the output from some asset management survey solutions can be limited. They react to the now and may not recognise that prevention is better than cure. That was the skill of the old highway maintenance engineer: fix the centre joint before it unravels, have a programme of crack and joint fill, use quality lining to manage speed and flow where you want it.
The role of the highway asset manager has become essential in using the new software solutions that did the job of the old maintenance engineers.

It is to be welcomed that in recognition of this, a new asset management sector is evolving at the RSTA that seeks to identify how asset management and the forward thinking solutions in the highways engineers tool box can work together. A new code of practice to include asset management as it relates to highway maintenance solutions is being considered and dialogue is in-hand with survey groups on how these solutions can be incorporated in asset management surveys.

Looking at the new AEI type surveys and seeing that these can look at all the highway maintenance solutions must be the future for the RSTA members who deliver early life intervention solutions.

A good highway maintenance engineer could double the useful life of a road surface. The key to this was early intervention and keeping the water out. The further development of asset management solutions that examine at the all the tools in the highway maintenance tool box could do much to provide a similar insight.

New asset management group for local roads

A new Asset Management Group has been set up by the RSTA. Aimed at local authorities, the Group will allow their highway departments to share best practice linked to the new mandatory Code of Practice – Well Managed Highway Infrastructure.

The next meeting will be held in June. It is hoped that representatives from TAG, LCRIG and Highways England will attend.

RSTA members and local authorities are encouraged to get involved. The objective is to help highway authorities with life cycle planning – to get the optimum performance from a pavement by intervening at the appropriate time with the right treatment and planning those interventions over the long term life of the road. This is what HMEP talked about by preventative maintenance through asset management.
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RSTA ASSESSMENT CENTRE

Due to the very specialised nature of road surface treatments and the relatively small number of appropriately experienced assessors, the RSTA has established its own NOCN and SQA Assessment Centre in order to ensure the provision of a high quality workforce and observance to Sector Scheme 13.

The RSTA is recognised by the National Highway Sector Scheme as being the only route through which operatives and supervisors can obtain endorsed CSCS cards.

The Assessment Centre is accredited to assess NVQ Level 1 through to Level 3 in all major surface treatment processes for operatives and supervisors and up to Level 6 for managers. The Centre aims to provide a one-stop shop to meet all road surface training requirements. This includes access to grant funding.

Nigel Haycock is head of assessment and training at the RSTA and is available to discuss clients NVQ needs from one off individuals to large groups. Email: Nigel@rsta-uk.org.

SECTOR UPDATE

NEWS FROM THE LATEST MEETINGS OF THE RSTA SECTOR COMMITTEES

RSTA has a number of road surface sector committees that are focused on examining and forwarding specific industry issues. Below is an update on their latest activities:

SURFACE DRESSING

• The RSTA Surface Dressing members have worked with the Road Emulsion Association (REA) to develop a new animated video to explain how potholes can be avoided by early intervention using surface dressing.
• The BS1707 Depot Tray Test for binder coverage has been published.
• The Surface Dressing Silver Certificate CPD 2 day courses are now complete for Spring with courses held in Preston, Yate and Perth. There will be another set of courses in the Autumn after the surface dressing season is complete.
• Rory O’Connor once again represented the RSTA and BSI at the European committee meetings.

SLURRY MICRO-SURFACING

• New guidance on TTM at slurry surfacing sites to be developed.
• The Slurry Surfacing Code of Practice is to be reviewed and revised.
• A new CEN Airfield Slurry Surfacing Standard has been proposed.

HIGH FRICTION SURFACING

• Rob Gourlay from Eurovia has “stepped” down as chairman. Mark Minett from WJ is the new chairman. Jonathan Till from GCP Applied Technologies becomes vice chairman.
• “HAPAS” will be removed from Highways England documentation going forward to allow for “equivalent assessment systems” to be considered as alternatives. Pts have developed a product acceptance scheme for HFS.
• In the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) revision, HD36 will be replaced by CD236.
• BSI are developing a British Standard for HFS under the B510/2 committee and Mike Harper will represent the RSTA on that committee.
• The RSTA ran two 2 day seminars for HFS in 2018 in Leicester and Exeter. Both were well attended.

GEOSYNTHETICS & STEEL MESSES

• Tom Foster has been re-elected for a further 2 year term and Graham Horgan has been elected as vice-chair.
• DMRB Revision - CD227 and Clause 936. The Geosynthetics & Steel Meshes Chapter will appear in CD227 entitled “Design for Pavement Maintenance”. Highways England has confirmed that Clause 936 can be an appendix in the Code of Practice when published.
• 2018 saw the committee update the Code of Practice for geosynthetics and Steel Mesh for Asphalt reinforcement (interlayers). This second edition provides highway authorities, designers and principal contractors a thorough understanding of Asphalt Interlayers, their use, laying techniques and applications. Reference has been made to BS EN 15381 Geotextiles and Geotextile Applications. Reference has been made to the Code of Practice when published.
• Second edition of Practice for geosynthetics and Steel Mesh for Asphalt reinforcement (interlayers). This second edition provides highway authorities, designers and principal contractors a thorough understanding of Asphalt Interlayers, their use, laying techniques and applications. Reference has been made to BS EN 15381 Geotextiles and Geotextile Applications. Reference has been made to the Code of Practice when published.

SPECIALIST TREATMENTS

Of the Specialist Treatments Committee, the chairman, Sonny Singh reported: “The Specialist Treatment subcommittee has grown from strength to strength with over 19 different companies as a part of its roster. Its greatest asset is the breadth of differing organisations with differing expertise which allows for an interesting discussion about the challenges and opportunities each member organisation has in the Surface Treatment sector.”

Current courses include:
- Bituminous paving
- Slurry microsurfacing: Machine
- Slurry microsurfacing: Manual
- Surface dressing: Machine
- Retexturing
- Road marking: Machine
- Road marking: Manual
- Permanent road studs
- High friction surfacing: Machine
- High friction surfacing: Manual

New for 2019
- Crack and joint repair NVQ Level 2
- Occupational work supervision NVQ Level 3
- Construction site supervision NVQ Level 4

Additional courses for topics such as reversing banksman, CAT and Genny and other related highway practices can be arranged. For further information contact: Nigel@rsta-uk.org
RSTA currently has 87 members. Membership of RSTA includes national and regional contracting companies, local authority direct services organisations, material and equipment suppliers. RSTA members must join National Highway Sector Scheme 13 where appropriate or comply with the requirements of applicable product assessment/certification and Approved Installers Schemes.