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ISSUE 3 AUTUMN 2015

The case for road MAINTENANCE
Exploring the need for effective road maintenance and its critical role for the UK economy

IN THIS ISSUE

4 Drivers short changed by Chancellor
5 Road accidents underline need for safer roads
10 Spotlight on slurry surfacing
Safe, colourfast demarcation with minimal disruption

WeatherGrip is an innovative, cold applied coloured surfacing, based on 2 part solvent-free Methyl Methacrylate (MMA) technology, designed to provide bright, colour-fast, skid and slip resistant demarcation for various large and small highway and non-highway applications.

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WeatherGrip is the ideal system for restoring and enhancing existing surfaces. To find out how WeatherGrip can help you get a grip of safer demarcation, visit: www.wj.uk or email us on weathergrip@wj.uk
The new government certainly appear to be more focussed now on improving the road network recognising the crucial role roads play in helping business to prosper, in growing our economy and helping people to go about their everyday lives.

The £15 billion announced for upgrading the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the Chancellor’s new vehicle excise duty road fund is welcomed but will only benefit the SRN not local roads which represent 98% of the road network. The Government’s announcement earlier this year that a further £6 billion will be allocated for local roads over the next 6 years again whilst welcomed will not make much of a dent in the £12 billion maintenance backlog reported in this year’s ALARM survey. So clearly there remains much to be done to resolve the current funding crisis affecting the local road network.

In future, authorities will be allocated funding based on performance and in particular how efficiently they maintain their road network, follow industry best practice, adopt asset management plans and collaborate with other authorities and stakeholders. All of these issues will be debated and explained in more detail at the 2016 RSTA Conference on the 7th April when we have the new Roads Minister in charge of local roads delivering a key note speech and other notable industry figures considering how Whole of Government Accounts reporting will impact on authorities’ attitudes and strategies towards future road maintenance and how authorities’ ‘Self-assessment’ will impact on future funding for local roads. See you there!

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Local roads will not receive any monies from the Chancellor’s new vehicle excise duty road fund despite motorists in England paying over £5 billion per year in vehicle excise duty.

The total vehicle excise is calculated by multiplying the Department for Transport figures for the total number of vehicles registered in England for 2014 (30,400,000) by the £166 average vehicle excise duty charged per annum according to the Chancellor’s July 2015 Budget speech. It does not include the VAT charged on fuel which brings in many more millions into the Chancellor’s coffers.

The new fund will only be for trunk roads and motorways. It will not be available for local roads which represent 98% of the UK road network.

The fund was unveiled by George Osborne in his July 2015 Budget. It will see the introduction in 2017 of three new levels of vehicle excise duty for new cars, starting with a lowest duty of £140 per year. The Chancellor promised that “every single penny raised in vehicle excise duty in England will pay for the sustained investment our roads so badly need” and stated that “tax paid on people’s cars will be used to improve the roads they drive on.”

“It is unfortunate that the majority of roads used by the majority of traffic will not benefit from this fund”, said Howard Robinson, chief executive of the Road Surface Treatments Association. Last year drivers in England paid over £5 billion in vehicle excise duty yet local highway authorities received only £976 million in grants from the Department for Transport for road maintenance. Robinson pointed out that: “Seeing as the overall majority of journeys start and finish on local roads it does not make sense to maintain trunks and motorways and not the roads that connect them.”

He continued: “The road fund should be used to invest in both the national and local road network. As stated by the Chancellor the tax fund should be used to improve the roads that people drive on surely that should include the local road network. The road maintenance sector has invested in and continues to invest in the development of efficient and effective road surface treatments and in the provision of a competent workforce to install them. It is time that the government provided real levels of investment in the local road network.”

Britain’s traffic at highest ever level

Latest statistics from the Department for Transport show that traffic increased by 2.3% in the year ending June 2015 over the previous year, with an above average share of this using local roads. Provisional estimates put traffic at 314.5 billion vehicle miles which is the highest rolling annual ever recorded and some 0.1% higher than the pre-recession peak for the year ending September 2007.

Traffic increased by 5.5% on minor rural roads and by 2.5% on minor urban roads. However, traffic on urban roads remains at 3.9% below the pre-recession peak in 2007. Overall, traffic on motorways and rural roads was higher than ever before.

The growth in traffic is believed to be due to the increase in online shopping and the delivery of goods, the growth in the UK economy and a growing population. These are all trends set to continue and underline the need for real investment in road maintenance.

One pothole claim every 18 minutes

Drivers in Britain made some 29,000 pothole damage claims in the last financial year amounting to one every 18 minutes every day claims the RAC Foundation.

Out of 207 local highways authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, 200 responded to the FOI request from the RAC, which also found that on average councils agreed to pay out on 25% of claims with the average settlement up from £286 to £294.
The Department for Transport has proposed that local authorities will have to compete for funding, with Roads Minister Andrew Jones setting out a pilot scheme whereby councils will be allocated funds based on performance.

Allocation of funds will be based on a set of criteria that includes asset management, efficiency, collaboration and customer satisfaction. Launching the pilot scheme Jones said: “Authorities that spend money on roads efficiently will be rewarded with extra funds to keep up the good work. While authorities with a history of inefficiency will receive comparatively less money”.

By the financial year 2018-19 the Government proposes that over a quarter of road maintenance funding will be allocated on the basis of either competition or performance.

The RSTA welcomes the approach as it will encourage local authorities to treat their highways as a valuable asset that requires cost effective maintenance. Encouraging the development of registers and asset management plans seems eminently sensible.

However, there must also be recognition that not all highway authorities are starting from the same position in terms of expertise and resources. For example, implementing this new approach may be challenging for those authorities losing experienced highway engineers due to ongoing council budgetary cutbacks.

To assist highway authorities the RSTA supports asset management training and is currently developing new web-based software in association with TRL free at the point of use for authorities. This will enable highway authorities to obtain best value from using road surface treatments in a Life Cycle Analysis that includes factors such as regular planned maintenance aimed at maximising the service life of the road asset.

The number of those killed or seriously injured in Britain rose by 5% to 24,582. There were a total of 194,477 casualties of all severities which is an increase of 6%, the first increase in overall casualties since 1997.

New figures from the Department for Transport (DfT) show that there has been an increase in overall road casualties in Britain for the first time in 18 years. It must be more than a coincidence that this increase comes at a time when many local authorities are failing to invest in road maintenance which is widely recognised as playing an integral role in road safety and accident reduction.

According to the latest figures there were 1,775 reported road deaths in 2014, an increase of 4% compared with 2013.

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New statistics from the DfT show that in the year ending March 2015, 3,410 cyclists were killed or seriously injured compared with 3,383 a year earlier. A further 16,760 cyclists were slightly injured. Commenting on the figures, CTC said that the rise in deaths and injuries was due to an increase in traffic, rising number of cyclists and the continued deterioration in road surfaces. It called upon local councils to be more proactive in fixing potholes.
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ROAD CONDITION IS NUMBER ONE CONCERN

The condition of local roads has been named as drivers top motoring concern, according to a report carried out by the RAC.

One in 10 motorists (10%) said the condition of local roads was their top concern, while a further 20% listed the issue as one of their top four concerns. Half (50%) of the 1,555 motorists surveyed for the RAC Report on Motoring believe the condition of roads in their area has deteriorated in the past 12 months with just 10% claiming it has improved; the remainder reporting no change.

Road conditions are a particularly big worry in Scotland and the south west of England, where one in five (19%) motorists say this is their top concern. The latter is not surprising given that Devon has the most miles of roads of any county in England and one of the highest maintenance backlogs in the country.

For the 50% who say roads are worse, the vast majority (99%) attribute this to potholes and general damage to the road surface, although litter is a source of annoyance for a quarter (24%), as is poor maintenance of verges for a fifth (21%).

Motorists clearly want the government to provide sufficient funding to ensure local roads are maintained properly [but] we also need councils to spend more of their own funds on repairing and replacing road surfaces

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The government has itself estimated the cost of bringing local roads in England alone back to a state that is fit for purpose to be up to £8.6bn. This is despite only allocating £6bn purely to maintain and improve local roads up until 2021. However, other estimates from the Asphalt Industry Alliance put the cost of returning English and Welsh local roads to a ‘reasonable condition’ to be far greater at £12.16bn.

RAC chief engineer, David Bizley said: “Motorists clearly want the government to provide sufficient funding to ensure local roads are maintained properly, but while any central government money given to local authorities for roads must be spent on roads, we also need councils to spend more of their own funds on repairing and replacing road surfaces.”

Bizley continued: “Currently, this is a challenge as they are under specific legal obligation to provide minimum standards in education and social services whereas their obligations to maintain roads are far less prescriptive. It is therefore inevitable that expenditure is biased against investment in the likes of road maintenance where prescriptive legal obligations do not exist and councillors therefore do not face legal sanctions. Bold and imaginative action is now required to address the deficiencies in local roads as funding from central government is insufficient even to address the current backlog of repairs and local authorities are currently unable to fill the gap from council tax revenues.”

SURREY SCHEME SAVES TAXPayers MILLIONS

More than £7 million-worth of taxpayers’ money has been saved as a result of Surrey County Council’s drive to make the county’s roads more pothole-proof.

The second year of Operation Horizon project to replace more than 300 miles of road with surfaces that come with a 10-year repair guarantee saved £3.1m through smarter contracts and recycling. This is in addition to the £4.1m saved in the first year of the scheme.
THE CASE FOR ROAD MAINTENANCE

All too often good road maintenance is viewed as being desirable rather than essential. This perception is misplaced and must change.

The failure to appreciate the true socio-economic worth of a well-maintained road network is underlined by the fact that the government has, over many decades, failed to provide adequate funding for road maintenance and that local authorities, faced with dwindling resources, are often forced to raid the road maintenance budget to fund other services.

Unfortunately, road maintenance is not glamorous. It does not have the new impact of expanding the trunk road network or investing in high speed rail links. Nevertheless it is essential. Roads are an asset that promote economic viability and social well-being. Businesses can trade. People can live their lives.

There are further reasons to ensure that we have a well-maintained road network. Maintenance is crucial to the safety of the road network. Poorly maintained potholed roads and those that have lost their skid resistance are a safety hazard. There are the financial costs to road users. Vehicles using deteriorating roads consume more fuel and may need more repairs. There is also a compensation cost with local authorities. Last year, according to the Local Government Association, they had forced to raid the road maintenance budget to fund other services.

The calls come after senior Department for Transport officials have conceded the difficulties local authorities face as a result of a revenue drain in the grant funding from the Department for Communities and local Government.

Above all there is the financial good sense of investing in programmes of planned cost-effective long-term preventative maintenance rather than expensive emergency short-term patch-and-mend. It costs only £2/m² to surface dress and maintain a road but costs an average of £57/m² to repair potholes.

The negative impact of decades of under-investment in road maintenance has been confirmed by the latest Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey carried out by the Asphalt Industry Alliance. The survey found that despite additional government emergency pothole repair funding and a significant 33% increase in the number of potholes being repaired during 2014 there still remains a black hole of £12.16 billion required to bring the local road network up to an adequate standard, this is an increase from £12 billion in 2013.

Local highway departments acknowledge the benefits of structured road maintenance programmes as part of their long-term asset management plans. Unfortunately, they do not have the financial certainty to allow them to plan and implement such programmes.

There is some optimism that the government is at last realising the need for assured long-term road maintenance funding with £6 billion pledged between 2015 and 2021. However, this may sound like a significant amount of money but given the poor state of the road network and the growing traffic demands being placed upon it the funding will only be enough for local authorities to continue to play catch-up and do nothing to address the £12 billion backlog of road repairs. It also underlined how short-changed motorists are. Road taxes raise some £6 billion a year whilst fuel duty raises a further £27 billion. More of this money should be invested into long-term road maintenance that addresses the £12 billion necessary to bring our road network up to a reasonable standard.

The case for funding a well-maintained road network is strong. Government must recognise the social and economic benefits and work with local authorities to develop long-term funding mechanisms that enable the implementation of programmes of planned maintenance.

It costs only £2/m² to surface dress and maintain a road but an average of £57/m² to repair potholes.

Financial reforms necessary to prevent ‘a bumpy ride’

Sweeping financial reforms are needed to tackle the widespread level of failing local highways assets, six of the largest city regions have warned. The Passenger Transport Executive Group (pteg), which represents six metropolitan transport bodies including Transport for Greater Manchester, Merseytravel and the West Midlands’ Centro made the calls in its new report, ‘A Bumpy Ride’.

The report highlights that Highways England, which manages the national road network received 2.7 times as much maintenance spend per km as local authority-managed A roads and motorways and 15.9 times as much as local authority unclassified roads’. This is despite councils managing 98% of the road network which also carries two thirds of all motorised traffic. It also claims that the six English metropolitan areas alone (with a combined population of 11 million), had 5,500kms of roads in urgent need of repair in 2014, compared to just 220km across the entire Highways England network.

The report sets out a list of demands on government, including calls for a significant increase in maintenance spending over the next five years to bring road surfaces back into condition and get ahead of the local repair backlog, estimated to be at least £12bn. It also calls for a review of the formula used to allocate highways funding so cash is issued in proportion to the traffic volume and usage of local roads rather than just in relation to road length.

The calls come after senior Department for Transport officials have conceded the difficulties local authorities face as a result of a revenue drain in the grant funding from the Department for Communities and local Government.
STAKEHOLDER VIEW

THE THREAT OF SUBSTANDARD ROAD CONDITIONS

Malcolm Simms
Asphalt Director, Mineral Products Association

Leaving roads in disrepair can be lethal. For example, cyclists who hit potholes have been thrown into oncoming traffic and cars sometimes swerve to avoid potholes, which may cause accidents. There is a very real threat posed by substandard road conditions to vulnerable road users, such as cyclists, as well as the wider impact on individuals and businesses.

The current challenges are the result of decades of underfunding by successive governments, and are exacerbated by the funding structures imposed on councils.

Local authorities receive a funding pot from central government, a proportion of which is identified for highways maintenance. Now none of that funding is ring-fenced particularly for highways maintenance. So, it comes under, as all funding pots to local authorities do, pressure from other services – health, education, and elements of transport all get drawn from the same central pot. But in fact all of those other services rely on the highway to a greater or lesser extent to be delivered. You’ve got to get kids to school, some parents drive them there and even if you are running buses to schools they need to run on the road. Shops and businesses all rely on door-to-door delivery.

Simply filling in potholes...is one of the least efficient ways to spend the money.

There is £2bn worth of maintenance that is needed to improve the UK’s roads yet local authorities in England face an average budget shortfall of over £5m every year. Clearly significant levels of funding need to be found to deliver the improvement in the network. At a central government level we need the commitment in funding into local authority highways maintenance. If that funding was ring-fenced specifically for that purpose then there is more chance that local authorities would be able to identify their budgets to plan their workload and deliver more efficiently and probably more cost-effectively.

The current approach of “simply filling in potholes” does not address the root causes of disrepair and can be more costly in the long-run. Potholes are an indicator of a problem; they are not the problem in themselves. Because authorities have been underfunded, their focus is to deal with the worst things first, to deal with the dangerous situation that a pothole can create at lowest cost. That’s not necessarily one of the best ways to spend the money, it is one of the least efficient ways to spend the money. Rather, they should be considering resurfacing the entire stretch of road. On a square metre basis resurfacing can be 20 times more cost-effective than filling the potholes in because you have got to mobilise the same number of people to do the work. So, it may cost a little bit more upfront but then you get the longer-term benefits that having a road in good condition can deliver.

A well-maintained road network will reduce the threat to vulnerable road users

Road maintenance may not be the most glamorous of political issues but a well-maintained road network will reduce the threat to vulnerable road users and help prevent tragic fatalities and injuries which result from poor surface condition.

THE INCENTIVE TO IMPROVE

Matthew Lugg, OBE
Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) Advocate & Director of Public Services at Mouchel Consulting

From 2016/17, allocations from the Department for Transport’s £578m capital incentive fund will be based on the scores achieved via a self-assessment questionnaire, with only authorities in Band Three receiving 100% of their grant year-on-year through this parliament.

Initial feedback on the dry-run of the self-assessment questionnaire has on the whole been positive with some local authorities saying that they have valued the process because it enabled them to do things that they had wanted to do for some time but had not had the catalyst before. Now they can go to their elected members and say: “look, if we don’t do this we’re going to lose some of our money.” Providing such an incentive to local highway authorities will encourage greater take-up of good practice and ensure that best use is made of overall available resources to deliver the best possible outcomes.

For those local authorities on level one and who are struggling to establish effective asset management plans, help is at hand with the DfT being ready to discuss the best way forward. This includes addressing the concerns over ambiguities in the questionnaire’s language.

Further assistance will be provided by a new asset management e-learning tool from HMEP that will be free to use and accessible through the HMEP website. The tool will include interactive learning across five modules including data management and life cycle planning.

HMEP’s range of efficiency tools are helping local authorities to make real improvements to the management and delivery of highway services not only via asset management but also collaboration and change, procurement and benchmarking and connection and sharing practices. The self-assessment questionnaire for the incentive fund should help to encourage local authorities to realise the potential benefits of adopting these principles.

From 2016/17, allocations from the Department for Transport’s £578m capital incentive fund will be based on...a self-assessment questionnaire.
Slurry surfacing incorporating micro-surfacing is an established, proven process with a long history of successful use. It is an extremely cost-effective road surface treatment where ongoing developments in techniques and improved operator training mean that there is a very low risk of early life failure.

The surface treatment involves the cold-application of a thin bituminous surface course using bitumen emulsion binders and fine graded aggregates with fillers and other additives. There are two broad categories; thin slurry surfacings used for treating footways and thicker polymer modified surfacings called micro-surfacing or micro-asphalt for carriageways.

Slurry surfacing is ideal for any type of surfacing receiving mainly pedestrian traffic (e.g. footways and cycleways) whereas micro-surfacing is ideal for use on urban roads and roads carrying up to 250 commercial vehicles per lane per day. Some products have a HAPAS certificate which enables them to be used on more heavily trafficked roads.

The best time to use slurry and micro surfacing is when the road surface needs minor restoration before the footway or carriageway surface deteriorates to the stage where expensive major patching and/or reconstruction is required and before surface skidding levels fall below the investigatory level for the class of road in question.

Slurry surfacing and micro-surfacing can be specified in accordance with the specification for highway works clause 918. These materials are recognised as products regulated by the Construction Products Regulations (CPR) and European Standard BSEN 12273. Contractors must now provide a CE mark and a declaration of performance for each type of slurry surfacing and micro-surfacing product placed on the market. Further guidance is available within the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) HD37. All contractors who are members of the RSTA have achieved accreditation to the National Highway Sector Scheme 13 for the supply and application of surface treatments to road surfaces.

Copies of the Code of the Practice for Slurry Micro-surfacing may be downloaded from the RSTA website: www.rsta-uk.org/publications

Slurry surfacing is an established, proven process with a long history of successful use [and] is an extremely cost-effective road surface treatment
**SECTOR UPDATE**

**Surface Dressing**
A major issue of concern for the Committee remains the shortage of aggregate hauliers and the impact this is having on chipping availability particularly during the peak season.

Work of the Committee includes examining the Code of Practice sections dealing with surface preparation and updating the ‘binders’ chapter to ensure that the Code remains current following publication of the Emulsions Standard BS EN 13808 in December 2013.

The Sector Scheme 13 document has been updated and was re-issued by UKAS in April 2015. A pan-industry group chaired by RSTA is updating Road Note 39 (design guide) with the aim of getting it reissued in time for the 2016 surface dressing season. The Code of Practice for Signing at Surface Dressing sites is under review with ADEPT and a new guidance document has been published on the use of geosynthetics (SAMIs) under surface dressings. This will enable double dressings to be used on cracked roads that would previously have had to be resurfaced.

**Slurry Micro-surfacing**
The Code of Practice for Slurry Micro-surfacings has been updated and re-issued following a lengthy review process with ADEPT. The HD37 part of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges will contain an updated chapter on slurry surfacing when eventually published in 2016. BS EN 12274 parts 1-6 Test Method Standards are progressing through a 5 year CEN review and are expected to be published sometime next year.

**High Friction Surfacing**
The BBA have conducted an in-depth study into the service life of high friction surfacing over a two year period. The results clearly indicate high friction surfacing delivers a service life on average of between 5-10 years. A new RSTA video has been published to remind highway engineers why HFS is so important and unrivalled at reducing braking distances and saving lives. A series of RSTA lunchtime seminars have been running throughout the summer to promote HFS systems.

**Specialist Treatments**
A series of lunchtime seminars has been running throughout the summer aimed at councils to promote crack & joint repair systems. A new CPD Crack and Joint Repair training course has also been developed and will be run on 20 November 2015.

A new sub-committee has been formed this year to develop an industry code of Practice for Ironwork installation and maintenance. This is expected to be published in 2016.

**Geosynthetics & Steel Meshes**
The committee is currently assisting the National Roads Authority in Ireland to update their road standards. A new ProTECT carbon footprinting tool is under development by the University of Nottingham and a new Clause 936 will be published as an Interim Advice Note (IAN) next year.

Other initiatives include the launch of a new CPD training course and an autumn seminar on 26 November to raise awareness of geosynthetics and steel meshes.
RSTA NEWS

New Surface Dressing Video

The RSTA and the British Motorcyclists Federation (BMF) have produced a new video which explains why surface dressing is an important road maintenance technique for keeping bikers safe.

RSTA chief executive Howard Robinson said: “The RSTA became aware last year of an e-petition lodged on the Department for Transport (DfT) website criticising surface dressing and wanting it banned. Surface dressing is the most widely used road surface maintenance technique and is used successfully by most councils across the UK to restore surface texture for improved skidding resistance. It also seals the road surface to help prevent potholes forming.” In response, the DfT put out a positive statement in support of surface dressing and explained the important role it plays in maintaining roads in a safe condition.

Robinson continued: “The source of the criticism appeared to come from the motorcycling community so we decided to produce an educational video in association with the BMF. The video is now available on the RSTA YouTube channel and it has been warmly received by the BMF who will bring it to the attention of their members, particularly at the start of each season.”

The Road Surface Treatments Handbook

For as long as anyone can remember road surface treatments have played an important role in helping highway authorities to maintain the UK road network. This is particularly so during periods when authorities for one reason or another have less money to spend on highway maintenance. In this context authorities will tend to look more towards preventative maintenance to make their road assets last longer thereby delaying the time to when major investment becomes necessary.

The earliest and still the most widely used treatment is surface dressing which is a very familiar technique to highway authorities with a long and proud history of successful use. Over recent years however the industry has witnessed the introduction and growth of a wider range of specialist techniques to enrich the engineer’s toolbox enabling alternative maintenance strategies to be adopted in the search for best value.

The main purpose of this handbook is to provide a quick and easy reference guide to help anyone involved in highway maintenance and asset management to more fully appreciate the range of techniques now available, where they can be used and what they have to offer. The narrative of this handbook is fundamentally based on a series of Codes of Practice written by industry practitioners, peer reviewed by ADEPT and published by the RSTA.

The RSTA Road Surface Treatments Handbook is available as a free download from: www.rsta-uk.org/publications

NEW GUIDANCE ON ROAD SKID RESISTANCE POLICY

RSTA has published new guidance on road skid resistance policy. The guidance aims to assist highway authorities to formalise processes for monitoring skid resistance, identify roads where lack of grip is a potential issue, prioritise sites for required improvement and ensure that these improvements are incorporated in the annual highway maintenance programme. By undertaking these actions authorities are able to develop a road skid resistance policy. The guidance provides a step-by-step approach to identifying grip deficient sites and sets out a process for deciding on their subsequent treatment and how this will be prioritised.

The procedures forward set out a long term strategy on how to manage the skid resistance of a road network to a consistent and safe level. The guidance complements an authority’s Highway Asset Management Plan which looks to manage assets in a strategic way. It also supports an authority’s Road Safety Strategy which aims to reduce accidents. The guidance is based on Highways England’s Technical Standard HD28/04 – Skid Resistance published in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 7: Section 3 and makes reference to Highways England Standard HD36/06 Surfacing Materials for New and Maintenance Construction again contained within DMRB Volume 7: Section 5.

Copies of the guidance can be downloaded from the RSTA website: www.rsta-uk.org/publications
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RSTA currently has 84 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 HAPAS Product Certification and Approved Installers Scheme or equivalent.
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