

Office of Road & Rail

Monitoring Highways England

Response to the First Consultation by the Association for Consultancy and Engineering

July 2015



This is the response from the Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) to the Office of Road & Rail (ORR) first consultation on its new Highways Monitor role. ACE represents the business interests of its members and the consultancy and engineering industry in the UK. It is the leading business association in this sector, counting around 650 firms - large and small, operating across many different disciplines, as its members.

Our members are some of the world's leading consultancy and engineering businesses. Renowned for the quality and excellence of their work, they regularly win awards for engineering innovation and achievement. Many of our members are directly involved with the management and enhancement of the strategic road network and we therefore consider ourselves to be a key stakeholder in the terms of the consultation.

The consultation response was prepared by our Roads Sector Interest Group (SIG) which exists to pre-empt and address the business issues affecting ACE members who work in the roads sector. It does this through a programme of meetings throughout the year, and through engagement with key stakeholders. The objectives of the Roads SIG are:

- Lead ACE's engagement with Highways England
- Promote smart investment in the road network to stimulate economic growth
- Promote a sustainable approach to the development of the road network that effectively manages demand, mitigates environmental impacts and increases resilience
- Promote views on strategic road network planning in the UK
- Explore the link between traffic congestion and journey time reliability with the economy and the environment
- Promote views on the procurement of consultancy services in the roads sector

The following ACE member companies and stakeholders participate in the Roads SIG:

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| • PCS | • AECOM / URS |
| • Ramboll | • Amey |
| • Hyder | • Capita |
| • Atkins | • Arup |
| • Jacobs | • Mott MacDonald |
| • WYG | • CH2M |
| • WSP / Parsons Brinckerhoff | |

The consultation response was prepared by a sub-group of volunteers from the Roads SIG. The draft response prepared by the sub-group was circulated to the full Roads SIG membership and the resultant comments were incorporated into the response.



The following is the ACE response to the consultation:

1. *Are you clear what our role will involve? Are there aspects of our role which you would like more clarity about?*

Yes, ACE is clear about ORR's role as set out at a high level in the legislation and associated supporting documentation. We do however feel that greater definition on the specific metrics relating to the financial and operational performance of Highways England would be helpful, for example, details on how the organisation will be benchmarked against other strategic highway authorities and how best practice will be brought from Europe and beyond.

2. *Do you agree with our strategic objective for our highways monitoring role?*

Yes, ACE agrees with the strategic objective. We do however note that the high level areas for performance improvement of safety, network disruption, environmental impact and increasing network capacity do not naturally align with each other and ACE is interested in how these potentially competing outcomes are going to be balanced. We would also like to see focus maintained on the directly impacted stakeholders, particularly road users and impacted communities.

3. *Are there specific ways you would like us to engage with you beyond the industry forums already referred to in this document?*

ACE welcomes the approach being taken by ORR to engagement with stakeholders and suppliers and we certainly embrace the opportunity for further and continued engagement. ACE represents the main engineering consultancy providers to Highways England (including both Major Projects and Network Development & Delivery suppliers). We have a specific forum, the Roads Sector Interest Group (SIG), which has been established to pre-empt and address the business issues affecting our members who work in the roads sector and which has objectives which include leading ACE's engagement with Highways England. We would therefore like the ACE Roads SIG to be a key focal point for ORR's future engagement with Highways England's engineering consultancy suppliers.

There are two other key representative bodies that ORR may wish to consult with: the Highways Term Maintenance Association (HTMA) and the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA). The three organisations, ACE, HTMA and CECA often work together when supporting or engaging with stakeholders, and we would welcome the opportunity to collaborate in our engagement with ORR on specific or general matters.



4. *Have we identified the key areas that require monitoring? Are there particular areas of Highways England's performance and efficiency which you consider require specific focus or an alternative monitoring approach?*

ACE feels that the key areas identified are broadly right but we also recognise that there will be a need for ORR's focus on particular areas of Highways England's performance and efficiency to change and evolve over time, in response to early findings from reviews and the changes being implemented in the Highways England organisation. We have some specific suggestions for particular areas of focus including:

- results and outcomes from collaborative working
- supply chain ability to deliver innovation
- performance of procurement processes
- knowledge transfer, shared learning and organisational development
- working with others, particularly Local Authorities and LEPs

In respect of the performance of procurement processes, we are particularly interested in how the cost of these processes, to both HE and the tenderers, will be monitored, and how the efficiency and value of the processes will be demonstrated.

5. *We have set out our initial plans for reporting on Highways England's performance and efficiency. Is there further information or analysis that you think we should produce?*

ACE feels that ORR's initial plans for reporting on Highways England's performance and efficiency are generally sound. We would like to see maximum use made of existing data sources and we fully support ORR's intention to do this. Where additional data is required, and where this is to be drawn from the supply chain, we would like to participate in developing those data requirements and collection methodologies. In the past data collection has been a significant and onerous task for suppliers with there being little visibility or feedback on how the data has then been used or the value it has added.

6. *Is there specific information relating to Highways England which is not currently in the public domain which you think should be prioritised for publication?*

ACE would like to see clearer information on the value streams within Highways England, particularly where funding and resources are deployed (and benefits gained) across both the supply chain and the internal Highways England organisation.

The ACE's Roads SIG membership has a significant combined experience and expertise that we believe would be valuable to ORR and to Highways England and we welcome the opportunity for further engagement in relation to the development and implementation of the Highways Monitor role. We would be particularly keen to discuss the details of our response with you in person.

For further details about this publication please contact:

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