

The power of Scotland

Graham Edmond, the head of network maintenance at Transport Scotland, gives his view on 2014, maintenance and the future. This is part one of a two-part article



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“Most challenges can be met by pragmatism, innovation and collaboration”

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2014 is a big year for Scotland. We have just celebrated the 700th anniversary of Bannockburn, this month Glasgow hosts the Commonwealth Games and in September the Ryder Cup takes place at Gleneagles. These are only short interludes in a much longer period of time.

I am responsible for the maintenance of Scotland's 3,600km strategic trunk road and motorway network. Long-term thinking is necessary as good maintenance is all about maximising the life of a vital asset to the economy and protecting the considerable investment we are making in new and improved roads. A well maintained road can be a wonderful way to view our outstanding scenery, but my job is not without its challenges.

Most of these challenges can be met by pragmatism, innovation and collaboration. Above my desk is a picture of a grinning Cheshire cat. It is there to remind my colleagues and I to keep positive and more importantly to be nicer to each other and our supply chain. Our contractors do not deliberately fill the roads with potholes or spread ice and snow, contrary to what some commentators suggest. We don't need to join them. The papers are full of negative stories about the poor condition of roads, but at the same time they carry lurid headlines about roadworks predicting chaos. We can of course do our best to pre-plan minimising delays but the real solution here is get the message out

there that maintenance is essential and unavoidable. We must be better as professionals in explaining this and quashing myths about what we do inside and outside our organisations. Knowledge of maintenance is poor in the consultants we employ to design and supervise new projects. Spending some time and effort in fixing these will ensure that we can better maintain the new assets we inherit and with more consent from road users, we can maintain our roads at a time that is safer and maximise durability – rather than, as we are, carrying out works overnight or in the depth of the winter.

Scottish Pavement Forum

Started well before the *Scottish Road Maintenance Review*, which has provided an output similar to the *Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP)*, Transport Scotland had been chairing the *Scottish Pavement Forum* which has become one of the main ways for us to develop innovation and collaboration. The forum was established in 2007 to address complaints about the poor interaction between representatives of the Scottish road construction industry. There was a need for better communication between clients, designers, suppliers and contractors. It meets quarterly and comprises a cross-industry membership. A wide range of issues associated with road pavements are debated and roundtable discussions are encouraged. The forum strives to implement the findings of research quickly and disseminate best practice across the road industry.

Examples of some initiatives include open-ended discussions regarding the current procurement process and the distribution of risks associated with innovative materials and techniques; traffic management improvements; consideration of new ideas that could improve and facilitate more efficient traffic management; improved drainage – developing a business case for improved and pro-active maintenance of road drainage. The forum has proven very successful in identifying practical research needs.

One of the most important outputs from the pavement forum has been our new surface specification TS2010. The main driver for this was a programme of research to adjust Scotland's domestic specification to improve material durability, quality control and safety. A four-year research programme and trials were laid on the M8 motorway. This allowed lessons to be learned and for a new national specification and notes for guidance to be developed. The findings of the research allowed for a step change in approach to specifying surface course with the introduction of performance-based skid resistance requirements. The new material is tested when it is both new and in service and increases the potential to use locally won materials based on performance.

Next month I will explain more about the specification and how the Pavement Forum has delivered some improvements on road surfaces in Scotland as well as more about our work on climate change adaptation. ☹