

# Encouraging efficiency

Richard Chinn was appointed chairman of the Highways Term Maintenance Association (HTMA) in July 2014 and is almost half way through his two-year spell. In an interview with editor Alec Peachey he explains why efficiency, asset management and skills are top of the organisation's agenda

**The Highways Term Maintenance Association (HTMA) is the trade organisation which represents service providers who currently maintain around 90 per cent of the highways network within the UK.**

It aims to deliver high quality maintenance and asset management services, whilst seeking to drive positive change in the industry.

The government has committed £15 billion investment into roads with a plan to resurface 80 per cent of the strategic road network in England. £6bn will be pumped into local road maintenance by 2021.

This is something that is welcomed by the HTMA. Chinn told *Highways Magazine*: "I think the commitment that the government is giving into long-term investment is absolutely essential. As an association it is a message we've been driving forward for some time. It has started to come to fruition and we've got to make sure that we spend the money wisely and efficiently as we move forward."

The HTMA chairman recognises the financial pressures facing local authorities, adding: "I think the key message is to take heed of an asset management approach to spending

*wisely. Whole life costing is essential if we're to move forward efficiently as an industry. Clearly there are concerns around revenue funding in local government. This investment is going into capital, but of course structural maintenance in local government is capital funded, so the pressure I think is around revenue. We'll continue to work with clients as an association to try and get that message across, because clearly the amount of money that is available for the more routine aspects of maintenance is not sufficient. So just as we've been banging the drum in regards to the need for capital investment we need to continue to do that in terms of revenue. I suppose the big fear with the sort of capital pot approach in local government is that more money could be steered away from maintenance in the future. We've got to make sure it stays at the top of the agenda by working with our clients in local government."*

In order to protect this funding Chinn would like to see some of the money ringfenced.

*"It would be good to see some ringfencing. My level of confidence is perhaps not what it should be because I know there are pressures right across the local government spectrum,"* he remarked. *"If you're sat in local government how do you make those*



**"It is up to the industry to prove it can deliver"**

**Richard Chinn**

*decisions? I feel for the members in having to make those decisions and the officers for having to put their case forward to members for those decisions to be made. I think what it needs is collaboration across the board so that we can all work together and really drive the messages forward. Just as has happened on the capital side I think suddenly we will see that government are taking note of the revenue requirements and hopefully easing the problem in the future. But it is not a quick solution and we've got to keep working together to achieve it."*

## Asset management

The HTMA encourage and support a long-term asset management approach and the benefits of investing early to save money on highways maintenance.

The Asphalt Industry Alliance's (AIA) most recent Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey estimated that it would cost £12 billion to get the local road network in England and Wales back into reasonable condition.

*"In recent winters we seem to have suffered in the UK with a lot of rain and flooding, which doesn't help. What typically happens after a wet winter is we see potholes breaking out everywhere,"* comments Chinn. ➔



*The HTMA encourages a long-term asset management approach*



The HTMA will be holding a health and safety summit – **Roadworkers 2015** – in Birmingham on **21 October**.

The event is taking place at the **Hilton Birmingham Metropole** and is designed to improve the protection of both road workers (including construction workers) and road users over the entire UK highway network.

The summit will bring together representatives from national and local government together with contractors from the maintenance and major project communities, as well as other stakeholders.

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◀ **“But of course we’re about more than repairing potholes. I think it’s about taking a long-term approach to asset management and making sure that what we’re doing as an industry is working with clients across the piece to ensure that the investment is going in early. Then we won’t get the problems in the future that we perhaps see now through lack of investment in the past.”**

Chinn, who is also director of integrated highways services at Mott MacDonald, says the HTMA welcome the Department for Transport’s (DfT) decision to set aside funding to incentivise good asset management and efficiencies.

The association has provided and continues to provide a significant contribution to the DfT’s Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP).

The HTMA recently published a new report entitled ‘Invest to Save’ that encourages the sector to take a long-term approach to highway maintenance.

HTMA was aware of a number of examples where English local authorities had taken this approach, so carried out a study to explore the potential benefits of investing early to save money on highway maintenance.

With the industry gearing up for the biggest investment in the road network since the 1970s, Chinn described the relationship between highway authorities and the contracting supply chain as “critical”.

**“Neither party can achieve what needs to be achieved by itself,”** he notes. **“This is where collaboration really comes to the fore. If we’re not prepared to**

**work collaboratively then we’re not going to deliver what’s required to be delivered in future years. I can’t stress strongly enough the need to be more collaborative and certainly that’s reflected in terms of policy statements that we’ve seen from the Highways Agency and it is on the local government agenda through LGA and is definitely a feature of HMEP. It is the key to success. There is a will to collaborate, but there’s also a need to work harder to make sure we’re collaborating as an industry to get those benefits that are there to be had.”**

There is also a big challenge around skills and attracting younger people into the industry.

**“Are the resources there to deliver this increased investment? It’s a big opportunity for the industry to show what it can achieve. It’s fair to say that the highways sector will be competing with other sectors in civil engineering. When the UK was in recession up until quite recently a lot of people in our industry moved overseas. We need to attract those people back to the UK now that the level of investment and opportunity is there for the taking. We need to encourage more people into the industry. Part of that is about showing highways maintenance is a career of choice for young people.”**

### Leading HTMA

Chinn has been actively involved with the association since its inception in 2005, as working group chair, working group sponsor, a member of the committee and of the executive board.

The association has grown to 29 members and nine associate

members. According to Chinn, the HTMA continues to work with other organisations such as CECA, CBI, CIHT, ICE, ACE, in reinforcing the message to government of the importance of properly maintained road networks and the contribution they provide to the economy.

He welcomes the move away from annualised funding, adding: **“The move to a five year funding cycle for the Highways Agency (Highways England) is very welcome, but to drive further efficiencies we would recommend two further steps. Firstly, to avoid moving the rush to complete work from annually to every five years, a long term costed, asset based programme of investment to be developed. Linking the five year funding cycle to this would provide more predictability, less likelihood of bow waves of work and more efficient whole life decisions.**

**“Secondly, we strongly recommend developing the funding structure now into a programme of planned workload by type, location and timing. This will allow service providers and the wider supply chain to plan and implement their future investments in people, plant and materials with greater certainty.”**

With the industry now entering one of the most important periods in its history, Chinn is keen to offer a note of caution.

**“It is up to the industry to prove it can deliver. If the sector fails in delivering this investment it will very definitely go back to other areas of spend within government. That’s the biggest risk and we’ve got to make sure collectively that we don’t allow that to happen.”** ▶