

Maintenance targets in sight



Assessment of what exactly needs to be spent on maintaining roads in England and Northern Ireland should become possible this summer with completion of the Pavement Management System (PMS) implementation programme.

PMS computer software is being developed by local authorities with the private sector to assess the condition of municipal roads and quantify targets for maintaining and improving highway networks.

The PMS programme is being funded by the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (DETR) and is linked to the Government's Best Value initiative.

It is being carried out to a reasonably tight timetable agreed by the UK PMS project board which is steering the programme for the DETR, local authorities and the Northern Ireland Department of Environment.

Two 'tranches' of the programme have already been completed. "The third and final tranche of PMS implementation will enable projection of future roads condition and economic prioritisation for bringing highway networks to a steady state of good repair during a structured programme," said Chris Britton of independent highway and pavement management specialist Chris Britton Consultancy.

CBC is providing advice on development of the UK PMS for the DETR and overseeing accreditation of PMS. "The programmes will typically be five years as envisaged in the DETR Local Transport Plan process," Britton said.

PMSs are being developed in response to the findings of the National Road Maintenance Condition Survey (NRMCS) and a request from the

DETR for more accurate information on highway maintenance funding requirements.

Results from the NRMCS for 1999, which were published in April this year, show – yet again – an overall visual deterioration of municipal roads from the previous year's survey.

An exercise carried out by Chris Britton Consultancy for the local authorities and others in 1998 revealed £5,250M would be needed to bring all UK municipal roads to the standard described in the local authority code of good practice.

"This figure provided a snapshot of maintenance need based on the NRMCS and the cost of carrying out all road improvements in one go," said Britton. "The DETR has asked road authorities to propose what they need according to a sensibly structured improvement programme. PMS will give a much better indication of maintenance requirements and funding shortfall."

Government funding provision for maintenance of local authority principal roads has been increased this year, but authorities still report a cash shortfall. Head of Highways at Worcestershire County Council Jeff Romanis said: "The message put out by the results of the NRMCS and local surveys is starting to get across. This year, support for principal road maintenance in Worcestershire has increased by 75% on 1999/2000 and on average by around 50% nationally. We are also getting substantial additional funds for the rest of the Worcestershire network from county council funding.

"But there is still a significant shortfall in funding needed to meet public expectations. The UK PMS will help us develop a more meaningful case for proposing more help from government."

New faces at the RBA



Dr Tony Harrison and Julian Peake have been appointed by the Refined Bitumen Association (RBA) as Technical Director and Chairman, respectively.

Harrison, 55, joined the RBA on 1 April as Technical Director taking over the position from Terry Fabb, who has retired after holding the post for 10 years. Harrison has a degree in chemistry and later went on to gain his PhD in reaction mechanism studies at the University of London in 1971.

On completion of his doctorate, Harrison joined Shell Research & Development. In 1985 he spent time at Shell Manufacturing in The Hague before joining Shell International's bitumen marketing support team.

For the last 10 years Harrison has worked extensively in Shell's international operations, most recently as Marketing Support Manager. During his time as a bitumen manager in Australia in the mid 1990s, Harrison was appointed as Chairman of the Australian Asphalt Pavement Association.

Peake, 45, was appointed as Chairman of the RBA in March this year and has been a member of the RBA council since 1993. After gaining a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Sheffield University through a British Leyland student apprenticeship, Peake joined Lancashire Tar Distillates as Transport Manager and later progressed to General Manager of the division.

In 1987 Peake was appointed General Manager of the company's bitumen division which was later bought by Lanfina and more recently by Total, to form Totalfina. He is a past chairman of the Road Surface Dressing Association and a member of the Institute of Petroleum, the Institute of Asphalt Technology and the Institute of Highways and Transportation.

The RBA is the trade association of the UK's five leading bitumen producers, who between them produce nearly all of this country's bitumen of which 85% is used by the road maintenance and construction industry.