

Notes of the meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Highways held in Dining Room A of the House of Commons on Wednesday 26 October 2016

Present

Christopher Chope OBE MP	Chairman
Viscount Simon	Vice Chairman
Phil Carey (Speaker)	
Alan Mackenzie	AIA
Malcolm Simms	AIA
Samantha Stagg	AIA/James Reed PR
Chris Southwell	AIA
Richard Hayes	IHE
Tony Kirby	IHE
Robina Longworth	MPA
Simon van der Byl	Secretary APPG (H)

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed those present and apologised that so few Parliamentarians were present, which was not for want of trying to persuade colleagues to attend. A brief discussion about what might be discussed later ensued, which included comments, amongst others, about the importance of minor roads as access points to the proposed Major Road Network (MRN), Highways England's budget and whether any suggested funding on highways in the round could be hypothecated, the affordability of maintaining the roads network and the effectiveness of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), especially with regard to providing and maintaining infrastructure such as roads. The key question, however, was whether the summary report on a proposed Major Road Network for England (pdf copy attached to these notes) might gain advantage by being formally endorsed by the APPG.

Presentation and discussion

a) Presentation

Phil Carey summarised the key points from the report, which had been jointly written by him and David Quarmby (erstwhile Chairman of the RAC Foundation) and funded by the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund, an independent charity. Its primary focus was on what England needed by way of major road infrastructure for the next decade or two, underpinned by the need for this infrastructure to be a driver of economic growth. Key points made were:

- The current concentration on just trunk roads is not good enough: more consideration of the total network was required.
- The report tries to understand user needs and define what makes a MRN fit for purpose.
- The report emphasises the importance of the existing "Strategic Road Network" (SRN), but also highlights some of the other elements of the total road network that were needed to go towards creating the MRN.
- It introduces the concept of a National Road Fund, which should provide stability and predictability.
- It looks at what impacts new technology can have and includes strong recommendations on what makes a MRN "fit for purpose".

b) Discussion

Questions raised and comments made during the subsequent discussion included:

- How much of the proposed MRN was “de-trunked” SRN: a high percentage!
- Whose budget would the extra £1.5Bn come from and how much might trickle down to Local Authorities for non-MRN maintenance?
- The implications of the third runway at Heathrow, in particular who would bear the costs of the necessary M25 alterations?
- On what basis had traffic forecasts been made?
- What was needed to get Government buy-in and who would take the lead?

Conclusions

In the summary, the question about whether the APPG might want to formally adopt the report and support it was raised again. In principle, while there were some caveats about the handling of the minor roads, the Group supported the proposal, but Phil Carey would get back to the Group when the report was finally accepted.

Simon van der Byl
Secretary APPG Highways
26 October 2016