



All-Party Parliamentary Group for Better Roads

Meeting

18th April 2023

Dining Room C, Houses of Parliament

Parliamentarians in attendance

- Sir Christopher Chope MP (Chair)
- Sir Bill Wiggin MP
- Sir Greg Knight MP

Non-parliamentarians in attendance

- Ian Lancaster
- Rick Green
- Martin Pollard
- Katharine Kelly
- Samantha Stagg
- Joe Hackett

Apologies

- Greg Smith MP
- Robert McIlveen

Discussion

The draft report which had been circulated in advance of the Meeting was discussed and broadly received positively. There was a brief discussion of the circumstances that led to the ringfenced Pothole Action Fund being changed in 2021.

The Group discussed potential ways in which it could further its campaigning activity. Ideas discussed included seeking a meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport, potentially to feature representatives from outside stakeholders; awards for best practice among local authorities, potentially with outside stakeholders as judges; inviting outside stakeholders to attend some future meetings of the Group; and a questionnaire for prospective parliamentary candidates ahead of the next general election.

A discussion was held over which outside stakeholders might be interested in the Group's work. Organisations mentioned included the Association of British Insurers, motorist groups such as the AA and the RAC, motorcyclist and cyclist groups, the emergency

services, the Road Haulage Association, ADEPT, friendly journalists, and the Local Government Association.

Two recent media articles were discussed: an article about potholes by Anthony Browne MP on *Conservative Home*, and an article about local government performance in the *Daily Mail*.

The Group discussed potential policy ideas. These included reinstating the ringfenced Pothole Action Fund, putting funding on a long-term ringfenced basis in order to give local authorities certainty and ensure that they spend the funding on local roads, and shifting focus from patchwork reactive repair work to resurfacing roads. An example was mentioned of one local authority that cut its highway maintenance budget in order to gain eligibility for more funding from central government.

The example of Scotland was mentioned in relation to options for increasing the accountability of statutory undertakers, and for exploring different asphalt mixes in order to make local roads more climate resilient. There was also some discussion of the real but limited role that new road repair technology, such as that used by Edinburgh Council, could play in improving the condition of local roads.

The Group also discussed means for advancing policy ideas. Parliamentary members asked for ideas for Private Members' Bills, specific proposals for changes to legislation or Government guidance, and potential written parliamentary questions or Freedom of Information requests. Ideas discussed for WPQs / FOIs included seeking data on road drainage maintenance or the adoption of warm-mix asphalt by local authorities. The Group also considered comparing outcomes from PFI projects to other local authorities.