

Minutes

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Transport Focus Board meeting	
Date:	14 November 2017
Location	G.40, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Attended

Board members:

Jeff Halliwell	JH	Chair
Marian Lauder MBE	ML	Board member
Isabel Liu	IL	Board member
Philip Mendelsohn	PM	Board member for Scotland
Bob Linnard	RL	Board member
William Powell	WP	Board member for Wales

Executives in attendance:

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief executive
David Sidebottom	DS	Transport user director
Nigel Holden	NH	Corporate services director

Ian Wright	IW	Head of insight
Mike Hewitson	MH	Head of policy
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Head of Strategy
Jon Carter	JC	Head of business services
Sara Nelson	SN	Head of communications
Michelle Calvert	MCa	Management Assistant to CEO and Chair

Guest Speakers:

Melanie Clarke	MCI	Customer service director, Highways England
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Apologies:

Theo de Pencier	TdP	Board member
Arthur Leathey	AL	Board member for London

Members of the public:

No members of the public attended the meeting.

Part A: Preliminary

1.0 Chair's opening remarks; apologies

JH opened the meeting at 11.00 and welcomed MCI. Apologies were received from TdP and AL. No members of the public had yet arrived, but any who did so would have the opportunity to ask questions. One question had been notified in writing from Professor Richard Knowles.

Stephen Locke's term as Chair of London TravelWatch had come to an end, with his position on the Board to be taken by AL. The terms of RL, ML, and IL would come to an end at the end of December. RL did not wish to be reappointed. IL would be reappointed. ML would continue as Board member and Audit Committee Chair until 31 March 2018, and as an ex-officio Audit Committee member until completion of the year's accounts.

JH and AS would meet with the Secretary of State and Rail Minister tomorrow, and with Jesse Norman MP in the near future.

IL provided an update from the Highways UK conference. The survey on user concerns with road surface quality had been launched. She had chaired a session with a presentation by GD, alongside Elliott Shaw and Nicola Debnam from Highways England. AS had also presented in one of the first panels and voiced Transport Focus's emphasis on the user. The conference had been future-focused, looking at the real-time back and forth of information between users and infrastructure providers.

AS updated the meeting on the motorway service areas report launch at Beaconsfield Services. This was the perfect location and the event had been very well-attended, including by John Hayes MP, Minister of State, and service providers' managing directors.

2.0 Minutes of the previous meeting

PM stated that page three ought to make explicit mention of the South West Trains franchise. He noted section C, item 3.0: 'PM's query regarding the discrepancy in separate funding numbers between the 17/18 workplan and finance report'. This was unclear. NH clarified that this referred to the additional income in the workplan report.

WP noted the reference on page four to there being 'no sponsored professional'. The situation had subsequently changed.

Subject to these minor amendments, the Board **approved** the minutes and **authorised** the Chair to sign them.

3.0 Board action matrix

Regarding the funding package for the Network Rail Supervisory Boards, AS reported that negotiations with Network Rail were continuing and were likely to conclude soon.

4.0 Chief executive's report

AS reported that ASLEF had settled its dispute with Govia Thameslink Railway. Greater Anglia had been able to run close to a full service during RMT action. DS added that MerseyRail had run nearly 75% of services during strike action and was coping despite additional Arriva strikes, showing joined-up thinking regarding tickets with Stagecoach. Northern's story was more complicated; its plan depended on a rolling stock cascade as well as the introduction of new rolling stock, whereas the union's message around passenger safety was easier for the public to comprehend. AS stated that Transport Focus had allocated some budget for a more granular report on passengers and staff, incorporating users' experiences of driver-only operation.

AS noted the publication of reports on Road Surface Quality, Motorway Services, and Passengers and Engineering Works. On the latter, a very strong product line had been developed. DS added that the Liverpool Lime Street report had been presented to the Industry Working Group last Friday and would soon be published.

AS had met the new Chief Executive of HS2, Mark Thurston, who had asked for Transport Focus to provide help and insight across an entire 10-year period.

5.0 Report from special Board meeting on 06 July

The report and minutes were **approved** by the Board.

Part B: Public Affairs

1.0 Highways England

MCI introduced herself as Customer Service Director for Operations at Highways England. She would talk about progress made against the year's annual plans as well as Highways England's ambitious plans for future years. The organisation had produced an outline plan including themes road users had identified, as well as day-to-day challenges that could provide Highways England with opportunities to reposition its stated ambition.

Roadworks experience would remain a challenge but provided opportunity for improvement. Successful 60mph speed trials through roadworks had taken place, which would bring benefits for customers. Where it is safe to do, users should vary their speeds; customers felt safer when driving at a speed appropriate to roadwork conditions. Customer-centric schemes such as billboard installation were underway. Longer term, the

organisation was looking at the length of roadworks and 24/7 working, translating findings into both smaller and larger operational schemes.

Highways England had three main principles driving future ambition: trust, care, and the contribution of people in the supply chain to delivering customer outcomes. Challenges around systems, processes, and organisational structure could not be fixed overnight. However, Highways England wanted to change its culture, promoting health and safety in the organisation and supply chain, while giving the same emphasis to the customer. This had been demonstrated through well-received sessions during National Customer Service Week. The organisation would soon start to share its ambitions for the next five years.

Trust was ultimately about standards: policies and procedures had to deliver the standard customers want, and would be reviewed on this basis. 378 miles of smart roads were being rolled out; the challenge here was making users feel safe on stretches of reconfigured infrastructure. More needed to be done to relay in innovative ways what was being done to relieve conditions on the network.

Around care, Highways England continued to try to develop a better roadworks experience, as well as the whole customer journey. The organisation was being more ambitious in its strategic partnerships. For example, she had met with Royal Mail, which was increasingly sharing its experience of the network.

The organisation was looking to develop a strategy next year around customer response; it did not do online customer contact enormously well and needed to improve, such as through the Digital Review Strategy. Work was being done to better understand communities, including equality and diversity, for which she was the management lead. There needed to be a big piece of work on freight and road haulage and this group's distinct user needs. Specific key work objectives, skills, and capabilities had been identified for staff in the delivery of customer service. For example, operations managers were now given incident and crisis management training. Recent successes included the speed trials, signs and signals, and litter upkeep through encouraging regions to work with local partners in 25 hotspots. The outline plan would be under annual review, as on a maturity scale of 1 to 5, the organisation was around 2.

There had been a sustained focus on incident management after the M1 incident. This had demonstrated challenges faced in the regional teams. Operations managers needed to understand when they were in crisis situations sooner rather than later, develop maturer relationships with police partners, and have the confidence to identify major incidents. MCI felt that the Highways England national traffic operations centre could help regions by providing a 'helicopter view' of what is going on beyond the immediate scene. Further, there needed to be a better 'battle rhythm' around communications to demonstrate how incident responses evolved.

JH thanked MCI and congratulated Highways England particularly on its increased use of

signage. He noted that AS had written to Highways England regarding the M1 incident and had received a high-level response. He therefore asked MCI to elaborate further on the organisational response.

MCI stated that not enough attention had initially been given to customer service. The regional operations manager had not opted for a regional response, stating that it would be police-led. Operations managers needed to be trained in this regard. Highways England ought to have been working with local police on the human issue of trapped traffic. Strategic signage had been put up, but not quickly enough. Opportunities for early interventions, such as cutting through a barrier and making use of local resilience forums, had been missed. The organisation had been too reliant on the police to call a major incident and needed to take account of the overall picture.

Finally, communication to customers around dealing with disruption needed to improve; this should not be left to police. MCI has lifted the restriction on the use of the main Twitter feed for messages in major incidents, and Twitter sentiment would be used to refine key messages. More than 50% of customers turned to local radio in incidents; where Highways England's reporting previously focused on front of queue, it would in future concentrate on what to do when caught in the queue. Further, police ought to jointly deliver customer messaging. Longer term, Variable Message Signs (VMS) could be reconfigured, but this would cost money and take time. The organisation needed to be creative in its Twitter link-up and smartphone usage among DfT colleagues. She had asked the Highways England Insight team to follow up with passengers caught up in the M1 incident.

PM felt in-vehicle information would be as important as VMS. More could meanwhile be learned from civil contingency arrangements in incident response. He asked what would happen in the event of such an incident taking place on a smart road. MCI replied that traffic could be brought down the same carriageway the wrong way; there were procedures in place.

ML noted that there could be a tension between the criminal evidence needs of the police investigation and their having to take into account welfare needs. She asked what influence Highways England could bring to bear on police. There were clear policies in place, MCI replied, but these had not been refreshed for some time; there was an opportunity to review these with the customer in mind. The policy had worked very well in a recent M5 incident in conjunction with Avon and Somerset Police.

AS asked MCI how she ensured appropriate staff were in place at local resilience forums. MCI replied that although police led welfare arrangements, Highways England emergency planners did work with local resilience forums and protocols were in place.

WP asked MCI if Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) were also involved in strategic planning issues. MCI replied that PCCs did bring some influence to bear, for example in

reviewing the Midlands incident (M6, February 2016) and subsequently visiting the organisation.

WP asked MCI if training needs had been identified for those with hidden disabilities, and if mechanisms were in place to share information across the English-Welsh border. MCI replied that she was happy to share learnings from Wales in England and vice versa. Quality impact assessments would take place as procedures evolved, and the organisation was looking to understand more about how VMS changes could affect those with hidden disabilities.

GD encouraged MCI to consider acting more independently in major incidents, prioritising customer welfare without necessarily relying on third parties to deliver it.

JH thanked MCI for a frank and open discussion. Transport Focus remained willing to help Highways England in their work, particularly regarding its engagement with DfT. GD added that Nick Harris and Mike Wilson of Highways England would report next week on the actions MCI had outlined.

Part C: Workplan

1.0 Workplan Report 2017-18

AS noted that after recent Board challenge, some risks had been evaluated yellow (showing some concerns).

RL asked about the relationship between the RAG status in this report and in the Strategic Risk Register, more specifically in relation to the SRUS item. MCa clarified that the risk register referred to the appetite for risk the board had set; the workplan reported on the work the organisation was carrying out. JH suggested coordinating these reports more thoroughly.

JH noted that Transport Focus continued to demand that “right time” performance be included in the balanced scorecard. AS stated that the ORR would set the performance regime for the next control period, and so in regulatory terms this would have to be mandated. Some progress was being made.

ML noted that 63% customer satisfaction was being achieved against a target of 70%. In one of the summer months, however, satisfaction had been scored on the basis of only very limited customer feedback. This was not statistically significant, and so it was agreed that there would be an ‘N/A’ option shown in the June and July monthly reporting.

2.0 Finance report

NH reported on the financial situation as at 31 August, whereupon the figures showed a favourable variance on passenger and road user representation budgets, due in part to a favourable outturn on T&S costs covered by additional research income. For the year, the organisation would come in at its target budget. There had been £138,000 of available funds on the passenger side for discretionary work and around £220,000 on the road side. Both amounts would be fully spent. Workplans would be delivered within the funding envelope. Further, while there appeared to be an adverse variance in externally funded activities, this was merely a timing difference between the costs being incurred and invoicing the partner organisations.

JH thanked NH and his team for their work and the finance report, which the board **noted**.

3.0 Record of projects and summary report

NH reported that only one project showed amber, and this was pending Board review. AS added that there had been a 'blitz' on projects stuck at review stage at recent management meetings. The report was **noted**.

Part D: Corporate affairs

1.0 To receive and endorse draft Version 3 minutes of meetings:

1.1 Passenger Contact Group: verbal update

ML reported that yesterday's PCG had focused on the Ombudsman scheme, about which there would be an update in the afternoon. There had been a long discussion on the penalty fares scheme and the challenges faced in recruiting the new independent appeals panel. The recruitment timetable had now been pushed back to January 2018.

The contract with Ventrice had been extended twice already, meaning that it would be preferable to go out to tender this time. However, there was a great deal of uncertainty around the Ombudsman scheme, and so the PCG recommended that the Board extend the call centre contract for a further year on broadly similar terms. The Board **approved** this extension.

DS stated that there were 950 complaint cases outstanding at today's date. October had been spent shifting as many cases as possible. Last week, 190 cases had been closed and 160 received. Great Western, Virgin West Coast, and Northern were the current top three, with relevant meetings ongoing.

1.2 Statistics Governance Group: 12 September 2017

RL briefly touched on the last SGG meeting, some of which would be covered in more detail in the afternoon. He noted that the change of contractor on NRPS had gone as well as could be hoped, and probably better.

In respect of SRUS, GD added that the DVLA option remained on the 'backburner', to return to once things were running in an alternative format. The key milestone of getting the tender out for the main contract had been met as planned.

The minutes were **received and endorsed** by the Board.

1.3 Audit, Risk Assurance and Remuneration Committee: 10 October 2017

ML noted that a new fee of £24,000 had been agreed with the NAO. The stakeholder audit had just completed and we were awaiting a draft report. The Ombudsman scheme would be subject to a 'sense-check' audit in February, with business planning and core controls (management accounts) scheduled for March. Finally, the team had been doing work on the upcoming General Data Protection Regulation, which would have a large organisational impact; a GDPR taskforce was being established.

The minutes were **received and endorsed** by the Board.

2.0 For approval by the Board:

2.1 24B – SRUS mobilisation project

GD noted that the paper was about work required to achieve the 1 April start. At the December meeting, a paper would be presented on what was proposed in terms of contract. This paper referred to a number of individual activities under the heading of SRUS mobilisation, which once added together reached over £95,000. They therefore needed to be brought forward for approval.

IL asked GD if this was the instrument by which the organisation was also consolidating a number of open projects. GD confirmed this to be the case.

Item 2.1 was **approved** by the Board.

2.2 N80 – Continuous NRPS change request

IW reported that this related to the continuous NRPS being run in East Anglia. The new cost took the item over the £95,000 threshold although it was to be funded entirely by the Department. Transport Focus had also added a management fee.

Item 2.2 was **approved** by the Board.

2.3 ICT hosting and helpdesk

NH introduced his paper on a move to a cloud-based IT solution for IT. This would involve a long transition period to manage the associated risks. It was therefore proposed to extend the current arrangement with Daisy Group for 12 months, thus allowing a move to the cloud in a more managed way.

IL asked if the costs were included in this year's budget numbers. NH replied that some transition costs had been included, and were shown in the forecast outturn, but further implementation costs were to be included in next year's budget. There was an anticipated 30% annual saving on IT running costs. IL asked NH about the differences between options four and five. NH clarified that option five was a completely cloud-based solution, whereas option four entailed some remaining server infrastructure.

PM asked NH if the costs for moving helpdesk had been factored in. NH replied that the organisation was not anticipating moving helpdesk from Daisy Group prematurely, but rather would do so at the same time as the move to cloud. Re-specification was however required to ensure a more bespoke helpdesk in future.

Item 3.3 was **approved** by the Board.

3.0 For noting by the Board:

3.1 ARARC risk report for Q1&2 2017/18

The report was **noted** by the Board.

3.1 BRD1718-04 – 17B – Tunnel Vision project

Item previously approved out of meeting.

4.0 Any other business

JH noted the question sent in writing by Professor Richard Knowles:

When is TRANSPORT FOCUS going to object to the Department for Transport and the Train Operating Companies about the reduction in well-used local train services on inter-city routes to make space for more inter-city express train services?

From May 2018, on the North TransPennine route between Leeds, Huddersfield and Manchester, the frequency of First TransPennine Expresses will increase from 5 per hour to 6 per hour, 4 of them direct non-stop between Huddersfield and Manchester Victoria.

1. the hourly all-stations Arriva Northern train between Huddersfield and Manchester Victoria is to be cut out to make way for this 6th express train per hour
2. Over 1 million passengers per year using the four intermediate stations between Huddersfield and Stalybridge (Slaithwaite, Marsden, Greenfield and Mossley) will lose their direct services to Ashton, Manchester Victoria, Salford Central, Salford Crescent and stations to Wigan
3. Instead, passengers from these 4 local stations will have skip-stops on hourly First TransPennine expresses from Leeds and Huddersfield to Stalybridge and Manchester Piccadilly (one calling at Marsden and Greenfield, the other at Slaithwaite and Mossley)
4. Official surveys by TfGM show that many more commuters, shoppers and other passengers have destinations nearer to Manchester Victoria and Salford Central than to Manchester Piccadilly
5. Arriva Northern's hourly peak services on Mondays to Fridays will be to/from Manchester Piccadilly rather than Manchester Victoria
6. Very inconvenient timings, for example from/to Greenfield, show the last train for commuters into Manchester for a 9am start at work will be 0745 (currently 0804) and the only train before 6pm for commuters finishing work at 5pm will be at 17.18 (currently 1711, 1726 & 1757)
7. Journey times to/from Manchester Victoria from Greenfield will increase and there will only be a connection at Stalybridge once an hour
8. There will be no usable connections to/from Salford Central (67 minute journey time from Greenfield)
9. Journey times to/from Salford Crescent will increase by more than 50% from 34 minutes.

JH confirmed that this would be answered in writing.

Minutes

1718-281	Nov-17	Question from Public	Respond to question received from public by letter.	AS	Dec-17
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The meeting closed at 12.54.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:

Jeff Halliwell
Chair, Transport Focus

Date