

CIHT NORTH WEST REGION

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL HIGHWAYS CONFERENCE, 14TH NOVEMBER 2018

The North West Region's Annual Highways Conference took place at the Emirates Old Trafford cricket ground in Manchester on 14th November 2018. This 'free to attend' event was sponsored by Ringway and there were also a number of exhibition stands covering a range of technical products and up-to-date initiatives which are being trialled within our industry. Over 100 delegates heard a range of topical and relevant presentations aimed at providing them with food for thought to improve the quality of service that they deliver.

The morning session was chaired by Chris Jackson, a past-President of the Institution, and the Keynote Address was given by Gary Kemp of the Department for Transport who provided an update on policy and the impacts of the 2018 highways budget for the north west's local authorities. Gary was followed by WSP's David Symons whose presentation was entitled 'Designing and Maintaining Future Ready Highways'. David spoke of how our society will have different needs and expectations in the future, and he also touched on how it will be essential to plan for the changing impacts of the weather. This theme was incorporated within the following presentation given by Tom Cowans of the North & Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency concerning the management of high winds on the highway network. Tom concentrated upon the importance of accurate wind-forecasting to the operational management of the Britannia Bridge which carries the A55 across the Menai Straits in North Wales.

The delegates were next invited to join a Workshop Session managed by Scott Bloxson of Essency Consultancy, Chris Founds of CJ Founds Associates, and Neil Black of Alleviate Consulting. Our specialists divided the room into three groups and asked for them to put forward their experiences of Asset Management, Effective Procurement and Collaborative Contract Delivery. After a time the groups moved around so that all attendees were given the opportunity to discuss each of the three topics. The points raised by delegates were collected and will be incorporated in a feedback paper which will be distributed to them.

The afternoon session was chaired by Barry Heaps, Chairman of the Region's Events Sub-Committee, and the first presentation was given by a Government Security Advisor who spoke about Security Considerations for Highways. He gave an informative and thought-provoking talk on the typical current security threats to our national infrastructure, and described some of the measures that have been taken and others which are being developed to counter these threats.

David Rowley, a Regional Director from the main sponsor, Ringway, then spoke about Innovation in Highways and suggested how the industry could change from a 'can't do' to a 'can do' lean, service delivery vehicle. Our next presenter was Vikki Edmondson, a senior lecturer from the University of Northumbria, and she talked about using BIM to create a platform for managing drainage assets through the 'Internet of Things', a future state whereby the Internet will no longer be dominated by human interaction but by communication between semi-autonomous smart objects or devices. This is a prototype web application being developed jointly by the University and Northumbria Water.

The final presentation of the Conference was given by David Capon, the Manager of the Joint Authorities Group (UK), who spoke about the Street Manager Project and its key strategic aims for the UK, describing the fundamental drivers and industry challenges to be overcome in delivering improved streetworks to minimise disruption and improve journeys for the public.

The Region's team has received very positive feedback from those who attended the Conference, with the opportunity to participate in the workshop sessions being particularly well received. The feedback also included 'hot topics' for the delegates which will be addressed in future events.