

Good asset management starts with knowing what assets you have, what condition they are in and what you want to use them for.



Rt Hon Rosie Winterton MP,
Minister of State for Transport

On 16 July 2008, Rosie Winterton MP, the Minister of State for Transport announced that the Department for Transport would be making available £23 million to assist local authorities in England with developing their asset management capability with regard to their highway assets. All Chief Executives have recently been sent a letter setting out how authorities can apply for an allocation from this funding stream. The letter goes on to affirm that, ‘Your authority’s highway network is almost certainly the largest and most visible community asset for which you are responsible. It is used daily by the majority of people and is fundamental to the economic, social and environmental well-being of your community and neighbouring areas. It helps to shape the character and quality of the local areas that it serves and makes an important contribution to your council’s wider priorities, including regeneration, social inclusion, community safety, education and health.’

Continuing, ‘In order to fulfil its potential, it is crucial that the local highway network is managed efficiently. To assist this process, the Government has, for some years, encouraged local highway authorities to develop Transport Asset Management Plans (TAMPs), as part of the Local Transport Plan process. Recent research shows that authorities’ TAMPs fall into a wide range of states of development. Many authorities have a long way to go before they reap the full benefits of an asset management based approach to looking after their most valuable asset.’

It stresses that, ‘At whatever stage of development a TAMP might be, good quality information about the asset and its condition is key to making effective investment decisions. It is clear that the state of inventories and condition data also varies widely across authorities. The funding announced by Rosie Winterton is being made available to English local highway authorities to help them develop their transport asset inventories. In announcing the funding, Rosie Winterton said:

“Asset management is not just about engineering, or finding the right technical solution at the best price. It’s about ensuring the asset provides the service that the public want from it. Good asset management starts with knowing what assets you have, what condition they are in and what you want to use them for. This extra funding will help local authorities to gather and use the data they need to ensure they get the best from the infrastructure they manage.”

Authorities are invited to submit a claim for funding by **19 December 2008**.

The letter is accompanied by a note outlining the arrangements for distributing the fund and some of its Key Points are:

- The £23 million is to assist local authorities in England with **developing their asset management capability** for their highway assets.
- Good asset management requires a thorough understanding of the asset under management and **inventory and condition data are essential** to this. The new funding is to assist local authorities with gathering inventory information and the condition of their highway assets.
- The scheme will recognise the achievement of those local authorities who have made progress collecting inventory and condition data.
- The scheme gives authorities an opportunity to demonstrate **innovation**.
- The Department is not prescribing what data authorities should collect and use. **It is for each authority to determine the data it needs**, its current data holding and thus the gap that needs to be filled. Only data that an authority will use will be of value.
- The **funding will be additional capital to support revenue spending**. It is not intended to represent reimbursement of costs but rather a reward for innovation and progress.
- Element 1 of the funding process will require authorities to **provide a narrative what data has been collected** to meet their needs during 2008/09.
- Element 2 will require the **identification of the way they have used their data** to achieve benefits and how they have implemented an asset management approach to deliver them.
- It is envisaged that **only a few authorities** (around 10%) **will secure funding** under Element 2. They will be judged against clarity of aims, value for money, handling the change, benefits and sustained benefits.
- The Department recognises that **private sector partners will play an important role** in helping authorities achieve their aims.

The message is clear

If you **do nothing**, you **get nothing**.

Action is required **now** and needs to have progressed significantly by the end of the 2008/09 financial year. Nothing can be achieved without data.

Some authorities have made considerable progress towards collecting the data they need, others have yet to start.

Funding will be for **work already undertaken and for progress made**. **Innovation** is the key to receiving funds and becoming a 'regional champion'.

Each authority decides on what data it needs to hold to meet its own specific requirements. No-one else will be producing a list or specification.

Here's how JRCS Ltd can help you get into the top 10%

JRCS Ltd has over 25 years experience of inventory and condition data collection including surveys, the specification and production of management systems, advanced data collection software, training and inspector accreditation.

JRCS Ltd regularly collaborates with other specialist companies who it considers to be 'the best in the business'. Resources are brought in, as and when needed, to exactly fit the tasks in hand and to provide quality results and the best value for money.

The first stage of an asset management plan is to identify what data needs to be collected. JRCS Ltd can review any data already held, its currency and the platform on which it resides, advising on its future suitability. Working closely with an authority, a full list of required data would be established adopting the key principle from the Western European Road Directors Group's 'Best Practice Guide on Data Management for Road Administrations':

Collect 'Need to know' data avoiding 'Nice to know'.

Finally, by performing a Gap Analysis review, a plan to fill the gap in the data would be drawn up.

JRCS Ltd and its associates have a proven track record of undertaking both inventory and condition surveys. All surveyors have been involved in this type of work for at least 10 years and are considered experts in their field. Alternatively the company can supply robust, state of the art, data collection software configured to an authority's defined data list for those wishing to undertake their own surveys.

An essential part of using data is the quality of the management system holding it. A review of an authority's existing system, its ease of use and its existing and potential functionality can be undertaken. For those authorities without a system, or dissatisfied with their existing one and looking to change, alternatives can be explored. JRCS Ltd has its own flexible, reliable, easy to use, low cost management database which can be tailored specifically to a user's exact needs or the company can provide technical expert assistance for other products.

Whichever system is being used, it is likely that it will require definition (or redefinition) and implementation. It is important to structure any data to be held so that it can be used efficiently and also to ensure that the data needed to produce key reports is held and can be kept fully up to date. JRCS Ltd has experienced personnel available to help in this area.

Asset management capability depends on the quality of the people using and maintaining the data. By offering a comprehensive range of training and third-party accreditation of operatives, JRCS Ltd can help an authority to guarantee the quality of its data.

Let us help you to be in that top 10%

Contact Details:

*John Reid B.A. Hons., F.I.H.T., M.I.A.M., Dip. H.C. & M
3 Meadow Road, Windermere, Cumbria, LA23 2EU.*

Tel: 015394 42006 (office) or 07766 760030 (mob.)

E-mail: john@jrcon.co.uk

Web: www.jrcon.co.uk