

## **Advance notice to Members**

### **Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works (MCHW) – A Major Change to the Specification for Highway Works**

The MCHW suite of documents is being rewritten and refreshed in the second roads period (RIS 2).

In March 2020, the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) was relaunched in a new consistent format, enabling a digital framework for standards content that will support innovation in digital design, construction and operation of highways infrastructure. National Highways is currently progressing the update and modernisation of the MCHW suite of documents in partnership with our Overseeing Organisation colleagues in the Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Over the years the Specification for Highway Works (SHW), part of the MCHW, has changed. Clauses have been added, some have been deleted and there have been many revisions. Even the colour has changed as it has been revised from orange to blue, brown, blue and white then a fully web-based version. Through it all the clause numbers have remained consistent so for example clause 801 has always referred to Type 1 sub base.

As a high-level summary, the modernisation will include:

- The seven volumes of the current MCHW will become three with a new style and format: 1) Specification for Highways Works documents; 2) Instructions for Specifiers documents; 3) Method of Measurement.
- MCHW content will be digitalised, thus enabling machine readability, increased automation in the production of contract documentation and easier maintenance of the content in future.
- Conditions of contract content will be removed to make clauses contract neutral.
- National variations will be provided with a consistent and clear format. Users will be able to download the documents both with the complete set of national variations relevant to all overseeing organisations and individual documents relevant for each overseeing organisation (country specific documents).
- This work supports MCHW and DMRB compatibility.
- The update of the MCHW has a key role in facilitating decarbonisation by not inhibiting low carbon solutions to be specified.

The refreshed MCHW is planned to be published in March 2025. The entire MCHW suite and DMRB documents that have been updated as part of this MCHW refresh will be published at the same time. A key element of this is the updating of the SHW which will involve renumbering of all the clauses to align them with the DMRB hence this advance note is to highlight the impending change and to ensure ADEPT members prepare accordingly and gain the knowledge as to how the new numbering system will work.

It is proposed that a further note will be issued in early 2025 to ADEPT members with more detail regarding how the new numbering will complement the DMRB and also to inform members of training/learning opportunities.

Stephen Child, Chairman ADEPT SMDS Group September 2024