

ADEPT SMDS GROUP GUIDANCE NOTE

Guidance on Road condition monitoring data, PAS2161 and asset management

The publication of PAS2161:2024 “Road condition monitoring (RCM) data – Specification” has generated comment and questions regarding management of the carriageway asset. Asset management decisions and processes should be based on data applicable to that asset. Local Authorities should determine what they need in place to facilitate good asset management and should include both the data they need to collect and the management of that data. The collection of any data must have a purpose and hence an end use to ensure it is cost effective. The Asset Manager should consider the needs of various stakeholders, from cyclists to maintenance engineers, and the network facets such as traffic level, schools and route type.

PAS2161 specifies the processing and validation of road condition data, data quality checks and the formatting of the data for national reporting. Roads are categorised based on potential maintenance treatment options which are used to reflect the level of deterioration across five categories. The outcome does not necessarily provide an Authority with the data that is required to manage their asset in the most effective way based on state of the network, whole life cost and carbon accounting. Within the PAS2161 document there is Annex B which is entitled “Additional RCM data”. It also states that “when planning the collection of RCM data for the purposes of national reporting of condition the Highway Authority should take into account the potential for the application of the RCM data in the wider management of highway assets, through the collection of additional data”.

Good, robust and up to date asset condition data is a key part of asset management and good data can support good decision making which, in turn, can help Authorities get the best value from limited resources. Local Authorities are encouraged to read Annex B and apply it to their asset management of the network to ensure that the technology they choose to use for RCM data collection meets their requirements in all respects, not just for national reporting. It states the following:

The Highway Authority should:

- a) Discuss the availability of additional data with potential RCM providers prior to commissioning any data collection on its network.
- b) Take into account the value that additional data might add to its local asset management process when selecting a particular RCM technology.
- c) Make an assessment of value that takes into account the potential benefits provided by additional data including (but not limited to):
 - 1) Reduction in the need to undertake other inspections;
 - 2) Providing support to wider asset management decisions;
 - 3) Determining treatment needs;
 - 4) Assisting in prioritisation of maintenance.

PAS2161 for national reporting uses condition categories on a scale of 1 to 5 to indicate the minimum level of treatment necessary if the sub-section is restored to a condition representative of that sub-section when not requiring maintenance. It is essential that the Highway Authority has determined their data needs and that additional data has been considered particularly regarding the determination of treatment needs and to assist in prioritising maintenance.

Authorities are also encouraged to consider the emerging DfT approach to the (new) incentive element of funding (as per letter stating requirements from DfT) which suggests DfT will be taking a closer interest in the management and condition of Local Authority roads in the future. Although the new approach does not require Authorities to provide U road condition data alongside Classified roads data it is evident that DfT will be taking a closer interest in how roads are managed and maintained, what data is held together with evidence of good practice.

ADEPT members are encouraged to consider their requirements at various levels from Councillors and residents to maintenance engineers and asset managers to ensure that appropriate and relevant facts are available. They should consider the following:

- a) treatment needs on the network
- b) prioritisation based on condition and relevant factors (location, users, route specific)
- c) programming based on lifecycle spend and the flexibility to use finance or need

In summary one can simply use PAS2161 and obtain the necessary data for national reporting. If the data is considered sufficient for an Authorities needs so be it however, as covered by Annex B of PAS2161, they are encouraged to consider data collection for Road condition monitoring in the wider context of asset management.

Stephen Child, Chairman, on behalf of ADEPT SMDS Group

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