

# Future of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)

## Supply chain briefing note

### Purpose

The purpose of this note is to brief the supply chain on the key changes that will affect the DMRB over the next two and half years. Background information is provided to illustrate the key changes, explain the rationale behind them and present their benefits. The features of the future DMRB documents are illustrated. The transition from current to new DMRB documents is outlined.

### Why are we undertaking a review?

The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) is a cornerstone of the delivery and management of motorway and all-purpose trunk roads across the United Kingdom.

The protocol attached to the Highways England Licence requires an update of the DMRB to enhance its usability, structure and content. In fulfilment of this requirement, in April 2015 Highways England began working on the “Future DMRB project” to review the current document set and completely redraft it by the end of the First Road Period (April 2020).

### Stakeholder consultation

A consultation to seek the views of key stakeholders and users of the DMRB was carried out in 2015 to support the initial review of the usability, structure and content of the DMRB.

Key areas of concern that emerged from the consultation include:

- Many pages and documents, which are often not up-to-date or regularly reviewed
- Unclear distinction between requirements and advice, leading to a huge number of departure requests received by Highways England
- Large proportion of advice not linked to requirements
- Unstructured nature of IANs, which means it is hard to locate relevant content and requirements

## Recommendations approved

Based on the findings of the consultation, eleven recommendations were offered to, and accepted by, the Highways England Executive Committee on how to meet the Licence requirements and develop a more user-orientated suite of documents. The recommendations aimed at supporting:

- The Overseeing Organisations in fulfilling their obligations and controlling their risks.
- Quicker modification of DMRB documents by the Overseeing Organisations.
- The development of clear and unambiguous requirements to be fulfilled by the supply chain.
- The delivery of up-to-date requirements consistent in style and format.
- Future-proofing of the content to unlock the potential of digital innovations. (including BIM and online publishing)
- More straightforward future updates.

## What are the main changes?

The project is introducing a number of changes across both the governance and drafting of the DMRB. Key changes are:

- New structure of the overall document set (which is aligned to asset life-cycle and discipline) and a new document numbering system.
- New style of individual documents and clauses.
- Technical review to ensure that requirements reflect current best practice.
- Incorporation of Interim Advice Notes (IANs) into the DMRB as relevant and introduction of Temporary Instruction Notes, short-term documents which cover requirements that need to be disseminated immediately to the supply chain.
- Consolidation of DMRB 'A' (advisory) documents with related 'D' (design) documents.
- Introduction of National Application Annexes to cover Overseeing Organisations and their specific requirements.

## Benefits

Benefits to the Overseeing Organisations include: greater efficiency in the production and maintenance of the DMRB; fewer departures; fewer compensation events for inconsistencies in the works information.

Benefits to the supply chain include: clearer, up-to-date and easier to use requirements and advice; enhanced efficiency and innovation throughout the lifecycle of the assets; fewer departures.

## How will the changes be implemented?

In April 2017 new drafting rules were introduced in the Highways England's Manual for Development of Documents to implement the changes to the DMRB. The new drafting rules follow best practice from BSI and the European Standardisation Committee (CEN).

## What will the new documents look like?

### Structure

The new DMRB documents will have a consistent structure with a regular sequence of sections.

### Style of clauses

Clauses will be as concise as possible.

Qualitative and subjective terms will be removed to provide certainty of the outcome sought.

Black boxes will no longer be used. A clear distinction will be made between legislative obligations, requirements of the Overseeing Organisations and advisory content by using appropriate verb forms.

## Requirements

Requirements will be introduced by using two verb forms:

- 'Must' for statutory obligations – departures will not be applicable to statutory obligations.
- 'Shall' for requirements of the Overseeing Organisations – deviation to these requirements is permitted through the departures application process.

## Advice

Advice shall always relate to a specific requirement, meaning that 'hanging' advice is not permitted. Advice and guidance material that are not linked to specific requirements shall be transferred to industry/knowledge banks to ensure that it is not lost.

Advice shall be introduced by using three verb forms:

- 'Should' for recommendations.
- 'May' for permissible approaches.
- 'Can' for clarification of a concept or statements of fact (introduced in notes)

Deviation to advice is permitted without following the departures process. However, specific design justification shall be required.

## Clause numbering system

Requirements will be presented with a 2-level numbering system (e.g. 3.4, 8.5, 9.6). Advice will be presented with a 3-level numbering system linked to a relevant requirement (e.g. 3.4.1, 8.5.1, 9.6.1).

## National Application Annexes

National Application Annexes (NAAs) will be published alongside the core DMRB document to provide Overseeing Organisation and their specific requirements where relevant.

## Transition from current to new DMRB documents

At any moment of time, a compatible and non-contradictory set of documents (including a combination of existing and new DMRB documents) will be available to the supply chain. Parts of existing DMRB documents that are incompatible with the new documents will be withdrawn. Packages of compatible new DMRB documents will be published together. For ease of access and navigation, in the interim period DMRB documents will have a double numbering system on the cover page, i.e. the new document numbering followed by the document(s) it replaces in the old numbering system (e.g. formerly HD 36/06 and IAN 156/16). Future DMRB documents shall continue to be published in the current volume set until a significant number of documents in the new style and format have been produced. At that point, the new DMRB volume structure will be introduced.

## Post publication

Future DMRB documents will continue to be published in a pdf format. However, the future DMRB project is introducing some significant changes to ensure a more proactive and efficient management of the DMRB requirements in the future. Specifically, a content management software system is currently under development, which will enable (among other things) the development cycle of a document to be tracked, background to clauses to be recorded, and documents to be made available via a variety of formats such as .doc, .xml, .pdf and .html formats. This will improve the efficiency of document production while facilitating the development of 'added value' systems by third parties.

## Enquiries

For enquiries about any document within the DMRB suite, please contact us at [Standards\\_Enquiries@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:Standards_Enquiries@highwaysengland.co.uk)

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.



Highways England



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