



December 2022

Seasonal Message

The December newsletter is a reminder that another busy year is drawing to a close. After several trying years, we can look forward to this year's holiday festivities nearing something like normality - whatever that means for you - and a break from work pressures.

My thoughts are with our Chair, Ann Carruthers, who is currently suffering a bout of ill health. I am sure that you will all join me in wishing her a speedy recovery and we look forward to welcoming her, back fit and well, in the new year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the MHA+ core team for all their hard work throughout the year in supporting members and colleagues; facilitating, coordinating, and organising meetings and events; and producing the data, reports, and documents needed to help the governance boards, frameworks, and collaborative working groups function effectively.

The obvious highlight of the year was the Annual Event on Carbon and Value on 22 June at Loughborough. We launched the new Medium Schemes Framework, MSF 4, and welcomed John Sisk to the existing supplier group. With 18 presentations, from valuing people and the environment to carbon reduction, we increased the number of client delegates and speakers, and the ongoing hot and sunny weather meant that there were cold drinks and ice lollies on offer as part of the refreshments.

Our thoughts are already turning to the coming year. We will focus on the procurement of the new Professional Services Framework, PSP 4, so please do volunteer to get involved in the tender evaluation process. The Annual Event, again in June, is on the theme of Value and Skills and we are already looking at venues and drafting the programme.

The continued success of the Alliance relies on people being engaged in our governance, specialist, and working groups. In return for your experience and enthusiasm, you will gain confidence and industry knowledge, so please make it a resolution to get involved this year.

It only remains for me to wish you all a very Happy Christmas time and a healthy and successful 2023.

James Bailey

Vice Chair, MHA+ Executive Board

Assistant Director, Highways and the Built County, Staffordshire County Council



Calling all local authority members - get engaged in 2023

The continued success of the Alliance relies on our local authority members to remain engaged with us. There are lots of opportunities to get involved. Much like the professional bodies, it offers a way to:

- Improve your industry knowledge by learning from others and keeping informed
- Improve your confidence
- Develop and hone your professional skills, for example by chairing meetings
- Develop a network of contacts that can help you in your role
- Raise your profile across the industry
- Influence decision-making as part of the governance structure boards

In return, we benefit from your experience and knowledge and knowing what our members need from us:

- The governance boards need people at the right management levels to enable good decision-making
- The framework community boards for medium schemes and professional services need users at all levels to get involved to help us to continually improve
- Those with an interest in communications, including the newsletters and the annual event, can help us through our communications group.
- If you have a particular interest or specialism, then our 16 service improvement groups and collaborative working groups on carbon, BIM, and social value will benefit from your input.
- We are particularly looking for people to get involved in PSP 4 tender evaluation in March and April to ensure robust procurement.

Spotlight on the Professional Services Framework Community Board – Nominations for new Chair

The purpose of the professional services workstream is to ensure that Midlands Highway Alliance Plus (MHA+) member authorities have easy and economical access to consultancy services by establishing a professional services framework that all authorities can use, considering (as far as is practicable) the needs and aspirations of member authorities in that procurement process.

The Framework Community Board (FCB) meets every other month and comprises representatives of each member authority using the framework, and a representative of each supplier. It is a forum where client users and supplier representatives can work together to ensure that the framework is running smoothly, by reviewing contract issues, workload, integration, performance, innovation, shared learning, and other matters which might arise, to produce and support a continuous programme of work.

Its objective is also to achieve a team-focused community that learns from each other and develops a culture of continuous improvement, producing a sustainable performance standard and benchmark for the industry that all parties to the Framework can be proud of.

Aspects to be developed include the Performance Toolkit, design/planning, resourcing, training, welfare, commercial disputes and clarifications, health and safety, risk management social value, and sustainability.

In addition to this, the FCB is tasked with promoting the Framework to develop a complete understanding of each FCB member's requirements and challenges and helping shape the future direction of travel for the framework.

The Framework Community Board is currently looking for an enthusiastic new Chair to help re-invigorate and lead the meetings. It is a particularly important role in the transition from PSP 3 to PSP 4. The Framework Community Board reports to the Programme Board so it is an opportunity to gain wider knowledge and involvement in the Alliance.

PSP 3 autumn indexation changes

Indexation applied to PSP 3 Year 3 PSSC rates from the end of April 2022 was +4.93% (+3.68% for inflation plus +1.25% for Employers NI uplift).

It was reported to the PSP 3 Framework Community Board on 8 November that the inflationary indices used to calculate the changes to the PSP 3 Rates card for Year 4 were subsequently revised. As a result, the inflationary element of the indexation

applied should have been over 6% higher. This not only affects the rates going forward but also any work done retrospectively since April.

At the time of the meeting, there was still some uncertainty regarding the Employers National Insurance uplift of 1.25% (the Health and Social Care Levy) that had formed the other part of that indexation in April. It was agreed to await the Government's Budget statement on 17 November in case of further changes before making any adjustments to the rates.

The Government's Budget statement on 17 November confirmed that the Employers National Insurance uplift of 1.25% applied in April (the Health and Social Care Levy) was reversed from 7 November and there were no further changes.

The Autumn Indexation changes to the PSP 3 PSSC Rates are therefore as follows:

- From December 2022, the inflationary indexation on Year 3 figures is 10.14%. The NI uplift no longer applies (a difference of +5.21% on current rates).
- Retrospectively, from the end of April to the end of November, the indexation on Year 3 figures is 10.14% inflation +1.25% NI uplift = 11.39% (a difference of +6.46% on current rates).

Supplier project managers and delivery managers will be contacting client managers separately to explain the implications for particular projects and secondments. We are currently confirming the rates with the suppliers and will send out further communications to ensure that clients are aware of the changes. As the agreed rates are confidential, we will be posting them on the ISP (Information Sharing Platform), for viewing by local authority members only.

These changes do not apply to:

- Lot 1 projects under the long form of contract (PSC), usually over £250k,
- Off-band rates, which are separately negotiated,
- Lump sum projects

The current situation is a result of the particularly high inflationary pressures exerted on the industry over the last year and the changes in government financial approach more recently. With the extra-ordinary pressures that local government finances are already currently under, I am aware that this only serves to add to that pressure as you try to balance your budgets for this year and for the next.

PSP 4 – revised procurement timetable

The PSP 4 procurement working group has been meeting weekly to achieve a robust procurement that meets member needs as far as possible. They have been reviewing the existing arrangements under PSP 3 and the feedback from clients and suppliers from earlier in the year to agree key aspects of the PSP 4 Framework and tender documentation, and consider the procurement mechanisms involved, such as the timetable, evaluation, and resourcing.

At its meeting on 16 October, the Executive Board noted that progress against the timetable for procurement was at significant risk and asked that a revised timetable be explored with Leicestershire County Council's legal and procurement teams to ensure that adequate time is incorporated for review, update, and approvals, avoiding the Christmas/New Year period, whilst ensuring that continuity of service can be maintained.

It has been agreed in principle that the tender documents will now be issued in early 2023. It is expected that the revised timetable will be agreed upon in detail by the beginning of January, allowing us to notify the existing suppliers and potential bidders who expressed an interest, update the website, and advertise the revised timetable more widely in the new year.

LCRIG launches new recruitment service

The Local Council Roads Innovation Group (LCRIG) aims to provide a link between central and its local government members, the supply chain, and the wider highways community.

With recruitment a particular problem for the industry, they are hoping that whether you are looking for a local government highways job, a private sector role, an interim placement or to provide your freelance services long-term, their new highways specific job portal can help.

See their [website](#) for access to the latest opportunities within the highways sector.



New look Learning Management System (LMS) welcome

This is a reminder to all members that we will soon be migrating over to a new look LMS.

All registered learners will have received a welcome email (from Virtual College) around the end of November – with your login information for the new MHA+ LMS. You will be asked to create a new password – this will be followed up by a **NEW PLATFORM LIVE** announcement. Check your spam if you haven't received any notification



Just in case you are new to what MHA+ can offer – you can find out more [here](#).

From 1 December you will be unable to access learning materials via the 'old' LMS as we are 'sunsetting' this version.

New Section to our website – Supplier Learning Content

We've got a new section to our website where you can access our supplier learning content!

Aecom is one of our PSP 3 framework suppliers and provides specialist 'bite-size' content – available via our YouTube® channel links. Click on the subject matter links on [this page](#), to access them directly.

Waterman Aspen (WA), one of our PSP 3 framework suppliers, provides specialist content via lunch and learn events available via our YouTube® channel. Click on the links on [this page](#) to access them directly.

James Trafford organises the WA lunch and learn events, that are free to all MHA+ members.

2023 Workshops

The first of our four planned workshops for 2023 will be held on **31 January**.

It will be organised and hosted by the digital working group – for the benefit of the framework community.

The first workshop will focus on ISO19650 and how it is implemented – including a discussion on the key documents.

The venue is the **Crowne Plaza (NEC)**.

Lunch and refreshments are provided.

Phil Reid (Eurovia) and Jon Simmons (Aecom) will be hosting this workshop and will deliver a 2-hour training session to bring everyone up to a common level of knowledge and understanding on ISO19650 in the morning; after lunch, there will be some table exercises comparing and discussing what the core documents should look like and contain. Additional discussions will focus on AIR, EIR, BEP, PIR, and others.

The session will be suitable for complete novices as well as seasoned practitioners and is expected to be an interactive session where there will be some debate about the interpretation of the standard and how best to implement it. The workshops will

enable learning together and hope to have a mix of suppliers, MHA+ member authorities (clients) and consultants in the room.

Additionally, the hosts will be there from 09:00 – 17:00 and will happily discuss the standard digitalisation either in general terms or challenges with any framework members or their supply chains, who are able to attend.

Digital working group information is available on the secure **Information Sharing Platform** – for registered users.

Register your interest in attending this event by contacting **MHA Skills**.

Service Improvement Groups

We continue to have excellent levels of attendance and participation from group members across the MHA Plus region and look forward to a full programme of SIG meetings in 2023.

Details of all upcoming Service Improvement Group meetings are available on the MHA+ Calendar and further information on each service improvement group is available from **Alice Russell**.

Survey on Code of Practice Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure – Highways

The UK Roads Board is conducting a survey on the Code of Practice to identify any future requirements. The Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice was published in October 2016, which included a section on Highways (Part B). This survey seeks to collect views on the current Code of Practice content and identify any requirements for updates.

Please access and complete the survey **here**.

Do share the survey amongst your contacts and complete it by 6 January 2023.

The results will be used to inform whether an update to the Code is required and its scope.

Mental Health and Well-being challenge for the Festive Season

This time of year can be an enjoyable and social time; a chance to spend time with those close to us and to overindulge. It can also be a particularly difficult and trying time and a drain on time, money, and sanity, where we find ourselves feeling lonely,

trapped by the expectations of others, struggling to cope with the additional pressures placed upon us, or worrying about the financial implications into the new year. Issues that we can cope with at other times of year can often seem overwhelming and it can leave us feeling stressed and vulnerable.

You are not alone. According to a YouGov survey in 2019, 51% of women and 35% of men find Christmas to be stressful. This year, around a quarter of us (26% or 33% of women and 20% of men) are already feeling stressed about the festive season, with how much it costs and present buying the most stressful aspects, followed by having to see certain family members.

Try to find someone who you trust to talk to and share your concerns and feelings with. If you don't feel that you have someone to turn to and you need to talk, a range of help and support is available.

Mind list **several helplines** staffed by trained people ready to listen. They won't judge you and could help you make sense of what you're feeling.

Remember, whatever you are going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. They are there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call, chat online, write (by email or letter) or access a self-help app. See their **website** or call 116 123 (free from any phone).

We all have different ideas of what is enjoyable – please make sure that you take a break from the expectations placed upon you and spend time doing the things that make you happy this season.

Spreading Christmas cheer for all to hear!

Apprentices at the John Sisk Dublin joinery and training centre have been busy building and delivering hundreds of handmade toys for children to charities and hospitals across Ireland, UK, and Europe this Christmas.



The handcrafted wooden toy story is part of a long-standing Sisk tradition. The Sisk Christmas toy project was started by John G Sisk at the Sisk joinery 50 years ago in 1971.

Work on the wooden toys commences in mid-November and takes four to five weeks to complete, with all staff and management in the Sisk training centre getting involved. Each November, the team get together to decide on the toys they are going to make, sourcing ideas from books, websites and feedback from the charities who have received toys in the past.

Paul Brown, CEO, John Sisk & Son, said: “One of our greatest success stories at Sisk has been our ability to give back to the many communities in which we work,

through our long-standing Sisk Christmas toy story. The toys are handmade by our apprentice carpenters and joiners, utilising the skills taught to them at our training centre. We would also like to thank all our supply chain partners, without whom none of this would be possible.”



MHA+ Annual Event - 21 June 2023

This year's annual event theme was Carbon Reduction and Value, and we held our event at Loughborough University's Holywell Park Conference Centre. We received great feedback about the location and set up for the day, making it a contender for our event in 2023.

Next year's annual event is set to be on 21 June 2023 - so save the date!

The theme for 2023's event will be 'Value and Skills', so please also get in touch if you would like to contribute as a speaker or exhibitor.



For enquiries about this bulletin or to suggest any future articles please contact Jacqui Wooldridge/
Karen Notman. If you have colleagues who may not have received this email please share it with them,
so that they can contact us directly to confirm that they wish to receive our bulletin, alternatively if you
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