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Foreword

Mike Ashworth (Chair MSIG Steering Group)

It is more important than ever for local authorities to work collaboratively and MSIG retains its place as an excellent example of this collaborative approach. Over the last year, a number of MSIG members have helped to raise the profile of the innovative work that MSIG is involved in. Clive Hall (Herefordshire) has been working with RSTA, on behalf of MSIG, to produce a tool/guidance which aims to bridge the gap between strategic asset management tools and extensive RSTA guidance on design and delivery of road surface treatments. Clive was a speaker at the RSTA Spring Conference, as was Paul Boss (Amey/Staffordshire CC). We look forward to further MSIG collaborative opportunities in 2016-17.

Welcome... to the annual Midlands Service Improvement Group Newsletter. This newsletter acts as a platform on which to present the activities and achievements of the Task Groups as they work in partnership to improve service delivery and value for money.

In this edition, Mike Ashworth, Strategic Director of the recently renamed Economy, Transport and Communities at Derbyshire County Council and Chair of the Steering Group thanks MSIG members for their work to raise the profile of MSIG and their input into collaborative projects. You will also find updates from the Task Groups on some of the work taking place across the region and a link to an online survey for MSIG members in which we ask you how we can improve the service we provide to you all.

MSIG continues to grow

MSIG is a collective of 21 County, City and Unitary Councils sharing best practice to drive improvements and efficiencies within the Highways and Road Safety disciplines.

The scope and expertise within the MSIG collective continues to expand year on year;

The Transportation Data & Analysis Task Group is now up and running and has met 3 times since June 2015. At the moment we only have representatives from 11 MSIG authorities, so please do contact either **Alice Russell** or **Neill Bennett** if you wish to participate in the work of this group. **Terms of reference** are available on the MSIG website if you are interested in finding out more about the specific work areas the group will be focussing on.

After a gap of approximately 5 years, 2015 also saw the re-establishment of the Highway Structures Task Group, with Chris Plant from Amey/Staffordshire County Council as the new chair.

Following a successful initial meeting in October 2015, the group has met again in February 2016 and hopes to focus on risk based inspections, maintenance strategies and local roads specifications. Again, if your authority does not have a representative on this group and you wish to get involved please contact **Alice Russell** or **Chris Plant**



MSIG News

Membership agreement

MSIG membership agreements have been drafted and sent out with this year's subscription invoices for member authorities to sign and return. The aim of the agreement is to ensure that members know what they can expect from MSIG and that they agree to the requirements of participation and to provision of data and support to other members. We hope this will also act as a reminder about the commitment that members make to MSIG and the benefits of being part of this active and collaborative group. A copy of the MSIG membership agreement is available to view on the **MSIG website**.

Connect and Share

Following on from the success of last year's joint MSIG/MHA event a close relationship with Midlands Highways Alliance continues to be developed. Another event is planned for 1 July 2016 in Derby.

President of ICE Sir John Armitt will be speaking on the work of the National Infrastructure Commission. We welcome any offers from MSIG members to speak at this event. Please look out for invitations later in the year.

The MHA/MSIG joint Low Temperature Asphalt Guidance note has now been published and is available on **MSIG website**.

Trial with National Highways & Transport Network

NHT Regional Benchmarking is a new service that is being offered by NHT Network to encourage the comparative opportunities for practice and performance on a regional basis. The service will be designed to complement the operation of existing service improvement groups e.g. MSIG by bringing more structure to the collection and comparison of performance data.

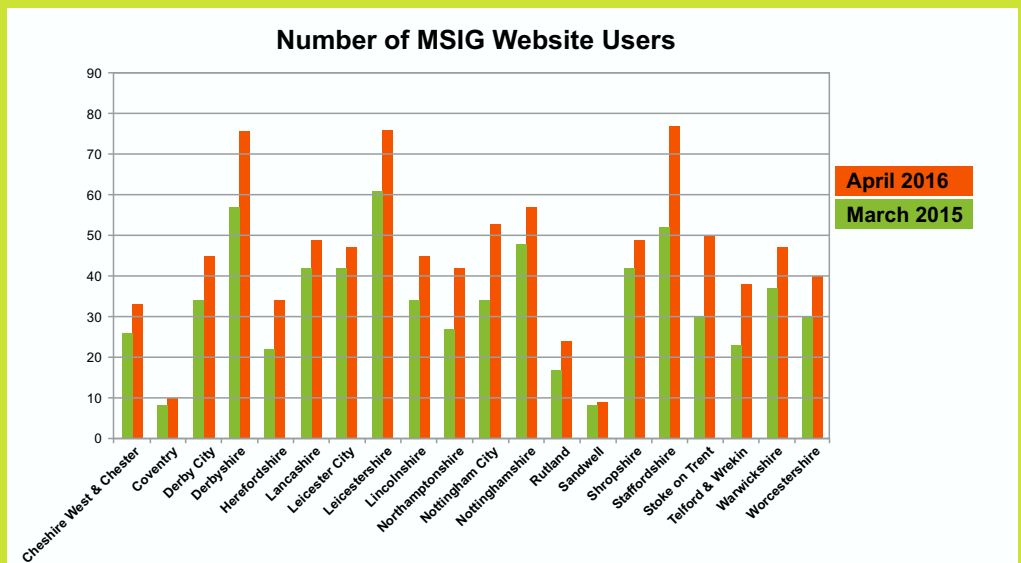
MSIG will be trialling this service over the coming months with some existing datasets and will share the output with MSIG members and offer the opportunity for you to provide feedback, particularly in relation to inter-regional/inter-group sharing of data.



MSIG Website Website address has changed!

The address for the MSIG website is now **msig.econtrack.com** rather than **www.midsig.co.uk**. This change should not affect your access to the website, but if you do experience any difficulties when logging in, please contact **alice.russell@derbyshire.gov.uk** or **support@measure2improve.com**

The MSIG website continues to grow as the scope and expertise within MSIG grows. For those of you that are interested, the graph below shows how many active users there are in each of the MSIG authorities. Approximately 150 new user accounts have been set up since April 2015. We would like to take this opportunity once again to encourage you to get as many of your colleagues involved with the website as it can be a great source of information for people at all stages of their careers within your authority. There is no limit on the number of users you can have for your authority.



Contact Alice Russell: alice.russell@derbyshire.gov.uk

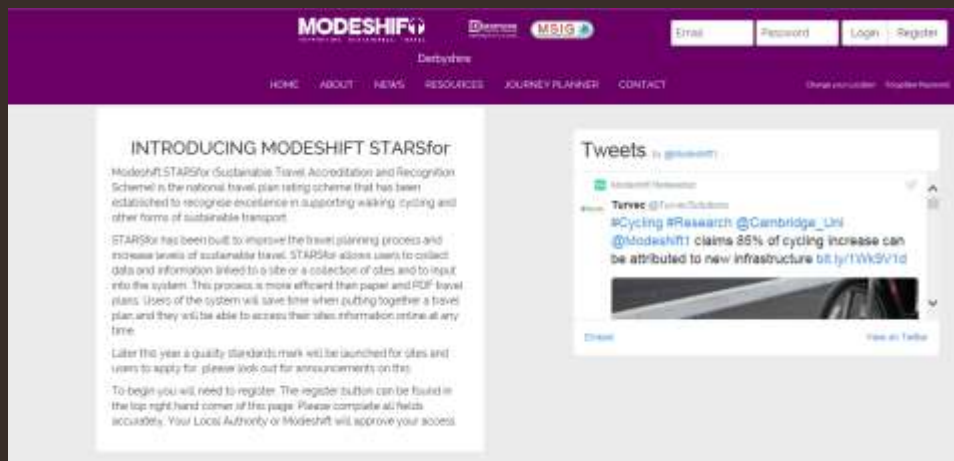
This year's top Efficiencies and Benefits 2015/16:

- STARSfor travel plan monitoring tool which is now available to all 21 MSIG authorities saves the equivalent of £136,461 over the 3 years that it will be provided free of charge. This is based on an annual licence fee of £1,999 and a one off training cost of £499 for each authority – this is the cost being advertised for potential users of the tool outside of the MSIG region.
- Savings have been made at Leicestershire County Council and Lincolnshire County Council by cancellation of iTRACE software contracts (approximately £14k annually). These authorities are now using STARSfor instead of iTRACE, which has no cost associated with it until July 2018.
- Derby City Council reported savings of around £18k following an exercise to thermally map its gritting routes, prompted by discussions at the MSIG Winter Services Task Group meetings. This saving has been achieved by reducing the gritting route on a marginal night from 171 miles to 55 miles.
- Derbyshire County Council saved approximately £950 on training costs by attending an equivalent course that had already been arranged by Northamptonshire County Council, following informal discussions at the Casualty Reduction Task Group.
- Rutland review of Highway Licence Fees – Rutland County Council used MSIG comparative data to inform a paper in relation to changes to fees based on those of other MSIG authorities. Cabinet approved the paper in February 2016.

News from the Groups..

Accessibility

The Modeshift STARSfor project, funded by the MSIG Strategic Project Fund, went live in July 2015. Development of the software and reporting functionality continues with user input. Training sessions have taken place across the MSIG region as well as an additional user workshop kindly developed and hosted by Leicestershire County Council. First indications are that MSIG authorities will be able to use the tool to generate income and a number of authorities are trialing the travel plan monitoring service with local businesses. Visit www.starsfor.org for more information or to register.



Contact Richard Lovell: richard.lovell@derbyshire.gov.uk

Flood Water Management

Following on from the success of last years' workshop style task group meeting, the Flood Water Management group ran another workshop in March 2016. This time the focus was on sharing current practice/process involved with the role of statutory consultee in relation to flood risk and surface water matters.

The workshop was very well attended, with representatives from 15 of the 21 MSIG authorities taking part. The workshop provided a valuable opportunity for group members to discuss processes, workload and resources and to identify alternative and more efficient working practices.

Details of presentations and information relating to the workshop have been posted on the MSIG website for those who were not able to attend on the day.



Contact James Biddlestone:
james.biddlestone@derbyshire.gov.uk

More Task Group News in brief...

Civil Parking Enforcement

Tackling congestion around schools at the beginning and end of the school day is the focus for the CPE task group in 2016. Determined to find a way to improve conditions, both in terms of safety and nuisance, the group is devising a survey for parents at schools across the MSIG region with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the mind-set and perception of risk amongst this specific demographic. The issues are all too obvious, but how to make improvements and reduce the potential for accidents and complaints as a result of behaviour at these busy times of the day is less straightforward.



Contact James Adams:
james.adams@derbyshire.gov.uk

Traffic Signals

In 2015, a bid was submitted by the Traffic Signals Group to the Strategic Project Fund to carry out a review of Pelican crossing facilities. The bid has been successful and work is now underway by those leading the project, based at Leicestershire County Council, supported by task group members from other authorities. It is hoped that the project will be completed in November 2016.

The Project will adopt an evidence-based approach to review and capture the benefits of converting pelican crossings to zebra crossings and provide procedural guidance, enabling suitable existing signal controlled crossing sites to be identified and assessed for conversion to assist highway authorities with consultative procedures.



Contact Gafoor Din:
gafoordin@warwickshire.gov.uk

Development Management

In March 2016 the group met for the first time since June 2015, following the departure of long-serving chair Andy Savage. Chris Bond (Northamptonshire) has taken over as group chair.

Group members have been providing feedback on the DfT draft advice note on Private Streets which was, in the main, written originally by MSIG and other regional colleagues including Lancashire, Leicestershire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Reading (see MSIG Newsletter 2015). We are sharing their consultation responses on the MSIG website. MSIG members and other colleagues will be reviewing consultation responses with DfT shortly, with the aim of enabling DfT to publish the guidance this year. The collaborative working and strong ties via MSIG and sister fora has made a considerable contribution to this project which may ultimately help shape primary legislative changes for the benefit of all highway authorities, residents and developers.

Contact Chris Bond: cbond@kierwsp.co.uk



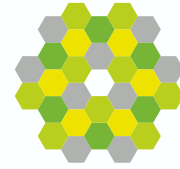
Land Charges

Following Andy Savage's retirement from Shropshire County Council, Dan Watson from Leicestershire County Council has now kindly taken on the role of group chair.

On 3rd March 2016, the group met for the first time since March 2015 and had a very successful and informative meeting with two representatives from Land Registry as well as Sussex County Council in attendance. Land Registry spoke to the group about the Local Land Charges Programme which will deliver a single LLC register for England, implementing the powers granted to Land Registry under the Infrastructure Act 2015. The aim is to provide a central digital service for LLC by consolidating 326 local authority registers into a single register. Land Registry is currently carrying out data audits with local authorities to assess how current records are held. As a group they will be assisting one another with the new CON29 enquiry forms and changes in process.

Contact Dan Watson: daniel.watson@leics.gov.uk

Land
Registry



Local Land Charges

Simple Digital Accurate

Street Lighting



The Street Lighting Task Group has combined its March 2016 meeting with a workshop run by Local Partnerships. The Street Lighting Toolkit training event at Nottingham was provided free of charge to MSIG members and was on the subject of "Energy Efficient Lighting – how to deliver energy efficiency savings".

This is another great example of how we can hold MSIG meetings in tandem with other regional events to reduce travel and training costs.



Local Partnerships is jointly owned by
Local Government Association HM TREASURY

Contact Martin Dunwell:
martin.dunwell@lancashire.gov.uk

Third Party Claims

At the Third Party Claims task group meeting in May there will be a presentation and question and answer session with a representative from Browne Jacobson in relation to the new Code of Practice and the legal implications and issues. If anyone else is interested in attending this from outside the Third Party Claims Task Group then please contact Alice Russell or Karen Seabright.



Contact Karen Seabright:
kseabright@worcestershire.gov.uk

Casualty Reduction

The working group formed to make an in-depth evaluation of cycling casualties has been put on hold until the outcome of similar research now being carried out at a national level is available.

In November 2015, group members were given a presentation by the national lead for the CRASH system, Steve Smith, and had the opportunity to put questions to him. The information around this accident data capture interface that the DfT is hoping to use has proved to be inconclusive in assisting local authorities and Police forces to move forwards in this area. Group members agree that MSIG has provided an essential forum for the discussion of issues and sharing experiences with pilot authorities.



Contact Suzanne Heydon:
suzanne.heydon@nottsc.gov.uk

Winter Services

The group now meets twice a year and it has been a very quiet winter season in terms of snowfall across the MSIG regions. The meeting on 14th April was attended by representatives from 13 of the MSIG authorities which was very encouraging. Group members all gave a 'post season' review and re-affirmed that the group was a really useful forum to share knowledge, ideas and experiences as well as identify potential opportunities for making efficiency savings through operational practices such as using pre-wet salt or route optimisation and automated gritting.



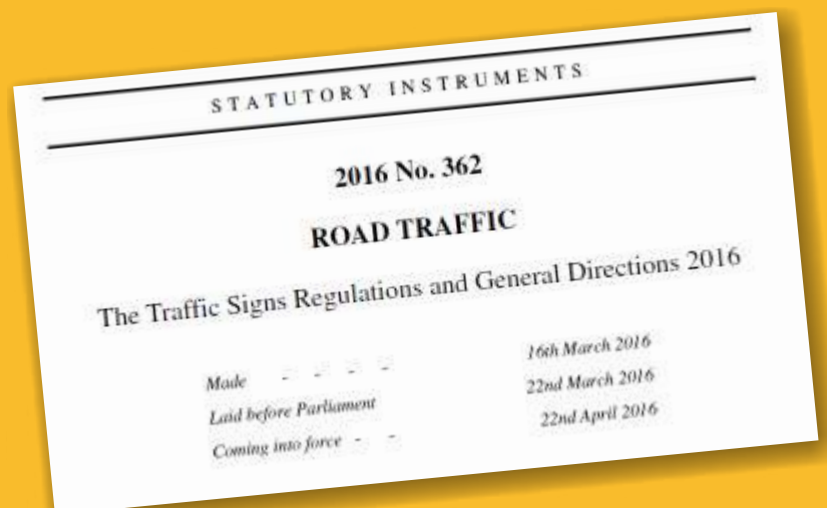
Contact Sean Rooney: sean.rooney@herefordshire.gov.uk

Traffic Engineering

In October 2015, the long serving chair of the Traffic Engineering Task Group, David Wright, left Leicestershire County Council. Peter Bell from Lancashire County Council has now kindly taken over from David as chair.

The group now want to focus on working collectively to influence DfT on a number of issues which regularly cause problems at adjudication, as well as sharing innovative ideas and approaches to interpretation of the new TSRGD.

Contact Peter Bell:
peter.bell@lancashire.gov.uk



Focus on Highways Maintenance & Asset Management Task Group

The Highways Maintenance & Asset Management Task Group is an active and well attended group; these two articles give a flavour of the work that the group is involved in and the expertise, knowledge and experience of its members.



Harry Godwin – Demonstrating the benefits of MSIG Membership and Collaborative Working

Harry (Leicestershire CC) has been a longstanding and active member of MSIG and will be greatly missed when he retires later this year. You may be interested to read about Harry's experience of working with MSIG in his own words;

I originally became involved with MSIG in 2005, when Opus had been engaged to deliver a consistent approach to highway asset management plans, through a series of workshops. This delivered a generic highway asset management plan in August 2005, for the thirteen local highway authorities involved.

The 'Framework for Highway Asset Management' was published by CSS in 2004, followed by the CSS/ TAG Working Group's 'Guidance Document for Highway Infrastructure Asset Valuation' in July 2005.

The (MSIG) valuation sub-group was set up in 2005 to create a method of putting a current value on the local highway network, which could be used by the Department for Transport (DfT).

In 2006, DfT commissioned CIPFA to evaluate the issues associated with implementing an asset management plan based approach to accounting, managing and financing local authority transport infrastructure assets.

Members of the MSIG valuation sub-group became involved in the process with CIPFA and others.

A draft report was published for consultation in summer 2007, workshops were held around

England and a final document was produced in June 2008. Yvette Cooper, on behalf of the Government, accepted all the Report recommendations in January 2009.

An Implementation Steering Group was to oversee the delivery of further guidance and £32 million was made available for local highway authorities to collect relevant inventory. HAMFIG, chaired by the MSIG valuation sub-group chair and including other MSIG members, was formed and the Transport Infrastructure Code was published in March 2010.

MSIG was involved throughout the process and benefitted directly as a consequence. I would not suggest that there were no blind alleys, but members were made aware quite swiftly when that was the case. Conversely, members were able to prepare sooner and better for the changes through knowing that they were coming.

CIPFA/LASAAC and HM Treasury have decided to implement the process from 2016/17, which means that current infrastructure value will be reported in local highway authority accounts from now on.

This is a major demonstration of the benefits of MSIG membership and collaboration.

At a lower, but no less valuable level, MSIG Highways Maintenance & Asset Management Group has determined:-

- what it believes are reasonable bandwidths of reportable condition for carriageways;
- a chart of suitable surfacing treatments for each road class and category;
- a set of seven small maintenance schemes, which can be priced up regularly by members for comparison purposes; to deliver an approach for members to decide their risk-based strategy to defects.

Highway Service Assessment Model – Light Touch Approach

In this article, Clive Hall, Herefordshire Council's representative of the MSIG Highways Maintenance & Asset Management Task Group, explains how he is working with a number of authorities to develop a peer review model which now has support from the MSIG Strategic Project Fund.

The regular assessment of service delivery is important for ongoing improvements and to secure stable levels of highway maintenance funding for highway authorities from DfT. To understand how and where progress can be made, authorities must have a low cost but reliable means of assessing its service. A 'light touch' approach is called for as part of such an assessment regime.

Supported by MSIG, Herefordshire Council is leading for the West Midlands Highway Alliance on the development of the assessment model so it can be deployed using a light touch approach. As a result MSIG, WMHA and other authorities will be able to use the assessment model as part of a network of peer reviews and as a complementary assessment model to the HMEP Peer review, and others, which provide for a more in depth assessment.

The assessment tests an authority against a set of attributes, as opposed to just the products or outcomes being achieved. The premise is that an excellent organisation is one that will display all of these attributes and as a result will be high performing and capable of sustaining that success.

The light touch approach is being designed so a meaningful review can be completed with a single day's preparation and a single day of review activity. The preparation can typically be completed by a single member of the highway services team utilising, as the core evidence, the materials that the authority has collated as evidence in support of their Incentive Funding Self-Assessment Questionnaire Submissions.

The review is supported by a peer interview that is intended to validate the assessment and assist the authority in identifying the key findings from the process. The approach concludes with the completion of a rating matrix. It is then for the authority to develop its improvement actions.

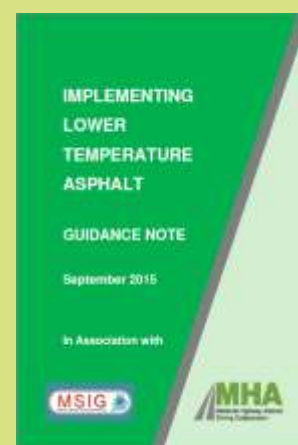
The prototype is currently undergoing trials with pilot authorities (Herefordshire, Coventry, Derbyshire, Derby City, Cheshire East, Staffordshire and Worcestershire) and the intention is to finalise development of the light touch tool and supporting guidance by July 2016, so it can be implemented from September 2016.



For further details contact **Clive Hall** at Herefordshire cwhall@herefordshire.gov.uk

Lower Temperature Asphalt Guidance

In September 2015, guidance commissioned by Midlands Highways Alliance, in partnership with MSIG was released and is now available to all MSIG members.



The guidance document focusses on the application of Lower Temperature Asphalt products and shares the experiences of a number of authorities through case studies. The guidance also aims to provide a framework for monitoring the performance of LTA schemes. Following the release of the document, a number of training courses have been run around the country. The courses have been well attended with some authorities going on to fund further courses for larger groups of their employees.

Paul Boss (chair of Highways Maintenance & Asset Management Task Group) presented at The Carbon Trust briefing held at Highways England's offices in Leeds following the publication of the MSIG/MHA Low Temperature Asphalt Guidance. The audience from both the public and private sectors were again complementary, positive that the publication will give confidence to authorities, increasing take up and enabling the many benefits of its use to be realised.

paul.boss@staffordshire.gov.uk

Regional Areas Covered by the Midlands Service Improvement Group



MSIG 'Strategic Project Fund' 2016

MSIG 'Strategic Project Fund' 2016

Some funding is still available through the project fund this year so please take time to consider projects which could be beneficial to all MSIG members and submit bids to MSIG as soon as possible to make use of the funds that are available. Blank copies of the bid submission form can be found on the **MSIG website**.

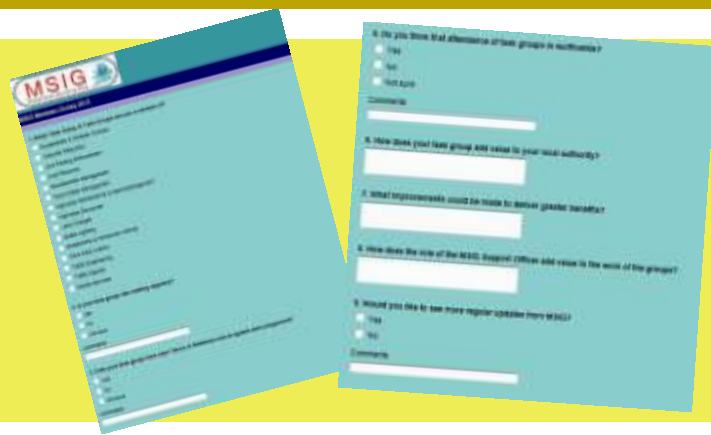
We now also have documentation about how the bid process should work so that those submitting a bid can be clear about what to expect and the timescales in which their bids will be dealt with. This is also available on the MSIG website.

Please let us know what you think

Last year we asked you to spare a few minutes to complete an online survey about your participation in MSIG and what we could do better. Sadly we had only 2 replies!

It is really difficult to review the role of MSIG and to make improvements or changes without your comments and feedback. The survey this year is much shorter and focusses simply on finding out how you participate with MSIG, what the benefits are to you and what you think we can do better

Click here to complete the survey.



MSIG Meetings

MSIG Task Group Meetings May to December 2016

	Chair	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Steering Group	Mike Ashworth - Derbyshire	17						8	
Accessibility & Smarter Choices	Richard Lovell - Derbyshire			14				24	
Casualty Reduction	Suzanne Heydon - Nottinghamshire	24					11		
Civil Parking Enforcement	James Adams - Derbyshire		15					3	
Development Management	Chris Bond - Northamptonshire			6				10	
Flood Water Management	James Biddlestone - Derbyshire			21				17	
Highways Maintenance & Assets	Paul Boss - Staffordshire			12			18		
Highways Structures	Chris Plant - Staffordshire		30				13		
Land Charges	Dan Watson - Leicestershire			7			19		
Street Lighting	Martin Dunwell - Lancashire		8			7			
Streetworks & Temporary Activity	Gez Romano - Warwickshire		10				7		
Third Party Claims	Karen Seabright - Worcestershire	12				29			
Traffic Engineering	Peter Bell - Lancashire		16					1	
Traffic Signals	Gafoor Din - Warwickshire					22			
Transport Data & Analysis	Neill Bennett - Derbyshire		21				4		
Winter Service	Sean Rooney - Herefordshire					15			



Alice Russell, MSIG Officer

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All meetings are subject to change. Please check the MSIG Website msig.econtrack.com for up-to-date meeting information.



msig.econtrack.com

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