

FORS Members' Conference report

15 October 2019

SAFER, SMARTER, GREENER



Introduction

Celebrating its fourth year, the annual FORS Members' Conference took place on Tuesday 15 October 2019 in the now-familiar surroundings of the National Conference Centre. Once again, the free-to-attend conference for FORS members proved a popular event in the calendar, with over 450 delegates gathering in Birmingham to listen to a range of experts and specialists from the transport industry.

Having celebrated a decade of evolving best practice in 2018, the conference's theme in 2019 was 'Safer, Smarter, Greener'. These three areas featured prominently in the presentations, with speakers highlighting both how their operations had sought to address the challenges and suggesting how delegates could make improvements to their own workplaces. Alongside the packed conference sessions, there was once again ample opportunity to talk to the 41 organisations who formed the event's exhibition, including the headline sponsor, Aquarius IT.

Speakers at the National Conference Centre ranged from operators to service providers and from vehicle manufacturers to component suppliers. There were also three sessions from the FORS team relating to the current developments, FORS compliance and help on maintaining FORS accreditation, and a look at future plans.

More FORS-related help and guidance was also available in a dedicated area represented by the four FORS Affinity Partners: FORS Driver Licence Checking Service; FORS Vehicle Graphics Service; FORS Fleet Management System and FORS Fuel Expert.



FORS Affinity Partners' area

The start of proceedings

The event's chair for the day was Jo Godsmark, director and lead consultant of BigChange and an active member of the CILT (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport) Outsourcing and Procurement Forum. Godsmark welcomed delegates, telling them that their presence confirmed the fantastic support that FORS receives, also recognising how fleets are respecting compliance.

She said the audience were a like-minded community that has a tough job and faces many challenges in the future, including climate change and safety. But, she added, with the help and support from FORS – in the form of numerous resources including training courses, online guidance and the conference itself – they could collectively make a real difference.

"With 95 per cent of collisions caused by human error – and growing concerns over air quality issues – there is still a lot we need to do," Godsmark told the audience. "Everyone in the room today recognises this and continues to work towards improved road safety and environmental protection."

Godsmark is also a chair and trustee of the international development organisation Transaid, which works on safe, sustainable and affordable transport solutions across the developing world. She used her time at the beginning of the day to highlight the challenges facing people in those countries, compared with those operating in the UK. "Last month I was humbled and privileged to visit Transaid's work in Zambia and it was a trip that brought home to me the gap in road safety, use of transport and the impact of environmental changes between the UK and developing countries," she said.



Jo Godsmark, FORS Members' Conference chair

FORS and its members help support Transaid

FORS was supporting Transaid for the first time at its Members' Conference and matched attendee contributions, raising over £1,000 to support the charity's work providing much-needed training and transport to communities across Africa.

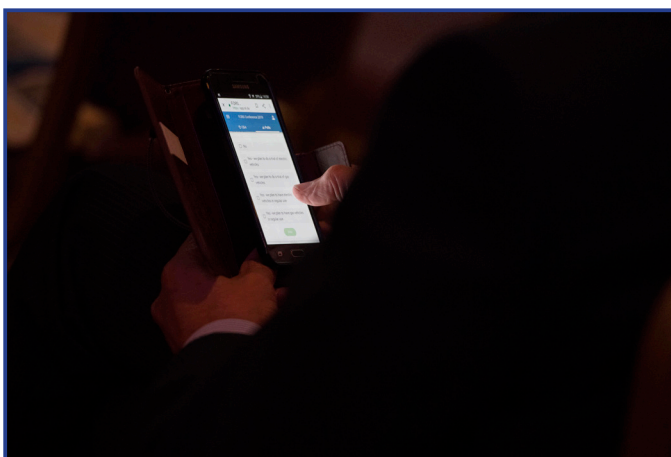


Transaid training, Nigeria

A new way to interact

As in previous years, delegates were given the opportunity to ask questions, but 2019 saw the introduction of the interactive app-based communication tool Sli.do. A Q&A and polling system, the app allowed questions to be sent at any point in proceedings and then stored for the panel discussions held during the day.

There were also a number of polls put to the audience on the subjects of FORS status, alternative-fuelled vehicles, FORS toolkits and reactions to version 5 of the FORS Standard.



A delegate using Sli.do

The latest FORS news

With a FORS update, Paul Wilkes, FORS Business Services Manager, was the first speaker to step up to the podium. He reinforced how improving safety, working smarter and looking after other vulnerable road users had been at the heart of FORS since it was established. He then went on to talk about the important focus within the Governance and Standards Advisory Group (GSAG) in relation to improving the environment. Two different working groups had been established, he said, the first looking at franchise operators with multiple operating sites and the other assessing the possible implementation of new technologies within the workshop environment, such as virtual reality.



Paul Wilkes, FORS

He confirmed that the working groups had made their recommendations and that the outputs would be made public to FORS members in 2020. He also detailed how GSAG members had offered experience, support and time as part of a new FORS mentoring service. The service is designed to put registered accredited operators in touch with long-standing Gold members who can share their experiences.

In his presentation, Wilkes also covered the introduction of a unified audit option for FORS members.

Organisations with a single operating centre can choose to opt for a combined Silver and Gold application, he explained, which means that progression to Gold can be achieved by submitting a single, combined Silver and Gold application and means having a single Silver and Gold expiry date.

There was also news about trials of two types of accreditation – driver hire and vehicle hire. The accreditations, explained Wilkes, are designed to help operators meet the requirements set out in the FORS Standard, which stipulates that short-term temporary hire vehicles and drivers employed by Silver and Gold operators must be FORS accredited. He pointed to ND

Brown, LeasePlan, Safety Vehicles Hire and Lease, and Bespoke Traffic and Highways Solutions as examples of companies that had already gained vehicle hire accreditation, with a number of other operators working their way through the programme.

Wilkes explained how FORS had engaged with companies who had specified or were interested in specifying FORS as a contractual requirement within their supply chain. He added that a survey of members that asked if they were working on contracts that specified FORS revealed more than 200 different organisations were doing so, adding that FORS is working closely with specifiers so that operators are provided with clearer support and guidance.

News from Highways England

The next speaker was John Kerner, project director at Highways England, a transport veteran of 30 years – first in the armed forces and then within Highways England, focussing on freight projects. He explained that Highways England was concerned with connecting the country, people, facilities and workers with jobs – and businesses with the economy. He told delegates that Highways England was part of the transport business and wanted to help them improve connections with customers to have safer and greener journeys. Kerner revealed that these freight-related journeys total around 400 million every day, representing 4.5 million miles travelled on motorways and major A roads.



John Kerner, Highways England

He explained a name change in 2015 from Highways Agency to Highways England had made it a more customer-focused organisation. He said there had been a £25 billion investment in roads to better connect businesses, friends and families and to benefit the economy.

“Highways England works on three key imperatives: safety, which is paramount; our ability to deliver and our customer service,” Kerner told delegates. “The Highways England journey is about breathing life into these three areas – it is not just producing strategies or plans; it’s about actions. We are providing a better service to the freight industry and working with you to help you better manage the challenges we face on the road network.”

The key imperative with Highways England is safety and Kerner said no one should be harmed while travelling on Highways England networks. “Everyone has a role to play – from the designers of the road network to the traffic patrol staff who are often the first on the scene in the case of an incident.”

Referencing the delivery of the projects, he cited the East Midlands, where 26 schemes had been either delivered or were in the planning phase. “If you scale that up across the whole country you get an idea of how much work is going on and the amount being invested in the UK road network,” said Kerner. “Whether it’s new roads, route upgrades or a suite of technology in the infrastructure, there are a broad range of projects.”

Finally, he stated that the current trials of 60mph limit through roadworks could make a big difference to hauliers not only to journey time, but also efficiency and route and journey planning, as well as the flow of traffic going through the works.

Secrets of the supply chain

Marc Holloway, regional transport manager at electrical wholesaler Rexel UK, explained the role of the company in delivering goods to consumers safely and efficiently. He paid tribute to FORS, which he said had “helped us to look at ourselves, the way we operate and how we could improve in several areas”. He confirmed that since achieving FORS accreditation, the company had cut the number of vehicles on the fleet, reduced overall mileage and fuel consumption and emissions through the process. “We are smarter now as a result of FORS,” he commented.

On the subject of being ‘greener’, Holloway explained that Rexel had done a lot of work with FORS and LoCITY, which aims to cut commercial vehicle emissions and improve air quality, saying that the pool of knowledge is helping to improve vehicle choices in the future.



Mark Holloway, Rexel

"We are facing changing times, but all that is happening is we are changing the method of propulsion – it's not rocket science," he argued. "We have had electric vehicles on test that generate a lot of interest and people are keen to find out more about them."

Holloway said he and his staff were committed to maintaining the standards among vehicles and staff. "With our fleet, we try to think of it like an airline – we refer to our drivers as pilots because no one doubts the need for safety in the aerospace industry. We describe our view as looking through a FORS telescope; I like to look at how other industries operate when assessing our own operations."

Finally, Holloway urged the audience to hold mock audits so that they are prepared for the real thing. "It's a sure way of finding issues in your business that need ironing out," he said. He also advocated the FORS helpline and website that offered a lot of advice and support.

"If you sense there is change on the horizon, make sure staff are trained up," he added. "It might seem like a big investment, but you need to be ready with staff who can step up if others move on from your company."

Help with mental health

A change in direction followed the Rexel presentation, as Kier's head of customer and communications, Natalie Geraghty, tackled the subject of mental health. She explained how her company was aiming to remove the stigma that is attached to mental health issues, telling the audience that mental health was very personal to her and had shaped the way her life had progressed. She said she believed that the topic should be on every agenda in every meeting, even if it is just a five-minute conversation.



Natalie Geraghty, Kier

"Our company has recognised that we work in a male-dominated environment and it's no secret that men find it difficult to talk about their feelings," said Geraghty. She explained how the company had introduced a series of videos, including one about an operative called Charlie who experienced a near-miss that changed his life and affected his mental health and wellbeing. In total there were six videos introduced over the course of the first half of 2019 that had a big impact online and these were then followed up with blogs that attracted more than 1,000 views.

In one of the blogs, the story was told of Gary, who had recovered physically from an incident but retained the mental scars. When he returned to work eight months later, Gary had a breakdown and still now struggles to get back into a vehicle. "Mental health shouldn't be competitive, we need to stick together – just as we do with safety. We should all be tackling these difficult issues in the same way," said Geraghty.

She outlined the key messages that Kier is trying to get across to its workforce and into the wider community, specifically that people don't have to suffer alone and they are aware that life is hard and it doesn't stop with work. She said that there is always support available and urged people to ask someone twice if they are ok because "they will always say they are fine the first time you ask them".

Geraghty called for more honesty and confidence when reporting sickness, when the real issue could be mental health and wellbeing. "We want a more focussed workforce and we want to help, even if it is getting people together and drinking tea and eating cake – even those sessions can help encourage talking and help make sure people feel ok," she said.

Tyre talk at the conference

Edwin Farquhar, key account manager at Michelin Services and Solutions, presented at the FORS Members' Conference to reinforce the importance of a dedicated approach to tyres. He stressed that keeping a closer eye on tyres could help decrease running costs and increase efficiency across the fleet. Farquhar explained that the aim of the company was to create solutions that were tailored to the needs of the customer. "All journeys are different and what we do has to be different for all operators," he said.

The first thing when implementing a tyre policy was to ensure staff fully understand it and get to grips with it, Farquhar maintained. "Standard policies don't take into account the nature of the business or its aims or objectives from a tyre policy (eg customer services, maximising the use of vehicles, etc)," he warned.

Farquhar then urged fleet managers not to keep details of the policy to themselves. "Tell everyone that comes into contact with your tyres what your policy is," he stressed, adding that everyone should know why specific measures are put into place. Appointing a tyre champion within your business is another important step, he added. Having such a person in place is a good way of gathering information and feedback about the state of the tyres that could possibly help improve the policy.

He urged delegates to get to know their tyres by checking tread depths, damage, wear and the overall condition as well as monitoring pressures and noting any signs of distress. Another important factor, said Farquhar, was to properly schedule tyre maintenance. "We know that everyone is busy, but vehicles are busy too and out on the road a lot of the time. They tend to come near the bottom of the list of costs but they are very important," he said. "Try and catch small service issues early before they become major headaches and make sure you differentiate defects from general husbandry."



Edwin Farquhar, Michelin Services and Solutions

If people had doubts, Farquhar told the audience to ask an expert because "they've already made every mistake in the book". These experts, he said, are going to know more than the customer and will be able to fill in any gaps in their knowledge. "Invest in that knowledge at every level. If advice isn't free, it isn't advice – it's consultancy. Always ask your tyre provider first," he concluded.

Talking technology to improve fleet compliance

Turning the conversation to online tools, Ruth Waring, director of Advisory Plus, the consultancy arm of BigChange, reminded the audience that fleet compliance wasn't just the O Licence for HGVs and PCVs and that all fleets – including vans and cars – must comply with health and safety guidance and legislation such as HSE's 'Driving for work' guidance and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. "We need to think about management controls and the advice from the HSE is to split the remaining content into three areas: safe driver; safe vehicle and safe journey – looking at the apps and the technology on the market.



Ruth Waring, BigChange

For 'Safe Driver', Waring explained that licence checks tended to be an area where some operators think "if they've got a licence, they're fine" about new recruits. But she stressed that they actually need to be driver licence evangelists and very clear on: the specifics of the dates; points on the licence and if the licence actually belongs to the driver. She pointed to Licence Bureau and DVSA's online services as routes to make these checks.

When it comes to fitness to drive, Waring suggested the use of wellness apps and also using drug and alcohol interlock devices. For better control of mobile phone use by drivers while behind the wheel, she recommended installing apps that cut out calls when driving. For the

monitoring of Drivers' Hours, induction training and driver welfare, she suggested tacho analysis and job tracking apps, smartphone visibility for the HR department and onboard cameras and insurance apps respectively.

Moving on to the subject of 'Safe Vehicle', Waring advised using apps to ensure the driver has done all of the necessary walkaround checks. And to overcome the challenge of scheduling planned maintenance and ensuring it is completed, she warned not to be overwhelmed by paperwork and to make use of fleet management systems. Tyres, she said, could also be easily included in the same systems.

For axle and vehicle loading – and ensuring the vehicles are not running overweight but running at the optimum weight – Waring pointed delegates in the direction of axle weight monitoring apps.

Finally, turning to 'Safe Journey', routing and scheduling software was a dynamic and strategic way of combating fatigue and maximising fuel economy for a journey, she said. Managing incidents and breakdowns – from the point of view of driver welfare and ensuring a lone worker is OK in a vulnerable situation – could be covered with telematics and a variety of apps that can either capture incidents quickly or contact breakdown companies for assistance.

Be safe; be smart

Following Waring, it was the turn of Adrian Barrett, director at Road Tech, to talk tachographs, reminding delegates that, following legislation that came into force on 15 June 2019, all new vehicles must be fitted with a second generation smart tachograph. The driving force behind the new technology, he explained, was that these units will further improve road safety, guarantee competition and decrease the administrative burden for transport operators. He reassured delegates that the new tachographs looked much like the previous ones and that some technology from the current crop had been carried over, such as smart downloads and driver data.

One minor change he pointed out was that the new cards had 'G2' on them, as opposed to 'G1', but drivers didn't have to automatically change their cards because they had a new G2 smart tachograph. "The new cards are fully compatible and collect new fields of data," he stated. "They are compatible with the older tachographs, while old cards work with the new G2 units."

The audience was informed by Barrett that the new smart tachographs use GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System) to read vehicle position on three occasions: at the starting location; after three

hours of movement and at the end of the journey. He also confirmed that there were no plans to have the units retrofitted to older vehicles.

He explained that through DSRC (Dedicated Short Range Communications), a number of issues such as security breach attempts, power supply interruptions, sensor faults data error and vehicle motion conflict are monitored. He also reassured the audience that no data that would identify the driver would ever be transmitted, in accordance with GDPR rules and regulations.



Adrian Barrett, Road Tech

Compliance is key

After lunch, Graham Holder, the FORS quality assurance and compliance manager, took to the stage to talk about the appeals process for FORS compliance breaches and the thinking behind enforcement decisions. The team, he said, was established in June 2017 and since then had 1,533 formal notifications, inquiries or sanctions levied against companies that have been non-compliant to the FORS Standard. One of the main aims of his presentation was to cover the misconceptions surrounding the accreditation process and to add clarity to the situation.

He highlighted some of these issues, including the requirement in FORS to nominate a number of Champions. "There are three FORS Champions that are required to be nominated as part of meeting the FORS Bronze Standard: fuel and emissions; work related road risk and counter terrorism," he explained. "These individuals can be singular – with one person responsible for the whole section – or be multiple nominations, ie one for each topic."

Holder then clarified that, "Where in previous versions of the FORS Standard, the policies and procedures were disseminated throughout the management, vehicles, drivers and operations sections, the requirement to have policies is now under the management section. Seventeen policies are required and they cover requirements from M1 to O7."

He explained that these policy documents could be hard copy or electronic, whatever is fit for purpose for the company. "It can also be 17 policy documents or one policy document," he added. "However, if you produce a single policy document that covers all of the 17 requirements, you must ensure that, at the time of audit, the auditor is satisfied you have met the requirement that is being addressed."

With regards to small operators, Holder explained that, "In FORS, if you have fewer than five vehicles and five employees, you are classed as small operator and you can demonstrate how you meet some of the requirements verbally, for example you can talk through your policies." "If you have more than five vehicles or employees, you need to have written policies in place." Other items covered by Holder included safety eLearning and the end of transition date for M3, G5 and G9, which is the 31 December 2019, meaning all training from 1 January 2020 must have been undertaken as required in Annexes 1 and 2 of the FORS Standard.



Graham Holder, FORS

After talking about some of the common failures at audits – overcome, in the main, by taking care to read the requirements and what actually needs to be actioned – Holder highlighted the FORS toolkits that are available to members via the website. He added that there were also guides, online tools and 15 toolbox talks available free of charge as PowerPoint presentations which can be downloaded and delivered to staff.

Future fuels under the spotlight

Professor Geoff Clarke, freight consultant at AECOM, chaired an informative panel discussion relating to alternative fuels. The session covered the variety of alternatives that have been – and will be – considered by operators looking to run more environmentally friendly fleets. "The desire to be 'greener' has always been part of FORS through tyre and fleet management and eco driving, but now it is time to take a closer look at the vehicles and the choice of what is available to operators," he said. To illustrate the current feeling in the transport community, a poll was conducted on the interactive portal Sli.do that indicated 19 per cent of Sli.do participants ran electric vehicles in some form.

After that introduction, Clarke gave the floor to Graham Neagus, Renault Trucks UK's head of LCV, who outlined what his employer offered. "We all have decisions to make for our fleets," he said. "Do we stick with diesel or look elsewhere? Everywhere we look, we see disruption, but we also see opportunities because there is a pollution issue that needs addressing."

Neagus admitted that previous electric vehicles had been functional, but not really fit for purpose from the point of view of transport and logistics. Recognising that customers want silent deliveries at night to take traffic off the road and ease congestion, he said that, as an OEM, Renault Trucks is listening and trying to prepare people for change. "We want zero emissions and believe that electric has a long-term future. We're not just talking about urban use, either; we're looking at regional operations as well," he added, reminding the audience that some EVs have a driving range of up to 300km.

Neagus then pointed out that it wasn't just the freight sector to benefit, giving the example of Harrogate, which has six ZEV buses that have replaced diesel-powered vehicles, bringing cleaner air to the town. "The total cost of ownership of electric vehicles, in some cases, is better than it once was with a diesel," said Neagus. "So the landscape stays the same, but how we operate will be different; the noise will be lower and the pollutants will be fewer." Reassuring audience members who might have infrastructure concerns, he confirmed that the UK has over 27,000 EV charging points at more than 9,800 locations.

The other big alternative to diesel is gas-powered vehicles and fighting their corner was Martin Flach, an alternative fuel consultant and former long-term employee at IVECO. He told the audience that it is important that there is a wide range of options when looking at alternatives to diesels, but what people want is something that is as efficient as diesel in terms of total cost of ownership reliability, safety, and payload.

He recognised that different technologies have their place in different environments. "Electric vehicles and fuel cells are less good for longer distances and the rural environment, while hybrids didn't really take off at Euro 4 and Euro 5 because the cost benefit didn't work at the time, but they may well do in the future," he said.

He went on to suggest that the one technology that works at the moment is gas, which means it has a lot of potential for the future. He explained that the fuel today can be compressed or liquid natural gas with two different technologies used – spark ignition and high pressure direct injection.

Flach cited tests with diesel and natural gas showed fewer CO₂ emissions on long-haul operations, which would improve well-to-wheel efficiency by 85 per cent. He also stated the commercial case for gas is that it is 10-20 per cent better when looking at total cost of ownership and that fuel duty differential is guaranteed until 2032 so there are no hidden costs there.

After Flach's conclusion, it was the turn of Brian Robinson, leader of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership's working group, to address the audience. He began by stating that in 10-15 years' time, the world needs be very different to what it's like now. "There are a range of options around and an increasing number of fleets moving over to 100 per cent electric for their urban work," he stated. "But it's not just about how you power the vehicle, it's about what the vehicles are and what you can carry onboard. It's probably time to think about larger trucks because bigger vehicles means fewer vehicles on the road that are needed."

Robinson stressed that new projects required innovation, funding and support for early adopters because they are expensive trials. He explained that the result of innovation funding has been seen in the Low Emission Freight Trials (LEFT), which were funded by the Department for Transport and managed by Innovate UK. "There have been 12 projects trialling low emission commercial vehicles and £20 million of government money invested in programmes to cut emissions and improve air quality," he told the audience. He added that ideas for the next set of trials include hydrogen fuel cells, hydrogen internal combustion engined vehicles, higher capacity vehicles and the reduction of van miles.

After the alternative fuels presentation questions were put to the panel on a range of subjects. The first one to tackle for Martin Flach was with regards to the current status of hydrogen fuel cell technology. He recalled an IVECO bus at the 2006 Winter Olympics powered by a hydrogen fuel cell, which worked very well but cost around €1 million. "The technology works, but it is eye-wateringly expensive at the moment," he said, adding that Birmingham Council had recently invested in six buses at a cost of €600,000 a bus. "The other challenge is energy density is very low. I can get a good range on a bus using tanks on the roof, but if I want to run an artic the space for the tanks is non-existent."

Brian Robinson then answered a question about what grants are available to operators, informing the audience that the plug-in van grant was still available but had been extended from vans up to 3.5-tonnes to N2 and N3 trucks above 3.5-tonnes. "£4 million is available and some of it has been spent and the first vehicles have been approved through that scheme," he said. There is still plenty left because it equates to £20,000 off the purchase price of the first 200 vehicles." He confirmed that the grant applied to plug-in electric vehicles and also plug-in hybrid and range extender electric vehicles if they meet specific criteria from the Department for Transport.



Professor Geoff Clarke, AECOM



Graham Neagus, Renault Trucks UK



Martin Flach, IVECO



Brian Robinson, Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership

Logistical challenges

Then it was time for CILT to take to the stage, with the institute's director of education, qualifications and training, David Jordan, looking at the 'Smarter' element of transport and future solutions to transport challenges. He talked about the journey to 2035 within the industry and what operators could expect to see in the short, medium and long-term. He said that the news of Volvo's VERA autonomous truck concept being in operation was a surprise to him – specifically the fact that what appeared to be the future was already here. He also picked out the Nikola TRE hydrogen fuel cell truck, which is due to enter production around 2023 with a range of 750 miles and the semi-autonomous truck designed by Mueyeon Cho based on a Mercedes-Benz chassis. This latter concept could have a range of 5,000km, he said, but warned that it was some way off and predicted for the early 2030s.

He stated that innovation and smarter technology will benefit other forms of transport, with autonomous, trackless trains already in use in China and Boeing air taxis based on drone technology planned for the 2030s.

For CILT, Jordan said that being in a digital age came with challenges, one of which is how to spoon-feed the digital message into the industry and embrace digital technologies? "We've got to look at education from a digital perspective and we are running webinars and launching a TV studio. We also have an online suite of services called CILT Success that more than 1,000 people already use on a regular basis."



David Jordan, CILT

He also highlighted the CILT forum, which has proved a great resource, with 28 different industry forums that discuss and support the future, such as forums for transport managers, the bus and coach community and transport and logistics safety.

He added that the industry forums feed into CILT's policy group as well as inputs into actual policies. He said the Logistics Research Network forum employs adaptive learning (what Jordan calls "the Amazon approach") where the system remembers what you've seen before and suggests forums and subjects that visitors might be interested in, based on previous visits.

Finally, on apprentices, Jordan confirmed there were 900,000 apprentices in the UK and reminded the audience that the Government aims to get that figure to three million by 2020 and possibly six million by 2030.

The future of FORS

In the final presentation of the day, John Hix, director of FORS, addressed the audience, outlining the future of FORS and what the next 12 months had in store – detailing a structural change to the way FORS is organised. "There are currently three core elements to the FORS programme – governance, administration and certification bodies. They are all delivered by the FORS Community Partnership (AECOM, CILT and Fleet Source) and AECOM is the concession holder, which is let, under a concession contract, from Transport for London (TfL)," he explained. "Over the past 12 months TfL has held industry days to ask stakeholders how they think the scheme might be strengthened and, in response, there are two main changes that will create a new FORS future model."

Firstly, to create a clear separation between governance, administration and audits, Hix confirmed that the scheme governance will be procured by TfL through a separate services contract. The winner of the contract will be responsible for GSAG and the content of the FORS Standard, he confirmed. "It is also intended that the successful candidate would take over approval and licensing of FORS training courses and FORS Professional – and ultimately they will also have a hand in appointing the audit providers," he said.

The second key change concerned the certification body. "To encourage more audit providers, it is intended that audit bodies will be able to set their own fees for audits, rather than them being set centrally," said Hix, adding that the changes will be part of a two-stage process. The first part – the separation – will be completed by mid-2020 and the full transition will be done by January 2022. "We've been looking for further audit partners for some time and have appointed DriveTech to provide Bronze audits and they have been doing so since October," he revealed.



John Hix, FORS

Addressing the upcoming Version 6 of the FORS Standard – due to arrive in late 2020 – Hix admitted that FORS needed to be careful about what it asks for in relation to the new version and said those responsible would take into account feedback from members. “One thing the Governance group will be looking at will be mixed accreditation where some vehicles and drivers would be at Silver level and others at Bronze,” confirmed Hix, adding that GSAG would be asked to set up a working group about vehicle safety equipment. Finally, Hix told the audience to look out for a new eLearning module about pedestrian safety and a new classroom package related to driver fatigue.

Transaid

As mentioned by Jo Godsmark in her opening address, Caroline Barber, chief executive of Transaid was given the opportunity to update the audience about the work that the charity has been doing in Africa. She explained the two core areas of the charity’s work: providing access to essential healthcare services and driver training, in a bid to tackle death and injuries on the road.

Barber explained that the decision to work on driver training was in response to the fact that of the 1.35 million people killed on the roads every year, a disproportionate burden is falling in developing countries and particularly sub-Saharan Africa. “We need to focus on this subject; we need more funding and we are doing good work in the UK and we need to take those approaches and best practice overseas,” she told delegates.

She highlighted operators who had been involved in driver training by sending trainers over to Africa to help with the initiative. In Tanzania, she explained that six trainers had been trained over the past year who had then gone on to train nearly 8,000 drivers. Other countries working towards this level of training are Uganda, Zambia and Ethiopia.



Caroline Barber, Transaid

She urged the audience to get involved however they could, including taking part in a Land’s End to John O’Groats cycle challenge, with options of completing the whole course, having a company relay or riders taking on a single three-day stage.

In conclusion

In her concluding remarks to the audience, Godsmark thanked the speakers, the event’s headline sponsor Aquarius IT and exhibitors for making the fourth FORS Members’ Conference a success. She said it had been a privilege for her to chair proceedings and that what she had heard gave her a real sense of commitment to FORS from people in the room.

She urged people to action some of the proposals that were set out during the day to ensure that their operations can become safer, smarter and greener in the future.

Questions to the speakers

There were a lot of questions covering a wide range of topics submitted to speakers via the Sli.do app in two panel discussion sessions during the conference. Natalie Geraghty, from Kier, was asked about how to persuade drivers to talk about mental health problems when they lose their licence, if only temporarily. She warned that it wasn't a quick process and difficult to manage, when compared with a physical problem that you can see. "As a collective, we need to have people in businesses that understand that we are all made up differently and help people see the bigger picture," she said.

Highways England's John Kerner was then asked about the company's passport scheme. He said he wasn't close to it, but was aware it was being rolled out. He was also quizzed about lay-bys and areas for overnight stops in relation to insufficient parking spaces. He confirmed that there was work to be done to match what is available in continental Europe and said that one of the reasons the freight steering group was put together was to start pulling together concerns and feedback from surveys to use what is available and to create a better partnership with service station providers.

Unsurprisingly a lot of questions were directed at Paul Wilkes after his FORS presentation, including one relating to delivery sites that specify FORS Silver not always applying the rule to vehicles of 3.5 tonnes or less, meaning that non-FORS members can deliver there. "I think that in a lot of these cases the sites are specifying CLOCS rather than FORS Silver. CLOCS currently only applies to vehicles over 3.5 tonnes. Making sure these rules are applied correctly will be part of future conversations with operators," he promised.

The second panel discussion session kicked off with a question for Ruth Waring about driver distractions, suggesting that apps were as distracting as a phone. "All of these things are dependent on how the user interprets and chooses to use the information. So it's all about training the drivers to understand when it is appropriate to look at a screen and when it isn't," she said, adding that driving style alerts had helped shift the focus.

There was also another question for Waring related to drivers who don't have a smartphone or tablet. She said that they would be in the minority, but one option would be to pay for them to have a compatible phone, but to ensure the driver has the correct training in order to be compliant.

Edwin Farquhar was then asked about retreaded tyres and his view of them. He confirmed that, in his experience, they are just as safe as a standard tyre.

RoadTech's Adrian Barrett was quizzed whether second generation tachograph recalibration took longer than the current unit. He confirmed that it does because there are some additional technologies involved and the DSRC needs to be made available, but it shouldn't be large amount and it shouldn't take too much longer.

Exhibition excellence





Aquarius, Headline Sponsor



"We are delighted to be the headline sponsor for this event and pleased to see so many fleets committed to raising best practice. This event is about safe drivers and vehicles – and drivers and vehicles need to be operated correctly. We can't stop issues happening, but we can identify problems and try and prevent them from being a big issue in the future."

*Guy Reynolds
Commercial Director,
Aquarius IT*

"This is our first time at the FORS conference, and I was deeply impressed by the focus on efficiency and innovation. It feels like the industry is really trying to improve itself and that FORS is playing a key role in this. We will definitely be coming back."

*Karla Harding
Head of Quality and Compliance,
Simply Waste Solutions*

"The FORS Conference provides a unique opportunity to network with leading members of the industry, allowing us to exchange ideas and form partnerships and that is why this is my fourth time attending and won't be my last. The truth is FORS is essential to our business, without FORS accreditation we would have never gained the TfL contracts we have, and they are vital to our business."

*Abel Elmellon
Operations Manager,
Specialist Engineering Service*



FORS Team

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