

What the Highways Agency said about *** ABLOADS ***

Some years ago the Highways Agency decided to take a good look at the way their Agents managed the checking of Abnormal Load notifications on the Trunk Road and Motorway network, and instructed the southern area of the Agency to carry out an Audit of these procedures. The *** ABLOADS *** program, as developed and operated for Kent County Council, fell within the scope of the Audit.

Representatives of the Agency viewed *** ABLOADS *** in operation several times and were enthusiastic about its potential. They agreed that their conclusions could be made public, and we set them out here exactly as they were reproduced in the Audit Report Summary.

The Executive Summary of the Audit Report concluded (and the emphasis is from the Report):-

*The most impressive system used for AIL assessment and movement administration is that operated ... for Kent CC. **The single most important recommendation is that the *** ABLOADS *** system should be trialed in one of the Maintenance Areas, with the view to being introduced nationally as a matter of priority.** The Audit team, VSE and NCS Central are all very impressed with *** ABLOADS *** and would support a trial. Future concern about handover of records and consistency would be addressed with the adoption of the *** ABLOADS *** system, as it is a database system which records and stores the details of structures, routes and of all AIL applications and movements. There is scope for the system to include information of road space to avoid areas subject to closures etc. It can be interrogated like any database and could be incorporated into the Bridge Management System.*

Some of the Recommendations of the Audit were –

- 1 *The single most important recommendation is that the *** ABLOADS *** system should be used in one of the Maintenance Areas on a trial basis, with the view to being introduced nationally as a matter of priority. The Audit team, VSE and NCS Central are all very impressed with *** ABLOADS *** and would support a trial. *** ABLOADS *** is the computerised AIL administrative system which has been in use by Kent County Council... since 1995. This system provides a check of standard application with all relevant information, a single point of contact, a standardised, consistent auditable procedure and a computerised assessment of each structure to previously approved criteria. A detailed check is made on the accuracy of each application and a current Indemnity certificate is required. Full records of each application and movement are maintained and the system uses a sophisticated mapping facility to advise hauliers of any particular restrictions.*
- 2 *The Hauliers complaints concern the number of additional Agents they are required to notify*

*for movements on the Trunk Road and Motorway network. This would be overcome by the use of *** ABLOADS *** , modified for use on the Trunk Road and Motorway Network, which could be based and operated on the NCS regions for AIL 's. If *** ABLOADS *** is, in due course adopted for the whole of the HA network, it would be preferable for hauliers to submit STGO Notices to a single HA contact.*

- 3 The concern about handover of records and consistency would be addressed with the adoption of the *** ABLOADS *** system, as it is a database system which records and stores the details of structures, routes and of all AIL applications and movements. There is scope for the system to include information of road space to avoid areas subject to closures etc...*
- 4 A review should be carried out of the HB assessed capacity of structures with capacities of less than the 30, 37.5 or 45 units of HB required. All of the procedures and systems used by Agents to administer AIL movements rely on accurate assessment results and, in particular, accurate HB capacities of structures. *** ABLOADS *** has the advantage of carrying out a comparative assessment using a frame or arch analysis program as appropriate, which compares the proposed load to both the HB capacity and the AIL capacity of the structure. This is an inherently safe procedure as the assessed HB live load capacity can usually be relied upon to be accurate (and conservative).*