Information for Technical Specialists

Briefing note

The New Departures Process

Introduction

The end-to-end departures process was reviewed in early 2019, the new National Highways Departures Approval System, DAS 3.0 was released. This replaced WebDAS and DAS 2.0.

 DAS 3.0 process is leaner and more streamlined, making departure submission and appraisal processes quicker, whilst also resulting in higher quality applications and improving visibility of departure progress.

This briefing note explains the key changes that you should be aware of as a Technical Specialist.

A full definition of requirements for departures is given in the Departures Manual.

New user interface

•	The new web address for DAS will be: departures.highwaysengland.co.uk
•	DAS will now be accessible via the majority of web browsers with the exception of Internet Explorer.
•	Better reporting and dashboarding tools will give SES forward visibility of upcoming workloads and progress of a departure throughout its lifecycle.

Early engagement

•   Designers should now record all departures as soon as they are identified in DAS, enabling early engagement. The Technical Specialist can give an initial view of the application.
•   This will be particularly key for unusual or complicated departures, that may be critical to schemes

•   You can indicate provisional agreement to the application, showing that the departure would be acceptable if fully justified when submitted and advising what type of evidence would be required as justification. Note that you will always be able to subsequently reject the full departure application as the provisional agreement is not binding.
•   This is a leaner process, enabling the Designer to verify what they need to justify in their submissions and hence making sure that an increased number of departure submissions are right the first time.
•   You can also indicate whether the proposed departure would be unacceptable, allowing designs to be changed as early as possible.
•   Further clarification of early engagement can be found in section 7.2 of the Departures Manual

Pre determination

•   This is the option for the Project Manager to automatically accept the Technical Specialist's recommendation, helping to streamline the recommendation process. In these cases, the Project Manager must declare this prior to supporting the departure.
•   All users involved within the departure at the moment the decision is made are notified through email notification, diary entry and timeline workflow headings.
•   Further clarification of this option can be seen in section 6.11 to 6.12 of the Departures Manual.

Authorising Signatory

•   The Authorising Signatory role has been introduced to clarify who is authorised to make the recommendation on behalf of SES

•   In best practice, this role is an approver role where the appraisal can be undertaken by a more junior Technical Specialist. This encourages good practice and provides an opportunity to confirm that an appropriate balance of risk and opportunity has been accepted and that the recommendation (including any conditions) is proportionate.

•   All users involved within the departure at the moment recommendations are made are notified through email notification, diary entry and timeline workflow headings.

•   More information on this role can be found in clause 7.16-7.19 of the Departures Manual.

Changes to rejection

•   There is now the option for a departure application to be returned to the Designer for rework. This will be if the application cannot be appraised due to quality and completeness issues. This will be a leaner process, as the subsequent resubmission process can be streamlined with the "clock" for appraisal being reset.

•   The previous option to approve an application with comments has now evolved into the option to approve with conditions. The conditions will be requirements for changes that the Designer is to make for approval to be recommended.

Quality improvements

•   The role of the Proposer at the Design Organisation has been clarified in the new departures process. It will now be necessary for a Proposer, a senior technical expert, to check every departure before submission, helping to reduce the number of applications reaching you that are incomplete or missing information.

•   The Departures Administration Team will work with the supply chain to monitor the quality of submissions to help facilitate continuous improvement. It is anticipated that the quality of departure applications shall improve over time, and the number of applications being returned for rework will decrease.

•   The new Technical Advisor roles in Major Projects Directorate will also have an assurance role in reviewing application before they are submitted to SES.

•   The new system will enable detailed records for departures to be captured and a clear audit trail to be established.

Service Level Clarification

•   The period in which a departure appraisal is to be completed in SES is 42 calendar days.

•   When applications are returned for rework, the clock is reset, and there will be another 42 calendar days after the resubmission to assess the application.

Will the process take longer or more effort?

The entire departures process has been reviewed and the changes that are being introduced are intended to:

•   Reduce the end-to-end time taken to determine a departure

•   Reduce the total amount of effort required to develop and appraise a departure application, including by reducing the proportion of applications that are rejected on quality grounds

•   Minimise the number of departures that are submitted due to out of date or unclear requirements (facilitated through the DMRB review and proposer role)

The changes have been designed so that, although superficially there are more stages, the total amount of effort required will be reduced through elimination of waste, quality issues and duplication.

Further guidance

The Departures Manual is available to assist you with applications. It gives a full overview of the departures application process.

If you have any queries, please contact departures@nationalhighways.co.uk