



**Summary of Project Review:  
April 2006**

**by Jean M Hopkin**

This

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## 1 Introduction

The objectives of the HA EUWATCH project are to improve information about Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) in Europe within the Highways Agency (HA), increase HA involvement in ITS activities in Europe and communicate information about activities and opportunities effectively within the HA.

The project started in September 2005 and is due to run until July 2007. The project was designed to run in two phases.

Phase 1 (the first six months) consisted of continuous information-gathering on four specific themes of interest to the HA:

- European ITS research
- European Commission
- ITS standards
- Galileo.

Dissemination has been via a web site and monthly newsletters delivered by email to relevant HA staff.

Shortly before the project started, the HA commissioned another project gathering intelligence on ITS pilots and other ITS developments around the world, known as the ITS Radar project. The two projects have worked closely together to produce information in a co-ordinated way.

A review of HA EUWATCH was planned at the end of Phase 1, to determine the scope of the work in the remainder of the project and in particular specific areas for more detailed intelligence gathering and reporting.

This report summarises this review, and is based on a questionnaire among recipients of the information, discussions at a joint ITS Radar/ EU WATCH workshop for key stakeholders and monitoring data from the web site.

Section 2 outlines the achievements during the first six months of the project.

Section 3 summarises the consultation with users.

Section 4 sets out the conclusions from the feedback and the types of changes that will be investigated in response to the feedback, during the first few months of Phase 2.

This document consists of the main text of the review report, without the supporting annexes. The full text of the report with annexes, is available on the HA EUWATCH web site by following the link below.

[http://www.haeuwatchits.info/files/deliverables/HA\\_EUWATCH\\_review\\_April\\_06\\_full\\_report\\_Issue\\_1.PDF](http://www.haeuwatchits.info/files/deliverables/HA_EUWATCH_review_April_06_full_report_Issue_1.PDF)

## 2 Summary of achievements in Phase 1

### 2.1 News and reports

HA EUWATCH has produced Newsletters to a standard format on each of the four themes, in October and November 2005, January and February 2006. The November issue was a 'special edition' devoted to presentations at the ITS World Congress held in October 2005.

The Newsletter articles which lead to specific opportunities for the HA in Europe and the most topical of the other articles are summarised in a monthly 'Newswire'. This is combined with the ITS Radar news and emailed to users by the ITS Radar team. A total of 66 articles have been highlighted in the Newswires.

The articles in the Newsletters, and the Newsletters themselves, have been posted on the HA EUWATCH web site ([www.haeuwatchits.info](http://www.haeuwatchits.info)), along with more general information about the project, an ITS glossary, and other information for users. A total of 120 articles were posted between the end of October 2005 and the end of February 2006.

At the end of February 2006 there were 24 specific subscribers to the HA EUWATCH material (see list in Annex 1 of the full report). In addition, ITS Radar subscribers who have asked for information on 'Europe' have received the Newswires.

HA EUWATCH has identified opportunities to attend several conferences. The project has attended two conferences on behalf of the HA and produced reports summarising the events: the Royal Institute of Navigation's annual conference in November 2005 'Nav '05' and the European Round Table on Intelligent Roads in January 2006.

HA EUWATCH also tracks the progress of work on ITS standards and has compiled a matrix summarising the status of standards which are being produced by the key groups which are responsible for development of ITS standards: CEN TC278 and ISO TC204.

The conference reports and standards tracking matrix are available in the 'deliverables' area of the web site.

### 2.2 Use of the web site

The web site is accessible to the general public, but the search engine key words have been left blank. Monitoring began as soon as the site was launched, but initially the main activity involved setting up and testing the site, so monitoring statistics have been reported from 1<sup>st</sup> December onwards.

A full report on the use of the web site is provided in Annex 2 of the full report. The key points are summarised here.

The analysis separates 'visits' in which one person views a page and interacts with it (e.g. clicking on a link within it), from 'hits' where users (or search engines) open a page but do not click on a link.

The number of visits has grown steadily over the three month period as the site has become more well known (to users and to search engines), reaching a total of 566 visits in February.

In February around three quarters of the visits were from North America and a quarter of visits were from Europe. During the three months of monitoring, between 30 and 60 visits each month were from Great Britain.

Referrals (when specific urls such as Google and MSN send users to the site) have grown in number and represent about 5-15% of visits in the first three months. Most of the visits are through direct links when a visitor uses a link in a Newswire, or enters the url in their web browser.

Two of the web crawlers (MSN and Google) have been building their own automatic index of the site.

During the first three months the average duration of visits to the site was about 6 – 8 minutes with several pages typically viewed in each visit. The most common type of visit has been to individual news stories, but information on entry and exit pages shows that many visitors look at information about the project before leaving the site. Each of the four key ‘themes’ has attracted 40-50 users to look at one of the documents (newsletters or reports) which have been placed on the site (as opposed to news articles).

It is not possible to identify HA users specifically from the web site statistics but between 12 and 14 visits each month have come from the ‘blocks’ of IP addresses which include the two addresses used by the HA.

### 3 Consultation with users

#### 3.1 email

The project has a dedicated email address ([ha\\_euwatch@trl.co.uk](mailto:ha_euwatch@trl.co.uk)) which is publicised in the newsletters and on the web site. Users have been encouraged to contribute suggestions for topics to be covered by the project, but no such suggestions have been received via this email address.

One of the users has however contacted the project sponsor direct and provided suggestions for three specific newsletter articles.

The email address is also used for key communications between HA EUWATCH and ITS Radar, ensuring that all members of the HA EUWATCH team have immediate access to these.

#### 3.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire seeking feedback on the HA EUWATCH service was sent to the 22 subscribers to the HA EUWATCH service in early February 2006. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Annex 3 of the full report.

Responses were received from three senior HA managers (Ginny Clarke, Alan Pickett and Barry Moore) and one with more technical responsibilities (Phil Rowley).

All four respondents said it was useful to receive information on EC policy and EC research, and the other two topics (Standards and Galileo) were each useful to two of the respondents.

Suggestions for additional themes were received from two people:

“Traffic engineering on motorways covering simulation methods, control techniques and integration of local networks with through routes e. g. motorway”

“Application of control techniques to all purpose roads”

“e-Safety”

No suggestions were received for topics to be covered in more detail through ‘Fact Sheets’.

One person had visited the site – about 5 or 6 times, and said:

“I find the site very useful as it saves a lot of time hunting around looking for information or keeping abreast of what is going on.”

The other three, the senior managers, had not used the site. One preferred newsletters, and another suggested that a “relevance sift” on the web site would be helpful.

Comments on the newswires and newsletters and the project in general were positive and complementary.

No suggestions were made for additional features or services.

#### 3.3 Workshop

A half-day workshop was held jointly with ITS Radar to obtain feedback and suggestions on the two projects. Invitations were sent to EU Watch subscribers based in the UK and the key ITS Radar users, including those who had submitted specific requests for ITS Radar investigations.

The agenda included presentations on different elements of the services provided by the two projects, with opportunities for discussion and feedback. A copy of the agenda is provided in Annex 4 of the full report.

The workshop was attended by the two HA project sponsors, six other HA staff, and members of each of the two project teams.

The outcome of the workshop is summarised in Annex 5 of the full report, and the key points are presented here.

- The audience for the work is very broad, with different requirements for information.
- Newswires need to be brief but informative and navigation within them needs improving.
- As well as links to the sources, articles on the web sites should include contact points to key individuals.
- The search facilities on the two web sites should be as 'intelligent' as possible, including links between them if this is feasible.
- Opportunities for the HA need more emphasis.
- The four themes for the work already cover the areas where requests have been made for additional information.
- A 'Fact Sheet' on DATEX2 will be prepared, and requests for other topics were invited.
- Ways to manage expectations and raise awareness were discussed.
- There is a need for the two projects to identify the value which the HA receives from the work.

## **4 Conclusions and responses to feedback from users**

### **4.1 Overall approach**

The feedback received suggests that the service should continue and that general approach does not need to be changed; the different methods of dissemination and different types of information gathered meet the needs of different types of users. However some detailed improvements have been identified and variations on the methods of delivery should be tried out and evaluated during the coming months, in conjunction with ITS Radar.

### **4.2 Coverage of topics and themes**

The items suggested for specific articles in the newsletters will be investigated and included in future editions.

The topics suggested in the questionnaire responses and workshop relating to traffic management and control and traffic operations are already covered by the input from the Euro-Regional projects into the ITS Research theme. However further efforts will continue to be made to obtain input from the staff who represent the HA in Euro-Regional Projects, and the information summarising the scope of the project has been amended slightly to emphasise this link.

e-Safety, the other topic suggested in the questionnaire, is already covered in the Research and Policy newsletters, but the information summarising the scope of the project on the Newsletters and web site has been revised to clarify this.

### **4.3 Newsletters, Newswires and Web Sites**

The ITS Radar and EU WATCH teams agreed to work together to try out variants of the services offered and then evaluate the benefits by obtaining further feedback from users.

HA EUWATCH Newswire items are already brief (generally three or four lines) and shorter than the ITS Radar items, so scope for making EU WATCH items shorter is limited, given that they need to provide enough information to help the user decide whether to click on the link to the main article on the web site.

One of the specific areas to work on initially is a method of inserting hyperlinks at the top of the newswires which take users to specific topics and to articles about specific opportunities for the HA. This may help to address the request for a 'relevance sift' as well as speeding up the process of reaching items of particular interest in the Newswires, and putting more emphasis on the opportunities identified.

The projects are also investigating options for improving the searches on the web sites and linking the two together for the purpose of searching.

HA EUWATCH in particular is investigating the feasibility of inserting key words at the end of each article on the web site and providing more information about searching the site. This should help users who see the need for a 'relevance sift'.

Web site monitoring will continue, with regular reports provided to the HA.

### **4.4 Raising awareness and improved dissemination within the HA**

The project sponsors agreed that links with the HA Information Strategy need to be made and will arrange a meeting between the team and the two projects. The HA sponsors will also make links with the Research and International team.