

Kealie Franklin, TOPAS, Administrator/Non voting Board Member

TOPAS – Traffic Open Products and Specifications

A replacement for Type Approval

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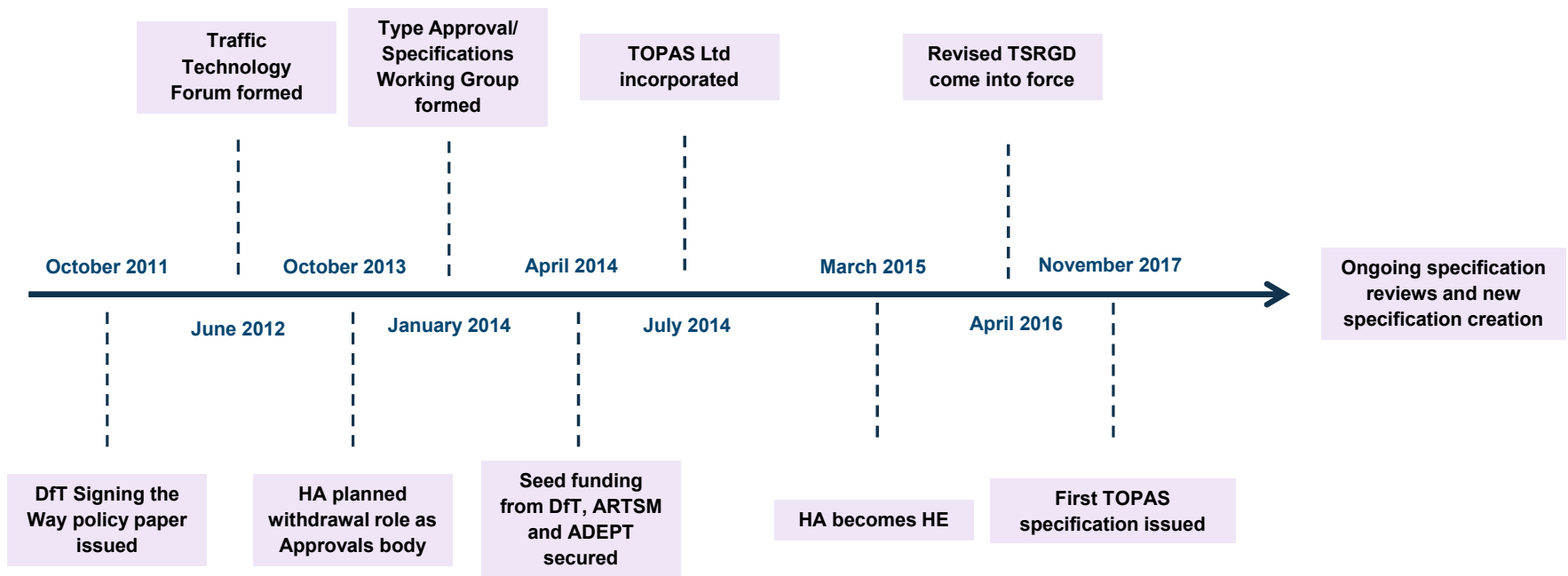


I am the Administrator for TOPAS, initially taken on in its infancy in 2014, to provide administrative services and to act as the primary point of contact for TOPAS via website communication - enquiries@topasgroup.org.uk

The role has grown considerably since the early days, and includes discussions with applicants, technical assessors and users in the implementation of the specifications and providing feedback to the Board from all areas of the industry that we represent. Last year I was made a non voting member of the Board.

For completeness, I have been the General Secretary for the Association for Road Traffic Safety and Management (ARTSM) since 2017.

A brief history of TOPAS:



TOPAS structure – tripartite representation



Funding from
DfT
ARTSM
ADEPT

Running costs funded from
product registration fees &
subsidy from Board groups

Management Board
(Director – ARTSM)

ARTSM

Four representatives representing industry

ADEPT / TSG

Four nominated representatives
From Highways Authorities

**CENTRAL & DEVOLVED
GOVERNMENTS**

Four Nominated representatives with
Transport Responsibility:

Topas is a limited company with Memorandum and Articles of Association and UK Registration at Companies House. It holds a public AGM each August.

Why do we still have UK centric requirements

European standards were created to facilitate the free movement of goods across member states, identifying minimum essential characteristics. Each country produces additional detailed requirements.

Additional specifications are written to determine the technical functionality that is essential in the UK (as they are elsewhere) to ensure safe and effective compatibility and interoperability across the entire infrastructure, with recognised commonality which is understood by manufacturers, users and the travelling public.

This is more necessary with the changing climate of the digital world.

The development of the specifications for infrastructure joining up with the digital world is essential, in order for both elements to function thoroughly and effectively.

TOPAS aims



- To maintain technical specifications for traffic control equipment and VMS (initially handed over from Highways Agency)
- To maintain a list of registered products verifying compliance with the requirements of the individual technical specifications
- To make the registrations available to be used by purchasing authorities
- To manage the consultation process for new technical specifications

TOPAS provides an open forum for all manufacturers, users, government departments and other interested parties to discuss the development and creation of Procurement Specifications

Where necessary TOPAS may constitute working groups to undertake detailed specification update and / or creation tasks. Such working groups are open to all interested parties who may have an interest in the specification or topic being addressed – it is not a requirement to be a member of the Management Board to take part in one or more working groups.

Value of specifications



TOPAS specifications identify the requirements of functionality including safe operation; ease of integration with other equipment on street; clarity on elements such as data interfaces, power supplies and mountings etc; and importantly provide detail for appropriate application

The role of standards is often seen as a barrier to innovation. However, no-one can deny that there is a benefit to buying with confidence and selling efficiently.

So for all of us, standards ensure an level playing field in industry and provide a way to let innovation gain traction.

Development of specifications



TOPAS currently owns around 25 specifications. Not a huge number you might think. However, we acquired 23 specifications that were of a significant age, all of which have required thorough review and revision . This can take an inordinate time to capture advancements and new compatibilities needed. For example, we have been working hard for 18 months on the extremely muddled suite of specifications relating to portable and temporary traffic signals - written as long ago as 2006.

In some cases there has been a need for TOPAS to act swiftly. For example, the pandemic saw a surge of non contact equipment come to the fore. In order to gain traction products needed as a minimum to be consistent, otherwise they would be almost completely ineffective.

There needs to be a way to enable innovation to become the norm and without the development and inclusion within specifications the uptake is much harder.

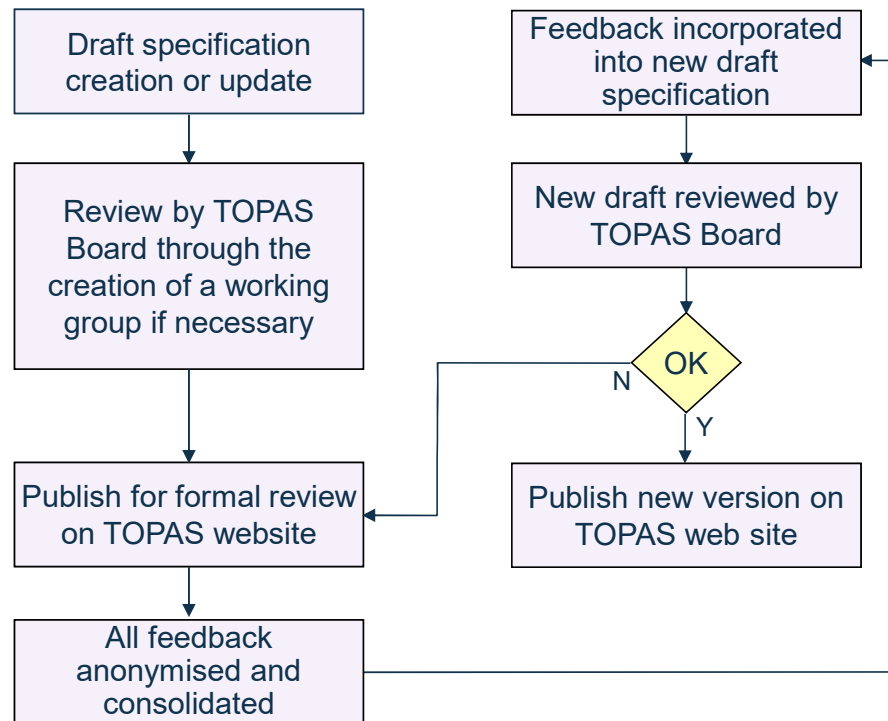
Specification review process

*Update of existing specification based on comments already received or output of a 'working group'**

To help ensure specification is in a state 'suitable' for wider review

Manufacturers with existing Registrations explicitly notified that a new draft specification is out for review (Typically first review period is 2-3 months & subsequent reviews 1 month)

Feedback anonymised by Administrator and consolidated into a 'feedback document'



Each comment considered by the 'working group' and incorporated or rejected. Process is fully documented and the resulting 'decision' document' is available if requested

If only minor changes to draft required specification may be published directly or if more significant, specification will be offered for re-review

* Working groups may be comprised of any interested parties. For large or complex updates, draft specification creation may involve multiple meetings and pre 'Board review' activities

New specifications and products



TOPAS continues to produce new specifications for new needs. These needs come from innovation or technology moving away from specifications. This may become evident through the registration processes when applicants identify compliance issues.

Where products do not meet all the requirements of the specifications, manufacturers can make representation to the Board justifying exemptions which may in turn prompt the review of the current standard or the creation of a new standard to ensure fitness for purpose and future proofing as best as possible.

Anyone can request a new specification or a review of a current specification. There is no charge for the creation of a specification, unlike PAS, but there may be some input required from technical expertise.

Benefits of product registration



We all recognise the benefits to innovators to gain early take up of ideas which can happen by identification of compatibility through registration with recognised specifications.

We also recognise the need for local authorities to be able to integrate products and data across county borders, particularly in the wake of connected and autonomous vehicles and to be able to make direct comparison of products easily.

TOPAS provides a robust but swift way for products to reach the market endorsing that they meet requirements and will be compatible for market use.

TOPAS Registration



Fundamental to TOPAS is the concept that products are Registered. However, currently this is not a statutory requirement.

TOPAS Registration, like the previous Statutory Type Approval, relies on a manufacturer ‘self-certifying’ compliance with the appropriate TOPAS specifications. This does not remove the requirements for regulatory certification for elements that require CE/CA marking.

Registration requires a review of a Product Technical File by an Independent Technical Assessor (gate keeper) who follows a specific set of criteria, identified for each specification.

TOPAS 2517B	Performance Specification for Electromechanical Variable Message Signs	Under review
TOPAS 2520A	Performance Specification for Uni-Directional Logic Equipment	Live
TOPAS 2522A	Performance Specification for Remote Monitoring and Control of Traffic Control Equipment via a Telecommunications Network	Live
TOPAS 2523B	Performance Specification for Traffic Control Equipment Interfacing Specification	Live
TOPAS 2537A	Performance Specification for Portable Traffic Signal Control Equipment with Pedestrian Facilities for use at Roadworks	Under Review
TOPAS 2538A	Performance Specification for Portable Traffic Signal Control Equipment for a Stand-alone Pedestrian Facility	Under Review
TOPAS 2540A	Performance Specification for Portables and Temporary signals (with Hall Routes)	New specification under construction
TOPAS 2541B	Performance Specification for Vehicle Activated Signs	Live
TOPAS 2542A	Performance Specification for Non-contact Pedestrian signal demand equipment	Live
TOPAS 2543	Performance Specification for Signal Heads	New specification under construction
TOPAS 2544	Performance Specification for Wait Indicator Equipment	New specification under construction
TOPAS 2545	Performance Specification for Detection Interface Protocols	New specification under construction
TOPAS 2581A	Performance Specification for Pedestrian Countdown Units for use at Traffic Signals	Live

DfT and TOPAS



The work of the DfT under TTF builds on the existing traffic control and transport infrastructure from signs through traffic signals and controllers, to out-stations and back office services – intelligent transport systems.

There is massive investment in all these areas and customers still want to get value from their existing assets. The inertia of transport systems makes evolution far more likely than revolution.

Successful innovations can be secured by writing them into specifications, that have evolved from and relate to the current core of products, maintained by such bodies as TOPAS.

TOPAS and the future



With the current discussions in Europe regarding the changes to the Construction Products Regulations, it may be that all Traffic Products will be removed from that requirement for CE marking.

It is likely that we will be pushed into greater alignment with those standards relating to vehicles.

We have already seen a huge raft of standards appearing relating to the higher level compatibility of vehicle to vehicle and infrastructure to vehicle.

There will however remain a requirement to ensure future products/data services are compatible globally but will also be fit for purpose on UK roads with our UK quirks. It is anticipated by TTF that TOPAS will be a part of that future.

If removal of CPR CE marking occurs, then it may be a larger part than first imagined!

Acknowledgements



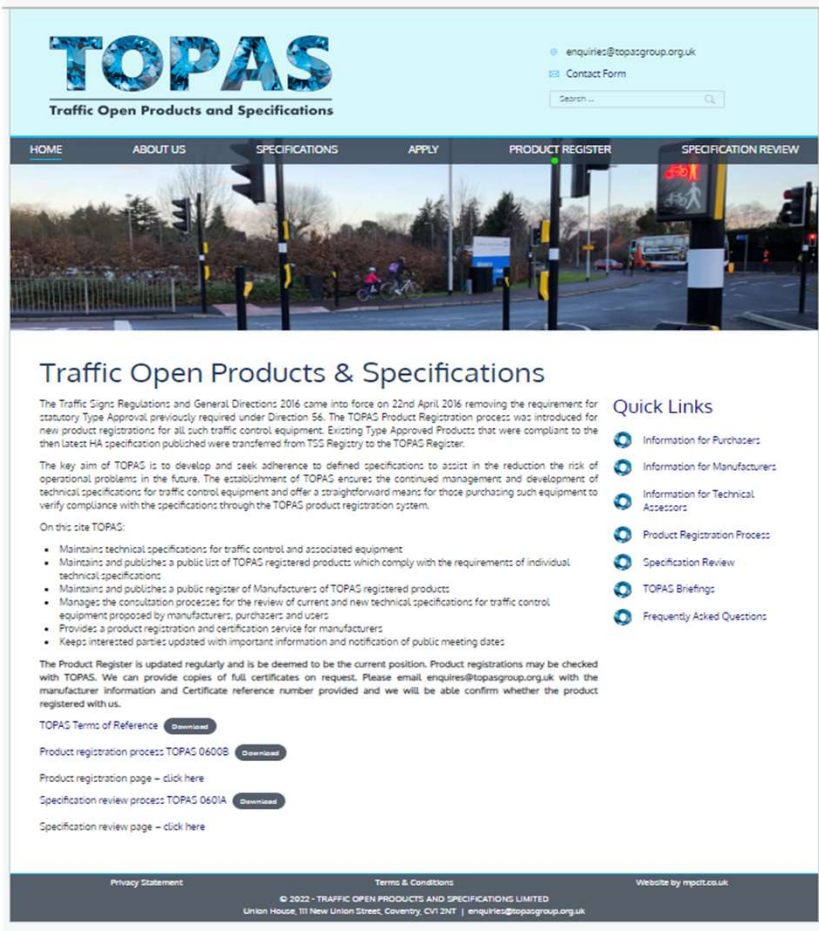
ARTSM is one arm of the TOPAS Board. Its objectives include providing input into specifications and standards developed in the UK.

We provide a significant body of expertise to TOPAS and BSI to ensure that standards, specifications and guidance that are produced are reviewed robustly.

Regulation always come second to innovation – but it is a necessary requirement for innovation to be successful.

I will be attending the LCRIG Innovation Festival next week at Newark on behalf of both TOPAS and ARTSM. Please feel free to come and have a chat.

Thank you for your attention



Any Questions?

TOPAS specifications, procedures and other useful material is published on the organisation's website:

www.topasgroup.org.uk

If you would like to be involved in any specification reviews or wish to propose new specifications please email

enquiries@topasgroup.org.uk