

STREETWORKS (GM ROAD ACTIVITY PERMIT SCHEME) REPORT

Report of the Director of Place Management

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme (GMRAPS) commenced on the 29th April 2013 to provide a way to better manage and reduce the disruption caused by roadworks across Greater Manchester.
- 1.2. The scheme requires Statutory Undertakers and the local authorities to permit their works on the public highway. The scheme is administered by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and operated by all the ten Greater Manchester local authorities with detailed permit approval and co-ordination taking place within the highway sections of the individual local authorities.
- 1.3. The scheme improves the strategic and operational management of the highway network through the better planning, scheduling and management of activities thus minimising disruption and delay to any road user.
- 1.4. The scheme allows for better communication between Local Authorities, Transport Authorities, Network Rail, National Highways and bordering Highway Authorities within Greater Manchester, minimising, as much as possible, disruption to road users while allowing works to take place in a timely manner.
- 1.5. Permitting works helps with keeping residents, businesses, interested parties i.e. emergency services/bus companies and other local authorities informed of what is happening on the network, with advance notification of potential works requiring Traffic Management (TM) being issued wherever possible.
- 1.6. In managing the highway network, the aims are to:
 - Improve the efficiency and reliability of key routes for workers, customers and suppliers to significant centres of economic activity;
 - Make the best use of walking, cycling and public transport routes to key centres and major new developments;
 - Encourage the optimal use of the network by giving people information about their travel choices;
 - Minimise the impact of road traffic and to improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists in residential areas
- 1.7. The Permit Scheme enables local authorities to:
 - manage and coordinate street works more effectively;
 - minimise disruption to users;
 - recharge the allowable coordination costs to the Utility Companies
 - Issue Fixed Penalty Notices / fines where appropriate when utility contractors do not adhere to the agreed permit conditions/dates and times.

- 1.8. TfGM's involvement is to administer the scheme provision, finance and undertake permit validation checks. This allows for provision of a consistent service for utility companies and the public throughout Greater Manchester
- 1.9. As part of GMRAPS one Public Register for all activities across Greater Manchester has been created. This is available via: www.gmroadworks.org and shows all activity across the Highway Network in real time. This therefore allows all stakeholders including the general public to view Roadworks that may impact on their journeys and plan their route(s) accordingly.
- 1.10. Stockport and other GM local authorities use the One Network¹ system for co-ordination as permit information is taken from Street Manager, the government system for permitting, and we also use it for plotting diversion routes, special events, regular events i.e. football matches. One Network has the information for the whole country, so is helpful with works on our boundary outside of Greater Manchester, which do not show in the gmroadworks map. One Network is also available to the public.

2. Background

- 2.1. The arrangements used in Greater Manchester are a Joint Permit Scheme for the purposes of Part 3 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 ("TMA") and the Traffic Management Permit Schemes (England) Regulations 2007 ("the Permit Regulations") and the Traffic Management Permit Scheme (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 ("the Amendment Regulations"). Decisions regarding permits, how the scheme operates, and enforcement are taken by the ten Greater Manchester Authorities, either collectively or individually as appropriate. Certain administrative tasks/ functions are carried out by a central administrative team within TfGM.
- 2.2. Full details of the scheme are publicly available within GMRAPS scheme document. (<https://tfgm.com/roads/gmraps/documents>)

3. Process

- 3.1. All companies/organisations intending to work on highway (known as Activity Promoters within GMRAPS) are required to apply for the relevant permit from their Local Authority which are known as the Permit Authority within GMRAPS.

4. Activity Promoters

- 4.1. Promoters (which include both public and private sector organisations) must consider the needs of all road users, including those with disabilities, pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists, public transport users and operators or motorists, throughout the planning and execution of activities. Promoters must also have regard to existing road activities and consider how their proposals will integrate with such activities, as well the broader operation of the highway network.
- 4.2. Applications for permits must include full details of what they are seeking to do:

¹ <https://www.onenetwork.com/supply-chain-management-solutions/intelligent-logistics/transportation-management-systems-tms/>

- Description of activities
- Location
- Illustrations
- Traffic Management, Parking and Traffic Regulations proposed
- Depth of any excavation
- Reinstatement type
- Estimated inspection
- Contact details
- Special requirements for immediate activities

4.3. Whilst it is recommended that applications for permits are made with as much notice as possible there are set timescales, though by agreement an early start may be provided:

- Immediate/emergency - within 2 hours of starting on site (refer to 4.4)
- Minor (duration 1-3 days) – Three days before start date
- Standard (duration 4-10 days) Ten days before start date
- Major PAA (over 10 days or requires a TTRO) three months before start date, note this is not permission to undertake the work just to book the road space
- Major (PA Follow up) ten days before start date

4.4. As defined in Section 52 of NRSWA, "emergency works means works whose execution at the time when they are executed is required in order to put an end to, or to prevent the occurrence of, circumstances then existing or imminent (or which the person responsible for the works believes on reasonable grounds to be existing or imminent) which are likely to cause danger to persons or property".

4.5. Where there is a view on part of the utility that the works are deemed emergency (for example a gas leak) then the persons responsible may begin works to rectify / repair without applying for a permit as long as an Immediate permit is applied for within 2hrs of starting on site.

5. Local Authorities as Permit Authorities

5.1. In assessing an application for a Permit, Stockport Council as the Permit Authority considers all aspects of the proposed activity and other influences that may affect traffic. These include but may not be limited to:

- The road network capacity;
- Safety (major impacts such as on traffic signal operation);
- The scope for collaborative working arrangements;
- The overall effect upon the local and regional highway network;
- The optimum timing of activities from all aspects;
- The effect on traffic, in particular, the need for temporary traffic control or prohibitions;
- Appropriate techniques and arrangements particularly at difficult road junctions and pinch points;

- The working arrangements required in protected and traffic-sensitive streets, and streets with special engineering difficulties or near a school;
- The effect of skip, scaffold and hoarding licences, pavement licences, any known special events and other licences or consents issued in respect of affected streets under the Highways Act 1980;
- The environmental impact if the proposed works are allowed;
- Developments for which planning permission has been granted on streets affected by the works.

6. Joint working: Coordination - Principles and Processes

- 6.1. The scheme is based on increased levels of cooperation and coordination across all parties and has four phases:
- Information: each Permit Authority needs accurate and timely information on what is proposed and when it is happening;
 - Analysis: all Permit Authorities need a means of assimilating and analysing this information;
 - Consideration: each Permit Authority must consider whether any changes are required to the proposal or conditions to minimise disruption before it agrees to the proposals;
 - Co-operation: All parties must co-operate with the Permit Authorities to achieve the minimum disruption.
- 6.2. All Promoters requiring Permits for activities on streets covered by GMRAPS are expected to actively and constructively participate in the relevant coordination meetings.

7. Local coordination

- 7.1. Local Coordination in Stockport is currently undertaken by in-house Streetworks Officers.
- 7.2. Local co-ordination meetings are held between Stockport as the Highway Authority and works promoters (both Statutory Undertakers and Utility providers) as well as internal works promoters for schemes affecting the public highway and are generally held on a quarterly basis. These meetings cover upcoming planned works from all promoters with a view to early identification of works where issues may occur for a variety of reasons such as the following:
- Any works proposed on strategic or traffic sensitive routes requiring either traffic control, road closures, lane closures or any activity likely to cause disruption to road users.
 - Any works proposed to take place outside schools during school term time.
 - Any works proposed to take place in the Town Centre or District Centres across the borough.
 - Any works affecting or impacting upon public transport provision either by directly affecting service punctuality or public access to services.
- 7.3. Following on from these general quarterly co-ordination meetings, more detailed scheme-specific meetings will be held with the utility company / contractors / works

promoters to discuss the full detail of the works requirement, its duration and impact upon road users, and the development of joint publicity around the project.

- 7.4. For Example: Cadent undertake an HSE-driven year on year gas mains rehabilitation programme in Stockport which over recent years has seen approximately 17km of mains replacement per 12 months either by traditional open cut to lay new pipes or less invasive slip lining of existing mains with new pipes.
- 7.5. Such individual schemes affect a mixture of both residential streets as well as strategic routes and generally involve some form of traffic control to deliver. Stockport Council Streetworks Officers meet with Cadent representatives every two weeks to discuss the ongoing programme, upcoming works and constantly review Utility and contractor performance on the active sites.
- 7.6. This approach allows in-depth discussion around the programme and consideration of impact and mitigation required before a permit is applied for, thereby allowing these outcomes to be incorporated in the permit conditions prior to application.
- 7.7. The Streetworks team will, where necessary, update Councillors about schemes in their area that are likely to cause disruption at an early stage, before permits have been submitted and the works are just at the planning stage. This can involve meetings with the contractors, and sometimes a walk around the area, so Councillors are fully aware of the works before they are agreed. This approach allows Councillors a greater insight of the works and how we have collaboratively put in measures to reduce disruption as much as possible. This also enables them to be better prepared to answer queries from their constituents. An example of this was when United Utilities undertook mains replacement works along the stretch of the A6 from Stockport centre to Hazel Grove.
- 7.8. During this scheme communication was key and SMBC communications team worked closely with colleagues at United Utilities to ensure regular updates were available to the general public in addition to the streetworks e-mails that were sent out for TM changes.
- 7.9. Stockport Streetworks Officers use this process across all promoters to identify works conflicts, for example where a promoter may have included a street which we are aware also occurs within another programme, for example resurfacing, and allows us to bring forwards the utility works ahead of the reconstruction. This locally-led approach also applies to a range of other Council schemes and recently identified a Cadent job at Edgeley Road / Dale Road junction which was brought forwards to enable a planned reconstruction of the junction to take place immediately after completion.
- 7.10. Streetworks Officers with direct local knowledge of major traffic routes have also been able to deliver successfully all aspects of the new Stockport Interchange and adjacent Weir Mill developments without unduly affecting the servicing of or visits to the major Town Centre shopping areas.
- 7.11. We routinely programme disruptive works to take place after evening peak / overnight where this is possible and the impact upon residents will not be

detrimental at these times.

- 7.12. Other very recent (past few weeks) examples of Stockport Council's Streetworks Officers working closely with Utility Companies on major routes to minimise disruption to the network are:
- Manchester Road, Heaton Chapel: Electric vehicle charging connection point changed by the promotor on request from Stockport to avoid lengthy traffic disruption associated with temporary signals at the entrance to the trading estate.
 - Marple Road, Offerton: United Utilities installation of measures to control pollution undertaken during Christmas school holidays on extended shift pattern to minimise delays to traffic.
 - Brabyns Brow, Marple: Network Rail proposal to install temporary 2-way signals 24/7 for up to 3 months reduced to off-peak stop and go boards when required following discussions with Streetworks Officers.
 - Bramhall Lane, Davenport: Cadent works to undertake gas mains replacement planned over a series of weekends avoiding disruption to car, bus and rail journeys during the working week.
 - Bramhall Lane South, Bramhall: Replacement of pedestrian crossing planned during summer school holiday to avoid multiple temporary signals during school term time.
- 7.13. The above demonstrate the importance of Stockport's Streetworks officers being able to utilise their detailed knowledge of the borough, its road network, ongoing and planned interventions (both major and minor) and the range of stakeholder interests/interfaces that require consideration.
- 7.14. Stockport Streetworks officers send out e-mails to a mail-out list of internal and external stakeholders, these include Councillors, emergency services, bus operators, communications team with details of the works so they are aware and make any adjustments to minimise disruption. These e-mails include a link to the permit on <https://one.network> website, this is updated in real time via Street Manager.

8. Possible Future Lane Rental Schemes

- 8.1. Guidance on Lane Rental Schemes was received from the Department for Transport in 2021 that updated the previous document of January 2012. It has been agreed that TfGM will lead on investigating this.
- 8.2. A lane rental scheme enables an English highway authority charging any works/activity promoter carrying out any registerable works in the street for the time those works occupy the highway. Charges are focused on the very busiest streets at the busiest times. Charges apply to works promoted by both utility companies and highway authorities on the road network.
- 8.3. The power for highway authorities to implement and operate a lane rental scheme in England is subject to the approval of the Secretary of State using a clear framework for a targeted approach to network management so that a lane rental scheme will be focused on the key strategic locations and with charges applying only at the busiest times.

- 8.4. The Government consulted on the future for lane rental schemes between September and October 2017 and announced its plans in February 2018 to allow highway authorities to bid for and to set up schemes. The announcement also highlighted the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA) Code of Practice for the Co-ordination of Street Works and Works for Road Purposes and Related Matters October 2012 Chapter 7, section 7.3 2 Department for Transport Network Management Duty Guidance issued 2004 and the Statutory Guidance for Permit Schemes issued October 2015.
- 8.5. Authorities need to have a well-run permit scheme where, for example, permit fees are proportionate, discounts offered for joint works, compliance with permitting regulations and guidance, schemes fully supporting the delivery of national infrastructure projects like HS2 and broadband/full fibre roll-out. Incentives could also be offered for high quality performance, including right-first-time reinstatements.
- 8.6. Lane rental charges are be used to incentivise work outside of peak times, they are waived for joint works, caps are put in place for major works to install and to replace apparatus so that these works are not unfairly penalised and delayed.
- 8.7. Schemes are trialled for a period of time before 'going live' and reviewed annually to ensure charges remained proportionate and are applied to the most congested roads. DfT guidance is that lane rental schemes should apply to around 5% of the network. The lane rental schemes would essentially be the key route network that the council manages working closely with TfGM.
- 8.8. DfT advised that a highway authority needs to be clear about objectives before taking any decision to begin developing a lane rental scheme and that authorities must already have in place a permit scheme in order to provide evidence (including data about its network to demonstrate that the permit scheme has been operated effectively). It is necessary to demonstrate that permit fees are proportionate, discounts are offered for joint works, and that schemes fully support the delivery of national infrastructure projects and roll out of broadband/full fibre networks. Authorities are also able to offer incentives for high quality performance, including right-first-time reinstatements. An evaluation report covering the first 12 months of the scheme's operation must also have been published.
- 8.9. Government expects that schemes will focus specifically on those critical parts of the highway network where the costs of disruption caused by works are greatest. This will ensure new schemes succeed in reducing disruption caused by works whilst, at the same time, avoiding excessive costs being passed onto utility customers. Authorities proposing lane rental schemes will need to show that they have taken an evidence-based approach to identify these critical parts of the network, which might include certain junctions, pinch-points and heavily trafficked streets or parts of streets that are already operating close to, or beyond, their intended capacity.
- 8.10. The Government has said that it expects new lane rental schemes to cover no more than 5% of the individual highway authority's network. Schemes can also cover

less than 5%. An authority will need show the coverage of a proposed lane rental scheme and to demonstrate that it is no more than 5% of its network. If an authority wants to apply lane rental to more than 5% of its network, it should provide clear evidence and justification for why this is the case.

- 8.11. Whilst DfT considers that lane rental should only apply to the most congested roads at the busiest times, the wider management and control of on-highway activity remains with Stockport Council as the highway authority for the majority of the Borough's roads.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. GM Authorities have a shared vision around the economy, transport, air quality and health which includes increasing the efficiency of roads by encouraging more sustainable and active travel, reducing congestion, and providing realistic alternatives to private car use.
- 9.2. Whilst TfGM currently has an operational interest in the Key Route Network and undertakes administrative duties on behalf of the Greater Manchester Authorities, each local authority is responsible for controlling activities on its own highway network.
- 9.3. In any discussions around the future operation of the network, and its permitting arrangements, Stockport Council will work closely with TfGM to ensure local knowledge and understanding is appropriately considered.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1. The scrutiny committee are asked to note and comment on the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Sue Stevenson on telephone number Tel: 0161-474-4351 or alternatively email sue.stevenson@stockport.gov.uk