

## **STREETWORKS AND THIRD-PARTY UNDERGROUND ASSETS REPORT**

### Report of the Director of Place Management

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1. The highways of Stockport have a large number of different utilities running underneath them. These include supply mains for water, gas, electric, phone and broadband connections as well as drainage and sewers. These utilities need maintenance on both a planned and reactive basis to ensure that our residents and business remain safe and have access to the facilities they need and rely upon.

1.2. Such works are subject to the permit process previously reported to Stockport Council's Communities and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2024 which includes both reactive (emergency) and planned works by energy, water and telecommunications companies who own and maintain assets underneath Stockport's adopted public highways.

#### **2. Background**

2.1. Stockport Council is responsible for the maintenance and safety of the adopted highways in the borough and is required to give access to Utility companies and their contractors to undertake works to a range of assets under the highway such as: burst water mains, leaking gas mains, electrical faults or sewer collapses as well as to install new infrastructure such as cabling for telecommunications.

2.2. Access to such assets requires a permit under the Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme which is hosted by Transport for Greater Manchester; information about where disruptions exist is available to everyone via the Public Register which can be found at: Greater Manchester Road Works On-line ([gmroadworks.org](http://gmroadworks.org)) or alternatively on a national basis at [one.network](http://one.network).

2.3. The purpose of a regulated permit scheme is to minimise disruption on the highway network by co-ordinating and expediting planned works.

2.4. The concept of Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme is to enable Local Authorities to:

- manage and coordinate utilities works more effectively;
- minimise disruption to all highway 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.

2.5. However, whilst coordination of works is more achievable where planned maintenance is happening, reactive maintenance (which may be due to the age of the assets, weather events, accident etc and which may be a danger to life and

property) is often required to commence on an immediate basis, usually before a permit is requested. In such instances, the permit application must be submitted within 2 hours of starting on site or by 10am if the works commence overnight. Stockport Council has no control about the timing and location of such interventions and would not wish to prevent such reactive and emergency works being progressed quickly.

2.6. In recent years several of our more long-standing utilities such as water and gas have implemented planned maintenance programmes to address the impacts of the age of their infrastructure. This is on top of the reactive repairs that they are called upon to make to their infrastructure and the expansion or re-enforcing of existing network necessary for new developments including where land use or business changes in areas which have supply.

### 3. Companies requiring access

3.1. In addition to Stockport Council itself needing to access highway substrata, the following companies require access:

- **Cadent:** has a dual programme around targeted planned maintenance predominantly slip lining of existing metal mains with plastic pipes whilst gas services are maintained. Cadent also needs to respond quickly to gas leaks on the network.
- **United Utilities:** has a small, planned programme for its clean water provision and continues to deal with mains bursts on an urgent basis; their sewerage management is mainly reactive rather than planned (some of their infrastructure is over 100 years old) with a focus on Combined Sewer Overflow replacement such as the proposals for Bramhall Centre.
- **Electricity North West:** has a planned programme around the installation of new cables as well as local reinforcement schemes between substations. Currently they are working on two schemes in the Heatons area. This supports expanding businesses and new needs such as Electric Vehicle Charging and associated capacity requirements. They also undertake reactive maintenance where there are faults and must be able to respond to emergencies quickly such as where there is a loss of electricity supply in a locality.
- **Telecommunications:** multiple companies exist in the market that provide for telecommunications including superfast broadband. These may be either above or below ground installations. For example, access may be required to the BT network that is subterranean or the erection/maintenance of telegraph poles where there is no existing underground asset. As mobile phone technology progresses so to does the need to maintain connectivity by installing new and replacement phone masts carrying the latest apparatus.

### 4. Current Permit Arrangements

4.1. Permits are required for all activities and applications for permits to do the work must include the following full details:

- Location, description of activities, start and completion dates
- Traffic Management, Parking and any temporary Traffic Regulations proposed
- Reinstatement type
- Contact details
- Special requirements for immediate activities

4.2. Whilst, ideally, applications for permits are made with as much notice as possible, there are set associated timescales as shown below:

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

4.3. Durations on immediate / emergency works are difficult to confirm during the early stages of these works. The repairs may be straight forwards allowing a relatively quick intervention but they can also be exceeding complex and difficult technical repairs especially considering again the age of the network and condition of the apparatus being worked upon as well as other factors such as utility congestion below ground and depth of apparatus.

4.4. Generally the busiest roads for vehicular traffic are also the busiest below ground for the utility networks with the most established road containing the oldest apparatus. This can lead to the longer running repairs also being on are more important and so disruptive transport links.

4.5. The introduction of a Lane Rental Scheme on some of the busiest roads, known as traffic sensitive routes, in Stockport and across Greater Manchester is currently being investigated. This would introduce timescale based charges onto the works promoters and includes all utility works as well as our own Local Authority promoted schemes giving a further cost incentive to undertaking works as rapidly as possible.

## **5. Management and Coordination of Works**

5.1. Stockport Council receives around 200 permit requests each day that need to be managed and processed.

5.2. 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.

5.3. However, this does not and cannot address the need for quick responses around reactive and emergency works and any unforeseen delays in works.

5.4. The volume, range and distribution of reactive works across the borough can make coordination difficult. Whilst opportunities to re-schedule or dovetail planned works in a specific area are desirable, there may be minimal opportunities to coordinate these in a rapidly changing environment.

## **6. Communications**

6.1. In addition to information being available to the public via the Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme link (Greater Manchester Road Works On-line ([gmroadworks.org](http://gmroadworks.org)) and one.network, each of the above companies should contact residents and businesses where work is planned.

6.2. Stockport Council officers endeavour to provide information to Councillors, emergency services, bus operators, businesses and members of the public about schemes in their area that are likely to cause disruption as early as possible. This is done via both email and via social media as these can be the quickest and most efficient way of communicating disruption when reactive or emergency work needs to be undertaken. These communications include a link to the permit on <https://one.network> website, this is updated in real time via Street Manager.

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1. Stockport officers continue to work with multiple internal and external stakeholders to manage and coordinate on-highway works that may cause disruption. However, in light of the volume of reactive interventions that need to be completed quickly and which are outside Stockport Council's control, the reliance on good communications between all interested parties will continue to be key.

## **8. Recommendation**

8.1. 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 Jamie Birtles, Sue Stevenson on telephone number Tel: 07356 120 423, Tel: 0161-474-4351 or alternatively email [jamie.birtles@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.birtles@stockport.gov.uk), [sue.stevenson@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:sue.stevenson@stockport.gov.uk)