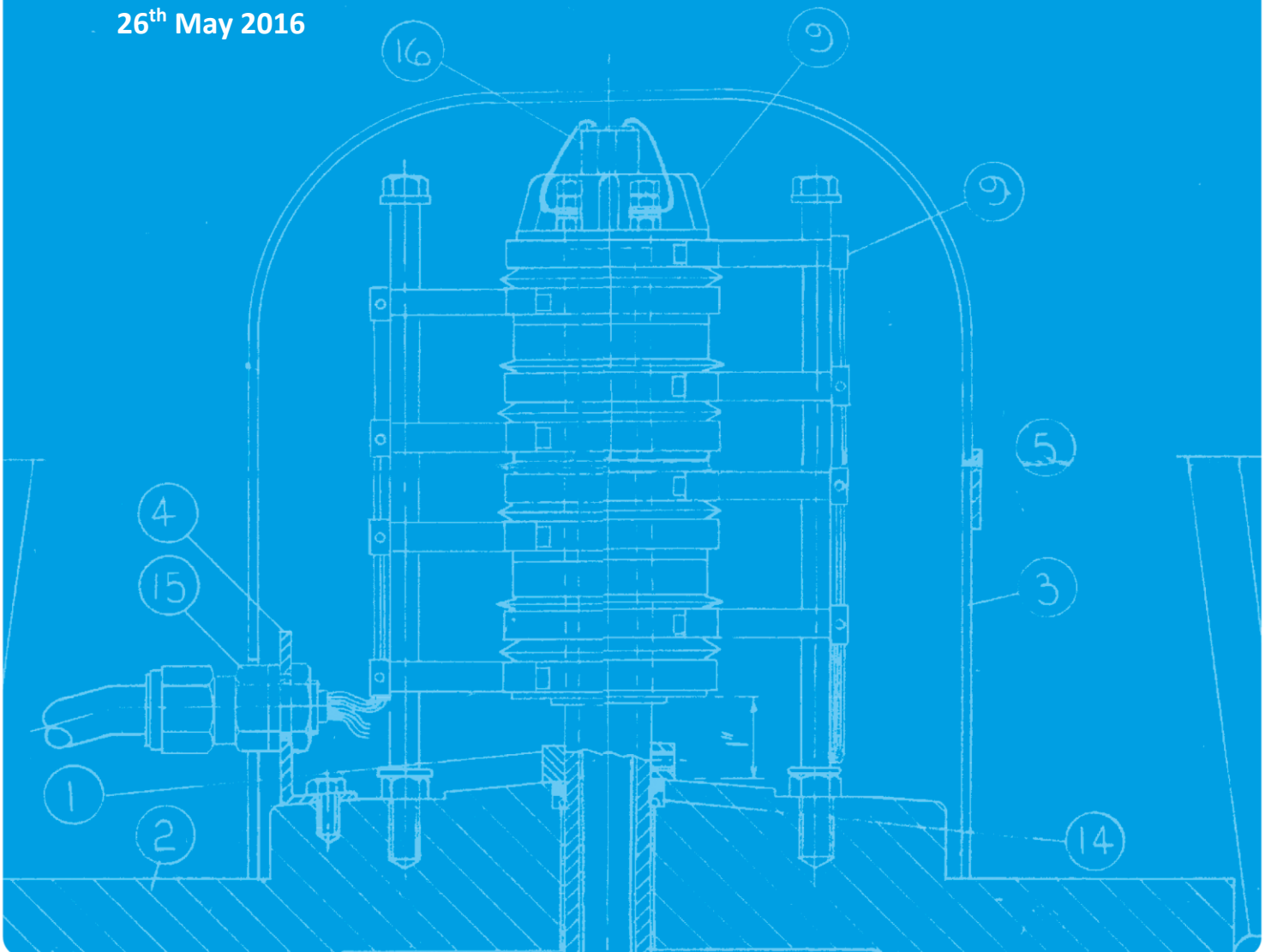


Reducing roadwork disruption on local 'A' roads

Department for Transport

Susan Love
26th May 2016



Department for Transport consultations on reducing roadwork disruption on local 'A' roads

Severn Trent Water (STW) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation, and supports the aims of the proposals set out. Some key points from our consultation response are summarized below:

- I. We wish to reduce congestion and disruption for road users and we are keen to work with industry colleagues to share innovation and best practice in this area.
- II. The new proposed measures contained in this consultation will lead to increased costs to STW and in turn our customers, the uncertainty is the extent of this increase.
- III. We support a trial of the proposed changes prior to formal implementation, in order to understand the risks posed by any changes.
- IV. We would seek undertakings from Highway Authority colleagues that they will be able to support any changes e.g. ensuring availability of HA resource such as street works inspectors, at weekends, in the same manner as Monday to Friday operations.

Getting a good deal for road users

We have developed these ideas so that all those using local 'A' roads have better journeys, whether they are travelling for leisure, business, or commuting - especially at weekends. So first, we have some questions for road users, before moving onto questions aimed at local authorities and those carrying out works on the roads.

Question 1: As a road user, do you support the aims of these proposals?

Yes we support the aim of giving our customers a better journey experience and we are also frequent road users.

Question 2: Do you have any suggestions about how those carrying out the works could communicate better with road users to minimise delays and frustration? Please give examples.

Severn Trent are keen to share some ideas about how we and our colleague's working in the highways could communicate better with our road using customers, in order to minimise any delays and to prevent customers frustrations, things such as:

- The use of social media such as Twitter to provide live updates on works
- The use of text message services
- Online web page updates – like 'in our street' (STW) and 'Elgin'
- Using local radio and letter drops to communicate major works
- On site Signage explaining clearly what the works are for and the estimated duration times

We are keen to learn from what other colleagues in the industry are approaching this.

Weekend works

We would like to know the proportion of works that would be affected by the proposed weekend working measures. Our analysis suggests there is a big difference in outcome depending on whether the works' promoter chooses to clear the site or to continue working through the weekend. To help us assess the impact of the proposed measures, please provide the following information.

Question 3: For works' promoters (authorities and utilities), please specify the annual number of works in each category carried out by or for your organisation below. The total of your answers to e, f and g should match your answer to c.

	Major	Standard	Minor	Immediate Emergency	Immediate Urgent	Total
a. How many works in total do you carry out on local roads?	2,552	1,909	40,509	2,169	7,876	55,015
b. From your answer to a) How many works are in the carriageway of local 'A' roads?	389	291	6,172	426	1,104	8,382
c. From your answer to b) How many works span one or more weekend(s)?	326	199	4,589	201	458	5,773
d. From your answer to c) How many deploy temporary traffic lights (portable traffic signals)?	315	178	3,879	187	377	4,936
e. From your answer to c) How many sites do you estimate you would clear at weekends?	22	26	874	15	218	1,155
f. From your answer to c) At how many sites do you estimate you would continue working at weekends?	201	178	4,129	201	458	5,167
g. From your answer to c) At how sites could you re-schedule to avoid weekends?	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0

Question 4: Please tell us the average daily cost for a work gang at minor, standard and major works? (We recognise that larger scale works may require more manpower).

Severn Trent refer to the information previously supplied to the DfT via NJUG – this information has been outlined below across all four utility sectors and provides the range of average cost per crew for a weekday, a Saturday and a Sunday. This information is not split by works type across minor, standard and major works.

Weekday: Ranging from £624.64 to £1410

Saturday: Ranging from £624.64 to £2090

Sunday: Ranging from £911.97 to £2110

The variance in rates is due to a number of factors, including:

- I. The different types of skills and expertise actually required for working on water apparatus.
- II. The type and scale of work, undertaking the whole job of excavating, jointing and reinstating, with the involvement of specialist sub-contractors to reinstate (the costs of which are separate).
- III. If a team is working at the weekend they will need the following resources (all of which will have an increased cost at weekends):
 - Supervision;
 - Grab Support;
 - Barrier Support Reinstatement crew; and
 - Administration support.

Where staff have worked during the weekend, this may impact resourcing during the week, which could lead to an increase in costs.

Question 5: Please tell us what the percentage uplift on labour costs might be for working a) Saturday and b) Sunday?

Severn Trent Water has shared our data with NJUG for a combined approach to understand the percentage increase for working on a Saturday and a Sunday compared to the normal Monday-Friday working day:

- (a) Saturday – the range of average uplift on a basic daily cost for a Saturday is between 12.5 – 49% with the median figure being an uplift of 29% (with a minority of companies having a reduced rate of uplift of 10% if two weeks' notice is given).
- (b) Sunday – the range of average uplift on a basic daily cost for a Sunday is between 25 – 100% with the median uplift figure being around 65%.

Question 6: What other costs would be incurred by working at weekends? Please give values if you can. Please also tell us if there may be ways of reducing or avoiding these costs.

Severn Trent believes there are other potential costs that could be incurred by working at weekends:

- Cost to provide supervision to gangs working at weekends

- Cost of potential administrative support over weekends – for example, the requirement to liaise with our authority colleagues to vary a permit or notice if works on site change, and also the administrative support required to support our operational staff.
- Cost of material supplies being available at weekends such as especially hot bituminous materials – currently materials suppliers / quarries are not open out-of-hours or at weekends, and so a requirement for availability of materials at weekends, especially hot-lay materials requires the quarry to open especially and so there is an associated uplift in materials costs.
- The need to meet regulatory requirements – there may be conflicting priorities between our regulatory commitments, for example in terms of customer connections
- Conflicts between local authority highways and environmental health departments – Environmental Health Officers often issue prohibition notices precluding work at weekends

Question 7: How long would it typically take to return a site to traffic on a Friday, and re-install it on a Monday for each of major, standard and minor works? Please provide costs if you can.

As per the figures we have previously submitted as part of NJUG data collection, it would take an estimated minimum of half a day to typically to return a site to traffic on a Friday and re-install it on a Monday, but the time taken to do this will vary depending on the type of work and type of materials used on a specific work.

Question 8: Is there anything preventing all minor works being started and finished during Monday – Friday?

A number of factors prevent us from starting and finishing minor works being during Monday-Friday, these include:

- Our obligations to meet regulatory Standards of Service / Customer SLAs or local authority requirements works must take place throughout the seven day week as appropriate.
- Road occupancy and timing of works is often customer dependent – customers will pay to be connected to a utility service based on request.
- Capacity of the road – our local authority colleagues will assess our application to carry our work and fit them in over a seven day period, as suitable according to the works and the scenarios involved

Question 9: Do you agree that works’ promoters could be required to self-report that they have complied with the weekend requirements by providing timed photographic evidence?

Yes, Severn Trent agree with the self-reporting approach to street works at the weekends but would support a practical and cost efficient solution, and innovative ways of meeting any such requirement.

Question 10: Please tell us how you would deal with any costs that might be incurred from these proposals. Please provide any estimates of costs and impacts.

Severn Trent are already subject to efficiency drives set by our regulators. And any additional incurred costs will be passed on to customers. The direct cost impact is in terms of customer bills and indirectly in terms of a potential reduction in our capital investment programmes.

Question 11: Do you think we should set charges on the same basis as over-run charges that are intended to reflect the cost of congestion caused, or is there another basis that would be more effective?

Severn Trent think a penalty-based approach, along the lines of the existing Fixed Penalty Notice system, is preferable, and less bureaucratic.

We would like to gather data relating to the cost of congestion in local highway authority areas on 'A' roads. This information is most likely to be available to authorities who have developed a cost benefit analysis related to traffic management such as where they have recently developed a street works permit scheme using 'Quadro'.

Question 12: For local authorities, if you have it, please provide data on the cost of congestion for the 'A' roads in your area, by day of the week if possible.

Data not available.

The following questions concern the co-ordination or network management carried out by local authorities.

Question 13: Do you think that local authorities should be able to remove the new requirements in relation to works carried out on specific roads if they think that local considerations make them unnecessary? Please provide examples of where this may be justified.

Yes, Severn Trent supports local authorities' discretion to remove the new requirements in relation to works being carried out on specific roads if they think that local considerations make them unnecessary.

We support local knowledge, experience, circumstances, and network management responsibilities, as the drivers to assess what's required on a case by case basis.

Question 14: If legislation were to set *maximum* charges, please specify in what circumstances you would use discretion to charge a lower amount.

See answer to question 11.

Temporary Traffic Signals

We are proposing that a charge be applied to works' promoters who fail to remove temporary traffic lights from a works site on 'A' roads promptly when works have been completed. We recognise that where hot-lay materials or concrete have been used, time will need to be allowed for the materials to set.

Question 15: For highway authorities, do you agree that the works' promoters should be required to self-report the time that works have been completed and that the lights have been removed by providing timed photographic evidence?

See answer to Question 9 – Severn Trent support self-reporting and would like a reasonable and practical solution to be developed. With consistent application across all works on local A roads.

Question 16: For works' promoters, when deploying temporary traffic lights at work sites, are they installed / removed by the team that carries out the reinstatement or by a separate team or organisation? If the latter, how does it work?

This often varies across the several operational contracts we have within Severn Trent. In some cases reinstatement teams do remove temporary traffic management. Where the signing lighting and guarding (SLG) is complicated and/or impact on fixed lights it could be a 3rd party.

Question 17: For works' promoters, what is the average time taken to remove traffic lights from works once completed on 'A' roads?

The average time taken to remove traffic lights from works depends on the complexity of the traffic management used. It could range from one hour to in excess of one day including the reinstallation of the permanent traffic lights if appropriate. The majority of lights would be removed on the same day, unless there are extenuating circumstances for example materials curing.

Question 18: For works' promoters, would you need to change how you operate to satisfy the new requirements for temporary traffic lights from works on 'A' roads? Please provide examples and details of any one-off or ongoing costs.

Yes –this would be dependent on individual contractual arrangements within our operational contracts, involving direct staff, first tier contractors and specialist 3rd party traffic management contractors.

Question 19: Do you think that a daily charge should be set for this failure to comply, or a shorter period? If a shorter period, to what period do you think the charge should apply (e.g. 2, 4, 8 hours)?

Severn Trent would prefer the use of Improvement plans for repeat offenders. Or the pre-existing Fixed Penalty Notices for breaches failure to comply.

General Considerations

Question 20: As well as Saturday and Sunday, should the proposals also apply to public holidays (other than Easter Sunday and Christmas Day)?

Severn Trent does not support proposals applying to public holidays, including Easter Sunday and Christmas Day.

Question 21: It may be necessary to update the Electronic Transfer of Notices (EToN) to take account of these changes. If changes were to be made, how much would it cost your organisation to implement? (This could include licence fees, management fees and training).

Severn Trent believes there should be a full review of Electronic Transfer of Notices (EToN) prior to finalising any implementation plan. Without doubt it will be necessary to make fundamental system changes to the EToN system.

It is difficult for Severn Trent to estimate the cost of this change until the details of the proposals are available, but we can confirm that our EToN system is fully integrated into our other in house systems such as SAP and Gist mapping, and that there will be cost for us to adapt our works management systems.

Question 22: Please tell us any other thoughts or suggestions you have on these proposals.

We would welcome a trial of proposed changes in a localised area, in order to understand the risks and issues of practical application, prior to implementation.