

United Utilities (UU):

General

Liaison and Co-ordination

The level of co-ordination and co-operation with UU has been very good generally and in relation to the major water improvement works taking place in Preston, UU has engaged very positively with us and with local councillors, residents, the city council and the media and is making a substantial contribution to highway infrastructure reinstatement and improvement in the surrounding environs.

Data recording

At its meeting in February 2011, the Committee was informed that UU was looking towards transposing its data into the County Council's MARIO (Maps and Related Information Online) system to assist in identifying where pipelines were situated underground.

Road works;

1. Prospective Permit Scheme

The Committee may wish to be aware that the County Council is considering the implementation of a Permit Scheme for street and road works in Lancashire. Some early discussions with utility company representatives have taken place, (we are required to do this by Department for Transport (DfT), including with UU.

Essentially, a Permit Scheme would give the County Council (as Highways Authority) better control over how and when utility companies carry out their works in the highway and should improve co-ordination and minimise disruption. Currently utility companies have only to notify a Highways Authority that they intend to carry out works, but under a permit scheme they are required to ask for and obtain permission. The Highways Authority may then impose a permit charge and apply various conditions to their works in terms of timing and duration, traffic management provision, methodology and consultation and publicity.

The County Council is currently examining the costs and benefits of a permit scheme for Lancashire with a view to producing a draft Permit Scheme for approval by April/May 2012.

A key point is that permits will be equally applicable to County Council works and utility works – however, the County Council would not have to pay permit charges.

2. Coordination

UU (and others) continue to work proactively with County Council officers in terms of co-ordination, especially large scale works. They both attend and make valuable contributions to the area based co-ordination meetings held in Lancashire.

3. Reinstatement performance

There is still room for improvement in terms of reinstatement performance. Based on visual inspections of their reinstatements carried out between the 1st April 2011 and 31st December 2011 the following is the outcome:-

UU – 3,464 inspections carried out, 579 failed = 16.7% failure rate

The County Council Executive is looking for improvement from UU (and others) in this regard. The Committee may wish to ask UU how they plan to tackle this reinstatement performance issue, especially given that it was raised at the last meeting (February 2011) and their failure rate has if anything increased since then.

4. Signing, Lighting and Guarding performance

In relation to the signing, lighting and guarding of utility company works in the highway, inspection outcomes are as follows:-

UU – 1061 inspections carried out, 120 failed = 11.3% failure rate

Regulation/Codes of Practice deem that failure rates of 10% or under do not requiring additional intervention by the Highway Authority.

The Committee may wish to ask;

Can UU explain why the failure rates are outside the 10% tolerance for signing, lighting and guarding?

What processes/procedures do they have in place for monitoring and auditing their own performance and addressing under performance?

Can UU outline how it plans to address this under performance and improve performance?