



NJUG CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY 14: Welsh Water Scheme Close-Off

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. The thirty-eight companies¹ we represent work to deliver gas, electricity, water and telecommunications to both individual consumers and UK plc.

NJUG members need to continue to drive forward further improvements. We have therefore developed the NJUG Vision for Street Works, which revolves around six main principles:

1. Safety is the number one priority
2. Damage to underground assets is avoided
3. Utilities work together and in partnership with local authorities to minimise disruption
4. Utilities deliver consistent high quality
5. Utilities maximise the use of sustainable methods and materials
6. Street works in the UK are regarded as world class

This case study is an example of NJUG delivering on these principles and turning the Vision into a reality.

Overview:

The Water Mains Refurbishment Programme, carried out by Laing O'Rourke on behalf of the Welsh Water Alliance, involved rehabilitation work on approximately 2000 kilometres of water mains in Wales and Herefordshire. During the construction period and for the first year following completion of the project, maintenance of the refurbished mains was the responsibility of Laing O'Rourke.

Whilst guidelines regarding which organisation was responsible for maintenance costs during and after the construction period were available, no agreement or guidelines existed determining what actually constituted 'scheme completion'. Disagreements between the parties regarding which of them was responsible for the costs, and at which stage, led to a deterioration of the general working relationship.

Those involved realised that relationships were only going to deteriorate further if guidelines were not put in place regarding close off and handover of the schemes. A joint decision was taken to organise a task-group comprising of representatives from those companies involved: Laing O'Rourke, Welsh Water, and United Utilities. This team was charged with responsibility for formulating and agreeing guidelines.



LAING O'ROURKE



¹ NJUG's current members are Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas), Water UK (representing all water and wastewater companies), National Grid, Openreach, Virgin Media and THUS, a Cable and Wireless Business. Our associate members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska McNicholas, Balfour Beatty, Morrison, Morgan Est, NACAP, PJ Keary, First Intervention, Carillion, Enterprise and Laing O'Rourke. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents thirty-eight utility companies.

Case Study

The task-group formulated a four-stage completion process:

<i>Stage 1: Section Status</i>	This involved the construction of a checklist to be completed prior to the sign-off of Section Status. Completed on a section or street basis during the construction period, this required sign off by Laing O'Rourke's agent and United Utilities' Site Water Quality Officer.
<i>Stage 2: Administration Status</i>	This process was agreed on to ensure all administrative issues related to the scheme had been completed. Sign off on this stage was required by United Utilities' Water Quality Team Leader, and Laing O'Rourke's Scheme Completion Coordinator.
<i>Stage 3: Network Status</i>	This stage was included to ensure the finished network and boundary valves were checked. The Group agreed that United Utilities' Water Quality Team Leader and Laing O'Rourke's Area Manager would act as the necessary sign-offs.
<i>Stage 4: Final Completion Declaration</i>	Following the successful sign-off of all previous stages, the Group agreed that the final stage would involve ensuring that the outstanding works and collation of data for the project's Health and Safety file had been carried out. This would be signed off by Laing O'Rourke's Regional Manager and United Utilities' Unit Manager.

Following the introduction of this agreed system, over the course of eight months, 60 of 72 schemes were completed and signed off. The system gave those involved clear goals to work towards, where previously there had been considerable confusion and misunderstanding.

Each section was signed-off by a Laing O'Rourke representative, and a representative from the Network Operator, ensuring agreement between the parties on the status of each particular section of the works. The clearer guidelines added a level of transparency to the closing off process and resulted in a marked improvement to the relationships within the Welsh Water Alliance.

The Welsh Water Alliance team recognised a procedural gap in the process for closing off schemes. This gap was leading to a deterioration of relationships between all parties. By confronting the problem, and working with Welsh Water and the Alliance partners towards a solution, the team clearly defined the requirements for handover of a scheme, and proved their commitment to a future working with Welsh Water.