



## NJUG CASE STUDY

### CASE STUDY 56: Lagan Construction Steer the Way for Public Liaison

#### *Winner of the NJUG 2011 Communication Award*

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. The 41 utility companies and 17 contractors<sup>1</sup> 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. Utilities deliver consistent high quality
3. Utilities work together and in partnership with local authorities and contractors to minimise disruption
4. Utilities keep the public informed on all aspects of works
5. Utilities maximise the use of sustainable methods and materials
6. Damage to the underground assets is avoided

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

#### **Overview**

Lagan Construction along with their designers WDR & RT Taggart has deployed an experienced, capable and balanced team of key framework management staff who are successfully delivering a water main rehabilitation framework in partnership with Northern Ireland Water (NIW) and their Consultants, Atkins in Northern Ireland. This is an established team that has been working successfully over the last 5 years on Phase 1 (May 2004 – April 2010, £60M) of the contract and has gone on to successfully procure Phase 2 (April 2010 – 2015, £75M) for Northern Ireland Water. Phase 1 delivered approximately 630km of rehabilitated mains.

#### **Case Study**

##### **Exceeding Client Expectations**

Lagan Construction is fully committed to working with NIW to exceed its targets agreed with the Regulator and strive to achieve what is set out in Northern Ireland Waters “Customer First Initiative”, with the aim of improving responsiveness to its customers, with less complaints, reduced disruption and interruptions avoidance.

##### **Dedicated Customer Care Manager**

Emphasis on Customer Care is demonstrated through a dedicated Customer Care Manager who coordinates advanced warning notices, customer notification letters, advance warning signs, interruption notices and the customer complaints database. This ensures effective communication to all affected by the works. Lagan Construction takes the needs of the Customers very seriously and works towards achieving 100% in their KPI Reports in which Customer Care is a key objective. The whole customer care process, from Client liaison to site level, is lead and managed by the full time dedicated Customer Care Manager.

##### **Communication with Public**

Lagan Construction understands that customer care is as much about the small things as the big things and at the very heart is the need for customer communication which exceeds the usual norm. Lagan accepts that their work impacts on

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<sup>1</sup> NJUG's current members are Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas), Water UK (representing all water and wastewater companies), National Grid, BT Openreach, and Virgin Media. Our associate members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska, Balfour Beatty, Morgan Sindall, Carillion, First Intervention, Laing O'Rourke, Compass, AMEC, Enterprise, Morrison Utility Services, Fastflow Pipeline Services, May Gurney, CLC Ltd, PJ Keary and Murphy Ltd. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents forty-one utility companies, seventeen utility contractors.

the public and that they have to strive to address the usual complaint of “nobody kept us informed”. They have therefore developed a triple step approach covering:

1. Works undertaken to mitigate the disruption in the first instance e.g. alternative supplies/back feeding/night time connection as well as the predominant use of trenchless technology.
2. The technical aspects of the work, including design and programming.
3. Delivery and operations, doing what we must quickly, cleanly and minimising impact as far as practicable.
4. Exceptional customer care, doing what we say we will do, and where we can't, keeping everyone informed of developments.

When a work package is authorised Lagan Construction contact all customers to inform them of the proposed work, the anticipated programme and how they will keep them informed through the advanced notifications:

- At 6 weeks to go they inform customers of the upcoming works.
- At 2 weeks to go they inform the customer of the details of the work affecting them including traffic management and any road closures. Information signs are erected.
- At 6/7 days to go notifications for any Planned Interruptions to Supply are issued to commercial users and 48 hours minimum prior to works domestic users are contacted.

### Customer Contact Centre

Lagan Construction has a 24/7 contact centre. There is an on call rota for evening and weekends for each individual work package team which helps the call to be dealt with by the right person. An escalation process is in place to ensure the call is passed effectively i.e. Engineer, Construction Manager, Customer Care Manager and Framework Project Manager.

### PR Strategy

A PR strategy is led by the Customer Care Manager prior to each phase of works commencing. Relevant Key stakeholders such as local councils, MP's, MLA's, Road Service Representatives are determined and a point of contact established. Meetings and/or presentations takes place when required to outline the extent of the works and manage any anticipated concerns. Consultation is on-going between the Customer Care Manager, key stakeholders, project management and site teams throughout the works and beyond. The Customer Care Manager operates a 'Touch Base' approach by telephone or face to face, with key stakeholders/local communities with the intention of either pre-empting or accelerating the resolution of queries or other issues. NIW Project Sponsor together with Lagan Constructions Project Manager and Customer Care Manager recently gave a presentation to Newtownabbey Borough Council in Belfast. The presentation was highly commended by the Chief Executive, Mayor and Councillors. There was a question and answer session at the end of the presentation which gave councillors a chance to ask questions on behalf of their constituents.

- The Customer Care Manager regularly contacts local Primary Schools in areas in which Lagan are working to give them the opportunity to participate in initiatives such as the Northern Ireland “Safety Sam presentations”, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISG) focuses on young children to highlight the dangers associated with water rehabilitation construction activities.

Within the last year almost 800 children have received presentations carried out by our dedicated Customer Care Manager. These have created positive PR for the Framework and on occasion, have been featured in local press.



The water mains team have visited the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice for two years running to get to work at the busy 5 acre site. Landscaping, weeding, painting play equipment and creating a new “Sensory Garden” were the tasks involved. In addition, Lagan Construction donated much needed funds to the Hospice.

Liaison with local community groups for large estates and areas in which Lagan work takes place regularly. One area in which they currently work in has a population of approx. 4000 houses within the one estate. Frequent meetings and consultations with local community groups take place on an on-going basis i.e. Lagan were involved in a Community Awareness

Day – informing attendees of the works in the area.

