



## NJUG CASE STUDY

### CASE STUDY 24: Northern Gas Networks – Turning the TMA into Reality

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. The 37 companies<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. 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 maximize 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 reality

#### Overview:

With only three-months to prepare, Northern Gas Networks proved itself to be a leading light in the industry in early 2008 when it became the only major utility in the North of England to achieve full compliance for the new Traffic Management Act (TMA). Although preparatory work for the new Act had begun during 2007, late changes to the Code of Practice and Technical Specifications meant that work was only able to truly commence on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2008 – in preparation for the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. Despite the short notice, the tri-partite team from Northern Gas Networks, United Utilities Operations Ltd and technical support partner Wipro Technologies, were able to meet all the requirements and become EToN phase 4 compliant.



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<sup>1</sup> NJUG's current members are the Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas), Water UK (representing all water and wastewater companies), National Grid, Openreach, and Virgin Media. Our associate members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska McNicholas, Balfour Beatty, Morrison Utility Services, Morgan Est, NACAP, PJ Keary, First Intervention, Carillion, Enterprise, Laing O'Rourke and AMEC. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents thirty-seven utility companies.

## Case Study

The introduction of the new TMA on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, meant wide-reaching changes for Northern Gas Networks and its operating partner United Utilities Operations Ltd. Northern Gas Networks works with 25 Highways Authorities and serves more than 147,000 Notices every year. Successful implementation involved changes to several IT systems, the introduction of new processes, delivery of training across the business and to their contractors, all supported by a comprehensive communications programme to both internal and external audiences.

A considerable amount of preparation had been undertaken between July and December 2007, however, when late changes to the Code of Practice and Technical Specifications were made by the Department of Transport, it was back to the drawing board in January 2008. With just three months to prepare, a dedicated implementation team was established. Their objectives were straightforward and yet challenging: to ensure the Network is adequately prepared for the introduction of the TMA by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and to minimise increased expenditure from permits and potential liabilities from Fixed Penalty Notices.

The first stage was to scope out the business requirements specification and a systems requirement specification. These documents formed the basis of the project and work groups were established to deliver the relevant work streams. Successful implementation relied heavily on a number of technical work streams. Changes were required to four major IT systems across the business from SAP, which is used to manage the Notification process, through to Advantex, which is used by mobile field-based staff.

A large number of business processes were re-written as a result of the changes – all of which required briefing out across the company and beyond to their contractor partners. Although both were equally important, the IT changes or business process changes couldn't have been successfully implemented without the comprehensive communications plan which underpinned the activity.

Tony Pearson, Network Planning Manager for Northern Gas Networks and project owner explained:

“This was a huge project to turn around in just three months – it was all hands to the pump. Of course, the technical and process changes were crucial, but right from the start we recognised the importance of communications. It was vital we fully engage all our stakeholders – be they internal or external.”

“We very quickly began raising awareness about the imminent arrival of the TMA across the business and with our contracting partners. We also began engaging with the 25 Highway Authorities in our network – providing them with regular updates about our progress and sharing knowledge and key learnings with them.”

“The communications plan was designed to reach everyone in the business – whether they were directly affected. This was an important change for our business and the cost of getting it wrong – both financially and in terms of the operational impact – was simply too high to consider.”

“Of course the communications were supported by targeted training to all those directly affected by changes to IT systems and/or processes.”

And the hard work paid off when Northern Gas Networks became the only major utility in the North of England to achieve EToN 4 compliance on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Indeed, in comparison, only 40% of the Highway Authorities within the network were able to achieve compliance.

The team's work to assist Highway Authorities with Notice testing and other data communication issues earned them positive feedback from several authorities. Northern Gas Networks continually strive to achieve positive working relationships with all its stakeholders and this project certainly met that objective.