



NJUG CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY 62: Dudley Town Centre Joint Working Scheme

Winner of the NJUG 2012 Partnership Award

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. The 38 utility companies and 17 contractors¹ 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 and its members delivering on these principles and turning the vision into reality.

Overview

Since April 2011, **South Staffs Water, National Grid Gas and Western Power Distribution** have met the NJUG vision by working together in partnership with Dudley Council to carry out a coordinated, 18 month program of combined utility works in the town centre.

Case Study

During the quarterly NRSWA coordination meetings various utilities indicated that they were planning to undertake work within the town centre and a few of the streets mentioned were also on the program for resurfacing and/or maintenance. Dudley MBC recognised the potential for a large, joint working scheme and several meetings took place where the idea of a joint working initiative was discussed at length. The meetings were well attended by both utility and council representatives.

Combined Programme of Works

Each utility company provided information on their individual works program. This included a map of the area, a list of all streets affected, description of works in each street, an estimated duration for each street, and traffic management requirements.

Along with the utility information, Dudley Council compiled a list of:

- All streets that required resurfacing / maintenance
- All the major re-developments due to take place over the coming 18-24 months
- All known events due to take place

The information was used to develop a combined program of works for approximately 40 streets within the town centre. It was a live document and was discussed at every progress meeting. It was the main planning tool that was used to send street works notices and was used for all information sent out by the PR and Communications teams.

Weekly Progress Meetings

A progress meeting took place every Thursday to ensure the works were running smoothly and to enable any problems to be solved quickly. It also helped to build a strong working relationship between utilities & the council. The

¹ 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, 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 thirty eight utility companies, seventeen utility contractors.

meetings were regularly attended and included representatives from the participating utilities, highway departments & local bus companies. The meetings followed a standard agenda and notes were widely distributed.

Traffic Management

Road closures and one-way systems were the main form of traffic management. This would allow multiple utility companies access to the whole/part of the street and they could carry out works safely.

It was agreed that traffic management would be organised and supplied by Dudley Council. All closures were put on one TTRO for an 18 month period. This gave a great deal of flexibility and meant that there weren't restrictions to close certain roads on certain dates. The cost of the TM was shared between all parties.

Joint Working Methods & Initiatives on Site

There were numerous joint working initiatives on site, a few have been detailed below:

Wolverhampton Street: During phase one, South Staffs were able to utilise a disused, galvanised gas main, through which they inserted long services saving the need to cut them open across the carriageway. It also made it easier to allow access to all frontages (business and residents) along this section of the street. There were numerous joint excavations where South Staffs & National Grid agreed to split the cost of the reinstatements, which worked well for both parties.

The locations of both gas and water mains made the joint occupation quite difficult for phases two and three. However, they overcame the problem by starting at opposite ends of the street, and plating off service connection holes for each other as they both headed towards the centre. As they approached one another, South Staffs agreed that they would work through the weekend and clear the section to enable National Grid to take over. All reinstatement costs were shared between them and it saved time on site.

In phase three, Western Power joined the site to install ducts and a new supply for a new property. They utilised existing trial holes to ascertain the cable route. Resurfacing took place after each phase of Wolverhampton Street.

The Inhedge: South Staffs extended the depth of their trench so National Grid were able to find the line for the large diameter gas main. This saved National Grid from undertaking trial holes. At a later date, National Grid Gas undertook their mains replacement and Western Power laid numerous ducts in the same trench. National Grid Gas took responsibility for the permanent reinstatement.

High Street, Dudley: South Staffs agreed for National Grid to utilise an old eight inch main that was abandoned in the 1960s. This prevented them from open cutting a 100m section of main & saved them on time scales and reinstatement costs. In return, National Grid widened a road crossing to enable South Staffs to lay a 90mm main for two fire hydrant legs. Overall, this saved both utility companies approximately 6 days work.

Benefits

The scheme was carefully planned and executed to ensure minimum disruption to local businesses, residents and travelling public. Reports from both Dudley Council Plus (the Council's main helpline) and the utility companies confirmed an extremely low number of complaints. It is believed this was down to the extensive PR that was coordinated by Dudley Council and carried out by all representatives.

The joint working initiatives saved utility companies time, money and resources in the field and resulted in all streets being completed within the advertised deadlines.

Most of all, this project has built strong, working relationships between the utility companies, their contractors and the Council's street works team. It has proved that working together creates a positive working environment where problems can be solved effectively and efficiently and success can be celebrated.

There are currently three other joint working schemes in-progress. Although they all have shorter timeframes, Dudley Town Centre project has been used as a template. So far, they are all proving to be successful.

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