



Eight2O alliance with Thames Water for customer communication in Hatton Garden

Winner of the Street Works UK Communication Leaders award 2017

Street Works UK is the UK industry association representing utilities solely on street works issues. Street Works UK represents some 56 utility companies and contractors engaged in the street works sector, and 18 specialist sub-contractors who provide equipment, materials and services supporting street works activities. Our members represent major contributors to economic growth and work to deliver gas, electricity, water and telecommunications to both individual consumers and UK plc. In order to continue this drive for further improvements within the industry – we have developed the Street Works UK Vision for Street Works, which revolves around seven main principles:

- Safety
- High Quality
- Minimise Disruption
- Keep the Public Fully Informed
- Sustainable Methods and Materials
- Avoid Damage to Underground Assets
- Innovation

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

Overview

By implementing and maintaining a personalised engagement communications strategy throughout the works eight₂O was able to address all queries, issues and challenges being experienced with Market Traders, Business and residents on site. The works progressed seamlessly and they managed to minimise complaints (3), maximise commendations (3) and we caused no detrimental losses to the business community – hence they received no claims for compensation. Once work was complete they carried out completion surveys to see if we could have done anything differently and to get feedback on our approach. The local businesses were very positive with the action we have taken and we scored 7.5 out of 10.

For instance, Andy from the Goldsmith store stated that he had never experienced this approach before. Previously, the first he had known about streetworks was when the drilling had started right outside his door.

Feedback was encouraged via a range of innovative methods and a reference number given for the works. One popular method was a text messaging service. This allowed them to manage any concerns and improve our methods and approaches. One of the texts we received stated; *“Passing by Clerkenwell Road and must say you work very hard to improve our water. You guys are a credit to Thames Water.”*



Greville Street is located within Hatton Garden, a world-famous gem and jewellery trading district which is also home to not only world renowned organisations such as DeBeers, but also to a handful of businesses left in the UK that can hand-cut diamonds to order. The works on Greville Street would take 5 months and so this location presented the eight2O team with some unusual challenges.

Recognising that this area is very popular with tourism and jewellery retail, they were very conscious of delivering this project without causing undue disruption, loss of business and general inconvenience to businesses and residents. With the added dimension of the April 2015 jewellery heist, they expected businesses to be very cautious to construction activities and so we developed a sympathetic approach to communication.

Due to this high risk, the customer team undertook a large number of customer surveys along Greville Street to understand the risks and any mitigation required. By doing this, they were able to effectively demonstrate what they were going to do before the works started and also during works.

A widespread customer survey was undertaken for all affected stakeholders and the results showed that the main concerns were around hours of work, noise, vibration damage and delivery access. Because of this, the programme and method of works was modified to meet all customers' needs.

The feedback received confirmed the suspicion that the vibration from our drilling activities risked interfering with the delicate work involved in cutting diamonds by hand and setting them. As part of an innovative approach, we agreed to do our excavation work on Sundays only, between 10am and 5pm. Then from Monday to Friday we'd dig by hand, so that we would not cause vibration damage during the jewellers work. Any noisy activities during the working week would happen between 8am and 10am (the survey responses revealed that most jewellery businesses open at 10am) and between 4pm and 7pm.

Additionally, they tailored our work times to meet the needs of other businesses. For instance, they stopped drilling when a local marketing agency held a meeting to keep them safe in terms of excess noise levels. They also did not work in the vicinity of a local pub's cellar during its busiest period (midday to 2pm) in order to minimise any potential impact. They only worked on Leather Lane on Sundays when the Market was closed and gave the Market back on Monday when business resumed.

The daily footfall in Hatton Garden is around 15,000 and some businesses were worried about potential customers thinking the road was closed off or being unsure of what route to take. To mitigate this, signs were created and erected, saying that the shops were open for 'business as usual' and directed people on access arrangements, to ensure that safety was maintained. Additionally, a range of new Thames Water branded signage was trialed to keep local



stakeholders fully informed on what was occurring. This included signage detailing what was going on and who to contact for any queries.

The customer team continued to keep the occupants of Greville Street fully informed as the works progressed using a special 'Hatton Garden' Thames Water webpage, via Thames Water Social Media channels, letter drops, signage and weekly customer drop in sessions.

The drop-in sessions provided an innovative approach of going the extra mile to keep the public informed, since it allowed face-to-face contact where the construction team could go through the works in more detail and answer any technical questions with the aid of work drawings and traffic management plans.

They provided a bespoke and tailored customer service approach to every business along Greville Street and Hatton Garden by having a dedicated Customer Experience Coordinator working directly with the businesses.

The Customer Experience Coordinator worked with the local businesses and construction team to make sure that individual needs and requirements were being exceeded including the provision of an on-site traffic marshal to assist businesses with refuse collections, deliveries of stock to businesses, office and resident removals, directing deliveries, couriers and the public around the traffic management.

Due to the sensitivity of the area and high security we took this tailored approach in keeping the public fully informed in Hatton Garden. They have left a lasting legacy by finishing 12 weeks ahead of schedule, successfully minimising disruption and leaving a positive impression of works with Camden Council.