

Street Works UK



**Conference and Awards summary
January 2021**



Street Works UK is the UK's only cross-sector trade association representing water, waste water, electricity and telecommunication utility companies, alongside their contracting partners and affiliates. This newsletter showcases highlights from last year's virtual Conference and Awards.

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As we begin the new year, it is important that we reflect on what a challenging period the last year has been for our industry. COVID-19 continues to have a profound impact on the way we conduct our daily and working lives, with the street works sector being no exception. Nevertheless, I am proud of the way in which our members have continued to provide safe, essential works throughout the pandemic. Clarity from the outset has meant utility companies can keep the lights on; gas running; water flowing and households online, and the first priority of our members has been protecting these vital services.

Last year, we were forced to run our annual Conference and Awards differently, with it taking place over four days online via Zoom, with the Awards being announced on social media. Despite this change, our Conference and Awards were a resounding success, with strong attendance across the four days and our sessions full of thought-provoking and enlightened discussion. I am delighted that we were able to be supported by two very innovative sponsors – Atkins Global and Skewb – who showcased their organisation’s work during our Conference sessions.

I was particularly pleased that we were able to hear from a series of high-profile speakers, including two government ministers and Clive Selley, CEO of Openreach. Their excellent contributions set the tone for our Conference and captured the challenges and priorities of our industry going forward.

2021 promises to be another transformational year for the street works sector. I am looking forward to setting out in more detail the role our industry should be playing to deliver the infrastructure the UK needs to thrive in

the information, carbon-neutral age. To do so, we will be setting out our strategic plans to take forward our 5-year Vision for the Street and Roadworks sector. I must give my thanks again to David Capon from the Joint Authorities Group (JAG) for his cooperation in helping to bring this Vision to fruition. I believe that we have showcased the best examples of collaboration and how paired thinking can enhance our view of what street works can achieve.

As ever, Street Works UK would not exist without its members, and we can only continue to support the industry in the years ahead with your help. I look forward to working with you this year to champion the work of our members as we look to build the country back better from the pandemic.

Clive Bairsto CBE

Chief Executive, Street Works UK
@CliveBairsto

The Street Works UK Conference is an annual event which brings together members from across the utilities sector, their contracting and supplier partners and local and national government. Our annual Conference is an opportunity to discuss developments in policy, innovation, ways of working in the industry and management of street works.

Conference was held virtually on Zoom on Tuesday 24th November, Wednesday 25th November and Thursday 27th November. Our Award winners were announced on Twitter on Friday 28th November. The detail below explores the key contributions and themes from each session.

Street Works UK was delighted to welcome three keynote speakers to last year's Conference, each looking back at the challenges of 2020 and giving their views on the future direction of industry.

Clive Bairsto CBE, CEO, Street Works UK



Street Works UK Chief Executive, Clive Bairsto CBE, opened the virtual Conference with a keynote address, reflecting on the events which have impacted the industry both positively and negatively since Conference in 2019. The

headline focus was on policy changes, including Street Manager. Clive described Street Manager as a “successful project”, in large part down to the hard work of our internal groups working with the Department for Transport. On the fourth edition of SROH, the industry has “seen the right answer” on guarantee periods, with a plan strongly encouraging innovation.

Clive spoke about the challenges brought about by COVID-19, which he described as changing the industry on a “week by week basis”. Street works

operators were classed as essential workers during the early part of the pandemic, ensuring vital services were allowed to continue during this time. Clive praised the work of the sector, particularly for its collaborative efforts with government departments, while reserving particular praise for Peter Loft, Co-Chair of HAUC England.

Finally, the keynote address looked toward the future by commenting on the Vision for the industry, developed last year in collaboration with the Joint Authorities Group (JAG). Clive described the document as “powerful” and that it had gained the attention of government, supporting its future plans on active travel, broadband and wider infrastructure, and the overall green agenda. He asserted that Street Works UK must explore ways for highway authorities and the industry to cooperate further to improve the level and frequency of collaboration within the sector.

Videos from last year's Conference events are available to view on YouTube:

[Keynote speeches: Clive Bairsto and Matt Warman MP](#)

[Keynote speech: Clive Selley, CEO, Openreach](#)

[Keynote speech: Baroness Vere, Roads Minister](#)

[Panel discussion: How do we drive an uptake of external collaboration over the next five years?](#)

[Panel discussion: How will digitalisation enhance street and road works in the UK?](#)

[Panel discussion: Equipped for the future? How should we prepare our workforce for future infrastructure upgrades?](#)

[Workshop: The street works policy landscape: what changes can we expect over the next year \(Day 1\)](#)

[Workshop: The street works policy landscape: what changes can we expect over the next year \(Day 2\)](#)

[Workshop: A new protocol for assessing utility waste](#)



Matt Warman MP, Minister for Digital Infrastructure, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport



The second keynote speech was delivered by Matt Warman MP, Minister for Digital Infrastructure at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The focus of his address was on the importance of digital

connectivity, asserting that digital infrastructure will “play a key role in driving our economic recovery”. The Minister thanked the street works sector for the “invaluable work” done to keep the country connected during COVID-19. In particular, praise was given to the leadership shown by Street Works UK, JAG and HAUC UK who in partnership with government provided clarity and certainty to industry and authorities.

Mr Warman noted that the government remains committed to delivering gigabit capable broadband “as soon as possible”, which is a noticeable shift from the government’s pledge on nationwide coverage by 2025. He added that more than 1 in 3 homes can access this broadband and expects this to rise to half of the nation by the end of 2021. The Minister stressed the importance of the role street works plays in the digital priorities of government, while adding that he looked forward to greater involvement with the sector over the coming years to ensure the industry is as efficient as it possibly can be. Officials in the Barrier Busting Taskforce are working with every highways authority to encourage best practice, including through the street works toolkit. He added that the fourth edition of SROH would help to drive collaboration across the industry.

After the Minister’s speech, Richard Maddock, Head of Street Works Local Government at DCMS, fielded a series of questions from members on behalf of the Department. Questions included

scalability of private enterprises, reinstatements, and regulatory issues including the need to simplify permit and traffic management schemes. Looking to 2021, Richard said that the focus was on delivering “real concrete action” to achieve government ambitions, building on the development of Street Manager and changes to SROH. Richard stated that the goal going forwards is hard change which benefits all parties, driving new reforms and ambitions which are fit for purpose.

Clive Selley CEO, Openreach



Clive described the United Kingdom as being “three years into a journey” transitioning from copper-based cables to fibre networks. He spoke in support of the 2025 broadband goal, with Openreach at the heart of increasing

full fibre proliferation in the UK. Nationwide full fibre, he said, “could reinvigorate the UK, and be a real platform for economic recovery,” generating an estimated £59 billion in added GDP by 2025 if the goal is met.

He noted that Openreach are “by far the biggest undertaker of street works in the UK”, with the organisation aiming to complete around 350,000 works in 2020. Gaining key worker status during the spring ensured teams were able to continue working, while in constant communication with the DCMS, and devolved and local governments. Clive added that he wants to work closer with highway authorities to meet their needs, with flexi-permit trialling providing great opportunities to do so.

Challenges facing Openreach both in 2020 and beyond were asked by the audience. Clive said that Openreach needs greater assistance from central and local government if it is to play a full part in achieving the nationwide broadband goal. The challenges Clive outlined were related to social housing and wayleave agreements; the need to increase the capacity of the sector to build more quickly; developing a

more simplified and streamlined form of traffic management, Brexit, and the speed at which COVID-19 is brought under control.

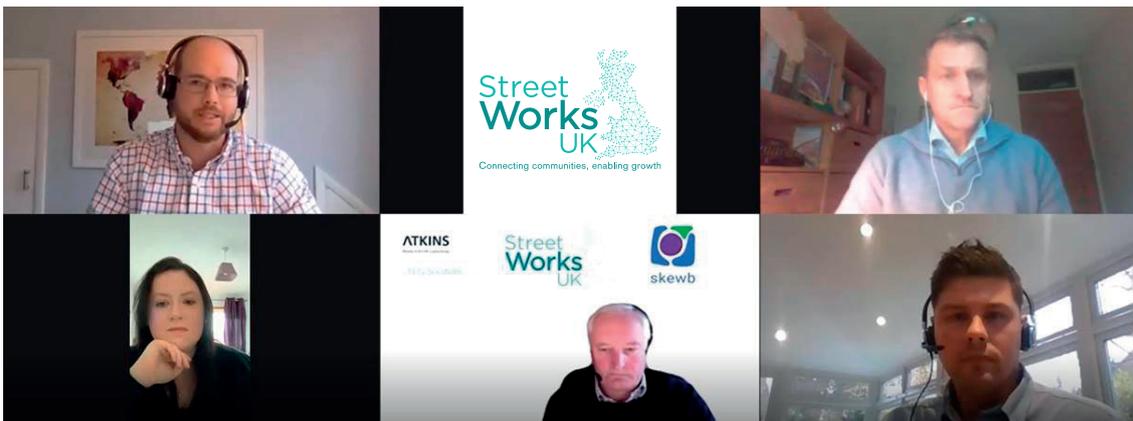
Baroness Vere, Minister for Roads, Buses and Places, Department for Transport



The final keynote speech came from Baroness Vere, Minister for Roads, Buses and Places. She thanked representatives in the street works sector for their hard work during COVID-19, and welcomed the close collaboration

which took place during this period. The successful transition and launch of Street Manager was picked out for particular praise, with the Minister describing it as a “transformational change” for the industry. Early data quoted by the Minister suggests that around one-fifth of requested permits are cancelled, and she called on the industry to improve this figure.

The Minister went on to outline the challenges which remain in transport and street works, such as the number of vehicles on the road, and the need to improve the quality and productivity of works, particularly reinstatements. SROH was said to be a helpful assistance to the industry, encouraging new innovation, greater planning and management of works and improving communication. Finally, the Minister reserved special praise for the Street and Road Works Vision, calling for the sector to put together an action plan on how to take this forward.





During Conference, Street Works UK held three panel sessions. These featured leading names in both the industry and in government and covered the issues facing the sector today.

How do we drive an uptake of external collaboration over the next five years?

The first of our expert panels discussed external collaboration over the next five years. The panel consisted of David Capon (CEO, JAG), Samantha Brothwell (Street Works Policy Manager, Western Power Distribution) and Sally Kendall (Head of Street Works, Department for Transport), with our CEO Clive Bairsto chairing the discussion.

The panel discussed their learnings from how the industry has successfully collaborated in the past, and how these learnings should be taken forward. David mentioned the need to have better data and communication, stating that technology is no longer a barrier to collaboration and industry must seize the opportunity to utilise its potential to improve the frequency and success of collaborative works. Samantha raised Street Manager as a new way of identifying opportunities in the future. However, she noted that consideration should be given to liability in collaborative projects, including who applies for the permit, and who performs the reinstatements. Samantha stated that this issue must be resolved, and industry must work together to find a workable solution. Sally described her role within government as making street works as effective as possible, reducing impact on road users. She suggested that the “time is ripe” to put changes into practice.

The panel then turned to issues raised by the chair and attendees. The issue of highways authorities not submitting forward planning for future works schemes was discussed as an example of where collaboration is being missed. It was agreed by the panel that this was not an insurmountable problem – the technology is there to do this via Street Manager. Examples of collaboration best practice were discussed, including between Openreach and Sheffield on flexi-permits. It was agreed that HAUC UK should put collaboration at the forefront of

thinking, and explore setting up a working group which looks at how to take this is taken forward, so that collaboration is front and centre of thinking. Samantha said that in order to make collaboration the norm in the industry, it is important to work with people responsible for street works within organisations, ensuring that they understand the benefits and opportunities which collaboration can create.

How will digitalisation enhance street and road works in the UK?

The second panel discussion focused on enhancing digitalisation in street works. The panel consisted of Holger Kessler (Geoscience Technical Adviser, Geospatial Commission), Simon Topp (Chief Commercial Officer, one.network) and Kat Quane (Road Works Policy Manager, Transport Scotland), with our CEO Clive Bairsto once again chairing the discussion.

During introductory remarks, Holger touched on the National Underground Asset Register (NUAR) project. Holder noted his learnings from the project including security and safety, effective stakeholder collaboration and engagement, and the importance of using a data model. Simon looked forward to the future of digitalisation, arguing that it provides a clear solution to the problem of ageing assets and increased levels of street works. He suggested that the UK is “ten years” ahead of the US and Australia, but that there remained technical challenges to overcome. Kat spoke on behalf of the Scottish Government, which operates on a noticing system and a national register which she argued makes collaboration between local authorities much easier than in other parts of the UK.

The panel then turned to technical and behavioural challenges associated with data. Kat mentioned that people who work on site generally pass information through peer learning, although there is no official guidance on this in Scotland. Simon described organisational change as a “critical aspect”, pointing out that new software alone does not solve problems. He mentioned the need

to drive organisational change on a more regular basis following the pandemic and push industry forward, with the panel questioning what the role of government, regulators and the private sector would be in helping to achieve this.

Looking forward, the panel agreed that reducing the cost of failure (i.e. overruns and overruns) should be a key priority, which will ultimately save utilities and promoters time and money. Simon questioned how industry achieves the best levels of pre-planning of works, looking at the potential impact of disruption on roadworks. He said that industry must harness the power of data analytics and floating traffic models, while being able to communicate on site in real time – placing technology in the hands of traffic management.

Equipped for the future? How should we prepare our workforce for future infrastructure upgrades?

The final panel discussion focused on preparing the street works workforce for future infrastructure upgrades. The panel consisted of Rob Norrington (Head of Mobilisation and Training, CityFibre), Mark Playforth (QHSE Director, HAL Group) and Phil Beach CBE (Chief Executive, Energy and Utility Skills), with the discussion chaired by Clive.

Giving his opening remarks, Rob highlighted the impact of COVID-19 in accelerating the adoption of technology. He mentioned CityFibre’s nationwide attraction and recruitment campaign, and their application for the government’s Kickstart Scheme, which is focused on job placements for young people. Brexit was mentioned as another possible challenge to the workforce as there is a fear that labour from overseas will be hindered. However, Rob found that this has allowed organisations to address rising unemployment by hiring staff from the UK. Rob asserted that the quality of education and training is as important as an operator’s experience. Outlining the challenges facing the sector, Mark mentioned the duty of care held between operators and towards road users. He stressed the importance of organisations not using delivery of works as an excuse to deploy workers without the proper training or equipment.

Mark added that the work of the Street Works UK Training & Accreditation group has been good “despite the challenges” faced owing to the pandemic. Phil Beach from E&U Skills said that regulation alone will not improve the workforce, and one of its costs is the failure to tackle the issues the UK has with rising demand for highly skilled workers.

The panel discussed the skills priorities of the future, with Phil mentioning the need for greater diversity and inclusion in the sector. Net zero was discussed as another driver, with a new workforce important in driving industry towards achieving the UK’s decarbonisation commitments. It was also mentioned that the existing workforce must be upskilled in order to face the challenges of the future. Finally, thoughts were given on how to attract more people to the industry. It was suggested that organisations must remove the stigma that many operatives face which is associated with digging up holes for a living – there are many facets to street works which go beyond this, including work in fields such as data and technology. It was asserted that the sector must be able to show the long-term view and benefits of a career in industry, as an alternative to going to university. One way suggested was that the term “technician” instead of “operative” could be used to describe the work undertaken by workers on the ground, reflecting the true nature of their work.





Skewb are delighted to be sponsoring Street Works UK's Annual Conference 2020. The event is a great opportunity to celebrate the successes of our business partners in making positive changes to the UK's infrastructure.

We Make A Difference

We are passionate about transforming water & energy utilities

Working together to solve your problems, achieving business outcomes and deliver water / energy efficiencies



We are a team of industry experts that have lived and breathed the utility world, experienced the journey and have a great understanding of the challenges ahead. We are really looking forward to being part of the conversation, discussing how we can support the industry with the pace of change required for utilities to meet stretching infrastructure deliverables along with the challenges they face from the regulators, the focus on energy and full fibre connectivity.

The speed of change within the utilities sector is challenging to manoeuvre. This current level of change requires more agility and pace than

many are used to, Skewb have developed a flexible street works model, enabling you to choose the solutions which work for you, and support the evolution of your street works journey over a period of time. We are passionate about making things better...and keeping things simple.

Skewb are firm supporters in the Vision for Street & Road Works 2025 and promoting the positive outcomes of this across the industry creating a direct link between the Vision and these wider business deliverables.

In addition to the panel sessions, Street Works UK held two workshops (repeated over two days) which provided members with an opportunity to learn more about the ongoing engagement with the Environment Agency over excavated utility waste and on the future street works policy landscape.

The street works policy landscape: what changes can we expect over the next year

The first of our workshops looked at the street works policy landscape over the next few years. It was led by Alison Williams (Street Works Policy and Compliance Manager, Openreach), Janet Chapman (Technical Manager Street Works Policy, Thames Water), and Myles Smith (Senior Policy Adviser, Department for Transport).

The workshop looked at the policy horizon in the short to medium term, with key policy changes due to take place:

2020-2021: Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways Implementation (England)

- HAUC Co-ordination Code (England)
- Full implementation of permit schemes across England
- Flexible permits (England)
- S58 in permit schemes
- Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways (Scotland) (potential)

2021-2022: Batch 1 Transport (Scotland) Act 2019

- TRO policy (England)
- Street Manager further updates
- Review of Traffic sensitivity criteria (England)
- Permit notifications on non NRSWA days (England)
- Batch 2 Transport (Scotland) Act 2019
- Review of the Diversionary Works Code (England, Scotland & Wales)
- Safety code review
- Prescribed fees for the Scottish Road Works Register (potential)

2022-2023: Batch 3 Transport (Scotland) Act 2019

- Street works inspections (England)
- Batch 4 Transport (Scotland) Act 2019
- Review of street works systems (Wales) (potential)

The audience discussed other potential policy updates, including mandatory forward planning in some utility sectors, including water. Alongside this, it was stated that the government has its own legislative agenda which will take shape over the next few years, including on electric vehicle charging and increased pedestrianisation. It was felt that legislation can complicate industry works, and that there is a need to simplify into a format which is easy for operatives to understand so that they can undertake works.

A new protocol for assessing utility waste

The second workshop concerned Street Works UK's ongoing engagement with the Environment Agency to develop a new protocol for assessing utility waste. It was led by James Thornton (Group Environment and Sustainability Manager, Clancy), and James Camis (Environmental Permitting Specialist, Welsh Water).

This workshop provided an overview of data and other updates since Conference in 2019. It was found that the number of samples taken did not provide a representative view of the risk of hazardous waste to the industry, however significant learnings can be taken from the data. For example, the data informs that the industry has a need for a solution, with all participants identifying hazardous waste arisings. Common risks to focus on include total petroleum hydrocarbons and coal tar. The Environment Agency has agreed its next steps ahead of the implementation of RPS 211. It was suggested that RPS 211 runs the risk of providing guidance for something which could change in two months and needs to evolve in the next instance. In addition, the chairs said that there is a "striking naivety" in the highways sector on waste, with many still believing it to be a utility problem and not a waste problem. The workshop also discussed whether Street Works UK could issue a guidance document on what is actually covered by RPS 211 in lay terms for members not involved in the work of the Environment Agency.



We are proud to announce the winners of the 2020 Street Works UK Awards, following a virtual ceremony via social media.

The Street Works UK Awards are a fixture of the street works calendar, and give members an opportunity to showcase examples of industry innovation and celebrate best practice.

The list of categories and their winners are:

STREET WORKS AWARDS 2020 WINNERS

PROJECT OF THE YEAR Symology	BEST COLLABORATIVE WORKS Openreach Fibre Cities: Nottingham City & Nottinghamshire
STREET WORKS EXCELLENCE Engineering Plastic Supplies/Balfour Beatty	DELIVERING FOR CUSTOMERS Cadent
COMMUNICATION LEADERSHIP Openreach	INNOVATIVE EXCELLENCE United Utilities
SUSTAINABLE METHODS Cadent	RISING STAR Khyati Pugh
CHAIRMAN'S AWARD Janet Chapman	

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If you are interested in getting involved with Street Works UK and would like to join one of our expert practitioner groups, the associates forum or the operations group, please let us know by emailing: info@streetworks.org.uk.