



**NJUG holds reservations on London Permit Scheme
but stands committed to making it work**

8th June 2009 – The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG), the UK trade association representing utilities and their contractors on street works matters, has questioned the ability of the proposed London Permit Scheme (LPS) to measure its own effectiveness - thereby failing to meet one of its legal requirements – in its response to the scheme’s statutory consultation.

While NJUG has submitted its response to the consultation, the organisation was disappointed that Transport for London and the London Boroughs had not accepted the trade association’s offer to engage at a much earlier stage to help them develop a more robust and workable proposal. Unfortunately, rather than submit a more positive response, NJUG has been compelled to highlight failings and uncertainties in the scheme in their consultation response. Such shortcomings will need to be addressed before the scheme can be deemed acceptable and approved by the Secretary of State, which could cause an unfortunate delay that may have been avoidable had the utility industry been involved at an earlier stage.

However, NJUG continues to remain committed to making every effort to ensure that any permit scheme is effective. To this end, members are working with the London Boroughs to trial the scheme to ensure it is workable, although to date, authorities have only been able to trial the software systems rather than implement a full operational trial as suggested by industry.

On the specifics of the scheme, NJUG members are pleased to see that the scheme references its overriding objective as that of securing the ‘expeditious movement of traffic on the authority’s road network’. However the proposal fails to describe any clear process or measures to assess this objective and the ability of the permit scheme to improve congestion, thereby failing to comply with the Traffic Management Act and the subsequent Permit regulations. Further concerns surround the method used to calculate current congestion levels. The ‘bottom up’ method generates a figure that is four times larger than a ‘top down’ calculation, and the scheme includes an unsubstantiated conclusion that “the truth lies in between these two estimates” (page 40, Application Support Document).

Les Guest, CEO of the National Joint Utilities Group, said: “NJUG has responded to the consultation. We are pleased that we are now able to offer our operational and technical expertise, although we feel this could have benefited the proposal at a much earlier stage. Having reviewed the proposal, we still maintain a number of reservations. In particular, there does not appear to be a methodology to measure current congestion levels and make comparisons once the scheme is underway. This is imperative if the effectiveness of the scheme is to be assessed and it is also an essential requirement of any permit scheme.”



Mr Guest went on to say, “The flaws we have identified will need to be rectified before Government can approve the scheme and we urge the boroughs to consider this sooner rather than later. However, in the meantime, NJUG members will continue to work with TfL and the London Boroughs to trial the IT systems required for permits. Furthermore, NJUG members are committed to making sure permits are workable and effective when it comes to reducing congestion, and we welcome any and all engagement with the London Permit Scheme developers to help them in any way we can.”

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Notes to Editors

Other concerns NJUG holds with the draft proposal can be found below:

- No statistical evidence to substantiate figure (10.2%) used to estimate the ‘proportion of total [congestion] that can be mitigated’;
- Benefit is claimed over a potential reduction in collisions and related safety as a result of permit schemes. This is inaccurate since the overall number of site inspections will remain at 30% (as current) even with the inclusion of permit inspections. This means that site visits and consequential opportunities to discover safety issues remains unchanged. The corresponding saving in compensation claims as a result of the previous benefit claim is similarly incorrect for the same reason.
- There is also concern over the number of traffic managers required. Using only the figures supplied within the scheme proposal, NJUG undertook a calculation on three London authorities – TfL, City of London and Bromley. Traffic Manager time was calculated using established annual hours available, set against the time allocated to permit scrutiny. It has been assumed that Traffic Managers will need at least 30% extra time for HR, management issues etc. The results indicate that TfL would require 8 additional traffic managers, the City of London 1 traffic manager, and Bromley 2.5 traffic managers. In reality, NJUG is concerned that TfL for instance, will not recruit this number, and therefore be unable to fully manage their permit scheme as they describe.

For further information about the National Joint Utilities Group please go to www.njug.org.uk.

To arrange an interview please contact the NJUG press office at pressoffice@njug.org.uk or telephone 020 7340 8737.

About The National Joint Utility Group (NJUG)

NJUG is the only UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. Our full members include the Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas companies), Water UK (representing water companies), National Grid, Openreach, and Virgin Media. Our Associate Members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska McNicholas, Balfour Beatty, Morrison, 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.

NJUG is the utility arm of the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee representing street works in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales known as HAUC (UK). Please see <http://www.hauc-uk.org.uk/> for further information.

NJUG’s focus is on promoting best practice, safety, quality and co-ordination of works as well as representing utilities in discussions with Government and other stakeholders on street work issues. Street works are essential activities carried out by electricity, water, gas and communications utilities to maintain, enhance, extend, renew and repair their networks.