



PAN-UTILITY

Fines fear over non-existent software

UTILITIES ARE seeking urgent clarification from the Department for Transport about whether they will be fined for noticing arrangements under the Traffic Management Act from next April.

From that date local authorities, highway authorities and utilities must use a new software system to transfer notices, but the system is behind schedule.

Final technical specifications for the system were not available until this week, shrinking the

planned nine-month development and installation period to five months.

Utilities fear they will be liable, under current legislation, for fixed penalty notices if they are not using the system from April.

“We want pragmatic and sensible guidance,” said Richard Wakelen, chief executive of the National Joint Utilities Group. He said he hoped the transport department would make it possible to continue operating under

the existing regime until the new system was fully installed. Wakelen said it was not clear how long it would take to install the new system.

Software developers for the system previously said they were worried about inconsistencies in different versions of the specifications. They also expressed concern about the timescale for the development, saying it had shrunk from utilities’ original request for a 12-month schedule.