UTILITYWEEK

PAN-UTILITY

Update to streetworks regime 'causes chaos'

by Janet Wood

UTILITIES AND local authorities faced "chaos" when a notice regime required under the Traffic Management Act went live on 1 April.

Utilities and authorities were required to use new software known as Eton 4 to manage notices from that date. However, delays in developing the system meant many organisations were still using an old version, Eton 3.

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) said: "Lack of compliance by authorities meant that only a small number of Eton 4 notices went through automatically. The remainder needed to be resubmitted by fax."

A spokesman for the Energy Networks Association (ENA) said some utilities were still using Eton 3, but added: "Local authorities are in a worse position. Four-fifths of them are not in a position to be able to go onto Eton 4."

Red light: system ground to a halt with notices sent by fax

He said companies had warned of the problem and were working around it by sending amended notices using the older system, or backing up notices by fax, but it would take several months before all parties were using Eton 4.

The troubled introduction of the new regime raises concerns about the next phase, due to go live in October. That upgrade, Eton 5, will add permitting to the automated system.

The ENA spokesman said concerns at this stage about the October upgrade were over policy, not technical, issues. He said recently that NJUG and the utilities had "rejected outright" draft proposals to roll out the upgrade from London, one of the test authorities. He said the proposals had been inadequate because they did not take account of issues such as congestion, which would affect permitting requirements.