NJUG

# PRESS RELEASE

## Independent Report challenges Government proposals to tackle traffic congestion

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An independent report, commissioned by the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG), has backed the utility industry's claims that the Government needs to think again on introducing new permit schemes for utilities to carry out street works. The Report by the regulation think tank the Regulatory Policy Institute (RPI) has identified major failings in the Government's justification for the new street works permit scheme regime.

- **A failure to identify and measure the benefits of the existing regulatory regime;**
- **A failure to analyse why permits are needed above recent changes to the existing regime;**
- **A failure to take account of the impact of Highway authority works' on congestion (around 50% of all works in the street);**
- **A failure to identify alternative options;**
- **A failure to justify the levels of costs and benefits attributable to permits;**
- **A failure to set an adequate benchmark for local authorities to consult on their specific permit schemes;**
- **A failure to properly assess the impact of permit schemes during the last three years thereby necessitating a post-implementation review; and**
- **A failure to ensure an effective review of permits by not establishing a baseline against which they will be measured.**

Commenting on the Report, NJUG Chief Executive Richard Wakelen said: "This Report challenges the whole basis for implementing permits, particularly given that new procedures, introduced only in April this year, have not had time to bed down or be properly assessed. Nor have any of the voluntary initiatives to co-ordinate works and reduce disruption being undertaken by utilities been taken into account." Richard went on to say: "The impact assessment of permit schemes clearly falls short of the Government's own better regulation principles, and does not accurately identify either their costs or additional benefits. We urge Government to establish a clear baseline against which to measure the effectiveness of permits, and to ensure that before each scheme is approved, all relevant cost and benefit information is made available, including the assumptions used to develop them." Richard concluded by saying "We believe Government has not adequately established that this additional layer of legislation will have any impact on congestion."

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**Notes to the Editors:**

For further editorial information, to arrange an interview, or for further comment, please contact pressoffice@njug.org.uk or telephone 020 7340 1423. The NJUG website can be located at www.njug.org.uk.

**About The National Joint Utilies Group (NJUG)**

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the only UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents thirty-eight utility companies and nine major contractors. Its focus is on promoting safety, quality and sustainable street works, the sharing of best practice, and working in partnership with stakeholders to minimise disruption. NJUG is also the utility arm of the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee, HAUC(UK), working collaboratively with Local Authorities to better standards of road and street works in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

NJUG's members include the Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas companies), Water UK (representing all water and wastewater companies), National Grid, BT, Virgin Media and THUS plc, and our associate members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska McNicholas, Balfour Beatty, Morrison, Morgan Est, NACAP, P J Keary, First Intervention and Carillion.

We all rely on gas, electricity, water and telecommunications being delivered to our homes and businesses and being available all of the time. To maintain that level of reliability requires major asset investment programmes and therefore utilities to carry out works in the street. However NJUG recognises the need to further improve co-ordination of works to continue to reduce the regrettable disruption that our essential works sometimes cause.

Utilities undertake essential street works for four main reasons – safety, security of supply, to connect or enhance consumer supply, or to divert apparatus to facilitate transport or urban regeneration schemes. NJUG members are committed to working together and with Local Authorities to minimise disruption and deliver safe, sustainable and efficient high quality street works.

**About RPI**

The Regulatory Policy Institute (RPI) is an independent charitable organisation dedicated to the study of all aspects of regulation and deregulation, including the institutional processes through which public policy is formed, as well as the development, implementation, enforcement and impact of particular policies. It conducts independent research, publishes, and holds conferences and seminars. Further information on the RPI can be located at www.rpieurope.org.