NJUG

NJUG Statement: Consultations on overstay charges and inspections

Quotes attributable to Les Guest, CEO, National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG)

NJUG welcomes the release of the Government's consultation on street works inspections, including proposed changes to the Code of Practice and a revised inspection fees regime. Through its work as the utility-arm of the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee UK, NJUG has been involved in the development of these proposals and will be responding on behalf of industry.

NJUG also recognises the release of the Government's consultation published today on increasing the charges for street works that overrun on traffic-sensitive streets. We understand the focus of the policy on traffic sensitive streets only, allowing utilities to prioritise operations on these key routes where disruption can cause the biggest impact. However, we do feel that the increase (as much as ten fold) is excessive, and whilst we understand that occupying the carriageway on busy roads adds to congestion, we are disappointed that it also applies to works carried out wholly in the footway or verge that do not affect congestion. It also fails to recognise the improvements achieved since its inception since 2001 and the audited reductions achieved in reducing site durations.

We are disappointed that once again excessive charges are only imposed on utility organisations and that no similar deterrents apply to works carried out on behalf of Local Authorities. Local Authority works account for fifty percent of all roadworks and disruption in England yet they are not governed by a similar robust regulatory regime or incentivised to minimise occupation of the streets. Furthermore, this policy adds to recently implemented regulations, including fixed penalty notices, a revised noticing regime, and new permit schemes, none of which have been professionally appraised to confirm their effectiveness.

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Notes to Editors

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.

The Government consultation on inspections can be found at:
http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2010-12/

The Government consultation on overstay charges can be found at:
http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2010-013/

About The National Joint Utility Group (NJUG)

NJUG is the only UK industry association representing utilities and their contractors on street works issues.

Our full members include the Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas companies), Water UK (representing water and waste water companies), National Grid, Openreach, and Virgin Media. Our Associate Members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska Utilities, Balfour Beatty, Morrison Utility Services, Morgan Est, NACAP, PJ Keary, First Intervention, Carillion, Enterprise, Laing O'Rourke, AMEC and SQS. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents thirty-nine utility companies and thirteen utility contractors.

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.

Utilities undertake street works for four primary reasons – safety, security of supply, to connect or upgrade customers' supplies, or to divert apparatus to facilitate major transport or urban regeneration projects. Examples include Crossrail, the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, tram projects, or new urban and housing developments.