



Lane rental position statement

October 2010

NJUG supports regulations that demonstrate clear benefit in return for cost, but feels that a disproportionate relationship exists between the cost of lane rental schemes on all roads and / or at all times when compared to the potential additional benefits that may be received by road users. **If lane rental is to be considered NJUG believes it should be targeted only at pinch points on strategic roads, where there are very high recorded traffic densities**, and only in cities where there are a significant number of pinch points as well as being operated on an incentive basis.

By focusing the charges on only those strategic pinch points of a highway network, work promoters will be able to prioritise works on those routes most prone to high levels of congestion. The definition of a pinch point must be clearly defined at a national level and where applied it must be recorded in the NSG so that it is available as part of the notification process. Incentives should also be put in place that allow all works promoters to work outside traffic sensitive times, to use innovative techniques such as minimum dig technology or plating (where safe and practical to do so) to return the road to service during peak hours, and to consider the joint use of road-space (eg: trench or TTRO sharing) in return for avoiding a lane rental charge. However whilst the relevant Highway Authority may wish works to take place outside normal hours, Environmental Health Officers may well prevent or restrict works due to noise constraints and the safety requirements of individual companies may prevent major work when it is dark so this needs to be borne in mind and a balance achieved between traffic disruption, safety and environmental disturbance.

On this basis NJUG would support a London-based pilot to determine the viability of lane rental being applied on key strategic locations within the capital, and would welcome an early opportunity to work with the Department for Transport and Transport for London on this. The pilot should involve rigorous assessment of the costs and the benefits after twelve months, and allow a full review to take place prior to any consideration of continuing the scheme and introducing similar schemes at appropriate locations within the UK where there are very high traffic densities and in cities where there are significant numbers of pinch points. Such benefits should be over and above those already claimed in the Cost Benefit Analysis for the introduction of changes to the Co-ordination Code of Practice, Improved Noticing regulations, Fixed Penalty Notices, Section 74 Overstay Charges and Permit Schemes.

Conversely a blanket daily charge on all works on all streets would do little to reduce disruption, would increase utility and council tax bills and would not encourage those working in the streets to prioritise those works on the busiest streets above other works in less congested areas

Finally, it is vital that this pilot, and any wider roll out of lane rental, must be applied equally to all works promoters (i.e. utilities, highway authorities, developers etc) to ensure that the maximum opportunity to avoid disruption to road users is utilised. It needs to be borne in mind that 50% of all works are carried out by authorities and that at present there are no financial incentives to carry out this work in an efficient and timely manner. The fact that this extension may require primary legislation should not be cited as a barrier.