

012

31 January 2012

CUTTING RED TAPE TO TACKLE ROAD WORKS DISRUPTION

Plans to axe red tape for councils wanting to put in place schemes to tackle disruptive road works were published today by Regional and Local Transport Minister Norman Baker.

Street works permit schemes give councils more power to coordinate works and once in place both utility companies and local authorities must abide by strict conditions including time limits, coordination or the amount of road space to be left available to road users. Anyone who breaks the terms of their permit or works without a permit could be prosecuted and face a fine of up to £5,000.

At the moment, councils wanting to operate a permit scheme need approval from the Department for Transport. The proposals put forward today would remove that requirement and give councils more flexibility in putting the schemes in place.

Norman Baker said:

"Councils should be spending their time improving the lives of their local residents not being bogged down by unnecessary bureaucracy. That is why I am proposing that local councils should be able to put in place permit schemes to improve the co-ordination of works on their roads without needing to get approval from central government.

"I hope that this will encourage more councils to develop permit schemes and make use of them to help reduce disruption and frustration for the travelling public."

Under the plans, councils will still need to comply with the law on the penalties and requirements they can impose on utility companies when operating a permit scheme.

The consultation runs until 13th April and can be found here: www.dft.gov.uk/xxxx

Notes to Editors

1. Street works permit schemes are currently in place in Kent, London and Northamptonshire.
2. The Secretary of State approved a permit scheme for St Helens in December 2011 and has received permit schemes applications submitted from East of England and Greater Manchester.
3. A council running a permit scheme is able to charge companies for providing a permit although any charge should cover the costs of administering the permit scheme and should not result in a surplus. It is a criminal offence to work without a permit. The maximum fine will be £5,000. It is also an offence to not meet a permit condition, for which the maximum fine is £2,500. Fixed Penalty Notices, as an alternative enforcement mechanism, can instead be given for working without a permit or not meeting a permit condition.
4. Local councils are responsible for designing and consulting on their own scheme proposals. Under current legislation, permit schemes in England can be implemented only with the approval of the Secretary of State. Councils in England have been able to apply to the Department for Transport to run their own road works permit schemes since the relevant Regulations came into force in April 2008. The Department for Transport's business plan sets out the intention to end the need for central government approval of individual local authorities' permit schemes in 2012. Legislative proposals to do this will require Parliamentary approval. Under the proposals the position in Wales would remain the same.

Press Enquiries: 020 7944 3066

Out of Hours: 020 7944 4292

Public Enquiries: 0300 330 3000

Department for Transport Website: <http://www.dft.gov.uk>
www.twitter.com/transportgovuk | www.youtube.com/transportgovuk
www.flickr.com/transportgovuk