

Transport Committee

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# Managing the impact of street works

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Second Report of Session 2024–25

HC 522

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# Transport Committee

The Transport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Transport and its associated public bodies.

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## Publication

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## Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Transport Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 2226; the Committee's email address is [transcom@parliament.uk](mailto:transcom@parliament.uk). You can follow the Committee on X (formerly Twitter) using [@TransportCttee](https://twitter.com/TransportCttee).

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# Summary

Street works are essential for utility companies to keep their services running and provide us with running water, energy, gas and broadband. However, they can also be a source of frustration for anyone trying to get around on roads and pavements by causing congestion and delays that harm the economy, disrupt transport services and limit access to high streets and businesses. Street works have also been shown to reduce the structural lifespan of roads and pavements, adding to the already-stretched maintenance burden for local authorities and in some cases making roads and pavements more dangerous to navigate.

Although the Government has announced proposals to change some of the ways in which street works can be managed, including strengthening fines and charges available to local authorities, there is more that can be done to assist local authorities in managing the deterioration of streets and minimising disruption.

The guarantee period for reinstatements by utility companies is currently too short at just two years (or three for deep excavations), given that reinstatements should last for over ten years if completed properly. Extending the guarantee period should incentivise utility companies to complete longer-lasting reinstatements, and avoid local authorities picking up the repair bill after just two years. The process for ensuring that surfaces are restored properly can also be improved by allowing local authorities to keep inspecting defective reinstatements if they remain un-repaired, and by introducing timescales in which utility companies have to repair the defects once they have been found and increasing fines if they fail to do so.

Where disputes arise between utility companies and local authorities, sometimes as a result of differing interpretations of legislation and guidance, an independent function for resolving these disputes short of legal action could save money and time. Introducing a Commissioner for street works, similar to the role of the Scottish Road Works Commissioner, could help ensure consistency in the interpretation of guidance across England and help to avoid disputes going to court. If the Department considers this approach too costly, it must identify and put in place an alternative approach to achieve this outcome.

Local authorities rely on advance warning to help them manage disruption from upcoming works. In some cases, immediate permits can be used to begin work straight away without needing to notify a local authority.

This makes it difficult for local authorities to plan or coordinate works on their road networks and can lead to significant disruption. Although these permits are appropriate in some cases, the Department for Transport needs to ensure that they are not used for maintenance which has been known about for some time. The Department should consider whether fines could also be used against companies which are found to have misused immediate permits.

Better information from utility companies could also help improve the ability of local authorities to plan upcoming works and spot opportunities for collaboration and site-sharing. Utility companies should be required to share information on their upcoming work with local authorities—as should housing developers, who ought to be able to plan works to connect new houses to utilities well in advance.

Lane rental schemes are one of the best tools local authorities have for reducing disruption from street works on their busiest roads, but only a handful are allowed to operate them. We think lane rental schemes should be made available to all local authorities that want them, with schemes designed in a way which incentivises works to be completed quickly rather than using them to charge companies regardless of how they complete the work.

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# 1 Introduction

1. Street works form a part of what most people would refer to as road works, and they are often poorly understood despite being widespread and a common source of frustration. Street works are distinct from other road works completed by highways authorities which aim to repair or improve highways, pavements and street lighting and tend to involve work on the road or pavement's surface levels.<sup>1</sup> In recent years the Government has introduced changes to the way that street works are managed, which prompted us to assess how effectively this is done and explore whether more improvements can be made.
2. Our inquiry focused solely on street works: these are works carried out by statutory undertakers, such as utility companies, to install, repair and maintain their services, which can take place on or under both roads or pavements. Much of the utility apparatus is placed underneath the road, so these works often involve digging further beneath roads or pavements than road works would, in order to access pipes or cables. Street works are an essential part of the provision, maintenance and upgrading of gas, water, power and telecommunications infrastructure across the country.<sup>2</sup>
3. Although street works are carried out by virtue of a statutory right or a licence by utility companies and their contractors, a local authority in whose area the works take place has certain powers relating to how they should be conducted. When works take place on roads these powers often lie with the local highway authority, and when the works are on pavements this is the responsibility of the "street manager" which is whichever local authority is responsible for maintaining the street.<sup>3</sup>
4. Street works are essential for providing and maintaining critical utilities including gas, water, electricity and telecommunications such as broadband technologies. This means they play a role in many of the Government's objectives such as building more houses, rolling out broadband and investing in energy networks to meet net zero targets, as well as replacing and upgrading ageing utility infrastructure. Clive Bairsto, Chief Executive of Street Works UK, summarised the importance of street works:

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1 [Street works and road works - GOV.UK](#)

2 House of Commons Library, [Street works in England briefing paper](#), 2019

3 House of Commons Library, [Street works in England briefing paper](#), 2019



From connecting essential utilities to new homes, providing broadband connectivity to businesses and supporting the electrification rollout, effective and efficient street works are essential to ensuring the day-to-day economy keeps moving and future ambitions around infrastructure delivery are met.<sup>4</sup>

## Oversight

5. The Department for Transport oversees the legislation, regulatory framework and guidance underpinning the street works sector. This includes statutory guidance which is developed in consultation with industry representatives such as the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC(UK)), which represents both the local authorities responsible for managing the works on their network, and utility companies which are often carrying out works.<sup>5</sup> Anthony Ferguson, Deputy Director for Traffic and Technology at the Department for Transport, explained how the Department tries to avoid over-regulating the street works sector where possible:

[...] we have to pick and choose quite carefully which things are best done by mandate and which are better done through codes of practice or guidance notes, and just encourage the right cultural approach. If you can get the culture right, regulation becomes less important.<sup>6</sup>

6. In December 2024, the Government announced proposals to increase the levels of fines available to local authorities to help them manage how street works are carried out. This included doubling the levels of Fixed Penalty Notices available for some street works offences—from £120 to £240 for most offences—and allowing overrun charges to apply at weekends and bank holidays. The amount of overrun charge which can apply varies according to the type of road and how many days the work has overrun by. Charges for the first three days of overrun are between £250 and £5,000 depending on the type of road, with charges on the busiest roads potentially increasing up to £10,000 per day once they have already overrun by three days.<sup>7</sup>
7. In Scotland, an independent Road Works Commissioner monitors street works and road works activity, promotes good practice and compliance with legislation, and keeps a central database of roadworks activity.<sup>8</sup> There is no equivalent body in England. Street works in England are logged

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4 Street Works UK, [The Road to Economic Growth: How street works are delivering for the UK](#), March 2025

5 Department for Transport, [Code of practice for street works inspections](#), 2023

6 [Q171](#)

7 Department for Transport, [Consultation outcome Street works: fines and lane rental surplus funds](#), December 2024

8 [SRWC Road Works Monitoring Report 2023–24](#)

on a database called Street Manager, which is accessible to all highways authorities and statutory undertakers, and whose data can be used by other platforms.<sup>9</sup>

## The inquiry

8. Our inquiry was launched in December 2024. We received 83 pieces of written evidence including from highway authorities, utility companies, road and pavement user groups, bus service providers and members of the public, and we took oral evidence from local authorities, utilities representatives and the Department for Transport. We are very grateful to all those who gave their time, energy and expertise to give evidence. Street works are a devolved matter in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, so this inquiry focuses specifically on street works in England.

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9 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

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## 2 The impact of street works

9. While street works are essential, they can also cause problems for the travelling public, for businesses and for local authorities. These problems include:
- Congestion, confusion and delays;
  - Road and pavement closures;
  - Loss of trade resulting from unspecific road closure signage;
  - Deterioration in road and pavement quality;
  - Damage to highways from use of alternative routes; and
  - Reduced accessibility.

### Congestion and delays

10. Street works are common on England's road networks: in the decade between 2014–15 and 2023–24, surveys found that an average of 16.7 million “utility openings” were carried out on the local road network in England per year—the equivalent of 96 per mile, and an average of 14,787 per local authority.<sup>10</sup> In many cases, these works sites will occupy parts of a road and so require lane closures, traffic lights or barriers which obstruct the flow of traffic.
11. Congestion and delays harm the economy, cause inconvenience to drivers, disrupt bus services, and reduce access to services such as shops and high streets. The Department for Transport has estimated that the combined 2.2 million street and road works (meaning works by highway authorities are also included) carried out in England in 2022 to 2023 cost the economy around £4 billion.<sup>11</sup>

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10 Asphalt Industry Alliance ([MIS0019](#))

11 Department for Transport, [Consultation outcome: Street works fines and lane rental surplus funds](#), 2024

12. The AA told us that it frequently receives complaints from its members relating to long-running street works, or works with traffic lights left in place over weekends when no work is taking place.<sup>12</sup> The Confederation of Passenger Transport, which represents bus and coach operators in the UK, told us that street works have an enormous impact on bus and coach services by causing delays, lengthening journeys and creating confusion (for example when stops are closed and routes diverted), all of which deter people from using their services.<sup>13</sup>
13. Street works sites can remain in place on roads and pavements even after the utility work itself has been completed, as other teams may be responsible for reinstating the road or pavement and clearing the road of safety equipment.<sup>14</sup> Councillor Adam Hug, Chair of the Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board at the Local Government Association, described how utility companies with a seven-day permit might arrive on day one to dig their hole, but wait until day seven before they reinstate it as a way of reducing costs for the company. He felt that the resulting week's worth of transport disruption shows some utility companies favour a "relatively small cost reduction for a company" over "an enormous set of externalities for the cost for every other business in the area and people getting to work", adding that the "balance is completely out of whack".<sup>15</sup>
14. Companies can be charged when their works overrun, including leaving equipment on site. If utility companies have endeavoured to remove all signing, lighting and guarding, and not more than five such items remain on the highway, the charge for overrunning is a single payment of £100.<sup>16</sup>

## Road and pavement closures

15. Street works which involve closing roads or pavements can also pose problems for drivers and bus passengers by blocking access to services which might require lengthy diversions. The Confederation of Passenger Transport described how 25 sets of works took place on one road in Plymouth during 2024, which included road closures or delays from highway incursions. The road closures meant that bus services had to follow a diversionary route which was over a kilometre long; this created an

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12 The AA ([MIS0014](#))

13 CPT (The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK) ([MIS0065](#))

14 [Q47](#)

15 [Q78](#)

16 The Street Works (Charges for Unreasonably Prolonged Occupation of the Highway) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012

additional 42 kilometres for the bus operator over the course of the day.<sup>17</sup> This problem can be especially acute on rural routes, where diversions can be particularly time-consuming.<sup>18</sup>

16. Road closure signs can also create confusion for the travelling public. For example, Wheels for Wellbeing told us that careless or ambiguous use of ‘Road Closed’ signs can create unnecessary barriers to accessibility, as the route may not be closed to all modes of travel.<sup>19</sup> Experiences gathered from residents in Kent show the confusion which signs can cause:

Sometimes signs are put up, written in felt pen, informing residents of forthcoming work but they are impossible to read whilst driving along. South East Water put up a sign last year stating they were going to do some work but this was never started. I asked them to remove the sign and they argued with me that it didn’t exist—I had to send them a picture before they came to remove it.<sup>20</sup>

17. The disruption caused by street works can affect some groups of people disproportionately. Emma Vogelmann, Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Campaigns at disabled people’s organisation Transport for All described how street works “hugely impact disabled people’s ability to use pavements”, and told us how diversions around street works can lack essential features for accessibility like dropped kerbs, tactile paving, and level surfaces.<sup>21</sup> Transport for All said that misplaced barriers, unstable ramps, and poorly positioned temporary pathways frequently force disabled people, people pushing buggies, and others who rely on accessible pavements into the road, creating unnecessary safety risks.<sup>22</sup>

## Surface quality

18. “Reinstatements” are the parts of a road or pavement which have been dug up and then put back in place. Poor quality reinstatements can result in uneven surfaces or cracks which can eventually lead to potholes and structural deterioration.<sup>23</sup> This can damage vehicles, bicycles and wheeled movement aids such as wheelchairs, and may be costly to repair and dangerous for users.<sup>24</sup> The AA told us that in 2024 they attended more than 643,000 pothole-related breakdowns, which it says takes up a huge amount

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17 CPT (The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK) ([MIS0065](#))

18 Cornwall Council - Transport Co-ordination Service ([MIS0058](#))

19 Wheels for Wellbeing ([MIS0013](#))

20 Katie Lam MP ([MIS0084](#))

21 [Q2](#)

22 Transport for All ([MIS0011](#))

23 Asphalt Industry Alliance ([MIS0019](#))

24 The AA ([MIS0014](#))

of time, money and effort for all involved.<sup>25</sup> Wheels for Wellbeing, a charity which supports disabled people to enjoy the benefits of cycling, explained that damage to footways and cycle infrastructure caused by street works has a disproportionate impact on disabled people who are more likely to be dependent on walking and wheeling to make essential journeys, but also less likely to be able to cross uneven pavement surfaces at all or without risk of injury.<sup>26</sup>

19. Street works also reduce the structural lifespan of roads and pavements which adds to the highway or pavement maintenance workload for local authorities. Research by the Transport Research Library has shown that the excavation involved during many street works can reduce the lifespan of roads and pavements by up to 17 per cent. A decline in structural quality is even more likely if the reinstatement work to restore the road or pavement is carried out poorly.<sup>27</sup> In a 2025 survey of local authority highway departments in England and Wales by the Asphalt Industry Alliance, local authorities reported that they spent an average of 2.8 per cent of their maintenance budget addressing premature maintenance arising from street works openings, which is a total of £66.8 million (more than £395,000 per authority).<sup>28</sup>
20. Poor quality street works reinstatements can also do aesthetic damage to streets, including patchy roads and pavements with ‘street scars’ (where the reinstatement does not match the appearance of the road or pavement), leftover traffic signs and noisy ‘rocking’ access covers, which makes walking, wheeling or living in the area less pleasant.<sup>29</sup> The Local Government Association told us that this has a significant impact on the attractiveness, quality and liveability of an area, with serious implications for the success of high streets.<sup>30</sup>

## 21. **CONCLUSION**

Street works are essential for many of the services we rely upon, such as running water, energy and internet access, but they can cause widespread issues for road and pavement users alike. Street works can disrupt people’s journeys, including through congestion, delays and road closures which affect drivers, cyclists and bus users. The patchy, uneven surfaces which can be left behind once works are complete, and barriers and signs left in place for excessive periods, can be problematic for road users and worsen accessibility on pavements.

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25 [Q24](#)

26 Wheels for Wellbeing ([MIS0013](#))

27 Transport Research Library, [A charge structure for trenching in the highway](#), 2009

28 Asphalt Industry Alliance, [Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance Survey Report](#), 2025

29 Central District Alliance Business Improvement District, Hatton Garden BID ([MIS0076](#))

30 Local Government Association ([MIS0016](#))

22.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Leaving equipment or signs in place that imply to the public that street works are still ongoing when they have finished should attract a full overrun charge.

23.

**RECOMMENDATION**

All road closure signage should specify exactly where the road closure is. When immediate permits are issued, this should be done as soon as reasonably practicable.

## Setting up street works in an accessible way

24. The Department's code of practice *Safety at Street Works and Road Works* includes standards for site safety, access and accessibility during street works and road works.<sup>31</sup> The current code of practice was last published in 2013, and accessibility groups such as Transport for All have called the standards "outdated and poorly enforced".<sup>32</sup> The Department told us that it is preparing to update the code to improve accessibility for vulnerable road users and bring standards into line with other DfT guidance, and that it intended to consult on a new code of practice in Spring 2025.<sup>33</sup>
25. During our inquiry *Access denied: rights versus reality in disabled people's access to transport*, we looked at how the Government worked with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), an independent expert committee that provides advice to the government on the transport needs of disabled people.<sup>34</sup> The Department told us that representatives of DPTAC had commented on the draft updated code of practice.<sup>35</sup>
26. We asked the Department what account it had taken of DPTAC's advice. The Minister for the Future of Roads, Lilian Greenwood MP, stressed that it was "very important" to strengthen the code in respect of accessibility. Anthony Ferguson, Deputy Director for Traffic and Technology, told us that the Department "work[s] with DPTAC on everything we do" and that they always

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31 Department for Transport, [Safety at Street Works and Road Works A Code of Practice](#), October 2013

32 Transport for All ([MIS0011](#))

33 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

34 Transport Committee, [Access denied: rights versus reality in disabled people's access to transport](#), March 2025

35 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

tried to take into account the experience of industry bodies. However, the Department did not provide any specific examples of how the draft code of practice had been amended.<sup>36</sup>

**27.**

**CONCLUSION**

In our report about accessibility in transport, we asked for more transparency about the impact that the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) has on the Department's decision-making. This is important for providing assurance that policy processes in respect of accessibility have been robust and meaningful. It was disappointing that the Minister and Deputy Director were unable to provide specific information about DPTAC's feedback on the Safety Code of Practice for street works or how the draft had been changed in response to it.

**28.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

We ask the Department to set out specific changes that have been made to the new Safety Code of Practice to improve accessibility during street works and how advice from DPTAC has been incorporated.



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## 3 Managing the impact on roads and pavements

29. Street works often involve excavation to reach the utility infrastructure, then reinstatement to put the road or pavement back in place once works are complete. When reinstating a road or pavement, utility companies are required to follow a specification set out by the Department for Transport to ensure that reinstatements will not shorten the lifespan of roads and pavements or create uneven surfaces.<sup>37</sup> A survey of local authority highway departments in England and Wales by the Asphalt Industry Alliance estimated that only 86 per cent of reinstatements were completed in accordance with the specification in 2024–25.<sup>38</sup> This would mean that approximately 250,000 reinstatements in roads fail to meet the Government’s standards per year, making them more likely to cause roads to deteriorate prematurely.<sup>39</sup>

### Guarantee period

30. In England, reinstatements to roads and pavements following street works by utility companies must be guaranteed to last for two years, or three years for deep excavations.<sup>40</sup> This means that the reinstatements must meet the standards set out in the specification for the duration of the guarantee, and if they fail to do so, they must be fixed by whoever carried out the work.<sup>41</sup> After the guarantee period expires, it is the relevant local authority which foots the bill for any repairs. Wandsworth Council told us that after the two year guarantee period, taxpayers are effectively paying to repair damage caused by utility companies.<sup>42</sup>

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37 Department for Transport, [Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways Fourth edition](#), May 2020

38 Asphalt Industry Alliance, [Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance Survey Report](#), 2025

39 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#)) and Asphalt Industry Alliance ([MIS0019](#))

40 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

41 Department for Transport, [Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways Fourth edition](#), 2020

42 Wandsworth Council ([MIS0026](#))

31. Many local authorities argued that England should consider a similar guarantee period to that which is now used in Scotland,<sup>43</sup> which in October 2023 was increased to six years for all reinstatements.<sup>44</sup> The Scottish Road Works Commissioner, Kevin Hamilton, told us that the guarantee period was lengthened following research showing that when reinstatements are completed according to the specification they will last for 10 to 12 years. He explained that the Scottish specification is similar in most important respects to England’s specification.<sup>45</sup>
32. The Commissioner told us that it is often “too difficult, time consuming and risky” for an authority to take a utility to court for a non-compliant reinstatement. He argued that extending the guarantee period would make it more difficult for utility companies to get away with carrying out a “substandard reinstatement that passes a visual inspection at two years and fails at some point later down the line”; Mr Hamilton believed this was currently “too easy” to do.<sup>46</sup>
33. Wandsworth Council felt that extending the guarantee period to three to five years would mean utility companies are “incentivised to ensure reinstatements are completed to a higher standard so they last longer, resulting in a reduction in future road repairs and less traffic congestion and delays for residents”.<sup>47</sup> The Local Government Association agreed that the current guarantee period is too short and “does not provide an incentive for companies to provide a long-lasting reinstatement”.<sup>48</sup>
34. However, utility companies were less supportive. Street Works UK and Cadent Gas noted that extending the guarantee period in England would affect the industry’s commercial contracts and result in higher costs for utility work. They argued that if contractors were required to underwrite repairs for up to six years, they would need to charge more to cover the costs of additional repair work. The premium for repair work might therefore “cascade” through the supply chain when costs were added by contractors and subcontractors. They said:

Such is the market that sub-contractors come and go, and any contractor who has to ‘cover’ for a subcontractor who might go ‘bust’ will be held commercially liable, and for that will charge a utility a significant premium. The liability will reverse back up the supply chain, and ultimately ‘rest’ with the utility.<sup>49</sup>

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43 The London Borough of Southwark ([MIS0053](#))

44 [Q108](#)

45 Scottish Road Works Commissioner ([MIS0006](#))

46 [Q108](#)

47 Wandsworth Council ([MIS0026](#))

48 Local Government Association ([MIS0016](#))

49 Street Works UK, Cadent Gas Limited ([MIS0079](#))

Street Works UK and Cadent Gas also said that most reinstatements which last the current two-year guarantee period are likely to last 10 to 12 years anyway, which would mean that extending the guarantee period would increase consumer costs with little benefit.<sup>50</sup>

35. In 2019, the Department for Transport consulted on an option to increase the standard guarantee period for all excavations to five years. There was roughly an even split between respondents who wanted to leave guarantee periods as they are—mainly utility companies—and those who preferred to see them increased to five years—mainly local authorities. The Department made the decision for guarantee periods to remain as they were (two years, or three years for deep excavations) until further work on the financial impact of implementing such a change could be carried out.<sup>51</sup> We asked the Department whether they had made any progress on looking into the financial impact. Anthony Ferguson, Deputy Director for Traffic and Technology, said that they had not carried out any work on this since due to changing priorities following the pandemic, and that any changes of this kind would require impact assessment work and a further consultation.<sup>52</sup>

36. **CONCLUSION**

It was disappointing to hear that, having said in 2019 that further investigation was needed into the financial impacts of increasing the guarantee period, the Department has not undertaken any further work on the issues. This is an inefficient use of a resource-intensive consultation process.

37. **CONCLUSION**

Local authority budgets for road maintenance are stretched thin; they can ill afford the expense of making good reinstatements which are not up to scratch. We note the concern about increasing costs being reflected in utility bills, but there is a balance to be struck: good quality road and pavement surfaces are also in consumers' interests. A two-year guarantee for a publicly-maintained asset is inadequate, especially since reinstatements which meet the standards tend to last more than ten years.

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50 Street Works UK, Cadent Gas Limited ([MIS0079](#))

51 Department for Transport, [Consultation outcome: Fourth edition of the specification for the reinstatement of openings in highways: summary of responses](#), May 2020

52 [Q138](#)

38.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The current guarantee period of two or three years for reinstatements after works, the latter being for deep excavations, is too short given that reinstatements should last more than ten years if carried out correctly. The Department should increase the standard guarantee period for all excavations up to five years, as was considered in its 2019 consultation. Utility companies should also face fines for any secondary remedial work that is required to the road or pavement within five years, as a penalty for the unnecessary disruption caused. These policies combined would create a greater incentive for works to be completed by utility companies to the right standard and relieve some of the pressure on highway authorities, which in some cases have to repair poor reinstatements after just two years.

## Inspections and remedial work

39. Highway authorities have powers to inspect a sample of reinstatements to check that they comply with standards and the Code of Practice for Safety at Street and Road Works. In 2023, the Department for Transport introduced a performance-based inspections regime, which means those utility companies with high failure rates are inspected more than those who are found to comply with standards. There is a financial incentive attached to this, as utility companies have to pay £50 for each inspection, and every three months are moved to a higher or lower sample rate as a result of their performance that quarter. This means that the worst performing companies could eventually have all their reinstatement work inspected by an authority.<sup>53</sup>
40. After an initial inspection, highway authorities have powers to require utility companies to repair any defective reinstatements (which do not comply with the specification) and can then charge companies £120 each for up to two follow-up inspections. If defects have still not been repaired after two follow-up inspections, the highway authority has no option but to repair the defects itself and re-charge the cost to utility companies.<sup>54</sup>
41. Local authorities highlighted some issues with this inspections process which make it difficult for them to deal with poor reinstatements effectively. For example, the two-cycle cap on inspections means that the inspections process does not provide a financial incentive for utility companies to fix a defect once they have already been inspected twice.<sup>55</sup> Richmond Council described how after two cycles “the utility provider can take months to

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53 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

54 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

55 Shropshire Council ([MIS0082](#))

carry out remedial works and the highway authority has no mechanism to put pressure on them” since they are no longer able to charge for further inspections. The Council suggested that the two-cycle cap should be removed to allow charges for inspections until the reinstatement is complete.<sup>56</sup>

- 42.** Another issue was the lack of timescales to require utility companies to fix a defect found during an inspection. This means defects remain in place for long periods of time with no urgency from utility companies to fix the problem.<sup>57</sup> For example, at the time of their submission, Shropshire Council reported that it had 347 outstanding defects waiting for repair by utility companies after an inspection, with 60 per cent of these dating back more than six months and 36 per cent more than one year.<sup>58</sup> Transport for London suggested that the timeframes for utility companies to repair accepted defects should be prescribed because some utility companies “take longer than reasonably necessary to remedy some defects due to the lack of prescribed timeframe”.<sup>59</sup>
- 43.** Local authorities also said the expectation on local authorities to fix defects themselves after two failed inspections adds to the workload of highway authorities which are already struggling to keep up with their highway maintenance backlog. Wandsworth Council told us that “highway authorities simply do not have the resources to be carrying out remedial works for utilities on top of their own highway maintenance”.<sup>60</sup>
- 44. CONCLUSION**
- The process whereby authorities inspect reinstatements for defects after works are complete is not working as well as it should be, with weak incentives for utility companies to fix the defects promptly, or at all, once they have been found during an inspection.

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56 Richmond Council ([MIS0038](#))

57 Tony Pegrum ([MIS0010](#))

58 Shropshire Council ([MIS0057](#))

59 Transport for London ([MIS0075](#))

60 Wandsworth Council ([MIS0026](#))

45.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Department should introduce timescales for companies to repair faulty reinstatements, with meaningfully increasing fines if they fail to do so on time. The fine should increase each time a deadline has not been met, and the company responsible should also pay the Department a sum equivalent to the cost of compliance after the first exceeded deadline. The two-cycle inspection cap should also be lifted so that there is no limit on the number of inspections which can be carried out. This would provide an ongoing financial incentive for a defective reinstatement to be fixed by the company which created the issue, instead of expecting authorities to repair it themselves and charge the costs back to the company, which would end up nullifying the guarantee period.

## Dispute resolution

46. In some cases, local authorities and street works companies disagree on matters relating to street works, such as who should be responsible for fixing a defect or through differing interpretations of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. If an agreement cannot be reached there is a dispute process to be followed as set out by the Department for Transport (see the box below).<sup>61</sup>

### Box 1: Dispute resolution for street works in England

- Straightforward issues: matter referred to the chairs of a regional Highways Authority and Utilities Committee (HAUC) for mediation.
- Complex issues: matter referred to HAUC (England) for mediation, consisting of a review panel of two or more members, at least one utility company and one local authority. If the matter is still not resolved the case is referred to HAUC (UK) with a panel of four people. The advice given can be shared in an anonymised way with the rest of the sector if both parties agree.
- Adjudication: if agreement cannot be reached by panel review, the chairs of HAUC(UK) will appoint an independent adjudicator from a list of recognised bodies. The decision of the adjudicator is deemed to be final.

Source: Department for Transport, [Code of practice for the co-ordination of street and road works](#), March 2023

61 Department for Transport, [Code of practice for the co-ordination of street and road works](#), March 2023

47. Local authorities told us that the proceedings of Highways Authority and Utilities Committee (HAUC) resolution panels can be inconclusive and sometimes lead to further confusion, since the panel consists of an equal number of utility and highway authority representatives, who tend to divide along predictable lines. Tony Pegrum, a Traffic Manager at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea explained that part of the problem is the lack of an independent voice on the panel.<sup>62</sup> Adjudicators consider cases referred to them on a case-by-case basis, and do not issue rulings that apply across the sector.<sup>63</sup>
48. There was some support therefore for the idea of introducing a Commissioner in England who could perform a similar role to that of the Scottish Road Works Commissioner: an independent arbiter of disputes that cannot be resolved locally.<sup>64</sup> Kevin Hamilton, the Scottish Road Works Commissioner, explained that when a matter cannot be resolved in a disputes panel, he will review the case and make an opinion. He told us that this opinion is not legally binding so the case could still go to court, although this is very rare and the final opinion usually settles the dispute.<sup>65</sup>
49. Tony Pegrum of Kensington and Chelsea said that this “seems to work well” and saw “no reason why something similar shouldn’t be introduced in England”.<sup>66</sup> Street Works UK and Cadent Gas thought that oversight of the dispute resolution process in England would be improved with a commissioner because “in Scotland, in cases of disagreement or dispute there is a single knowledgeable point of resolution with powers to enforce decisions”, whereas in England the only options to settle a dispute are through court proceedings or informal dispute resolution via HAUC where “there is a lack of expertise or authority in reaching resolution”.<sup>67</sup>
50. Street Works UK and Cadent Gas also supported the broader functions of the Commissioner, saying that in Scotland the role had driven up quality and standards across the street and road works industries, particularly in relation to consistency in how reinstatements are carried out. Street Works UK thought a commissioner role in England could help drive consistency of approach.<sup>68</sup> Transport for London also supported the idea, calling for an

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62 Tony Pegrum ([MIS0010](#))

63 Department for Transport, [Code of practice for the co-ordination of street and road works](#), March 2023

64 Transport for London ([MIS0075](#))

65 [Q110](#)

66 Tony Pegrum ([MIS0010](#))

67 Street Works UK, Cadent Gas Limited ([MIS0079](#))

68 Street Works UK ([MIS0034](#))

independent party with powers to monitor and report on the performance of all bodies involved, with the ability to apply sanctions and act as the final arbiter in disputes.<sup>69</sup>

51. We asked the Minister for the Future of Roads whether she thought a Street Works Commissioner would be useful in England. The Minister noted that the scale of works carried out on roads in England is substantially greater than in Scotland, and that establishing a position similar to the Scottish Road Works Commissioner would be “quite a substantial investment” at a time when the Government is moving away from having more arm’s length bodies.<sup>70</sup> The Minister also said that a Commissioner role similar to Scotland’s would not introduce any new powers that are not already shared between local authorities and the Department for Transport, and that moving to a new system would be challenging.<sup>71</sup>
52. The Scottish Road Works Commissioner’s office was funded by Grant in Aid of £535,000 in 2023–24.<sup>72</sup> In 2023–24 there were 13.5 times more street and road works in England than in Scotland;<sup>73</sup> if the cost of a Commissioner function were to be in proportion, it would cost around £7.2 million. While this is a significant sum, we note that the Government announced in December 2024 that it was allocating £1.6 billion for highway maintenance, and that the Asphalt Industry Alliance (as cited above) has assessed the cost to local authorities of the consequences of poor reinstatements at £67 million annually.<sup>74</sup> The costs of legal action to deal with disputes are unknown.

53. **CONCLUSION**

The current dispute resolution process does not seem to be working well. Disagreements relating to the interpretation of street works legislation can end up as legal disputes which are resource intensive for authorities and utility companies alike.

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69 Transport for London ([MIS0075](#))

70 [Q151](#)

71 [Q159](#)

72 The Scottish Road Works Commissioner, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023–24](#)

73 The Scottish Road Works Commissioner, [ROAD WORKS MONITORING REPORT 2023–24](#) says 163,147 works were started in Scotland 2023–24, and Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#)) says 2.2 million works were carried out in England 2023–24

74 Department for Transport, [Press release: Seven million more potholes to be filled next year as public urged to report roads in need of repair](#), December 2024



54.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Department for Transport should consider setting up a Street Works Commissioner in England to help ensure the consistent application and interpretation of legislation, provide an option for independent dispute resolution and monitor performance across the sector. This would provide clarity for the street works industry and help promote good practice. If the Department considers this approach too costly, it must identify and put in place an alternative approach to ensure that common areas of dispute can be resolved efficiently by an independent, central function whose decisions can be communicated and applied across the sector.

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## 4 Managing disruption

55. Street works can cause disruption as workers need to occupy parts of the road or pavement to access utility infrastructure, or close it entirely. This disruption often leads to congestion and delays, and can block access to important services ranging from high streets to bus stops. Local authorities aim to reduce disruption by working with utility companies and using various tools to manage how work is carried out, such as permit schemes and lane rental schemes. Evidence to our inquiry discussed the extent to which local authorities are given sufficient information to help them manage street works effectively.

### Permits

56. Permit schemes allow local authorities to have more control over how and when works should take place, including the ability to challenge utility companies on the duration of their planned work and refuse permits.<sup>75</sup> If works overrun their agreed permit duration, they can be subject to overrun charges. However, the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation told us that, although permits create an incentive to finish works on time, there is no incentive for companies to complete work before the end of the permit.<sup>76</sup> Shropshire Council suggested that reduced work durations could be incentivised by a new permit fee structure, so that the fee paid is linked to the work duration.<sup>77</sup>

57. **RECOMMENDATION**  
The Department for Transport should consult on amending guidance for permit schemes so that fees incentivise completion of works earlier than the period allowed for by a permit.

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75 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

76 The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) ([MIS0027](#))

77 Shropshire Council ([MIS0082](#))

## Immediate permits

**58.** Immediate permits, as defined in the Department for Transport’s statutory guidance for permit schemes, are issued by local authorities to cover either:

- emergency works, where immediate action is needed to prevent danger to people or property; or
- urgent works, where immediate action is needed to prevent a loss of the service provided by the utility company.

When utility companies use these permits, they can begin the works immediately without needing to notify the local authority until up to two hours after the work has started.<sup>78</sup>

**59.** Since immediate permits do not require advance notice to local authorities, they often begin before the authority is aware of them.<sup>79</sup> Kent County Council told us that the use of immediate permits bypasses their opportunity and duty to plan and coordinate where and how works are carried out to avoid disruption.<sup>80</sup> Wandsworth Council explained that the lack of council involvement until work has started means they are unable to give advance notice to residents; their response has to be reactive rather than pre-planned.<sup>81</sup>

**60.** The use of immediate permits is becoming more common. In England, 30.1 per cent of all street works in 2023–24 were carried out under an immediate permit, an increase from 26.7 per cent in 2021–22.<sup>82</sup> Some local authorities, such as Shropshire Council, raised concerns that in some cases, urgent permits are being misused. They argued that these permits are being used for “poorly planned maintenance works and works that are time sensitive such as new connections which are often driven by complaining customers or the utility’s own regulatory pressures”.<sup>83</sup> Tony Hemingway of Transport for Greater Manchester described how immediate permits can be used whenever there is an “unplanned interruption” which is a very broad term and can be very hard to argue against. He gave the example of how a crackly phone line, which had been known about for weeks, could be deemed an unplanned interruption, meaning they have the right to go and dig up the highway without needing to notify the local authority in advance.<sup>84</sup>

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78 Department for Transport, [Permit schemes: statutory guidance for highway authorities](#), July 2022

79 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

80 [Q76](#)

81 Wandsworth Council ([MIS0026](#))

82 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

83 Shropshire Council ([MIS0082](#))

84 [Q78](#)

61. Local authorities did, however, acknowledge that utility companies are operating within the current framework of rules that have been set by the Government, and that they are not under any obligation to give a local authority advance notice for works to maintain the supply of their utility service.<sup>85</sup> Mark Whittaker of Cadent Gas explained that immediate permits are essential for carrying out their services and argued that it is right that utility companies focus on dealing with situations affecting supply or causing a risk to life first before collating information for a permit. He also said that local authorities could still manage their work through permit conditions once the permit has been submitted.<sup>86</sup>
62. Neil Edwards of Kent County Council suggested that new or amended categories of permit could be introduced that would require utility companies to give local authorities more advance warning of works that they will be carrying out to maintain the supply of their service.<sup>87</sup> Tony Hemingway of Transport for Greater Manchester alternatively proposed that the type of permit that can be used should depend on the severity of the disruption. This would address a problem with the current system that any type of service interruption (including very minor interruptions such as a trickling pipe) can be used as a reason to use an immediate permit with no requirement to warn local authorities in advance.<sup>88</sup>
63. The Department for Transport told us that it had looked into the use of immediate permits by examining Street Manager data and speaking to industry representatives and had not found evidence of misuse so far.<sup>89</sup> We asked the Minister if she was concerned about misuse or overuse of immediate permits, and she confirmed that the Department had not been able to verify whether there is abuse. The Minister reported that the Department had seen a significant number of immediate permits being used by water companies, which may be a result of struggling to carry out proactive repairs and instead waiting until an issue is urgent before carrying out the work. When we asked whether it would be worth reviewing the definitions for the types of immediate permits, the Minister said that she “absolutely agree[d] that we could look at whether there is an opportunity to tighten the definition of those works”, and that the Department was working with HAUC to update the Code of Practice for the Co-ordination of Street and Road Works to make it clearer when they can be used.<sup>90</sup>

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85 [Q79](#)

86 [Q53](#)

87 [Q79](#)

88 [Q78](#)

89 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

90 [Qq183-185](#)

64.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Immediate urgent and immediate emergency permits are an essential tool, but they should be used in situations when there is a genuine need or plan to urgently fix a problem. The Department for Transport should consult on how the use and definition of urgent works could be amended to prevent the use of these permits for works which are known about by utility companies well in advance or do not require instant attention, such as a low level waterpipe leak. Options could include introducing a new category of immediate permit which accommodates work to maintain the supply of a service but is not going to be fixed immediately, or reforming immediate permits so that the level of advance warning required is linked to the severity of disruption. The Department should consider whether fines could also be used against companies which are found to have misused immediate permits.

## The planning of upcoming street works

65. The ability of local authorities to manage street works in their area depends on good communication between the authority and the companies carrying out the street works. This enables local authorities to put in place measures to manage the impact they might have, such as notifying affected bus services or asking for works to be completed outside of peak hours.<sup>91</sup> Without coordination, the same areas can be subjected to repeating disruption from different utility companies. Councillor Tom Besford described the kind of situation that can occur when works are poorly coordinated:

first UU dig up the road to repair the water pipes, then once they've filled it in, ENW dig it up again to repair electricity, then once they've filled it in, [Cadent] dig it up for gas, and finally Virgin or BT for the broadband / phone lines. This is stupid, prolonged and unnecessary.<sup>92</sup>

66. Kate Carpenter, representing the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, related an example from her career of attempting to coordinate works among utility companies to take place at the same time as other planned work:

We had a go at that. We tried to close an unclassified road [...] to replace a bridge, so we contacted all the departments of the council and all the utilities and said "We'll have this road closed for six months. You can come in from each end and do all the works within that. No cost of permitting; it will all be available and will be nice

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91 Hampshire County Council ([MIS0012](#))

92 Councillor Tom Besford ([MIS0003](#))

and easy.” All of them said they would do the work and then, as we approached the job, one by one they pulled out and no one else did the work. The closure took place with none of those opportunities. The following year the road was continually dug up.<sup>93</sup>

Ms Carpenter concluded that this shows the incentives to collaborate are not right, because “it is too easy to do [the works] at a different time”.

- 67.** Utility companies told us that in practice it can be difficult to coordinate work for a number of reasons. For example, the complexity of how pipes and cables are laid out under the surface, with different utilities at different depths and a poor understanding of exactly where these pipes and cables will be, makes it difficult to plan the work between separate companies as the complexity can only be understood once the work has started.<sup>94</sup> Commercial disincentives can also make utility companies avoid sharing work opportunities. Mark Whitaker of Cadent Gas described the difficulty of determining which of the collaborating companies would be responsible for certain parts of the work, or which company should be responsible for carrying out remedial work if the reinstatement were to fail, for example.<sup>95</sup>
- 68.** The Department for Transport has issued a code of practice for the co-ordination of street and road works, which provides guidance to local authorities and utility companies on how they can support better coordination and collaboration. The guidance encourages, but does not require, utility companies to share ‘forward planning information’ on the Street Manager system and encourages local authorities and utility companies to identify opportunities to coordinate work during quarterly co-ordination meetings.<sup>96</sup> Shropshire Council said that utility companies rarely use forward planning notices, and suggested that they should be made mandatory.<sup>97</sup> We heard from local authorities including Shropshire and Wandsworth that there is significant variation between utility companies in terms of their engagement or attendance at coordination meetings.<sup>98</sup>

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93 [Q128](#)

94 [Q39](#)

95 [Q45](#)

96 Department for Transport, [Code of practice for the co-ordination of street and road works](#), March 2023

97 Shropshire Council ([MIS0082](#))

98 Wandsworth Council ([MIS0026](#)) and [Q84](#)

69.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Collaboration and coordination of works between utility companies and local authorities relies on sharing information on upcoming works well in advance. There are currently no requirements on utility companies to share plans for their upcoming work with local authorities. The Department should introduce requirements for utility companies to share their plans for upcoming work at the earliest opportunity, such as by making forward planning notices mandatory. The Department should keep under review how effectively this increases collaboration in practice. If it does not, the Department should develop options for tools to mandate collaboration when necessary, such as giving local authorities ability through permit conditions to enforce site-sharing.

70.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Up-to-date information on local street works is essential for the public, whether residents or road users. The Department should support the development and promotion of apps which make use of open source data, and ensure that the data is accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date.

## New housing developments

71.

A particular frustration in some areas is an apparent lack of coordination of works to install and connect utilities for new housing developments, as these are works that ought to be known about well in advance. This can lead to repeated periods of disruption on nearby roads.<sup>99</sup> Utility company representatives and local authorities told us that where works are uncoordinated, this is in part due to new housing developments being built by different companies, each with their own planning approach and different timelines for completion.<sup>100</sup> Since utility companies have a timeframe to complete the work once it has been requested by each housing developer, the opportunities for collaboration are missed and the local area may be subject to repeated works.<sup>101</sup>

72.

The Joint Authorities Group (UK), which represents highway authorities, suggested to the Committee that utility service connections should be considered at the planning stage for new housing developments, and that a utility services plan should be required from housing developers. This could

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99 CPT (The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK) ([MIS0065](#))

100 [Qq42-43](#)

101 [Q39](#), [Qq42-43](#) and JAG(UK) ([MIS0083](#))

give local authorities more time and opportunity to coordinate disruption on the networks surrounding developments, or at least ensure they are better prepared to minimise the upcoming disruption.<sup>102</sup>

73. We asked the Minister whether there is a need for guidance relating to the street works which are needed for new housing developments. She responded that the Department could “look at whether we could do more to ensure that developers share information with the local authority about what their plans are and the timeframes”. The Minister said that providing guidance in this area to encourage good practice would be a good idea.<sup>103</sup>

74. **RECOMMENDATION**

Coordination of street works for new housing developments is not happening as often as it should. The Department for Transport should work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on how best to ensure that authorities are notified at an early stage of, and have an opportunity to coordinate, the plans for utility connections to new housing developments. This should include requirements for housing developers and utility companies to share plans and timelines for installation of utility infrastructure to new housing developments, and setting out guidance to minimise transport disruption from such works.

## Lane rental schemes

75. Lane rental schemes allow local authorities to charge companies a daily fee for carrying out works on the busiest roads (see Box 2 below for further information). There are currently five lane rental schemes in operation, with the first schemes being introduced 2012.<sup>104</sup> The Government set out in its December 2024 English Devolution White Paper proposals to devolve the power to approve lane rental schemes, which currently sits with the Secretary of State for Transport, to Mayors in strategic mayoral authorities. However, if an area is not part of a strategic mayoral authority, the power to approve will remain with the Secretary of State.<sup>105</sup>

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102 JAG(UK) ([MIS0083](#))

103 [Q176](#)

104 Department for Transport, [Lane rental schemes: guidance for English highway authorities](#), April 2025 (note: the fifth lane rental scheme started in East Sussex in April 2025)

105 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))



## Box 2: Lane rental schemes

- Lane rental schemes allow a highway authority to charge up to £2,500 per day for works on the busiest roads at the busiest times. These schemes work alongside permit schemes.
- The main aim of lane rental is to provide a financial incentive to encourage utility companies to reduce the duration of the works. This could be through more efficient planning, carrying out works outside of peak periods or optimising the number of operatives on site to complete the works as quickly as possible.<sup>106</sup>
- Evaluations carried out on schemes which have been in operation for a while (such as Transport for London, Kent County Council and West Sussex County Council) found that the schemes were successful in reducing disruption from works on the busiest roads, since utility companies were aiming to complete work outside of busy hours or collaborate more with other companies.<sup>107</sup>

Source: Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

- 76.** Local authorities told us that they are keen to see greater use of lane rental schemes as a tool to help manage disruption caused by street works on their busiest roads.<sup>108</sup> Those schemes already in operation have been deemed a success across a range of metrics, including improved journey times during peak periods, reduced disruption and an increase in collaborative works.<sup>109</sup> Transport for London (TfL) told us that the benefits delivered by lane rental schemes are considerable and far ranging beyond the primary purpose of reducing disruption. These benefits have included improved journey times of five to eight per cent during peak periods, reduced disruption saving an average of 988 days of works per year and increased collaborative working between utility companies. TfL told us that “it is difficult to think of anything more effective than lane rental in reducing disruption”.<sup>110</sup>
- 77.** Utility companies, however, argued that lane rental schemes should not be necessary if permit schemes are being used effectively. They expressed concerns that some schemes could be used as a revenue-generating

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106 Department for Transport, [Lane rental schemes: guidance for English highway authorities](#), April 2025

107 Department for Transport, [Street works lane rental evaluation](#), March 2016

108 [Q103](#)

109 Transport for London ([MIS0075](#))

110 Transport for London ([MIS0075](#))

opportunity by local authorities, particularly if they are designed in a way which charges the company immediately for anything it does, regardless of whether or not the work is carried out in less disruptive ways.<sup>111</sup>

- 78.** Street Works UK told us that it would be better if lane rental schemes were set up in a similar way to Kent County Council's scheme, which has been in place since 2013.<sup>112</sup> This scheme operates with a two-day fee-free period for immediate works, which intends to incentivise utility companies to complete works more quickly (within the fee-free window) and to a higher standard so that they do not need to carry out remedial works in the future which would also incur a charge.<sup>113</sup>
- 79.** When we asked the Minister whether other schemes should feature a fee-free window; she told us that the flexibility in how lane rental schemes are set up is good because local authorities can then operate them in a way which works best in their area.<sup>114</sup>

## Wider rollout of lane rental schemes

- 80.** Although any local authority can set up a lane rental scheme, this requires approval of the Secretary of State and can be a costly process.<sup>115</sup> When asked why the Government does not propose to make powers to approve lane rental schemes more widely available beyond mayors of strategic authorities, the Department said that they are still a fairly new tool, and it is wary of devolving the entirety of lane rental down to purely local decisions given the impact they can have on utility works.<sup>116</sup> The Department told us that it planned to keep the rollout of lane rental schemes under review, that it was currently assessing eight new applications for schemes, and that it knew of at least twelve more applications being prepared.<sup>117</sup>

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111 [Q50](#)

112 Kent County Council, [Kent Lane Rental Scheme Operational Guidance](#), October 2020

113 [Qq101-103](#)

114 [Q200](#)

115 Department for Transport ([MIS0064](#))

116 [Qq201-202](#)

117 [Qq203-206](#)

**81.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Lane rental schemes have worked well and can be a useful tool for authorities to manage disruption on their busiest stretches of roads. The Department for Transport should go further to encourage and support more local authorities to set up lane rental schemes by allowing all relevant authorities to do so without the need for approval from the Secretary of State. Lane rental guidance from the Department should also encourage schemes that are set up in such a way as to incentivise the speedy completion of works, rather than imposing charges straight away.

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# Conclusions and recommendations

## The impact of street works

1. Street works are essential for many of the services we rely upon, such as running water, energy and internet access, but they can cause widespread issues for road and pavement users alike. Street works can disrupt people's journeys, including through congestion, delays and road closures which affect drivers, cyclists and bus users. The patchy, uneven surfaces which can be left behind once works are complete, and barriers and signs left in place for excessive periods, can be problematic for road users and worsen accessibility on pavements. (Conclusion, Paragraph 21)
2. Leaving equipment or signs in place that imply to the public that street works are still ongoing when they have finished should attract a full overrun charge. (Recommendation, Paragraph 22)
3. All road closure signage should specify exactly where the road closure is. When immediate permits are issued, this should be done as soon as reasonably practicable. (Recommendation, Paragraph 23)
4. In our report about accessibility in transport, we asked for more transparency about the impact that the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) has on the Department's decision-making. This is important for providing assurance that policy processes in respect of accessibility have been robust and meaningful. It was disappointing that the Minister and Deputy Director were unable to provide specific information about DPTAC's feedback on the Safety Code of Practice for street works or how the draft had been changed in response to it. (Conclusion, Paragraph 27)
5. We ask the Department to set out specific changes that have been made to the new Safety Code of Practice to improve accessibility during street works and how advice from DPTAC has been incorporated. (Recommendation, Paragraph 28)

## Managing the impact on roads and pavements

6. It was disappointing to hear that, having said in 2019 that further investigation was needed into the financial impacts of increasing the guarantee period, the Department has not undertaken any further work on the issues. This is an inefficient use of a resource-intensive consultation process. (Conclusion, Paragraph 36)
7. Local authority budgets for road maintenance are stretched thin; they can ill afford the expense of making good reinstatements which are not up to scratch. We note the concern about increasing costs being reflected in utility bills, but there is a balance to be struck: good quality road and pavement surfaces are also in consumers' interests. A two-year guarantee for a publicly-maintained asset is inadequate, especially since reinstatements which meet the standards tend to last more than ten years. (Conclusion, Paragraph 37)
8. The current guarantee period of two or three years for reinstatements after works, the latter being for deep excavations, is too short given that reinstatements should last more than ten years if carried out correctly. The Department should increase the standard guarantee period for all excavations up to five years, as was considered in its 2019 consultation. Utility companies should also face fines for any secondary remedial work that is required to the road or pavement within five years, as a penalty for the unnecessary disruption caused. These policies combined would create a greater incentive for works to be completed by utility companies to the right standard and relieve some of the pressure on highway authorities, which in some cases have to repair poor reinstatements after just two years. (Recommendation, Paragraph 38)
9. The process whereby authorities inspect reinstatements for defects after works are complete is not working as well as it should be, with weak incentives for utility companies to fix the defects promptly, or at all, once they have been found during an inspection. (Conclusion, Paragraph 44)
10. The Department should introduce timescales for companies to repair faulty reinstatements, with meaningfully increasing fines if they fail to do so on time. The fine should increase each time a deadline has not been met, and the company responsible should also pay the Department a sum equivalent to the cost of compliance after the first exceeded deadline. The two-cycle inspection cap should also be lifted so that there is no limit on the number of inspections which can be carried out. This would provide an ongoing financial incentive for a defective reinstatement to be fixed by the

company which created the issue, instead of expecting authorities to repair it themselves and charge the costs back to the company, which would end up nullifying the guarantee period. (Recommendation, Paragraph 45)

11. The current dispute resolution process does not seem to be working well. Disagreements relating to the interpretation of street works legislation can end up as legal disputes which are resource intensive for authorities and utility companies alike. (Conclusion, Paragraph 53)
12. The Department for Transport should consider setting up a Street Works Commissioner in England to help ensure the consistent application and interpretation of legislation, provide an option for independent dispute resolution and monitor performance across the sector. This would provide clarity for the street works industry and help promote good practice. If the Department considers this approach too costly, it must identify and put in place an alternative approach to ensure that common areas of dispute can be resolved efficiently by an independent, central function whose decisions can be communicated and applied across the sector. (Recommendation, Paragraph 54)

## Managing disruption

13. The Department for Transport should consult on amending guidance for permit schemes so that fees incentivise completion of works earlier than the period allowed for by a permit. (Recommendation, Paragraph 57)
14. Immediate urgent and immediate emergency permits are an essential tool, but they should be used in situations when there is a genuine need or plan to urgently fix a problem. The Department for Transport should consult on how the use and definition of urgent works could be amended to prevent the use of these permits for works which are known about by utility companies well in advance or do not require instant attention, such as a low level waterpipe leak. Options could include introducing a new category of immediate permit which accommodates work to maintain the supply of a service but is not going to be fixed immediately, or reforming immediate permits so that the level of advance warning required is linked to the severity of disruption. The Department should consider whether fines could also be used against companies which are found to have misused immediate permits. (Recommendation, Paragraph 64)
15. Collaboration and coordination of works between utility companies and local authorities relies on sharing information on upcoming works well in advance. There are currently no requirements on utility companies to share plans for their upcoming work with local authorities. The Department should introduce requirements for utility companies to share their plans

for upcoming work at the earliest opportunity, such as by making forward planning notices mandatory. The Department should keep under review how effectively this increases collaboration in practice. If it does not, the Department should develop options for tools to mandate collaboration when necessary, such as giving local authorities ability through permit conditions to enforce site-sharing. (Recommendation, Paragraph 69)

16. Up-to-date information on local street works is essential for the public, whether residents or road users. The Department should support the development and promotion of apps which make use of open source data, and ensure that the data is accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date. (Recommendation, Paragraph 70)
17. Coordination of street works for new housing developments is not happening as often as it should. The Department for Transport should work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on how best to ensure that authorities are notified at an early stage of, and have an opportunity to coordinate, the plans for utility connections to new housing developments. This should include requirements for housing developers and utility companies to share plans and timelines for installation of utility infrastructure to new housing developments, and setting out guidance to minimise transport disruption from such works. (Recommendation, Paragraph 74)
18. Lane rental schemes have worked well and can be a useful tool for authorities to manage disruption on their busiest stretches of roads. The Department for Transport should go further to encourage and support more local authorities to set up lane rental schemes by allowing all relevant authorities to do so without the need for approval from the Secretary of State. Lane rental guidance from the Department should also encourage schemes that are set up in such a way as to incentivise the speedy completion of works, rather than imposing charges straight away. (Recommendation, Paragraph 81)

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# Formal minutes

**Tuesday 24 June 2025**

## Members present:

Ruth Cadbury, in the Chair

Steff Aquarone

Dr Scott Arthur

Catherine Atkinson

Katie Lam

Alex Mayer

## Managing the impact of street works

Draft Report (*Managing the impact of street works*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 81 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

## Adjournment

Adjourned till tomorrow at 9.30 am



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# Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Wednesday 5 March 2025

**Jack Cousens**, Head of Roads Policy, The AA; **Emma Vogelmann**, Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Campaigns, Transport for All; **Mr Keith McNally**, Operations Director, Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) [Q1–31](#)

**Clive Bairsto**, Chief Executive, Street Works UK; **Till Sommer**, Head of Policy, Internet Services Providers' Association; **Mark Whittaker**, Head of Works Quality and Management Systems, Cadent Gas Limited [Q32–62](#)

## Wednesday 19 March 2025

**Councillor Adam Hug**, Chair of Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board, Local Government Association; **Neil Edwards**, Traffic Manager, Kent County Council; **Jane James**, Street Works Policy and Performance Manager, Shropshire Council; **Tony Hemingway**, KRN Highway Asset Manager, Transport for Greater Manchester [Q63–105](#)

**Kevin Hamilton**, Commissioner, Scottish Road Works Commissioner; **Kate Carpenter**, Representative, Learned Society and Technical Strategy Board, Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation; **Sarah Widdows**, Chair, JAG(UK) [Q106–132](#)

## Wednesday 30 April 2025

**Lilian Greenwood MP**, Minister for the Future of Roads, Department for Transport; **Anthony Ferguson**, Deputy Director for Traffic and Technology, Department for Transport [Q133–210](#)

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# Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

MIS numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Affinity Water	<a href="#">MIS0046</a>
2	Anglian Water	<a href="#">MIS0047</a>
3	Asphalt Industry Alliance	<a href="#">MIS0019</a>
4	Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT)	<a href="#">MIS0030</a>
5	Bath & North East Somerset Council	<a href="#">MIS0007</a>
6	Besford, Councillor Tom	<a href="#">MIS0003</a>
7	Buckinghamshire Council	<a href="#">MIS0037</a>
8	CPT (The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK)	<a href="#">MIS0065</a>
9	Cadent Gas Ltd	<a href="#">MIS0050</a>
10	Central District Alliance Business Improvement District; and Hatton Garden BID	<a href="#">MIS0076</a>
11	Civil Engineering Contractors Association	<a href="#">MIS0059</a>
12	Cornwall Council - Transport Co-ordination Service	<a href="#">MIS0058</a>
13	Department for Transport	<a href="#">MIS0064</a>
14	Derbyshire County Council	<a href="#">MIS0042</a>
15	Devon County Council	<a href="#">MIS0066</a>
16	Dorset Council	<a href="#">MIS0054</a>
17	First Bus	<a href="#">MIS0073</a>
18	GAIST Solutions Ltd	<a href="#">MIS0080</a>
19	Hampshire County Council	<a href="#">MIS0012</a>
20	Hemiko	<a href="#">MIS0029</a>
21	Hertfordshire County Council	<a href="#">MIS0015</a>
22	ISPA	<a href="#">MIS0069</a>
23	Independent Networks Co-operative Association (INCA)	<a href="#">MIS0048</a>

24	JAG(UK)	<a href="#"><u>MIS0083</u></a>
25	JAG(UK)	<a href="#"><u>MIS0081</u></a>
26	JAG(UK)	<a href="#"><u>MIS0009</u></a>
27	Kent County Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0074</u></a>
28	Knoll Residents Association	<a href="#"><u>MIS0002</u></a>
29	Lam MP, Katie	<a href="#"><u>MIS0084</u></a>
30	LSBUD (LinesearchbeforeUdig)	<a href="#"><u>MIS0067</u></a>
31	Local Government Association	<a href="#"><u>MIS0016</u></a>
32	London Borough Bexley	<a href="#"><u>MIS0024</u></a>
33	London Borough of Camden	<a href="#"><u>MIS0045</u></a>
34	London Borough of Enfield	<a href="#"><u>MIS0041</u></a>
35	Mobile Infrastructure Forum	<a href="#"><u>MIS0033</u></a>
36	Mobile UK	<a href="#"><u>MIS0032</u></a>
37	Mossman, Alan	<a href="#"><u>MIS0001</u></a>
38	National Grid Electricity Distribution	<a href="#"><u>MIS0055</u></a>
39	Northern Powergrid	<a href="#"><u>MIS0039</u></a>
40	OCU Group Ltd	<a href="#"><u>MIS0028</u></a>
41	Openreach	<a href="#"><u>MIS0043</u></a>
42	Pegrum, Tony	<a href="#"><u>MIS0010</u></a>
43	Phillips, Mr Heath (Head of Traffic Management, Via East Midlands Ltd)	<a href="#"><u>MIS0005</u></a>
44	RAC Foundation	<a href="#"><u>MIS0068</u></a>
45	RTIG Inform	<a href="#"><u>MIS0018</u></a>
46	Rawson, Mr Michael	<a href="#"><u>MIS0004</u></a>
47	Richmond Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0038</u></a>
48	Rochdale Borough Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0035</u></a>
49	Salford City Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0008</u></a>
50	Scottish Road Works Commissioner	<a href="#"><u>MIS0006</u></a>
51	Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks	<a href="#"><u>MIS0025</u></a>
52	Severn Trent Water	<a href="#"><u>MIS0060</u></a>
53	Shropshire Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0082</u></a>
54	Shropshire Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0057</u></a>
55	Somerset Bus Partnership	<a href="#"><u>MIS0062</u></a>

56	Somerset Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0021</u></a>
57	Southern Water	<a href="#"><u>MIS0022</u></a>
58	Stagecoach South East	<a href="#"><u>MIS0072</u></a>
59	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0071</u></a>
60	Street works manager at a highway authority	<a href="#"><u>MIS0070</u></a>
61	Street Works UK	<a href="#"><u>MIS0034</u></a>
62	Street Works UK; and Cadent Gas Limited	<a href="#"><u>MIS0079</u></a>
63	Sykes, Ms Annabel	<a href="#"><u>MIS0031</u></a>
64	The AA	<a href="#"><u>MIS0014</u></a>
65	The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT)	<a href="#"><u>MIS0027</u></a>
66	The London Borough of Southwark	<a href="#"><u>MIS0053</u></a>
67	Transport and Health Science Group	<a href="#"><u>MIS0017</u></a>
68	Transport for All	<a href="#"><u>MIS0011</u></a>
69	Transport for Greater Manchester; and The Ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities	<a href="#"><u>MIS0049</u></a>
70	Transport for London	<a href="#"><u>MIS0075</u></a>
71	Transport for West Midlands	<a href="#"><u>MIS0023</u></a>
72	TravelWatch SouthWest	<a href="#"><u>MIS0036</u></a>
73	Travers, Professor Tony	<a href="#"><u>MIS0077</u></a>
74	UK Power Networks	<a href="#"><u>MIS0044</u></a>
75	United Utilities	<a href="#"><u>MIS0052</u></a>
76	Urban Transport Group	<a href="#"><u>MIS0063</u></a>
77	Walsall Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0040</u></a>
78	Wandsworth Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0026</u></a>
79	Westminster City Council	<a href="#"><u>MIS0056</u></a>
80	Wheels for Wellbeing	<a href="#"><u>MIS0013</u></a>

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# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2024–25

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Access denied: rights versus reality in disabled people's access to transport	HC 770
1st Special	Access denied: rights versus reality in disabled people's access to transport: Government Response	HC 931