

1. Response form

Getting a good deal for road users

We have developed these ideas so that all those using local 'A' roads have better journeys, whether they are travelling for leisure, business, or commuting - especially at weekends. So first, we have some questions for road users, before moving onto questions aimed at local authorities and those carrying out works on the roads.

Question 1: As a road user, do you support the aims of these proposals?

Comments:

No one likes to be held up by road works and all road users will naturally support the proposals but such a response does not take account of the overall cost of achieving this or the impact on those involved in undertaking the works. Road users expect road workers to be working at times when road users are not doing so themselves which is somewhat unequitable.

Question 2: Do you have any suggestions about how those carrying out the works could communicate better with road users to minimise delays and frustration? Please give examples.

Comments:

Improvements could be made to achieve more consistency in on-street advance warning signs and to improve conspicuity of these but this can be constrained by physical space and the need to provide concise text such that drivers can readily read the signs whilst driving.

The industry has taken on board many approaches to communication and makes information readily available especially via the internet using systems like ELGIN / roadworks.org.

Further development of web based publicity and use of social media has potential to reach many road users. Resources would be best directed to this area and it is regrettable that the proposal to discontinue the high cost newspaper advertising was not adopted by DfT.

Weekend works

We would like to know the proportion of works that would be affected by the proposed weekend working measures. Our analysis suggests there is a big difference in outcome depending on whether the works' promoter chooses to clear the site or to continue working through the weekend. To help us assess the impact of the proposed measures, please provide the following information.

Question 3: For works' promoters (authorities and utilities), please specify the annual number of works in each category carried out by or for your organisation below. The total of your answers to e, f and g should match your answer to c.

	Major	Standard	Minor	Immediate-emergency	Immediate-urgent	Total
a. How many works in total do you carry out on local roads?	599	511	1424	18	216	2768
b. From your answer to a) How many works are in the carriageway of local 'A' roads?	158	142	426	9	72	807
c. From your answer to b) How many works span one or more weekend(s)?	90	38	2	1	13	144
d. From your answer to c), how many deploy temporary traffic lights (portable traffic signals)?	37	15	0	1	4	57
e. From your answer to c), how many sites do you estimate you would clear at weekends?		Not		available		
f. From your answer to c), at how many sites do you estimate you would continue working at weekends?		Not		available		
g. From your answer to c), at how many works could you re-schedule to avoid weekends?		Not		available		

Question 4: Please tell us the average daily cost for a work gang at minor, standard and major works? (We recognise that larger scale works may require more manpower).

Comments:

Works are defined as minor, standard and major solely on the basis of the works duration. Any data therefore needs to also have the context explained.

A typical daily cost for a gang is of the order of £1100 irrespective of the works category. Where works are of a scale that multiple gangs can be employed the cost per gang remains the same.

Question 5: Please tell us what the percentage uplift on labour costs might be for working a) Saturday and b) Sunday?

Comments:

Uplift is typically 50% on direct costs but there are indirect costs to be taken into account as set out at question 6.

Question 6: What other costs would be incurred by working at weekends? Please give values if you can. Please also tell us if there may be ways of reducing or avoiding these costs.

Comments:

The labour force working at weekends would require rest days during the week which would result in loss of production during Monday to Friday. Theoretically it might be possible to assign additional labour but there would be inherent inefficiencies and lack of continuity of labour. Materials costs especially for coated materials incur additional charges typically £10 per ton and £500 lump sum. Traffic management costs would also increase typically by 50%. There may be some reduction in this uplift if works could be programmed to incur regular weekend or night working where working shifts can be reasonably constant, but this would often require works to be inactive during weekdays.

Question 7: How long would it typically take to return a site to traffic on a Friday, and re-install it on a Monday for each of major, standard and minor works? Please provide costs if you can.

Comments:

See question 1. Any data therefore needs to also have the context explained. There would be considerable differences between sites involving excavations and those subject only to surface treatment. Clearing and setting up works might take something like 3 hours or half a day depending on the scale including extent of traffic management.

Question 8: Is there anything preventing all minor works being started and finished during Monday - Friday?

Comments:

Since minor works are those planned to take no more than 5 days the main constraint would be resourcing. However, there would also be other factors to consider such as other works required before or after those works especially where there is an interface with customers with multiple parties undertaking different elements of a larger project especially those works by utilities to provide services to off-street projects. There may also be local activities which determine the timing of works; a football ground having home matches on Thursday and Tuesday but playing away on Saturday might result in minor works from Friday to Monday.

Question 9: Do you agree that works' promoters could be required to self-report that they have complied with the weekend requirements by providing timed photographic evidence?

Comments:

Photographs could be transmitted as attachments to notices to demonstrate this but some on-site verification should also be expected since it is not simply whether works are present or not that matters but if works are present their impact can also be reduced sometimes through adjustment not identified by the workers.

Question 10: Please tell us how you would deal with any costs that might be incurred from these proposals. Please provide any estimates of costs and impacts.

Comments:

The proposals would increase the cost of carrying out some works which would result in an overall reduction of works undertaken on the authority's roads since

budgets are finite. Although this would also drive a need to further examine whether works can be planned and executed in different ways there would certainly be increased costs for each project. Ultimately, if costs increase due to additional labour costs less work could be undertaken and fewer employees would be required resulting in redundancy.

There would be a need to ensure that any penalty charges were applied in order to support the additional work of coordination teams.

Question 11: Do you think we should set charges on the same basis as over-run charges that are intended to reflect the cost of congestion caused, or is there another basis that would be more effective?

Comments:

Over run charges would probably be appropriate although it has been suggested that higher charges would ensure that greater attention is paid to meeting programmes.

We would like to gather data relating to the cost of congestion in local highway authority areas on 'A' roads. This information is most likely to be available to authorities who have developed a cost benefit analysis related to traffic management such as where they have recently developed a street works permit scheme using 'Quadro'.

Question 12: For local authorities, if you have it, please provide data on the cost of congestion for the 'A' roads in your area, by day of the week if possible.

Comments:

This data is not available.

The following questions concern the co-ordination or network management carried out by local authorities.

Question 13: Do you think that local authorities should be able to remove the new requirements in relation to works carried out on specific roads if they think that local considerations make them unnecessary? Please provide examples of where this may be justified.

Comments:

The proposal appears to assume a very simplistic approach which does not take account of the great variation in impact created by different works sites. In particular it should be noted that the impact arising from temporary traffic signals varies according to the length of the works site / distance between signal heads. Depending on location and traffic flows, disruption due to a 20m long site might be acceptable whilst that of a site of several hundred metres

might not be. The ease with which a site might be more readily be cleared for the weekend is also not related to the length but to the nature of works being undertaken, including, in particular, the size of any hole in the road.

Question 14: If legislation were to set *maximum* charges, please specify in what circumstances you would use discretion to charge a lower amount

Comments:

Such discretion inevitably leads to potential for inconsistency. A fixed charge is therefore preferable.

As with s74 charges currently there is a need to examine whether the charge is applicable or not and the number of days of over run but the charge then applicable is fixed.

Temporary traffic signals

We are proposing that a charge be applied to works' promoters who fail to remove temporary traffic lights from a works site on 'A' roads promptly when works have been completed. We recognise that where hot-lay materials or concrete have been used, time will need to be allowed for the materials to set.

Question 15: For highway authorities, do you agree that the works' promoters should be required to self-report the time that works have been completed and that the lights have been removed by providing timed photographic evidence?

Comments:

Yes. Some works promoters already operate processes of this nature.

Question 16: For works' promoters, when deploying temporary traffic lights at work sites, are they installed / removed by the team that carries out the reinstatement or by a separate team or organisation? If the latter, how does it work?

Comments:

The vast majority of temporary signals are set up and operated by specialist suppliers. This is a result of the need for specific training to place and operate signals and also maintenance of equipment. Many sites also require manual operation of signals, such as during peak periods, which requires a dedicated person. If this were assigned to the gang, this would deplete the gang and reduce productivity. Therefore by using a separate supplier the additional labour is provided.

Question 17: For works' promoters, what is the average time taken to remove traffic lights from works once completed on 'A' roads?

Comments:

As indicated in question 16 there is usually an operative on site with the signals and their removal can therefore commence as soon as the work is complete. If multiple sites are being managed by the same person the signals would still be expected to be removed within 2 hours.

Question 18: For works' promoters, would you need to change how you operate to satisfy the new requirements for temporary traffic lights from works on 'A' roads? Please provide examples and details of any one-off or ongoing costs.

Comments:

Questions 16 and 17 indicate that little change would be necessary

Question 19: Do you think that a daily charge should be set for this failure to comply, or a shorter period? If a shorter period, to what period do you think the charge should apply (e.g. 2, 4, 8 hours)?

Comments:

Any period other than a daily charge creates a far more complex enforcement and assessment regime, although the use of a shorter period might incentivise mobilisation part way through a day on which charges are accruing. However, on balance the simple daily charge is more realistic to operate.

General considerations

Question 20: As well as Saturday and Sunday, should the proposals also apply to public holidays (other than Easter Sunday and Christmas Day)?

Comments:

Many road users appear to expect road works to be cleared for public holidays more than for average weekends. This reflects the higher leisure travel and number of entertainment, community and sporting events that generate traffic at these times. Therefore public holidays should be included in any scheme.

Question 21: It may be necessary to update the Electronic Transfer of Notices (EToN) to take account of these changes. If changes were to be made, how much would it cost your organisation to implement? (This could include licence fees, management fees, and training).

Comments:

This cannot be quantified by a single authority. Most suppliers of register systems could implement changes at a cost spread across all customers.

Question 22: Please tell us any other thoughts or suggestions you have on these proposals.

Comments:

For street works one argument against including weekends as working days was to enable works planned for completion by Friday to extend into the weekend without incurring over run charges accepting that weekend working would probably be at a higher cost to the works promoter. If the works were left idle during the weekend and continued on the Monday then over run charges would be incurred. This requires meaningful management of the works and rigorous challenging of works durations and monitoring of extensions but is generally workable.

The period excluded from s74 over run charges should be reduced to 1 day since no works can be undertaken in less than part of 1 day. The reduction from 3 days to 2 days had no logical basis and provided no incentive to ensure that short duration works do not run into a second day.

Highway Authority representatives on a HAUC working group provided a detailed paper to DfT to seek support to ensure that temporary traffic signals must be specifically authorised in accordance with traffic signs law. Failure to endorse this requirement undermined the effective management of works involving temporary signals, which are, as the consultation implies, one of the most disruptive aspects of street and road works.

2. Your details

Your details

Name:

Peter Goode (Traffic Manager)

Responding as an individual?

Responding as an Organisation?

Yes

Name of Organisation if applicable:

Nottinghamshire County Council

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