



**OFFICER RESPONSE TO PETITION
LOCAL COMMITTEE
(MOLE VALLEY)**

**COUNCILLOR RAJ HAQUE
PETITION**

13 SEPTEMBER 2010

A petition of signatures was received from Mole Valley District Councillor Raj Haque on behalf of local residents at the meeting of the Mole Valley Local Committee 18 June 2010.

We, the undersigned, call for adequate coordination and consultation prior to carrying out work on underground services in Fetcham

The Local Highways Manager responds:

The County Council has a statutory duty, through the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 (NRSWA) and the Traffic Management Act (2004) to coordinate all activity on the highway network in order to ensure the safety of all road users, to protect the structure of the street, and to minimise inconvenience and disruption to road users as far as reasonably possible. The "Code of Practice for the Coordination of Street Works and Works for Road Purposes and Related Matters" (which shall be referred to as the Code of Practice), sets out the principles and processes of coordinating works across the highway network, the key points of which are summarised in this response.

It should be noted that the Code of Practice does not include any prescribed procedure for publicising works or engaging with traders for example, other than the requirement for formal Notices of works as described below, which must be available for public viewing. This is currently achieved by the authority's Roadworks website, although improvements are currently being developed.

Surrey has a dedicated team to undertake monitoring of notices received regarding the nature and whereabouts of works, as well as monitoring the utilities' performance through inspections to ensure works are completed to required standards and agreed timescales, including works where defects have been identified. All of these activities are carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice and other legislative requirements.

The utility companies also have statutory obligations to provide a supply or service to customers, which are closely monitored by the utility regulators to ensure that the required level of service is maintained, and the utilities therefore have a legal right to carry out their 'streetworks' within the public highway. The basic need for works cannot therefore be challenged by the authority, but where new services (rather than replacements) are required, there is some scope for directing works away from critical traffic routes. It should be noted that the utility companies are wholly responsible for the actual management and on site supervision of their own works.

Notices received are scrutinised to ensure that conflicts between different utility works and Surrey's own works, or between works and diversion routes (if roads are being closed) are avoided, and timescales and working times are considered in order to reduce congestion and disruption as far as possible. 155,000 notices were received from utilities in Surrey during 2009/10, relating to over 33,000 'jobs' or schemes. This does not include Surrey's own works on the highway.

Approximately 25% of utility works undertaken across the county are deemed as 'Urgent' or 'Emergency' works, and as such are not subject to the same prior notification (although subsequent notification, no more than two hours after works have started, is compulsory). These works, by their very nature, cannot be coordinated in advance, and do very often disrupt other planned and coordinated activities. In these circumstances, efforts are always made to mitigate any impact, but this is clearly much more difficult to achieve.

In addition to the advance notifications for works described above, forward programmes supplied by the utilities and our own contractors are reviewed and are discussed at formal coordination meetings, held on a quarterly basis. These meetings include other stakeholders such as the Highways Agency and emergency services, but are held at a countywide level, and so attendance by representatives from individual communities and interest groups is neither practical or beneficial for those involved.

Local engagement is more appropriate and productive on a project by project basis, as many detailed planning and/or site meetings regarding specific projects will follow the overall coordination meeting, when working hours, traffic management requirements, consultation and publicity requirements for a particular project are discussed and agreed. Measures may include advance warning signs, letter drops to residents and traders, or public meetings for example, but there are no specific requirements for these activities within the Code of Practice. Utility companies each have their own approach to customer relations, but Surrey County Council aims to influence

this through seeking confirmation that these local issues have been addressed prior to finalising proposals for any project. The Streetworks team are therefore keen to develop new links with existing representative groups such as town centre or disability groups, as well as those led by county and borough councillors, as points of contact for ourselves and for the utility companies for feedback on local issues, concerns and priorities as part of that planning process.

It must always be recognised, however, that due to the very nature of the works being undertaken, there will almost always be some degree of disruption as a result, and whilst every effort is made to accommodate the requirements of the local community, it is rarely possible to satisfy all needs at once, and the authority must consider the overall impact of any works on the wider community.