SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL

STREET WORKS PERMIT SCHEME

YEAR 3 REVIEW

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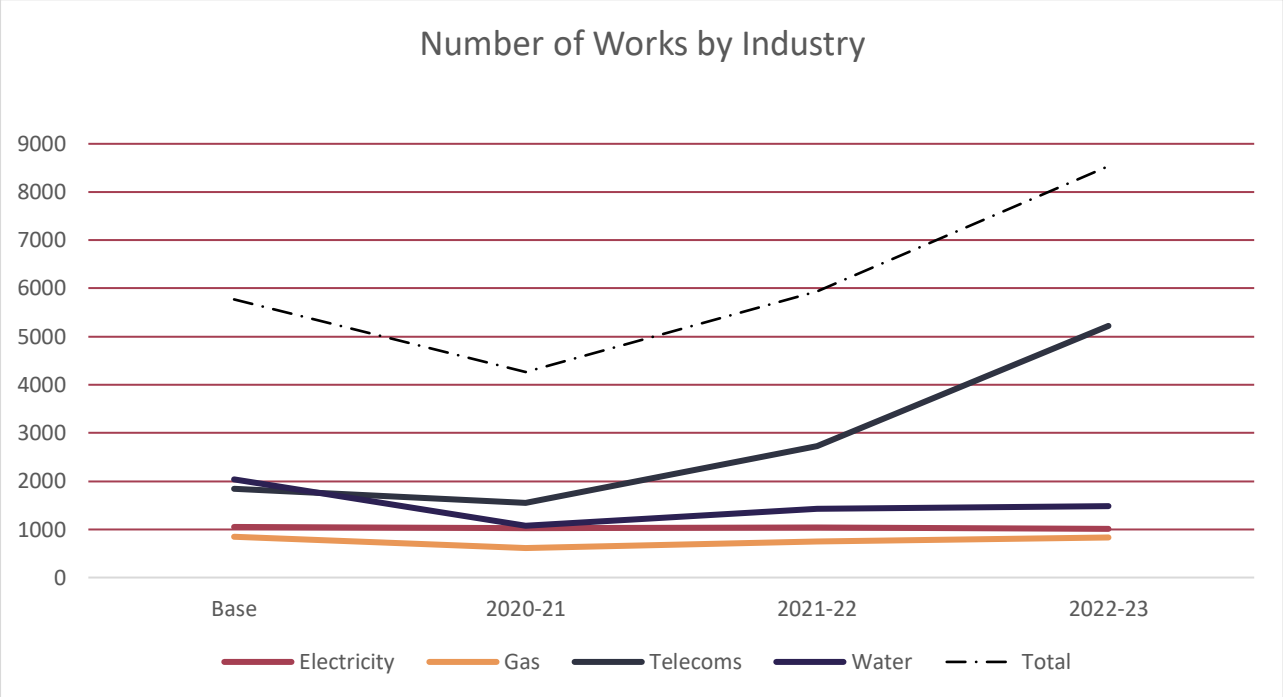
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the third annual evaluation of the Sunderland Permit Scheme and report covers the year April 2022 to March 2023 as well as evaluating the efficacy of the scheme over its first three years of operation.

The report evaluates the continued progress of the Permit Scheme against its declared objectives and the wider benefits of operating a scheme to the people of Sunderland.

The third year of operation continued to bring challenges to the team as things returned to normal after the lifting of the final Covid restrictions in February 2022. The original estimate of permit volumes based on previous years' notice volumes has proved to be low and staffing levels will need to be re-evaluated in light of this.

Year	Electricity	Gas	Telecoms	Water	Total
Base 2019/20	1050	846	1837	2037	5770
2020/21	1029	612	1549	1075	4265
2021/22	1032	747	2734	1423	5936
2022/23	1010	827	5222	1477	8536



Allowing for the effects of Covid running from March 2020 to December 2021, the number of permits across all but the telecommunications industry is flat or shows a slight decrease over the three years of the scheme, telecommunications however show a steady increase, a trend which is likely to continue for several years as the rollout gathers pace.

INTRODUCTION

The Sunderland Permit Scheme was introduced in March 2020 to increase the council's ability to discharge its duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA2004) by providing increased control over activities taking place on the Sunderland Highway Network. These were previously coordinated via a notice system operated under the New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA).

Permit Schemes enables the Authority to.

- manage and coordinate street works more effectively.
- minimise disruption to users.
- recharge the allowable coordination costs to the Utility Companies.

The powers now afforded to Sunderland has allowed conditions to be imposed on Promoters carrying out works to ensure that works are carried out in a safe, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

The over-arching objectives of the scheme were to:

- Reduce occupation of the highway.
- Enhance coordination of all activities on the highway.
- Obtain greater control of all activities on the public highway.
- Minimise/avoid/manage delays to all road users.
- Encourage collaborative activities between all activity promoters.
- Promoting best practices across Sunderland and the wider Tyne and Wear region.
- Enhance cross-boundary co-operation.
- Reducing the impact of noise on residents by having greater control of timing of activities.
- Reduce instances of customer complaints regarding road and street activities.
- Public transport benefits which come from more structured and coherent engagement with all stakeholders at all stages of the activity life cycle.
- Promote common activity practices across the region to ensure ease of operation for activity promoters.
- Demonstrate parity for all activity promoters.
- Enhance reliability of activities taking place at a particular time.

The headlines from this review are that in 2022/23:

- A total of 16201 permit applications across all workstreams (including variations) were checked and coordinated, with 91.63% being granted and 8.37% refused for various

reasons The is an increase from 96.5% and 3.5% respectively in 2021-22 but can partially be explained by increased works clashed due to increased works volume. There was a total of 7437 applications granted on first submission.

- 3793 variations have been checked and co-ordinated
- Whilst there has been on an overall increase in days of occupancy this is accounted for by an increase in the number of submissions driven by the fibre rollout.

SCHEME OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Sunderland Permit Scheme are set out in the scheme along with the aligned objectives to the Tyneside and Wear Local Transport Plan.

The Sunderland Permit Team continues to provide support, guidance, and training to all stakeholders (Highway Authorities and Utilities) to enable them to deliver the Permit Scheme and meet their Network Management Duty. This has supported the drive to ensure all works which take place on the highway are managed appropriately and in accordance with the scheme.

Sunderland, having considered the current performance of works promoters, regards the introduction of the permit scheme as having a positive effect to their network in respect of:

The control of the way in works are carried out has improved by use of conditions.

- Supported and encouraged the drive to minimise delays on the network.
- Promoted of best practices across all works promoters

Better visibility of works for network management co-ordination.

- The scheme places significant value on ensuring parity amongst all Promoters.
- Enhanced cross boundary co-operation by submission of permits.
- Where possible collaborative working has been investigated

Improving public perception of management of road works.

- The Permit register available online via www.roadworks.org shows all activity across the Highway Network in real time including limited advanced notice of works.

This allows all stakeholders including the public to view Roadworks that may impact on their journeys and plan their route(s) accordingly.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The scheme was developed using the mandatory Key Performance Indicators which were part of the statutory guidance determining schemes at the time of development. Further indicators were added as agreed during consultation.

KP1 - The number of applications for Permits and variations received, the number granted, and the number refused.

KPI2 - The number of conditions applied by condition type.

KPI3 - The number of approved duration variations (extensions).

KPI4 – The number of deemed permits.

KPI5- The number of early entries applied for

Additional Measures.

Average Durations.

Days of Occupancy.

Refusals.

Incentives.

KPI 1- The number of applications for Permits and variations received, the number granted, and the number refused.

Number of works received compared to the permits in the equivalent period (not including variations)

Permit Type	2019/20	2020/251	2021/22	2022/23	% Difference 2022-2023
Immediate	1715	2887	2763	1969	-28.7&
PAA	-	682	800	1468	+83.5%
Major	1034	727	885	1373	+55.1%
Standard	1662	1101	1616	1514	-6.3%
Minor	1785	2465	2626	3553	+35.3%
Totals	6196	7180	8689	9604	+10.53%

2022-23 saw a further increase of 10.53% in permit numbers and this continues the overall trend of a steady increase year on year. This can partially be explained by the broadband rollout although the inclusion of the Council's own works also adds to this.

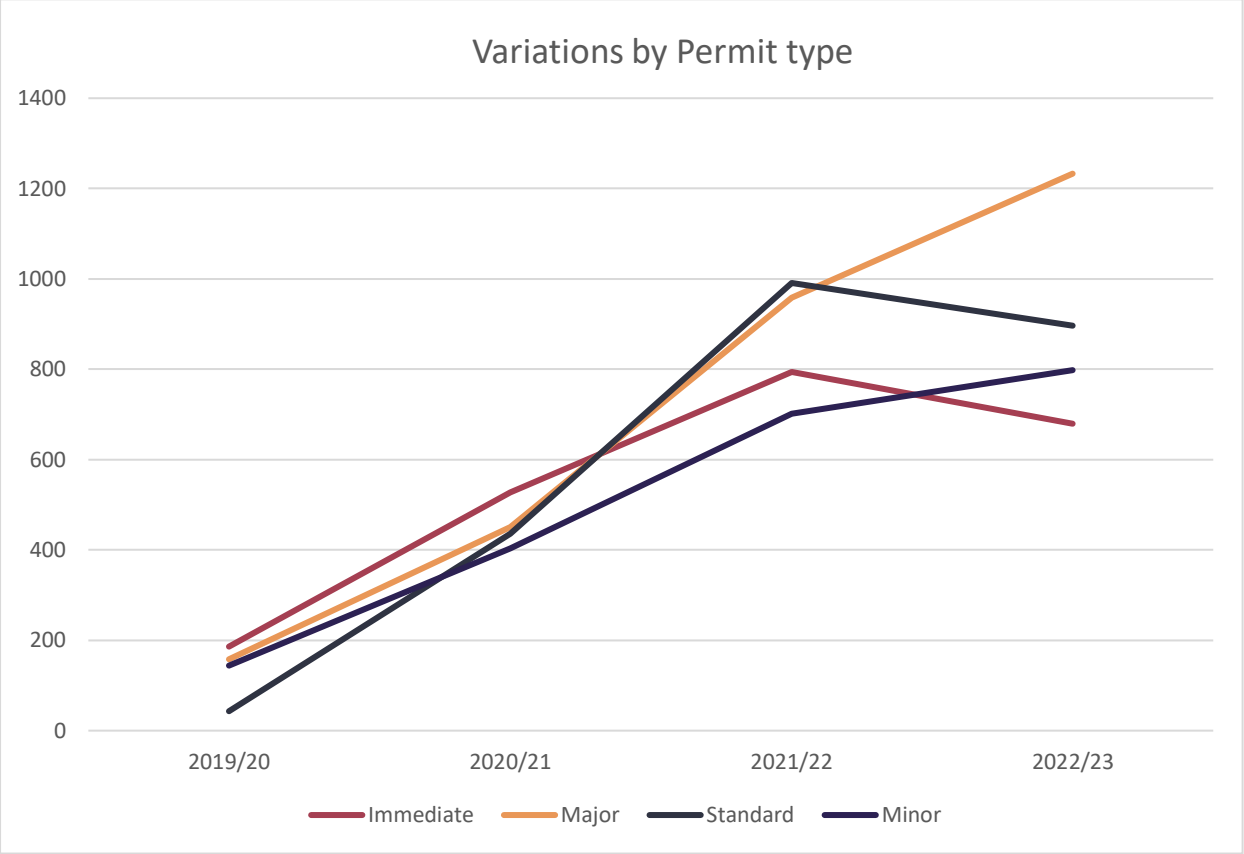
Number of permits received per utility.

Type	PAA	PA	Standard	Minor	Immediate	Variations	Total
City Fibre	404	300	538	1552	8	657	3459
Sunderland	231	262	327	731	980	895	3426
Virgin Media	416	448	58	766	31	45	2124
Northumbrian Water	64	63	189	280	866	440	1902
Northern Gas Networks	243	228	242	21	283	525	1542
Northern Powergrid	31	27	287	142	527	347	1361
Grain Connect	291	287	105	73	-	236	992
Openreach	10	11	39	323	245	174	802
New World Payphones	1	1	-	61	-	20	83
O2	3	3	3	29	1	6	45
GTC	1	1	25	1	-	17	45
T Mobile	-	-	5	27	-	8	40
Last Mile Electricity	-	-	8	3	1	2	14
Network Rail	4	4	-	11	-	6	25
ES Pipelines	-	-	2	3	-	7	12
Highways England	-	-	-	6	-	2	8
Persimmon Homes	-	-	1	7	-	-	8
Fulcrum Pipelines	-	-	4	1	-	1	6
ESP Electricity	-	-	2	1	-	2	5
Murphy Power Distribution	-	-	4	1	-	-	5
Electricity Network Company	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Hutchinson 3G	-	-	1	17	-	1	1
Romec	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
South Tyneside	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Vodafone	-	-	-	3	-	-	3

Number of variations received in the equivalent period.

Type	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	% Against total permits
Immediate	186	527	794	680	40.33%
Major	158	450	958	1233	69.77%
Standard	43	436	991	897	65.46%
Minor	144	404	702	798	19.76%
Totals	531	1925	3445	3793	45.11%

Variations have shown an increase in all categories which can partly be explained by the increase in permit numbers and partly by increased scrutiny as the scheme reaches maturity.



KPI 2- The number of approved duration variations (extensions)

There was a total of 1006 extensions approved, 14 refused and 97 had their duration challenged in the period. This represents 13.4% of the received permit applications (not including PAA) which is a significant increase from the 5.6% in 2021-22.

These may be broken down by Quarter as follows

Quarter	Granted extensions	Refused Extensions	Duration challenged extensions
Q1	234	7	23
Q2	236	5	33
Q3	256	7	23
Q4	257	5	18
Total	1006	24	97

These do not show significant variations between quarters which shows that weather conditions do not significantly affect the need to extend works. These extensions represent 29.7% of the variations received.

KPI 3- The number of conditions applied by condition type

The table below reflects the number of conditions applied against the permit type. These are based on the Statutory guidance for highway authorities – Permit scheme national conditions issues in July 2022.

NCT Code	Emergency	Major	Minor	Standard	Urgent	Total
NCT02a	19	633	1667	1515	1259	5093
NCT02b	0	439	402	208	70	1119
NCT04a	4	357	828	498	11	1698
NCT04b	1	7	16	27	2	53
NCT05a	12	21	115	28	1	177
NCT06a	15	556	566	544	62	1743
NCT07a	12	174	46	70	121	423
NCT08a	48	209	346	252	118	973
NCT08b	7	9	110	40	47	213
NCT09a	0	5	3	8	2	18
NCT09b	0	8	19	13	4	44
NCT09c	1	43	127	48	49	268
NCT10a	4	62	668	100	56	890
NCT11b	0	1424	222	494	67	2207
NCT12a	0	0	0	0	0	0
NCT13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**123**	**3947**	**5135**	**3845**	**1869**	**14919**

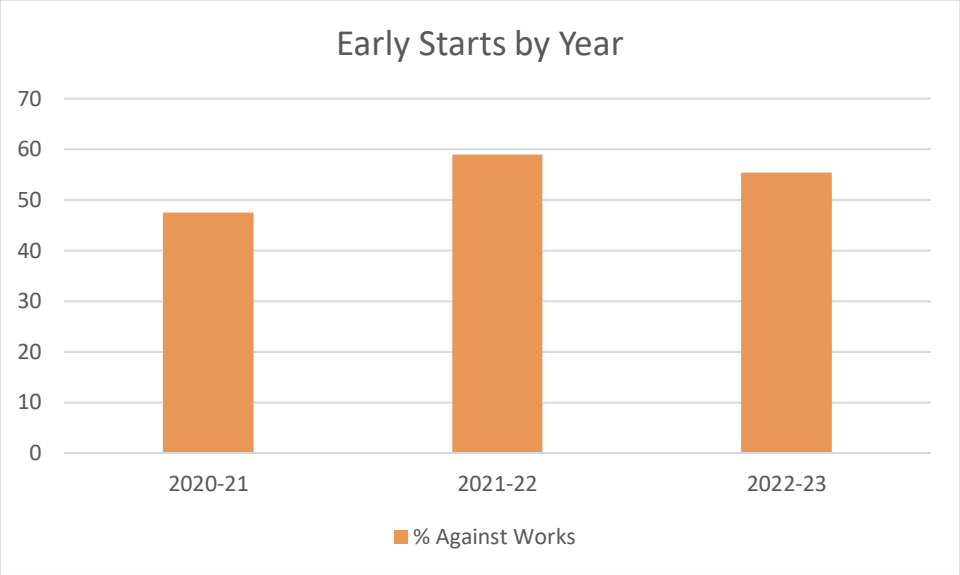
KPI 4- The number of deemed permits

There has been a total of 15 deemed permits which have been submitted on Permit Authority roads. This represents less than 0.1% of submitted permits. The majority of these are extension requests that were not responded to in time. It is unclear if these were just missed or if there is an issue with visibility within the Insight application. The implementation of the Aurora Street Works management system from Symology should help increase visibility of response deadlines and keep this figure almost zero.

KPI 5- The number early entries applied for

The number of early start requests remains high against the number of works being undertaken although this is partly due to early starts being requested and never used. This is a problem that impacts co-ordination and bears further examination.

Year	Number	% Against works
2020-21	2028	47.54%
2021-22	3502	58.99%
2022-23	4728	55.39%



The above illustrates the number of early starts requested as a percentage against the total number of works.

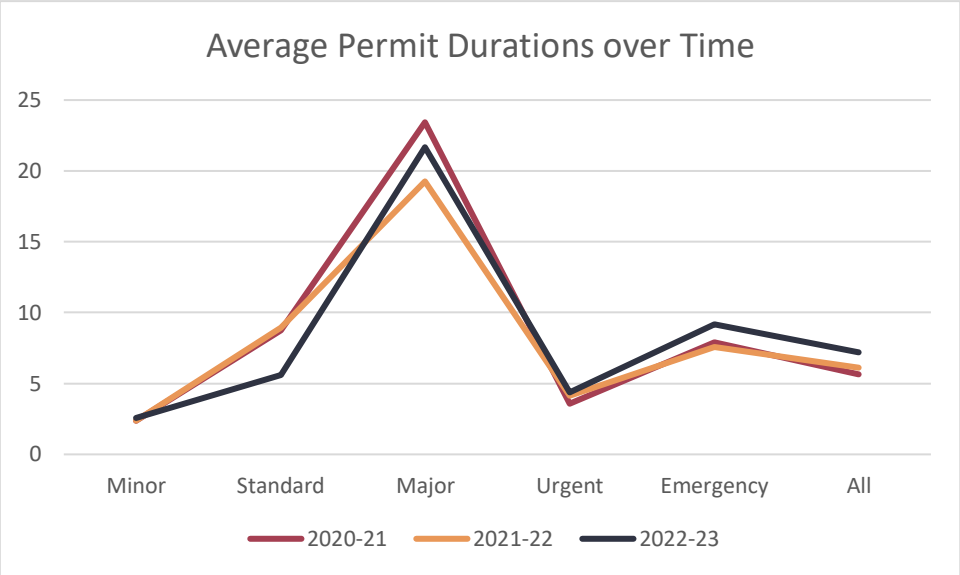
ADDITIONAL MEASURES

Average Durations

The durations over the three years of operation have been measured. There has not been a significant change in durations with the largest being a 3.13% reduction in the duration of Standard works over the three years compared to the 2019/20 baseline which can partially be ascribed to the increase in telecoms works that take less time to complete.

The table below displays the average durations by year.

Year	Minor	Standard	Major	Urgent	Emergency	All
2020-21	2.37	8.74	23.43	3.58	7.9	5.66
2021-22	2.38	8.96	19.26	4.14	7.57	6.14
2022-23	2.57	5.61	21.67	4.39	9.17	7.18



Days of Occupancy

After a slump due to covid, days of occupancy have shown an increase year on year. This can be partially attributed to the increase in the number of works being undertaken.

The table below shows total days of occupancy year on year.

Year	Minor	Standard	Major	Urgent	Emergency	All
2019-20	11349	12188	15975	12300	3463	55275
2020-21	10437	10246	11964	13202	3257	49106
2021-22	10938	14635	16506	14024	3283	59386

2022-23	14866	16471	30828	15631	3802	81598

	% Increase in works	% Increase in occupancy
Immediate	14.8%	23.28%
Major	32.78%	93.0%
Standard	-9.91%	35.14%
Minor	99.01%	30.99%
All	55.01	47.61%

The open-ended nature of Major works means that an increase in number of 33% is not directly proportionate to the increase in occupancy. It is of more significance that a doubling of Minor works has only resulted in an increase of 31% in occupancy, showing the scheme is having the desired effect of reducing the average duration of these works.

Refusals

The scheme used a standard set of Refusal Reasons which focus on quality, standard conditions and works location.

The table below sets out the number of refusals by permit type and utility submitted

	PAA	Major	Standard	Minor	Immediate	Total
BT			**2**	**8**		**10**
City Fibre	**24**	**7**	**10**	**14**		**55**
Electricity Network Company Ltd			**1**			**1**
Grain			**19**	**2**		**21**
Hutchinson 3G				**2**		**2**
Last Mile Asset			**2**			**2**
Last Mile Electricity			**2**			**2**
Netomnia				**2**		**2**
Nextfibre				**2**		**2**
NGN	**4**		**9**		**1**	**14**
NPG			**1**	**2**	**2**	**5**
NWL	**4**		**1**		**1**	**6**
NWP				**3**		**3**
O2			**4**			**4**

Virgin			**2**	**2**		**4**

Incentives

The scheme offers several incentives for improved performance and as yet there has been some, but not as much as anticipated uptake. To date the following incentive reductions have been applied. It is notable that although there were 138 permits with collaboration in this period there were only 16 discounts claimed.

Month	Collaboration	Multiple Permits
April		£490.00
May	£49.00	£307.50
June	£21.00	£280.00
July		£526.10
August	£21.00	£835.50
September		£892.80
October	£92.40	£220.00
November		£909.60
December		£341.70
January		£40.20
February		£189.70
March	£86.70	£709.30
Total	£66.00	£848.30

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The scheme made an operating loss of £44,213 in year three. This can be attributed to the general increase in inflation in this period. Consequently, the permit fees will need to be reconsidered to make the scheme cost neutral.

Expenditure	
Wages (incl NI)	£580.103
Other expenditure	£71993
Central Admin Costs	£33,715
Consultants and ICT costs	£57,248
Income from Permits	£698846
Account deficit / surplus	-£44,213

CONCLUSION

The Sunderland Permit Scheme has successfully delivered its stated benefits, most visibly in terms of consistency of approach to in the delivery of the Network Management Duty. There has been a clear alignment between the delivery of the street works across the Authority between all works promoters.

There has been a significant increase in the works undertaken by the utility companies from pre-scheme numbers but an analysis of these shows that the works by non-telecoms related companies has remained broadly static whilst the telecommunications sector has almost tripled over the same period.

There are areas which could be improved, and the scheme will always be seeking to challenge itself to improve its operations. This will ensure the permit scheme operates in a cost effective and economic manner.

Areas for improvement include:

- Forward planning and communications around the extent, nature and disruption resulting from works.
- Constant improvement of the Highway Authority permitting their own works to ensure consistency.
- The potential to increase and improve collaborative working between promoters.

Actions recommended from the review

- Review Highway Authority permit applications to understand if variations are being utilised and understood correctly.
- Encourage works promoters to utilise the works data alteration functionality instead of variations where applicable.
- Encourage all undertakers to increase advanced publicity to reduce public complaints.
- Review the original durations submitted on Major permits in collaboration with the works promoter to understand if incorrect durations and data are being submitted.
- Re-evaluate both the permit fees and staffing levels in light of the increased permit numbers and the £44,213 operating deficit.
- Encourage utilities to collaborate and reduce their costs as well as disruption.