



NJUG CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY 34: East Sussex Partnership

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. The 37 companies¹ we represent work to deliver gas, electricity, water and telecommunications to both individual consumers and UK plc.

NJUG members need to continue to drive forward further improvements. We have therefore developed the NJUG Vision for Street Works, which revolves around six main principles:

1. Safety is the number one priority
2. Damage to underground assets is avoided
3. Utilities work together and in partnership with local authorities to minimise disruption
4. Utilities deliver consistent high quality
5. Utilities maximise use of sustainable methods and materials
6. Street works in the UK are regarded as world class

This case study is an example of NJUG delivering on these principles and turning the vision into reality.

Overview:

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has more than 3,000 kilometres of roads and each year these are subject to approximately 50,000 utility services repair or maintenance works. EDF Energy Networks' projects and those of other utility companies previously led to difficulties for the council in delivering its Network Management Duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA). Instead of resorting to legal action, the council entered into a unique, innovative partnership with EDF Energy Networks.

This partnership was the first of its type in the country. Its success in providing a focus on delivering street works and road works in a spirit of joint working between utility contractors, noticing teams, inspectors and managers has inspired and encouraged other utilities and authorities to enter into similar agreements.

Case Study:

This agreement was the first such contract in the country between a utility company and a local authority. It brought together ESCC, EDF Energy Networks and contractors May Gurney and Murphy Limited to improve working relations and deliver an even better service for energy customers, residents and road users.

As part of the agreement, all parties agreed to work as one team, challenging the norm through innovation and creativity. This included striving towards a number of key objectives:

- Developing a partnership built on trust, mutual respect, openness and honesty
- Working together to improve all highway works carried out by ESCC and EDF Energy Networks and
- Jointly striving to deliver 'best in class' performance in terms of safety, customer service, quality and cost

¹ NJUG's current members are Energy Networks Association (representing electricity and gas), Water UK (representing all water and wastewater companies), National Grid, Openreach, and Virgin Media. Our associate members are Clancy Docwra, Skanska McNicholas, Balfour Beatty, Morrison Utility Services, Morgan Est, NACAP, PJ Keary, First Intervention, Carillion, Enterprise, Laing O'Rourke and AMEC. Including members through trade associations, NJUG represents thirty-seven utility companies, and twelve utility contractors.

To establish a clear understanding of the ambitions and planned outcomes of the partnership, a number of workshops were held to develop a balanced scorecard. This scorecard has become key to measuring the performance of the partnership. The key focus in developing the scorecard was that the partnership would bring about a better understanding of the needs of each others' businesses and would drive improved service delivery for all parties to the benefit of customers.

It was fundamental that all levels within the partner organisations understood the objectives. To assist with this, articles were published in EDF Energy Networks' and ESCC's internal magazines. Workshops were also held to discuss the key areas that came out of launch events such as communication, sustainability and notices. Within the first year of operating the partnership (2007), there were significant attributable improvements:

- EDF Energy Networks and ESCC have carried out joint site safety audits of both Murphy and May Gurney sites using the same criteria. The increase in compliance with the Code of Practice and sites, which are considerate to all highway users, have increased from 65% to a consistent 85%
- Through monthly meetings and regular feedback, the notice quality of both EDF Energy Networks and May Gurney has improved from 29% in January 2007 to 84% in December 2007
- The importance of customer interaction was recognised, prompted by the number of calls the council receives concerning EDF Energy Networks projects or street light issues. As a result, the utility developed a relationship between its customer contact centres including greater transparency of service levels to better inform colleagues and customers. Levels of disruption were reduced, with the number of works completed on time increasing from 89% (January 2007) to 94% (December 2007)
- The TMA allows councils to charge utilities a daily rate for over-running works. Recognising that this could become a contentious issue for the partnership, the scorecard reflected the new approach of improving performance rather than looking for failure. The other area of financial impact was promoting the use of sustainable materials and reducing landfill and aggregate tax.

To support the balanced score card and promote performance, further initiatives were pursued:

- Joint coaching and briefing day for all staff to promote understanding
- Sharing of noticing skills processes with May Gurney by EDF Energy Networks' noticing agent
- A combined staff survey on the partnership to understand how to develop the partnership further
- A sharing of the needs of the strategic road network in East Sussex in order to focus utility works and minimise work durations that lessen the impact on the road user
- Two-day community project undertaken to provide a secure child's play area at Rodmell School in East Sussex
- Initiation of a focus group of local utilities to deliver a reduction in landfill and encourage recycling

