

CASE STUDY NUMBER 83: Severn Trent Water/NMC Nomenca – Cheltenham Flood Alleviation Scheme

WINNER OF THE NJUG KEEP THE PUBLIC FULLY INFORMED AWARD 2015

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) is the UK industry association representing utilities solely on street works issues. The 42 Utilities and 16 Associates we represent are major contributors to economic growth and 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 seven main principles:

- Safety
- High Quality
- Minimise Disruption
- Keep the Public Fully Informed
- Sustainable Methods and Materials
- Avoid Damage to Underground Assets
- Innovation

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

Overview

Severn Trent Water and NMC Nomenca needed to deliver £6 million of potentially disruptive sewer flood alleviation improvements over a 12-month period across Cheltenham Spa – so both did everything they could to put their ‘customers and communities first’ before, during and after the works took place.

Case Study

Context: Severn Trent knew that their planned £6 million of sewer improvements and replacement of over four miles of pipes in a town like Cheltenham would present many potential problems, not least the disruption and impact the work would cause. Ten months before beginning on site, their ‘Customers and Communities First’ project team were working hard to ensure customers, and stakeholders were engaged with and kept informed before, during and after the works.

Close cooperation with Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucestershire County Council, the local MP, businesses and business leaders, and all customers across Cheltenham, and a comprehensive stakeholder engagement, meant that everyone knew why the works were taking place, their benefits, and how they would be kept informed throughout.

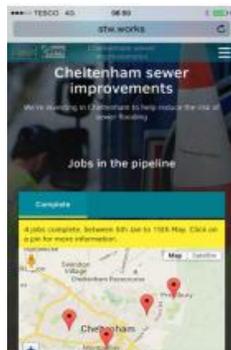
How were the public kept informed?

Holding public exhibitions ahead of every piece of work carried out – Severn Trent actively listened to its customers and acted on their concerns. In their very first drop-in session it was explained that a bus diversion may cause some children problems in getting to school during their GCSE exams, so Severn Trent acted quickly to move their programme around and ensure the works were delayed until after the exam period. Representatives from the local bus company and Gloucestershire County Council also attend to ensure that everyone was available to answer public concerns.

Working closely with affected businesses – Severn Trent changed its approach to dealing with businesses by personally visiting all of them, instead of just writing to them, and talked them through

the business compensation programme, making it as straightforward as possible for them. Advertisements for businesses were paid for in the local newspaper and radio and sponsored street fairs were organised to take advantage of the road closure (with NMC even building a shelter at which a camel made a guest appearance for a souk market) and ensured Severn Trent's business compensation manager was available and in the area at least once a week during the work.

Community engagement – Severn Trent actively engaged with the local community and this included sponsoring the half marathon and hosting a stand at the event. The work programme was designed to avoid every event in the town, including the Gold Cup. Severn Trent sponsored 'Cheltenham in Bloom' and visited numerous schools to explain their work and talk about the dangers of work sites.



Customer engagement – As well as writing to customers to explain every part of their work, Severn Trent's contract partners, NMC Nomenca, hosted a dedicated website about the work, used social media and also used Cheltenham as the launch of a new Severn Trent microsite, 'In My Street'. This was a dedicated and new innovation, allowing customers to get all the information required about the work on their mobile phone. It showed the progress of the work, maps of the TMA and road closures, bus diversions, introduced them to the team on site, explained what they are doing, gave wider business

information and had a dedicated Twitter feed for them to interact with Severn Trent about the work. The site was promoted through the media, signage in the street and customer correspondence.

Stakeholder engagement – Regular meetings were held with the local Member of Parliament and excellent relationships were built up with Cheltenham Borough Council. Severn Trent also attended the Scrutiny Committee meeting twice to keep Councillors updated and received fantastic feedback on how the works were being carried out. All of this led to the following endorsements:

"Thank you for your ongoing support of the businesses in The Suffolks...I am also grateful for the work you have done to engage with the local community." Alex Chalk MP

"I am full of admiration for the excellent work this company has achieved in my ward very well done and Thank You." Councillor Anne Regan

"I have to say that based on feedback I have received, Severn Trent have done a great job generally on this and should be congratulated." Councillor Andrew Chard

"I do hope the rest of your project goes as well as it did here in Warden Hill, only heard good reports on how all the works were carried out and how tidy and clean the area left when works finished, all good!" Councillor Chris Ryder

