

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

10 SEPTEMBER 2026

QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor White to ask the Chair:

Reducing Disruption from Roadworks

Residents and businesses across Reading continue to face disruption from roadworks, particularly where works overrun, are extended, or where utility companies carry out works on the same stretch of road in quick succession.

Obviously work by utility companies is necessary. However, many Councils have succeeded in reducing the disruption from roadworks.

The Council has previously indicated its intention to become a permitting authority, which would give it greater control over when and how roadworks are carried out and allow conditions to be placed on works to reduce disruption. However, this has been delayed many times.

What does the Council currently measure in relation to roadworks, particularly delays, overrunning works and disruption to residents and businesses, and how have those measures changed over the last three years ?

Could the Lead Councillor provide an update on progress towards Reading becoming a permitting authority, including the expected timetable for implementation and any key steps still outstanding ?

Alternatively does the council have another plan for tackling disruption from roadworks?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Ennis, the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport:

I thank Councillor White for his question.

I understand and empathise with the disruption that can be caused by road works. As Councillor White has acknowledged, they are a necessity for ensuring that the services on which we rely are maintained and working, and that they are fit for the future.

It is unfortunate that, in addition to being the land that we use to travel, the Highway is also the primary location for these services. This inevitably leads to temporary disruptions when they require maintenance or replacement.

The Council is operating in line with permit processes currently, and is utilising legislative powers and processes available to us. Whether operating a Permit scheme,

or noticing scheme, we can only make decisions and influence what we know about at that time.

We monitor various criteria relating to road works. I am pleased that the average duration of road works has been decreasing over the last three financial years, although the number of works, and durations will always fluctuate, based on demand, investment and regional/national programmes.

We undertake random sample inspections, and these are showing a high compliance rate (>90%) for inspected works sites and reinstatements. We will charge utility companies who are found to be overrunning their notified works durations. I remain concerned that 20-30% of all works activities appear to be related to urgent works involving service provision failures. This is perhaps a reflection of the age of some of the infrastructure in Reading, the high demand on those services, and the need for more pro-active upgrades.

This Council remains committed to transitioning to a Permit scheme, but I must manage expectations regarding what this will deliver. Roadworks will need to continue being undertaken, whether reacting to service losses and emergency situations, or proactively maintaining and upgrading supplies. Roadworks will need to continue to be undertaken safely, both for the workforce and those outside the work area, which necessitates traffic management.

Development of a permit scheme and the interrelated processes is resource-intensive, and these resources are also being required for the development of the Council's substantial and transformational Digital Traffic Regulation Order project. We remain committed to delivering this scheme in the near future.