



**Reducing  
disruption  
through  
collaborative  
working.**

# Reducing disruption through collaborative working.

We're determined to reduce the impact our work can have on customers across our region. So we're working with gas, power and telecommunications providers, as well as Transport for London, the London Borough of Croydon and the Greater London Authority, to understand how collaborating on planned streetworks can reduce the impact on the lives of all our customers, local communities and the environment, while still improving our services.

## Background.

Over the past year we've been working with Atkins and their digital partner Fluxx, challenging ourselves to make improvements in the way we deliver streetworks to reduce the impact on our customers, and become more efficient through effective collaboration.

We know that our essential streetworks can often disrupt our customers' daily lives, especially when a road reopens only to quickly close again for a different project, or for another company to start work.

From talking with our customers regularly, we know that they want us to minimise the inconvenience of our work. Our customers see the need for our work to maintain and upgrade infrastructure, but they want planning, advance warning, co-ordination with other utilities and highway authorities, and clear and reliable information about the work.

We wanted to identify innovative and more efficient ways of working, so we hosted several workshops with teams across Thames Water, including our delivery alliance eight<sub>2</sub>O, to explore how better collaboration might benefit our work as well as our customers - including road users, residents, the highways authorities and local councils.

- **Working with others to help reduce the impact of streetworks on our shared customers, the environment and local communities.**



## Visualising complex data.

During our workshops with teams across Thames Water, we identified numerous benefits of sharing project information at the planning stage - including less frequent disruptions, less environmental impact, cost saving, and better relations with our partners and customers.

However, sharing complicated early stage pre-planning information can be challenging. This is because the information often isn't finalised, it's sometimes out of date as soon as it's published and it often comes in multiple formats which are time consuming to understand and convert into usable data.

We looked at ideas from other sectors, particularly digital development, to try to devise smarter and more informed ways of using data and technology – simplifying our processes and maximising the impact of our work.

We've now identified a digital mapping tool, which we can use to upload data from many different projects and display it all on a single map that's accessible to all our project teams. We've named this tool 'ThamesConnect'.

### ThamesConnect tool

This tool enables our teams to easily identify areas where lots of streetworks are planned, without needing lengthy analysis and deciphering complex datasets. Our teams can use this map to coordinate projects and reduce disruption. Over six months last year, we saved £8 million through efficiencies including sharing contractors and reducing parking bay suspensions.

'ThamesConnect' now helps us to make better, more efficient decisions for our customers, and may even enable some projects to happen which would otherwise be delayed due to potential disruption.

### Expanding 'ThamesConnect'

After this success in mapping our planned streetworks, we wondered if it might be possible to extend the benefits beyond Thames Water to other utilities, transport authorities, highways authorities and other departments within London boroughs.

We shortened the duration of our streetworks by four months on a water main replacement project in Camden, by working more closely with other utility companies and the local authority, we're now testing this approach in the London Borough of Croydon.



We're actively engaging with gas, power and telecommunications providers, such as Southern Gas Networks (SGN), UK Power Networks (UKPN) and BT Openreach, along with Transport for London and the London Borough of Croydon, to test how we can work together more effectively to improve services and reduce impact on the lives of our shared customers, local communities and the environment.

Currently, we're exploring the feasibility of using a single contractor to carry out all planned works in a pilot area. We're trialling this on a six month basis, across water, gas and the council's resurfacing programme.

If successful, we estimate that there could be a 20 per cent reduction in the number of days on site. So work that's scheduled to take 50 days may take just 40 - which would significantly reduce disruption for all our customers.

### A shared future.

By being smarter with data, and working closely with other utility companies and local authorities, we hope to better coordinate our work, plan better, save on resources, and most crucially of all, limit the impact on our customers.

We're now looking at rolling out this scheme to other London boroughs in the not-too-distant future.

