



**Northumberland**  
County Council

# **Street Works Permit Scheme**

**For Road Works and Street Works**

## **Year 3 Review**

# Document Control

## Version History

Date	Version	Comments
20/06/23	V 0.1	Draft
28/07/23	V 1.0	Final version

## Review Control

Reviewer	Section	Comments	Actions Agreed

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## 1 Executive Summary

The Northumberland County Council Street Works Permit Scheme Order 2020 was made on 2 January 2020 with the scheme coming into force on 3 February 2020.

This is the third annual evaluation of the Northumberland County Council Street Works Permit Scheme which covers the period of 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

This report evaluates the progress of the permit scheme in relation to the scheme objectives and on the recommendations made in the Year 2 review.

We have continued to see successes and improvements in the way that works and activities on the highway network have been undertaken and managed within the scheme.

The key outcomes identified in this third year of the permit scheme can be summarised as follows; -

- A total of 22548 permit applications were received in the period with 16235 (72%) being granted and 2504 (11.1%) refused (the other 16.9% is made up of applications that were granted then cancelled, refused then cancelled, deemed or superseded). 7243 of the total number of applications received were variations.
- Only 0.03% of all received permits have deemed.
- 224 days of disruption to the travelling public have been saved in the review period following challenges made in relation to the duration of works initially proposed
- 382 calendar days have been saved as a direct result of encouraging collaborative working between works promoters. This compares to 685 days in Year 2
- The percentage of agreed permits that attracted a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) decreased marginally from 14.5% in 21/22 to 13.9% in 22/23.
- We have demonstrated a positive commitment to ensuring fairness across all works promoters through the level of support provided by the Streetworks team.
- Performance monitoring measures established provide a framework for continuous monitoring and reporting in order to drive performance.
- The permit scheme is reporting a small loss this year of £4703, however this results in a small overall surplus of £2526 over the first 3 years.

## 2 Introduction

The Northumberland County Council permit scheme operates as a single scheme and was introduced to give greater control over road and street works activities taking place on the Council's highway network. The permit scheme was aligned with the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026 which sets out the vision, aims and objectives for transport across the county. The LTP has since been superseded by the North East Transport Plan but the permit scheme still aligns appropriately.

The move to implement a permit scheme has enabled the Council to manage and coordinate road works more proactively than in the past via the former noticing regime. This ability has brought with it responsibility to use additional powers in a way that has enabled the authority to better manage its network, minimise disruption to its users, and improve the efficiency and reliability of the transport network.

Our Streetworks team prides itself in the positive working relationships that have been built over many years with works promoters. We continue to work very closely with both utilities and our highways colleagues alike to achieve the successful operation of the permit scheme.

## 3 Progress against Year 2 recommendations

Below is the feedback against the recommendations made in the Year 2 review as well as the agreed annual indicators: -

- **ensure the level of deemed permits remains below 0.5% of all received permits**  
Only 0.03% of all received permits have deemed.
- **carry out a review of how the permit conditions are being applied to ensure that they continue to be applied in line with the guidance**  
Throughout this year the Network Coordinator, Network Management Support Officer and Permit Officers have met on a regular basis to discuss permit related developments to ensure consistency across all areas when processing permits. These meetings have shown that the permit conditions continue to be applied in line with the guidance. These meetings will continue as we seek to ensure best practice.
- **seek to continually improve Permit Officer knowledge of the network through increased involvement in site inspections and visits**  
Permit Officers have continued to attend site meetings to improve their understanding of specific works and work methodologies whilst also spending time shadowing their Streetworks Inspectors to widen their general knowledge base
- **maintaining good levels of collaboration and information sharing across the North East LAs**  
We continue to be active members of NEHAUC and NEJAG with our Interim Network Manager serving as the vice chair of the latter. We have also continued to collaborate with other LAs through the Mayrise User Group sharing best practice and discussing any relevant and common issues.
- **seek to improve data analysis and recording in order to provide meaningful year on year comparisons showing direction of travel**  
As outlined in the Year 2 review, work was undertaken to develop a bespoke suite of reports to provide more granular data to inform decision making – these have

continued to be iterated throughout this year. We made the decision to maintain the existing models as we felt it was clear and understandable and the consistent approach allows for meaningful year on year comparison.

- **produce additional guidance materials for all undertakers to increase knowledge and understanding of the scheme requirements**

The team has hosted workshops and provided reference documents to help improve the understanding of the scheme requirements with a particular focus on the quality of permit submissions; having all the information required to assess the permit at the point of submission is a capacity saving for both the LA and the works promoter. We have also reviewed the format of our quarterly Coordination meetings, including an improved remote access option, and this has received positive feedback which is reflected in the increased number of attendees.

#### 4 Performance monitoring

The overarching objective of the permit scheme can be summarised as the ability to manage and maintain the local highway network to maximise the safe and efficient use of road space and provide reliable journey times.

In order to appropriately monitor scheme performance, the below KPIs have been set and are monitored through the year.

1. KPI 1 (*The number of permit and permit variation applications received, granted, refused, deemed and cancelled by activity type*)
2. KPI 2 (*The number of conditions applied by condition type*)
3. KPI 3 (*The number of permit extension requests received and granted for issued permits*)
4. KPI 4 (*The number of early starts requested and granted per activity type*)
5. OM 3 (*The number of Section 74 Overruns that have occurred with a percentage of total works that have overrun*)
6. OM 4 (*Average duration of phases by works category along with a total quantity of phases that meet the criteria*)
7. OM 6 (*Number of collaborative works phases with the totals of working and calendar days of disruption saved*)
8. AM 3 (*Number of phases that have permits that were refused and then a variation was submitted with a reduced duration which was granted*)
9. AM 5 (*Number of FPNs issued for permit breaches including withdrawn FPNs*)

The specific objectives of the Northumberland County Council Street Works Permit Scheme are listed below and are evidenced through the KPI data provided within the appendices to this report;

- **Coordination** - *reduce occupation of the highway for both street and highway works in order to minimise disruption to the travelling public*

KPI 1 (Appendix A) provides a detailed breakdown of the number of permit and variation applications received, granted, refused, cancelled and deemed. A total of 22548 permit applications were received in the period with 16235 (72%) being granted and 2504 (11.1%) refused (the other 16.9% is made up of applications

that were granted then cancelled, refused then cancelled, deemed or superseded); 7243 of the total number of applications received were variations.

These figures are remarkably similar to Year 2 with the overall number of applications increasing from 22510 so a difference of only 48 permits with the number of granted permits reducing from 16624 and the number of refusals increasing from 2313; the number of variations has also increased from 7108.

The data demonstrates that less than 0.03% of all received permits deemed (reduced from 0.23% in Year 2), which were predominantly variations on immediate permits. This low number is testament to the continued hard work and dedication of the Streetworks team. Their drive to ensure every permit is assessed demonstrates the commitment to appropriately managing the network. KPI 2 (Appendix B) lists the individual conditions that are applied to HA and SU permits to aid coordination and to reduce the potential for disruption caused by works which in turn contributes to meeting scheme objectives.

AM 3 (Appendix H) shows that the proactive challenge offered by the Streetworks team has saved over 224 calendar days' worth of disruption to the travelling public which is broadly similar to the 187 days saved in Year 2. This shows that the work the team have undertaken to challenge durations, including developing a working document with various utilities to agree the average duration of different works methodologies, is resulting in more accurate duration requests in the first instance.

The data in OM 3 (Appendix E) states that over running works during the third year have increased for both HA (from 1.37% to 2.4%) and SU works (from 1.15% to 2.5%).

One of the key focuses of the team remains to address the historical approach from works promoters to try and build contingency into all works durations. This undermines the ethos of a permit scheme and results in unnecessary disruption on the network. However, this does increase the chances of a potential overrun, or the need for extensions where justified, as this contingency is no longer included into the additional time in the permit.

Whilst the data clearly shows that the Permit Officers have been very diligent in assessing virtually all the permits received, it must be noted that the volumes of work have caused a great strain on the team from a resource perspective. The team normally copes well when fully staffed but there is currently very little resilience in the existing structure so any periods of leave or sickness result in immense pressure on the remaining staff. This is unsustainable and unacceptable from both a business standpoint but more importantly a wellbeing perspective for the team. Consideration is being given as to how to address this.

- **Compliance** - *improve compliance with the relevant codes of practice and conditions*

AM5 (Appendix I) shows the number of FPNs issued by the three FPN offence codes and further divided by HA and SU. A tally of granted permits has been included, also subcategorised by HA and SU, in order to provide some context to the data.

A total of 2249 FPNs (including internal shadow FPNs) were issued against a total of 16235 granted permits – this averages out at an FPN on 13.9% of granted permits which is a marginal improvement from the 14.5% in Year 2.

It should be noted that a large percentage (79.2% - 1782) of the total FPNs are Section 74(7b) offences (late starts and stops) and 60.2% of these (1072) are relating to NCC Highways works. This continues to be raised at performance meetings with the NCC Highways Area Managers, but it is predominantly due to resource issues; a number of solutions have been trialled, but none have been successful to date. NCC Highways is close to implementing a new software system called Alloy that will allow their staff to start and stop works directly from site which will aim to both improve the quality of live information and reduce the incurrence of Section 74(7b) shadow FPNs.

We also continue to work with representatives from the SU side as the percentage of their work that attracts an FPN has increased each year since the implementation of the scheme – from 5.28% in Year 1, to 6.4% in Year 2 to 8.4% in Year 3. It is worth noting that these stats will be affected by the continued increase of fibre providers working in the county. Managing this work using FPNs as a deterrent remains a challenge given the level of the fine is outweighed by the financial incentive to complete the work at a pace.

We have therefore implemented a process for new providers to try and improve compliance. We insist on having an introductory meeting to discuss the overarching scope of the works and then a site visit to any locations with open dig or traffic management before any permits are accepted. We also limit the number of areas in which they can work simultaneously to prevent the works promoters' resources becoming stretched and avoiding issues with completing reinstatements in a timely manner as other neighbouring LAs have experienced. We also have scheduled progress meetings to ensure we are kept up to date on develops on a frequent basis and raise any concerns at an early stage so corrective action can be taken. This has allowed us to establish expected practices from the outset and means we can easily hold providers to account if there is any digression.

- **Information** - *ensure accurate information is available to the public through improved quality of information received from all works promoters*

Through the permit application process and scrutiny of permit conditions, better quality information for each works is achieved. All works contained on the Council's Streetworks register are publicly displayed through the one.network platform. We continue to meet with our software providers on a monthly basis to discuss development opportunities and potential synergy with our various systems to ensure the most accurate information is available to staff for assessing works and for the public to aid informed journey planning.

- **Fairness** - *ensure all works promoters are treated fairly and with parity*

All permits received are assessed using the same process. The Permit Officers



continue to offer additional support and advice to both HA and SU staff via email, phone calls and Permit Modification Requests (PMRs).

The sample inspection regime, as set out in the Inspections Code of Practice, allows for a Street Authority to establish the overall performance of each undertaker (including Highway Authority works and private works) operating in its area. This involves inspection of a structured random sample of works at various stages during the works and reinstatement guarantee period. To ensure that promoters are treated equally, 100% of the sample inspections generated are carried out. As well as carrying out 100% of the sample inspections generated, the Streetworks Inspection team also carries out a large number of routine inspections in order to ensure a greater level of monitoring.

KPI 3 (Appendix C) clearly demonstrates a parity of treatment when granting extension request with extensions granted on 6.1% of HA works and 9.9% of SU works – this compares to 7.1% of HA and 8% of SU works in Year 2.

The percentage of works with an early start request for the HA has dropped notably from 22.8% in Year 2 to 16.2% in Year 3 whilst the SU figure has increased from 9.7% to 14.1%. The percentage of approved early start requests for the HA has increased from 46% in Year 2 to 57.1% this year whilst the SU percentage has dropped from 78.9% to 71%.

The team continues to consider each application on its merits and therefore treated all works promoters fairly and with parity.

- **Collaboration** - *encourage collaborative working between all works promoters*

Encouraging work promoters to work in a more collaborative way in order to minimise disruption to the travelling public has long been a focus of the Streetworks team. The team proactively seeks to engage with any works promoter when there is a clash for the requested road space and will help to facilitate a solution where possible.

The data from KPI OM6 (Appendix G) shows that these efforts saved 382 days' worth of disruption on the network in comparison to 685 days in Year 2. The team continues to focus on identifying collaboration opportunities wherever possible, but this is ultimately dictated by the nature of the work being undertaken in the county. It's also hoped that the improved attendance at the Coordination meetings will give works promoters a wider knowledge of other organisations' work on the network and naturally create new collaboration opportunities.

## 5 Financial information

As shown in the table below, the scheme has operated at a small loss of £4,703 in the third year. The recovery of the scheme set up costs were spread over the first 3 years of operation and have now been fully recouped.

	SU Costs
<b>2022/23</b>	
Staffing	513,718
Set up costs (per annum for 3 yrs)	46,152
Non-staffing costs	65,349
Total Allowable Expenditure	625,219
Permit Income Apr 22 - Mar 23	620,517
Total Permit Income	620,517
Surplus/Deficit	-4,703

It was always anticipated that it would take the first 3 years of the scheme before financial stability could be achieved and this has been borne out in the year end positions with a surplus of £68,603 in the first year, a loss of £61,374 in the second year and then a small loss this year; this creates an overall surplus of just £2,526 which is an acceptable tolerance for a cost neutral scheme.

## 6 Recommendations

As mentioned in Section 3 there were six recommendations made in Year 2; three of which were achieved and the remaining three continue to be monitored as part of business as usual.

During this year we have faced a number of key challenges that have ultimately driven the recommendations made in this report. The recommendations are as follows; -

- Review the existing staff structure to address resilience issues regarding Permit Officer capacity
- Maintain the financial stability of the scheme

## 7 Appendices

### Appendix A

#### KPI 1

The number of permit and permit variation applications received, granted, refused, deemed and cancelled by activity type

Apr 22 - Mar 23

Works categories	Applications received				Applications granted				Applications granted & cancelled				Applications refused			
	No (HA)	Work cat break down (%)	No (SU)	Work cat break down (%)	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps
Major (>10 w/d)	637	17.5%	1019	8.7%	463	17.9%	729	9.0%	67	41.1%	123	16.4%	37	18.9%	109	13.9%
Standard	460	12.7%	2401	20.6%	295	11.4%	1205	14.9%	13	8.0%	126	16.8%	23	11.7%	208	26.4%
Minor	2294	63.1%	4974	42.6%	1616	62.4%	3113	38.6%	83	50.9%	447	59.8%	127	64.8%	434	55.1%
Immediate - Urgent	51	1.4%	2598	22.3%	38	1.5%	2503	31.0%	0	0.0%	43	5.7%	7	3.6%	30	3.8%
Immediate - Emer	194	5.3%	563	4.8%	178	6.9%	512	6.4%	0	0.0%	9	1.2%	2	1.0%	6	0.8%
Total	3636	100.0%	11669	99.0%	2590	100.0%	8062	100.0%	163	100.0%	748	100.0%	196	100.0%	787	100.0%

Applications refused & cancelled				Applications deemed				Applications superceded			
No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps
21	20.4%	86	13.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	63	8.1%	181	6.4%
16	15.5%	176	27.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	142	18.3%	784	27.8%
61	59.2%	351	54.6%	1	100.0%	1	50.0%	550	71.0%	1537	54.5%

3	2.9%	26	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	6	0.8%	271	9.6%
2	1.9%	4	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	14	1.8%	45	1.6%
103	100.0%	643	100.0%	1	100.0%	2	100.0%	775	100.0%	2818	100.0%

Works categories	Variations received				Variations granted				Variations granted & cancelled				Variations refused			
	No (HA)	Work cat break down (%)	No (SU)	Work cat break down (%)	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps
Major (>10 w/d)	233	17.9%	796	13.4%	151	15.0%	621	13.6%	2	4.2%	31	7.9%	75	27.5%	167	13.4%
Standard	310	23.8%	1509	25.4%	251	25.0%	1110	24.2%	8	16.7%	94	24.0%	55	20.1%	373	29.9%
Minor	706	54.2%	2339	39.4%	555	55.3%	1681	36.7%	38	79.2%	262	67.0%	138	50.5%	591	47.4%
Immediate - Urgent	8	0.6%	1042	17.5%	6	0.6%	952	20.8%	0	0.0%	3	0.8%	0	0.0%	79	6.3%
Immediate - Emer	46	3.5%	254	4.3%	41	4.1%	215	4.7%	0	0.0%	1	0.3%	5	1.8%	38	3.0%
Total	1303	100.0%	5940	100.0%	1004	100.0%	4579	100.0%	48	100.0%	391	100.0%	273	100.0%	1248	100.0%

Variations refused & cancelled				Variations deemed				Variations superceded			
No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps	No (HA)	% of total apps	No (SU)	% of total apps
31	23.7%	61	8.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	28.0%	8	7.3%
25	19.1%	242	35.3%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	4	16.0%	25	22.9%
74	56.5%	379	55.3%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	12	48.0%	67	61.5%
0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	2	8.0%	9	8.3%
1	0.8%	3	0.4%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
131	100.0%	685	100.0%	1	100.0%	3	100.0%	25	100.0%	109	100.0%

## Appendix B

### KPI 2

The number of conditions applied by condition type

Apr 22 - March 23

<b>Total no. of permit conditions</b>	51412
<b>Total no. of HA permit conditions</b>	13825
<b>Total no. of SU permit conditions</b>	37587

NCT Ref	Condition description	HA	%	SU	%	Total	%
NCT 02a	Limit the days and times of day	1568	11.3%	3344	8.9%	4912	9.6%
NCT 02b	Working hours	59	0.4%	920	2.4%	979	1.9%
NCT 05a	Width and/or length of road space that can be occupied	0	0.0%	10	0.0%	10	0.0%
NCT 07a	Road closed to traffic	407	2.9%	432	1.1%	839	1.6%
NCT 09a	Changes to traffic management arrangements	8	0.1%	21	0.1%	29	0.1%
NCT 11b	Publicity for proposed works	594	4.3%	1686	4.5%	2280	4.4%
NCT 01a	Duration on streets where the validity window does not apply	2762	20.0%	9107	24.2%	11869	23.1%
NCT 01b	Duration on streets where the validity window applies	2762	20.0%	9107	24.2%	11869	23.1%
NCT 04a	Removal of surplus materials/plant	1	0.0%	8	0.0%	9	0.0%
NCT 04b	Storage of surplus materials/plant	1	0.0%	15	0.0%	16	0.0%
NCT 06a	Road space to be available to traffic/pedestrians at certain times of the day	5	0.0%	23	0.1%	28	0.1%
NCT 08a	Traffic management request	1897	13.7%	1682	4.5%	3579	7.0%
NCT 08b	Manual control of traffic management	117	0.8%	522	1.4%	639	1.2%
NCT 09b	Traffic management arrangements to be in place	68	0.5%	109	0.3%	177	0.3%
NCT 09c	Signal removal from operation when no longer required	812	5.9%	1420	3.8%	2232	4.3%
NCT 10a	Employment of appropriate methodology	2	0.0%	74	0.2%	76	0.1%
NCT 11a	Display of permit number	2762	20.0%	9107	24.2%	11869	23.1%
NCT 12a	Limit timing of certain activities	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

## Appendix C

### KPI 3

The number of permit extension requests received and granted for issued permits

#### Apr 22 - March 23

	HA	%	SU	%	Total	%
Total applications	3430	N/A	12517	N/A	15947	N/A
Extension requests	210	6.1%	1240	9.9%	1450	9.1%
Requests approved	210	100.0%	1240	100.0%	1450	100.0%

## Appendix D

### KPI 4

The number of early starts requested and granted per activity type

Apr 22 - Mar 23

Activity type	Granted permits by work cat break down (HA)	Early start requests (HA)	% of early start requests (HA)	Early starts granted (HA)	% of granted requests (HA)	Granted permits by work cat break down (SU)	Early start request (SU)	% of early start requests (SU)	Early starts granted (SU)	% of granted requests (SU)	Total no of early start requests	Total no of early starts granted	Total % of granted requests
Major	614	215	35.0%	125	58.1%	1350	300	22.2%	250	83.3%	515	375	72.8%
Standard	546	163	29.9%	106	65.0%	2315	500	21.6%	370	74.0%	663	476	71.8%
Minor	2171	161	7.4%	77	47.8%	4794	393	8.2%	227	57.8%	554	304	54.9%
Total	3331	539	16.2%	308	57.1%	8459	1193	14.1%	847	71.0%	1732	1155	66.7%

## Appendix E

### OM3

The number of Section 74 Overruns that have occurred with a percentage of total works that have overrun

**Apr 22 - Mar 23**

	HA	SU
Number of works	2196	8558
Number of works with an overrun	53	214
Percentage of works with an overrun (%)	2.41%	2.50%



## Appendix F

### OM4

Average duration of phases by works category along with a total quantity of phases that meet the criteria

Apr 22- Mar 23

Activity type	Average duration (HA)	Total number of phases (HA)	Average duration (SU)	Total number of phases (SU)
Major	6.75	23	11.40	51
Standard	5.52	21	5.63	116
Minor	1.58	115	1.69	291
Immediate (Urgent)	2.34	4	3.94	225
Immediate (Emergency)	2.68	15	5.05	45

## Appendix G

### OM6

Number of collaborative works phases with the totals of working and calendar days of disruption saved

**Apr 22 - Mar 23**

Activity type	HA	SU	Total
Collaborative phases	4	37	41
Working days saved	66	218	284
Calendar days saved	95	287	382

## Appendix H

### AM3

Number of phases that have permits that were refused and then a variation was submitted with a reduced duration which was granted

**Apr 22 - Mar 23**

Activity type	HA	SU	Total
Phase total	11	57	68
Working days saved	16	135	151
Calendar days saved	20	204	224

## Appendix I

### AM5

Number of FPNs issued for permit breaches including withdrawn FPNs

Apr 22 - March 23

	HA	SU	Total
<b>Number of granted permits</b>	3594	12641	16235
<b>% of the total no of works in the county</b>	<b>22.14%</b>	77.86%	100.00%

FPN type	HA			SU			Total
	No of FPNs	% of total FPNs issued	Break down by FPN code	No of FPNs	% of total FPNs issued	Break down by FPN code	No of FPNs
74 (Starts/Stops)	1072	60.2%	89.9%	710	39.8%	67.2%	1782
19 (Without a permit)	74	46.3%	6.2%	86	53.8%	8.1%	160
20 (Permit breaches)	46	15.0%	3.9%	261	85.0%	24.7%	307
<b>Total</b>	<b>1192</b>	<b>53.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1057</b>	<b>47.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2249</b>