



Northumberland
County Council

Street Works Permit Scheme

For Road Works and Street Works

Year 2 Review



Northumberland
County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk

Document Control

Version History

Date	Version	Comments
11/11/22	V 0.1	Draft
07/12/22	V 1.0	Final version

Review Control

Reviewer	Section	Comments	Actions Agreed

Contents

1	Executive Summary	3
2	Introduction	4
3	Progress against Year 1 recommendations	4
4	Performance monitoring	5
5	Financial information	8
6	Recommendations	8
7	Appendices	9
	• Appendix A (KPI 1)	9
	• Appendix B (KPI 2)	11
	• Appendix C (KPI 3)	12
	• Appendix D (KPI 4)	13
	• Appendix E (OM 3)	14
	• Appendix F (OM 4)	15
	• Appendix G (OM 6)	16
	• Appendix H (AM 3)	17
	• Appendix I (AM 5)	18

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.

Due to the timing of the scheme implementation, the first year review covered a fourteen month period. This is the second annual evaluation of the Northumberland County Council Street Works Permit Scheme which covers the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

This report evaluates the progress of the permit scheme in relation to the scheme objectives and on the recommendations made in the Year 1 review. For the purposes of comparison when referring to Year 1 this related to the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 only.

The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to bring some challenges during Year 2 of the scheme however it is hoped that on reaching the end of Year 2, we have resumed a level of business as usual. We have continued to see some 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 second year of the permit scheme can be summarised as follows:-

- A total of 22,510 permit applications were received in the period with 16,624 (73.9%) being granted and 2,313 (10.3%) refused (the other 5.8% is made up of applications that were granted then cancelled, refused then cancelled, deemed or superseded). 7,108 of the total number of applications received were variations
- Performance monitoring measures established provide a framework for continuous monitoring and reporting in order to drive performance.
- 187 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
- In relation to the number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued for permit breaches – there was an increase of 1.12% issued 2021/22 compared to the previous year.
- Only 0.23% of all received permits have deemed which may be a reflection of the additional resources through increasing from 3 to 4 area teams.
- Through the level of support provided by the Streetworks team we have demonstrated a positive commitment to ensuring fairness across all works promoters.
- 685 calendar days have been saved as a direct result of encouraging collaborative working between works promoters compared to 239 days in Year 1
- The permit scheme is reporting a surplus this year of £68,603, however this results in an overall surplus of £7,229 over the first 2 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 aligns with the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026 which sets out the vision, aims and objectives for transport across the county. This has since superseded by the North East Transport Plan.

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 1 recommendations

Below are the six recommendations made in the Year 1 review including the progress made to date;-

- **increase from three to four dedicated operational areas**
A fourth Streetworks Inspector, Permit Officer and Network Technical Assistant were recruited to the team which is now operating with Central, North, South East and West area teams. The additional capacity has benefitted the effectiveness and efficiency of the permit schemes operation.
- **ensure the level of deemed permits remains below 0.5% of all received permits**
0.23% 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, with processing permits. 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 are encouraged to attend site meetings where appropriate and more specifically in relation to major works but also for routine and sample inspections to build their knowledge.
- **continued development of performance monitoring through monthly meetings and continuous open dialogue**
A suite of reports have been developed with our software supplier, Yotta (Mayrise), in order to for us to access more relevant data in relation to the monitoring of our permit scheme. These reports have allowed us to break down information to a more detailed level, allowing greater analysis of performance across all SUs.

- **maintaining good levels of collaboration and information sharing across the North East LAs**

We have continued to collaborate with other LAs through the Mayrise User Group sharing best practice and discussing any relevant and common issues. Whilst this group originated to discuss software issues, it has since become a wider support group focusing on scheme delivery. We also continue to be active members of NEHAUC and NEJAG and frequently have informal discussions with neighbouring LAs.

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 22,510 permit applications were received in the period with 16,624 (73.9%) being granted and 2,313 (10.3%) refused (the other 5.8% is made up of applications that were granted then cancelled, refused then cancelled, deemed or superseded); 7,108 of the total number of applications received were variations.

The data demonstrates that less than 0.23% of all received permits deemed, 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 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 187 calendar days' worth of disruption to the travelling public. Whilst this is significantly lower than Year 1 (604 days), this is a result of the work that the team have carried out initially with works promoters to more accurately calculate works durations in the first instance. At the request of the Network Coordinator, works promoters submitted a list of average durations for different works processes as guidance, to help in understanding the most appropriate timescales, which was then agreed with the Network Coordinator.

Whilst the data in OM 3 (Appendix E) states that over running works during the second year has increased for SU works (from 0.41% to 1.15%), there has been a significant decrease for HA works from 3.91% to 1.37%.

- **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 2,415 FPNs (including internal shadow FPNs) were issued against a total of 16,624 granted permits – this averages out at an FPN on 14.5% of granted permits. It should be noted that a large percentage (82.4% - 1,990) of the total FPNs are Section 74(7b) offences (late starts and stops) and the majority of these (1456) are internal works. This continues to be raised at performance meetings with the NCC Highways Area Managers and the root cause established; it is predominantly an administration issue caused by resource shortages during peak periods. NCC is looking to implement new software 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.

The breakdown of AM 5 (Appendix I) shows an increase in both the volume of permits received and FPNs issued to SUs compared to Year 1. In Year 1 5.28% of all works attracted an FPN as opposed to 6.4% of all works in Year 2.

The Streetworks team have responded to this increase by identifying the organisations responsible and implemented a range of measures to help mitigate further increases. These measures included monthly meetings to raise key issues and discuss timely forward planning in order to try and pre-empt any unforeseen challenges. These meetings, led by the Network Coordinator and Senior Streetworks Inspector, have also strengthened working relationships. One of the aims of creating a Senior Streetworks Inspector was to provide greater capacity to

allow tighter monitoring of major schemes across the county given that these schemes often cause increased disruption to the travelling public.

- **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.

- **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 requests and remains consistent with Year 1 figures.

However, it must be noted that the percentage of works where an early start is requested is sizeably different; the total percentage of works with early requests for all HA works is 22.8% whilst it is only 9.7% for all SU works. Whilst in the first year early start requests were mainly for Major and Standard HA works, this is now more evenly spread across activity types. Whilst the proportion of works with an early start request is significantly higher for HA works the percentage of granted requests is much higher for SUs (46% for HAs and 78.9% for SUs). The figures therefore show that the team have considered 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 685 days worth of disruption on the network in comparison to only 239 days in Year 1.

5 Financial information

It is anticipated that it will take the first 3 years of the scheme before financial stability can be achieved. The full scheme set up costs have been spread over the first 3 years of operation.

In preparation for implementation of the scheme, data from the previous noticing regime was used to calculate the anticipated income levels from permit fees. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the first year of the scheme operated at an overall deficit compared to the income levels that were predicted. It was expected that this would stabilise during the second and third years. Whilst the second year has shown a surplus of £68,603, this results in an overall surplus of £7,229 over the first 2 years. It should be noted that there has been a significant increase in the number of permits issued by communications organisations during the second year. Whilst broadband activity continues to increase, we expect that this will reduce as Project Gigabit draws to a conclusion and therefore cannot be assumed as the norm for the purposes of setting permit fees.

2021/22	
Staffing	467,924
Set up costs (per annum for 3 yrs)	46,152
Non-staffing costs	77,992
Total Allowable Expenditure	592,068
Permit Income Apr21-Mar22	660,672
Total Permit Income	660,672
2021/22 Surplus	68,603
Deficit brought forward from 2020/21	-61,374
Surplus as at end of Year 2	7,229

6 Recommendations

As mentioned in Section 3 there were six recommendations made in Year 1, two of which were achieved. The remaining four are now part of business as usual. We are recommending that the level of deemed permits is retained as an annual recommendation given the importance for continuous monitoring.

During this second year we have faced a number of key challenges that have ultimately driven the recommendations made in this Year 2 report. The recommendations are as follows;-

- Ensure the level of deemed permits remains below 0.5% of all received permits
- Seek to improve data analysis and recording in order to provide meaningful year on year comparisons showing direction of travel
- Produce additional guidance materials for all undertakers to increase knowledge and understating of the scheme requirements

9 Appendices

Appendix A

KPI 1

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

Apr 21- Mar 22

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)	616	16.5%	1462	12.5%	535	86.9%	1038	71.0%	71	11.5%	129	8.8%	38	6.2%	154	10.5%
Standard	567	15.2%	2557	21.9%	389	68.6%	1506	58.9%	17	3.0%	290	11.3%	37	6.5%	225	8.8%
Minor	2273	60.9%	4686	40.2%	1747	76.9%	2941	62.8%	98	4.3%	424	9.0%	84	3.7%	374	8.0%
Immediate - Urgent	62	1.7%	2549	21.8%	56	90.3%	2300	90.2%	1	1.6%	44	1.7%	2	3.2%	18	0.7%
Immediate - Emer	214	5.7%	416	3.6%	188	87.9%	370	88.9%	6	2.8%	1	0.2%	6	2.8%	6	1.4%
Total	3732	100.0%	11670	100.0%	2915	78.1%	8155	69.9%	193	5.2%	888	7.6%	167	4.5%	777	6.7%

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
18	2.9%	109	7.5%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	43	7.0%	269	18.4%
14	2.5%	189	7.4%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	141	24.9%	825	32.3%
47	2.1%	314	6.7%	0	0.0%	7	0.1%	442	19.4%	1364	29.1%

1	1.6%	15	0.6%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	4	6.5%	229	9.0%
1	0.5%	4	1.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	20	9.3%	39	9.4%
81	2.2%	631	5.4%	0	0.0%	12	0.1%	650	17.4%	2726	23.4%

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)	222	16.9%	1148	19.8%	190	85.6%	828	72.1%	0	0.0%	59	5.1%	28	12.6%	299	26.0%
Standard	404	30.7%	1485	25.6%	353	87.4%	1066	71.8%	12	3.0%	100	6.7%	39	9.7%	373	25.1%
Minor	655	49.8%	2356	40.7%	546	83.4%	1831	77.7%	19	2.9%	251	10.7%	89	13.6%	478	20.3%
Immediate - Urgent	8	0.6%	638	11.0%	8	100.0%	569	89.2%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	44	6.9%
Immediate - Emer	26	2.0%	166	2.9%	23	88.5%	140	84.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	7.7%	17	10.2%
Total	1315	100.0%	5793	100.0%	1120	85.2%	4434	76.5%	31	2.4%	411	7.1%	158	12.0%	1211	20.9%

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
11	5.0%	137	11.9%	1	0.5%	1	0.1%	3	1.4%	20	1.7%
16	4.0%	260	17.5%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	12	3.0%	44	3.0%
49	7.5%	367	15.6%	0	0.0%	4	0.2%	20	3.1%	43	1.8%
0	0.0%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	22	3.4%	0	0.0%	3	0.5%
0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%	8	4.8%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
76	5.8%	765	13.2%	2	0.2%	37	0.6%	35	2.7%	111	1.9%

Appendix B

KPI 2

The number of conditions applied by condition type

Apr 21 - March 22

Total no. of permit conditions	53928
Total no. of HA permit conditions	14972
Total no. of SU permit conditions	38956

NCT Ref	Condition description	HA	%	SU	%	Total	%
NCT 02a	Limit the days and times of day	1591	10.6%	4335	11.1%	5926	11.0%
NCT 02b	Working hours	127	0.8%	771	2.0%	898	1.7%
NCT 05a	Width and/or length of road space that can be occupied	0	0.0%	13	0.0%	13	0.0%
NCT 07a	Road closed to traffic	420	2.8%	478	1.2%	898	1.7%
NCT 09a	Changes to traffic management arrangements	9	0.1%	27	0.1%	36	0.1%
NCT 11b	Publicity for proposed works	574	3.8%	1842	4.7%	2416	4.5%
NCT 01a	Duration on streets where the validity window does not apply	3042	20.3%	9165	23.5%	12207	22.6%
NCT 01b	Duration on streets where the validity window applies	3042	20.3%	9165	23.5%	12207	22.6%
NCT 04a	Removal of surplus materials/plant	1	0.0%	5	0.0%	6	0.0%
NCT 04b	Storage of surplus materials/plant	0	0.0%	4	0.0%	4	0.0%
NCT 06a	Road space to be available to traffic/pedestrians at certain times of the day	0	0.0%	29	0.1%	29	0.1%
NCT 08a	Traffic management request	2037	13.6%	1801	4.6%	3838	7.1%
NCT 08b	Manual control of traffic management	150	1.0%	554	1.4%	704	1.3%
NCT 09b	Traffic management arrangements to be in place	32	0.2%	41	0.1%	73	0.1%
NCT 09c	Signal removal from operation when no longer required	902	6.0%	1470	3.8%	2372	4.4%
NCT 10a	Employment of appropriate methodology	0	0.0%	89	0.2%	89	0.2%
NCT 11a	Display of permit number	3042	20.3%	9165	23.5%	12207	22.6%
NCT 12a	Limit timing of certain activities	3	0.0%	2	0.0%	5	0.0%

Appendix C

KPI 3

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

Apr 21 - March 22

	HA	%	SU	%	Total	%
Total applications	3990	N/A	12502	N/A	16492	N/A
Extension requests	284	7.1%	1003	8.0%	1287	7.8%
Requests approved	284	100.0%	1003	100.0%	1287	100.0%

Appendix D

KPI 4

The number of early starts requested and granted per activity type

Apr 21 - Mar 22

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	725	187	25.8%	145	77.5%	1866	268	14.4%	233	86.9%	455	378	83.1%
Standard	742	175	23.6%	151	86.3%	2572	352	13.7%	291	82.7%	527	442	83.9%
Minor	2293	496	21.6%	99	20.0%	4772	274	5.7%	181	66.1%	770	280	36.4%
Total	3760	858	22.8%	395	46.0%	9210	894	9.7%	705	78.9%	1752	1100	62.8%

Appendix E

OM3

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

Apr 21 - Mar 22

	HA	SU
Number of works	2694	8633
Number of works with an overrun	37	99
Percentage of works with an overrun (%)	1.37%	1.15%

Appendix F

OM4

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

Apr 21 - Mar 22

Activity type	Average duration (HA)	Total number of phases (HA)	Average duration (SU)	Total number of phases (SU)
Major	7.99	27	9.68	76
Standard	5.75	33	5.45	122
Minor	1.73	142	1.81	264
Immediate (Urgent)	2.33	5	3.67	188
Immediate (Emergency)	2.14	17	4.81	33

Appendix G

OM6

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

Apr 21 - Mar 22

Activity type	HA	SU	Total
Collaborative phases	11	52	63
Working days saved	68	440	508
Calendar days saved	92	593	685

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 21 - March 22

Activity type	HA	SU	Total
Phase total	10	52	62
Working days saved	15	125	140
Calendar days saved	16	171	187

Appendix I

AM5

Number of FPNs issued for permit breaches including withdrawn FPNs

Apr 21 - March 22

	HA	SU	Total
Number of granted permits	4035	12589	16624
% of the total no of works in the county	24.27%	75.73%	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)	1456	73.2%	90.5%	534	26.8%	66.3%	1990
19 (Without a permit)	98	50.3%	6.1%	97	49.7%	12.0%	195
20 (Permit breaches)	55	23.9%	3.4%	175	76.1%	21.7%	230
Total	1609	66.6%	100.0%	806	33.4%	100.0%	2415