

Safety Alert

A47 Guyhirn Junction water supply damage

27 April 2021

Background information

As part of planned site clearance works for the A47 Guyhirn Junction Scheme, a ditch on the edge of the scheme boundary was being cleared using an 8t 360 excavator, with ditching bucket attachment. During the works, an uncharted 25mm black HDPE pipe (high-density polyethylene) private water supply service was damaged. The water supply serviced 4 nearby bungalows built in the 1970s. Anglian Water were alerted and attended site promptly. The repair was fully completed the same afternoon.

Investigation Findings / Initial learning

- A permit had been issued for the works. The water supply was not charted on any utility drawings and was unable to be picked up when the area had been scanned using service avoidance equipment prior to commencement. The utility was also not picked up by the ground penetrating radar, as the ditch was outside the main construction area.
- The utility pipe was sitting within the silt deposits above the ditch invert level and was not visible prior to excavation. Because the colour of the HDPE (high-density polyethylene) pipe was black instead of blue as standard, this made it even more invisible to identify.
- The repairing Anglian Water Engineer acknowledged that this utility was not laid in accordance with current standards.
- Anglian water is investigating the legality and ownership of this utility.

