

## Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG)

Meeting minutes – Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023

Steering Group meeting (ENA Offices/MS Teams)

### ATTENDEES

Name	Initials	Company
Jo-Anne Michael	JM	HSE
Richard Broome	RB	LSBUD
Jim Denholm	JD	SPEN
Bryan Woods	BW	Amey
Brett Stinton	BS	NWL
Greg McGinn	GM	BT Openreach
Steve Crossland	SC	Balfour Beatty
Laura Knight	LK	LSBUD
Andrew Pinkham	AP	United Living
Aaron Eaton	AE	UKPN
Simon Kruyswijk	SK	Virgin/O <sub>2</sub>
Steve Welsh	SW	SGN
Mike Leppard	ML	ENA
Jamie Reeve	JR	ENA
Max Everson	ME	Site Assist
Luke Quinn	LQ	Site Assist
Dag Wirdenius	DW	Site Assist

Heath Pritchard	HP	Cabinet Office
Chris Chambers	CC	Cabinet Office

#### APOLOGIES

Name	Initials	Company
Matthew Hopkinson	MH	National Grid
Julia Evans	JE	Highways England
Iain Boardman	IB	Costain
George Foulger	GF	Clancy Group
Matthew Young	MY	HS2
Robert Burns	RBu	Costain
David Burgess	DB	Network Rail
David Foster	DF	Network Plus
Freddy Werpel	FW	Pelican Corp

## MEETING NOTES AND ACTIONS

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

ML welcomed members to the Q1 2023 Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG) meeting, and apologies were received as above. The agenda was reviewed which was designed to cover outstanding actions, ongoing work, and presentations/discussion with visiting stakeholders. Site Assist will be attending to present on site risk assessment technology, and the Cabinet Office will then provide an update on the NUAR initiative. Standing agenda items include communications, events, and relevant industry updates.

#### **Actions**

### 2. Meeting minutes – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022

#### Accuracy

There were no amendments to the draft minutes, which were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### Actions

There were a couple of event reports to follow up and circulate to the group. ENA had organised a public safety workshop on strike avoidance on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022. A report had been drafted summarising the presentations and breakout discussions and will be issued to the group. ML will follow up with Costain on a project run in conjunction with National Highways which will provide some useful learning.

#### Section 5 – USAG Communications work

FW continues to develop the new USAG web site and revisions have been made to the original draft design template. An update will be provided at agenda Item 6, and there will be a wider consultation with the group in due course.

#### Section 6 – NUAR initiative

Ongoing action to engage with the Cabinet Office and Regional User Groups. Following a call with Holger Kessler in February and, in view of the impending launch of NUAR, Cabinet Office colleagues are attending to provide an update at agenda Item 4.

#### Section 7 – USAG Work plan

Steering Group governance documents have previously been drawn up. A draft 2023 Work Programme needs to be further developed and incorporate strategic aims and stakeholder engagement work, and this needs to be supported by reinvigorating the Working Groups.

Section 8 – 2023 Meeting dates

A list of proposed 2023 Steering Group meeting dates had been issued as follows:

- **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March** – Current meeting
- **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June** - To be rearranged (due to clash with National Damage Prevention Day)
- **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September**
- **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December**

All meetings to be held at the ENA offices in London unless advised differently.

Ongoing 2023 actions

Ericsson USAG awareness event; RB to represent the Steering Group at a meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March;

Letter to Dr Keiran Mullen MP (Crewe and Nantwich); draft to be completed by RB and ML;

Pot ended cables; query from AP on DNO policy for managing such assets as these are not always included in utility maps and can be difficult to locate. They should be treated as live cables, and there is potential for harm. JD offered to liaise with SPEN colleagues and the ENA Public Safety Committee and coordinate a response;

Progarm engagement; the business has previously attended and presented to USAG on new PPE and cable protection products and are keen to do so again. Progarm routinely present at industry events/conferences, but the group agreed for ML to approach and arrange a suitable meeting slot.

<b>Actions</b>	<p>Letter to Dr Keiran Mullen MP (Crew and Nantwich); draft to be completed and sent</p> <p>Pot ended cables JD offered to liaise with SPEN colleagues and the ENA Public Safety Committee and coordinate a response to the group</p> <p>ML to approach Progarm and arrange a suitable meeting slot to present</p>	<p>RB/ML (March 2023)</p> <p>JD (Next meeting)</p> <p>ML (Ongoing)</p>
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**3. Site Assist**

ME, LQ, and DW joined the meeting on behalf of Site Assist and delivered a presentation and discussion on their business and its product/service. This is based around a digital platform site permitting system as an alternative to a traditional paper based process. This is designed to deliver the necessary tools to work safely and efficiently whilst freeing up valuable workforce time, which provides a link to USAG objectives.

Benefits to this system cover Planning, Communication, Compliance, Risk Exposure, Transparency, and Auditing issues, whilst at the same time addressing challenges of site accidents/incidents, efficiency, insurance aspects, working time, system accuracy, and standardisation of processes. The platform itself is completely paperless, encompasses all aspects of the permitting process, and is applicable to projects from Tier 1 contractors through to domestic housebuilding work.

Companies quoted as using the system include a number of USAG members, namely SPEN, Balfour Beatty, HS2 and Costain as well as Vinci, Morgan Sindall etc. who all report the tool as being a driver of safety and behavioural change, and an example of how technology can assist operational work practices.

SC provided user feedback on behalf of Balfour Beatty; the company has found the system to offer a simple user interface that provides for a consistent approach and better record keeping. Controls on work processes have improved and it allows for automated reporting, auditable content, and an overall reduced level of risk. Wider benefits also include greater awareness and data on potential near miss incidents (High Impact Low Probability events).

ME provided a live demonstration of the tool using realistic site data to demonstrate the system's application and flexibility, and the means for project oversight by managers and engineers. This helped illustrate the permit, team management, authorisation, site location, templates, and site report aspects of the App all of which feed into an oversight map of current permits and their live status. It was further explained that companies' specific needs can be tailored for, and the system changed and modified accordingly.

Ongoing challenges remain designing the tool for both contractor and asset owner requirements. Compared to other available products there is also a stronger focus on permitting, and practical site functionality and use.

<b>Actions</b>		
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#### 4. NUAR update

HP (Head of Strategy) and CC (Deputy Director) from the Geospatial Commission joined the meeting to provide an update on the NUAR initiative which covers England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The overarching principles of the project and roll out are Standardisation (data), Security (secure platform), Streamline (sharing data), and Support (quality/missing data). At an operational level the key aspect is infrastructure data and access to it with over 700 data owners needing to be engaged in the process. Asset owners are to remain in the 'driving seat' with respect to managing their assets and the system, with an expectation of a greater level of interaction between those breaking ground and the infrastructure owners.

The perceived benefits cover improvements in the planning process, the quality of data provided, a greater level of data sharing, reduced level of risk to excavators, and reduced business and public delays.

The timeline of the project has seen the three pilot areas in operation since 2019, a gradual build of the NUAR platform from 2021, and an imminent launch of the platform in those areas in March 2023 (Minimum Viable Product (MVP)), leading to a gradual roll out in England and Northern Ireland up to September 2024.

This follows a public consultation held in 2023 to which there were 164 responses. Areas for which there was a consensus included the proposal for a single database managed by Government to address security concerns, and that legislation would probably be needed to ensure complete participation by all parties. There was no current consensus on how NUAR will be funded, and it is unclear how use of the MVP will work alongside other service provision. Costs for running the system are also yet to be determined, but there may be commercial opportunities beyond the base use case.

The group also asked how utility strike data, a quoted benefit of the scheme, would be recorded and how organisations will be incentivised to be transparent and report incidents. It is unclear how national data will be kept current and the frequency of updates that will be expected from asset owners. The infrastructure owners will be expected to maintain their databases and allow access to contractors, which would then lead in time to wider access to other parties (subcontractors).

Members asked how they could support/promote NUAR if required, bearing in mind the group’s key remit on safe digging practices which will remain USAG’s key focus and objective. A supporting quote may be appropriate and/or companies can promote use of the system to their stakeholders in their geographical region.

Post meeting note – NUAR launch articles:

<https://www.constructionenquirer.com/2023/04/05/first-safe-dig-digital-underground-utility-maps-issued/>

[Digital map created of UK’s underground pipes and cables - BBC News](#)

<b>Actions</b>		
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## 5. Amey case study

Due to time constraints from the presentations and other agenda items it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

<b>Actions</b>		
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## 6. Communications

### Web site

ML updated members on developments with the new USAG web site, and the revamped format and content which FW has been working on. The template has been reviewed by several members of the Steering Group and a few amendments made to the proposed layout.

The new site is clearer and well presented, and will address/promote the following:

- USAG and Steering Group aims and expectations;
- Industry resources (BPAUS Toolkit, case studies, guidance, videos etc.);
- USAG Strike Reports;
- USAG Charter (signatories, charter, sign up process, membership);
- Contact/News (contact routes, social media, Linked In, Infoline, newsletter etc.).

A link to the revised and final web site template will be circulated to the group when available.

2023 Campaigns/Events

The CECA Safe Digging Initiative has developed into an ongoing programme of engagement and safe working practice promotion. An event had recently been held in Yorkshire with contributions from Clancy, Balfour Beatty, and Costain members. A venue and date for an event in the southern area is to be determined, whilst AP is keen to hold a similar event in the north-west and LSBUD are already engaged in the process.

National Damage Prevention Day

This annual event will be organised and hosted by LSBUD and held at St George’s Park, Burton-on-Trent on 22<sup>nd</sup> June. This will feature a variety of presentations, speakers, and an exhibition, and USAG members were encouraged to promote and attend the event. Prior to this ENA will hold its annual SHE Management Conference in Dublin on 24/25<sup>th</sup> May, which will include speakers from Streetworks UK and JAG UK on utility management issues.

Workers Memorial Day

It was noted that the annual International Day on Health and Safety, known as Workers Memorial Day, is taking place as usual on 28<sup>th</sup> April. Members agreed it would be useful to mark the occasion with some communications messages on the web site.

Post meeting date – the following was published:

[Workers' Memorial Day: Remembering and Honouring Those Who Have Lost Their Lives at Work - Utility Strike Avoidance Group](#)

HSE guidance

JM informed the group that HSE has recently published operational guidance ‘Welfare standards for construction work’. It explains the requirements for welfare facilities provision on construction sites. It gives guidance on the interpretation of the standards, clarifies the basic expectations for compliance with Schedule 2 of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (CDM), and provides guidance on enforcement. The guidance is freely available: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/og/og-00002.pdf>

Duty holders should ensure that the provision of welfare is considered at the planning stage of their projects and is maintained, and its adequacy reviewed on a regular basis throughout the project. Reference is made within the operational guidance to the prescriptive requirements set out in BS 6465-1:2006+A1:2008, this will be used by HSE as a good rule of thumb about the standards expected for ‘readily accessible sanitary conveniences’.

JM also referenced a fatal incident involving a highways worker; part of the HSE investigation into this incident involved consideration of the adequacy of the welfare provision for the works.

<b>Actions</b>	A link to the revised and final USAG web site template will be circulated to the group	FW/ML (Ongoing)
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	Members agreed it would be useful to mark Workers Memorial Day with a comms message on the web site	FW (April 2023)
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7. Industry updates		
<p><u>Streetworks UK guidance</u></p> <p>JM highlighted that original, useful NJUG guidance on buried infrastructure, now the Streetworks UK guidance 'Guidelines on the positioning and colour coding of underground utilities' apparatus', is due to be revised and updated. The material is referenced in HSG47 and needs to remain current and more detail added.</p> <p>Streetworks UK have been reviewing the guidance as it has not had a significant review since 2013. The core purpose of the document remains as is; recommended minimum depths, proximities, and colour coding, to ensure adequate protection from adjacent assets and future excavation works, and to aid identification.</p> <p>Some of the new proposals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the scope of the document from solely installing utilities in the footways and include carriageway and grass verges;</li> <li>• More comprehensive identification table;</li> <li>• Include service connections;</li> <li>• A hierarchy of controls for deviations e.g. shallow mains;</li> <li>• More comprehensive explanation of heat networks;</li> <li>• Annex covering examples of below and above ground marker systems.</li> </ul> <p>Streetworks UK are looking to circulate a copy of the revised document as a mini consultation of key stakeholders.</p> <p><u>Excavated spoil</u></p> <p>Work has accelerated with SWUK and associated industry working groups on the excavated spoil issue in view of the impending expiry of RPS 211 (exemption for non-hazardous spoil disposal) on 30<sup>th</sup> April. Liaison with the Environment Agency is focussing on the Phase 2 sampling programme involving 1700 samples of hazardous and non-hazardous spoil samples, and the need to then develop alternative desk and site based risk assessments to ensure improved waste classification processes can be introduced. This has been accompanied by engagement and communications with Government Departments to lobby and emphasise the importance of developing a workable solution for all asset owners and contractors. An Implementation Plan is now being developed for pre and post RPS 211 covering the new industry Protocol, the development and adoption of industry wide processes, and the training and roll out of these new procedures.</p>		
<b>Actions</b>	Streetworks UK are looking to circulate a copy of the revised utilities guidelines as a mini consultation of key stakeholders	All (Ongoing)



8. USAG Objectives		
<p>There are an umber of aspects to the 2023 Work Programme and Steering Group Objectives that need to be addressed, covering quarterly actions, reinvigorating the working groups, and collective work on assessing and implementing strike report findings. There was limited time to discuss how to develop this work, but this remains a key priority for 2023 and will require more detailed consideration, an invitation to USAG members to participate in the working groups, and the development of the work programme.</p>		
<b>Actions</b>		

9. USAG Meetings 2023		
<p>Dates for the 2023 quarterly meetings are listed at the beginning of the minutes. It was agreed to change the date of the Q2 Steering Group meeting to Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July to avoid a conflict with the National Damage Prevention Day event. This meeting will be held in person at the ENA offices in London and a calendar invite will be issued.</p>		
<b>Actions</b>	Calendar invite to be issued for the Q2 2023 USAG Steering Group meeting	ML (April 2023)