

## Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG)

Meeting minutes – Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Steering Group meeting (ENA Offices/MS Teams)

### ATTENDEES

Name	Initials	Company
Bryan Woods	BW	Amey
Greg McGinn	GM	BT Openreach
Steve Welsh	SW	SGN
Andrew Pinkham	AP	United Living
Freddy Werpel	FW	Pelican Corp
Jim Denholm	JD	SPEN
Richard Broome	RB	LSBUD
Laura Knight	LK	LSBUD
Jo-Anne Michael	JM	HSE
Aaron Eaton	AE	UKPN
Matthew Hopkinson	MH	National Grid
Steve Walker	SW	NPG
Billy McCann	BM	Cadent Gas
Mike Leppard	ML	ENA

## APOLOGIES

Name	Initials	Company
Eddie Eaves	EE	Highways England
Julia Evans	JE	Highways England
Simon Kruyswijk	SK	Virgin/O2
David Burgess	DB	Network Rail

## MEETING NOTES AND ACTIONS

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

ML welcomed members to the Q2 2023 Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG) meeting, which was held as both an in person and online meeting. SW (NPG) was welcomed to his first meeting and apologies were received as above.

The Steering Group membership remained a full complement with replacements offered by companies for those who had left the businesses. FW will also be moving on from his USAG support role, whilst some colleagues attend as deputies as required. Links to the ENA SHE Committee and Public Safety Committee still need further strengthening to assist with future support and governance.

#### Actions

### 2. Meeting minutes – 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023

#### Accuracy

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

#### Actions

Ongoing work includes continued development of the USAG Work Plan; this will be discussed at agenda Item 8. 2023 meeting dates have been rearranged to avoid clashing with industry events and to match colleagues' availability.

Section 2 – Stakeholder engagement

A letter was drafted and sent to Dr Kiran Mullen MP in response to queries on the utility sector’s work on safety; no feedback has been received to date.

Section 2 – Pot ended cables

Issues on the location and detection of pot ended cables had been raised by AP. Feedback had been sought from DNO companies and this issue is on the agenda at Item 5.

Section 2 – Equipment suppliers

Requests are sometime received from tool and equipment suppliers to attend and present at USAG meetings which have been managed on a case by case basis to date. The consensus amongst members was to filter such requests based on their relevance and the presentation of innovation. Invites could be accepted based on the focus of the quarterly meetings and limits placed on the time allocated. To ensure a fair and transparent approach to all such requests then suppliers should be encouraged to approach USAG via the general communications channels e.g. the USAG Infoline service.

Section 6 – 2023 Communications

Developments with the new USAG web site have progressed and an update and presentation will be provided at agenda Item 3.

Updates on events and wider stakeholder engagement will be provided at agenda Item 6.

Section 6 – Workers Memorial Day

Safety messaging was published on the USAG web site in support of Workers Memorial Day which is held each year on 28<sup>th</sup> April.

Section 7 – Streetworks UK (SWUK) guidance

Guidelines on the positioning of underground utilities is being reviewed and updated as the original NJUG guidance dates from 2013. ML to follow up with SWUK on the status of this work.

Section 9 – Steering Group meeting dates

Revised date for this Q2 meeting agreed to avoid clash with National Damage Prevention Day. Dates for Q3 and Q4 to be confirmed in the meeting.

<b>Actions</b>	ML to follow up with SWUK on the status of the work on reviewing underground utility guidance	ML (Next meeting)
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### 3. Communications

#### USAG web site

The new USAG web site has been developed by FW and a link to the draft platform was previously circulated for comment, leading to some minor changes and improvements. These have now been made and the site also addresses comments and requests received from USAG members via the Infoline to improve the clarity and access to information. FW demonstrated the current web site platform and talked through the various pages. The group were asked to approve the launch of the new site which was timely given it is National Safe Digging Week, and this will now be actioned.

FW provided a summary of progress in communications issues over the last 18 months. Followers and engagement on social media have increased from 4.7K (November 2021) to 7K (June 2023). The analytics on web site posts and engagement rate have similarly steadily increased. During this time learning has included the need for image consistency, the requests from users for safety advice and tips, the use of videos (promotional, incident learning), optimum times for and consistency in posting material, and the benefit of publishing a variety of information and interactive posts.

FW informed the group that his role in Pelican Corp was changing and that unfortunately he would no longer be able to support the group. Members expressed their thanks for all his work and commitment to the work on communications which has been an important output of USAG thanks to Pelican Corp and LSBUD's provision of resource and support. To ensure this work continues, LSBUD have arranged for a handover to a colleague, David Gerrard, to take on this work.

The need for the continued provision of supporting material from members remains key, and colleagues were encouraged to submit guidance, campaign material, bulletins etc. as and when they are available. To help promote the work of the Steering Group, a request was made for the page on meeting minutes and meeting dates to be updated.

A SHE Bulletin from BU-UK had been issued with the meeting papers via ENA for noting. This outlines a low voltage cable strike arising from excavation of an uncapped cable.

<b>Actions</b>	To help promote the work of the Steering Group, a request was made for the page on meeting minutes and meeting dates to be updated	ML/LSBUD (Next meeting)
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#### 4. Case study report

BW delivered a presentation on a gas pipe strike incident by Amey on Cadent Gas mains infrastructure; the slides were circulated with the meeting papers. The excavation work was part of planned carriageway reconstruction works, but when removing the asphalt and underlying material a medium pressure gas pipeline was struck. This was due to the pipe crossing up and over a concrete obstruction rather than around, which became the subsequent route following the repair.

The incident highlighted that the GPRS survey had unexpectedly not detected the shallow gas mains and, although a line search enquiry had correctly been undertaken, there were discrepancies between the main location plans and the engineer's drawing which would have alerted the team to the issue. There was also no protection in place over the gas pipe. The incident learnings will be reviewed by Amey and Cadent Gas and are shared to alert others to the survey and drawings issues.

#### Actions

#### 5. Technical issues

##### Pot ended cables

The group discussed issues with electricity pot ended cables and any potential for harm from such assets. The issue here is that they are redundant cables but are left in the ground in case new connections are needed in the future. However, they are not always recorded on utility drawings and there is no consistent records approach from the DNOs.

From an asset owner perspective, then all cables should be treated as live and safe digging practices employed as per HSG47. The absence of any current load makes them difficult to locate and they may be dead; some cable routes are detectable using a Genny but not usually by radio detection. The survey operator is relying on the cable to radiate a locatable signal without any intervention by the operator and this is often not the case. Whilst the cable may be live or dead, there is no load on the end and so there will be no current flow and no locatable signal for a CAT in power mode. In radio mode the success of locating radio signals is affected by the length and diameter of the cable and any signal could be radiating from a different source (metal pipe or utility). The pot ended cable presents itself as high resistance to any signal as there is no path for the signal to follow, so a signal applied by a Genny to the main cable, even if possible, will likely stay on the main cable. Other options include the use of a higher frequency signal or use of the Genny in induction mode, but both are again difficult to apply for pot ended cables.

JD offered to consult further with SPEN colleagues and establish if an offline call/discussion would be worthwhile.

Lead sheath cables

Cadent Gas raised a query with ENA on any specific issues with work around lead sheath cables. This can be high risk as they are prone to fault movement and have no specific protective armour. Cadent had been provided information that DNOs will not work around such cables unless they are isolated, but suspected this was not correct. Nevertheless, the question was raised as to whether DNOs employ any specific control measures here.

Consultation through ENA confirmed there is no differentiation between cable types for excavation work and that HSG47 principles apply to all assets, and they should be treated as live. Lead sheath cables are potentially less robust and there may be specific jointing procedures for fault repair, but the same advice is provided to third parties on excavation work practices.

Working underneath Overhead Lines (OHLs)

GM raised a query on work carried out directly underneath OHLs and any specific DNO guidance and advice that is available. The standard guidance is contained within HSE GS6 accompanied by generic ENA guidance and specific company advice and guidance material; this relates mainly to work within a horizontal distance boundary from the OHL but includes advice on passing underneath lines. However, for excavations directly underneath OHLs then this usually prompts additional company advice and/or discussion with the asset owner; JD explained this process from a SPEN perspective illustrating the type of information shared with the customer and offered to forward this to GM.

MH reported that for transmission lines additional consideration needs to be given to induced voltage in equipment and the potential need for field earths due to these higher voltages. ML outlined information on OHL heights and distances from buildings and people is included within ENA TS 43-8 and similarly offered to forward this to GM.

USP Competency Framework

At the National Damage Prevention Day, Dave Macpherson (Kier Highways) outlined work on a new competency framework as project lead for this initiative, and some USAG members have been engaged in this. It has been designed as a support framework for smaller businesses and aims to improve competence levels for operational staff up the management line to ensure a complete approach to design, planning and operational issues. This will logically be one area that USAG should explore and support within its workplan.

<b>Actions</b>	JD offered to forward SPEN guidance on OHL work to GM and ML to similarly forward ENA TS 43-8 as supporting advice	JD/ML (July 2023)
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## 6. Stakeholder engagement

### CECA Safe Digging initiative

CECA have already held a northern regional seminar with support from USAG members which was well attended by a variety of organisations building on other similar events. Another workshop is planned for the southern region, and this is provisionally scheduled to be held in Gloucester on 17<sup>th</sup> October; further information to be circulated when available.

### National Damage Prevention Day

This event was arranged by LSBUD and held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June at St George’s Park, Burton on Trent and incorporated a number of interactive and varied sessions accompanied by an exhibition. LK reported there had been positive feedback from the event, which also serves a useful precursor to National Safe Digging Week (this current week). LSBUD and others are promoting the week and information and supporting material is available; companies are encouraged to promote through their social media channels and share any published information.

### ENA Public Safety Workshop

ENA is hosting an event in Birmingham on 21<sup>st</sup> September addressing safety issues for both overhead line contact and underground utility strikes. The day will effectively be separated into two dedicated sessions and will be accompanied by an exhibition. This is being organised by ENA and its Public Safety Committee which is comprised of all the TOs/DNOs, and is targeted at third parties working in the vicinity of electricity assets (transport, agriculture, and construction sectors, local authorities etc.) The programme is almost complete and speakers in the morning strike avoidance section will include Tm Marsh and Jason Anker (safety behaviours), HSE (Specialist Electrical Inspector), LSBUD, UKOPA, and the Cabinet Office (NUAR). Further details will be circulated to the group for promotion and USAG members are encouraged to support and attend if possible (£50 delegate fee).

### Presentations

The Steering Group will continue to offer and respond to invitations to attend seminars and individual company meetings to promote the work of USAG, and members were asked to support this as and when such invitations are received. One is scheduled with National Highways in July.

### **Actions**

## 7. Industry updates

### Streetworks UK (SWUK) guidance

The work on excavated spoil with the Environment Agency has recently accelerated following the final extension of RPS211 on the transfer and disposal of non-hazardous waste spoil from utility excavation activities. This will be replaced by a modified RPS211 for both SWUK members and a specific version for waste disposal sites whilst work continues on the replacement industry Protocol covering the assessment, classification, testing, transfer, and disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous spoil. Once the Protocol is agreed industry will have 12-18 months to introduce and proof check the new risk assessment processes.

A core SWUK WG comprised of SWUK, Water UK, and ENA colleagues is overseeing the work which is now project managed by Mark Whittaker (Cadent Gas), and all utility owners and contractors are being kept informed and engaged by a wider WG. Volunteers for a separate industry working group have been secured to develop and support the required risk assessment work and regular liaison with EA continues.

### Equipment suppliers

Further to the earlier discussion on supplier meeting requests, information had been received and a reply submitted to EFKB on their innovative proposal for identifying buried assets. This is based on the use of coloured plastic shavings above the specific utility marker tape to pre-warn of their presence during excavation. Whilst this uses recyclable plastic, this requires placing additional material in the ground which will be mixed with spoil thereby affecting reuse and disposal operations, and does not address the presence of multiple utility assets which is often the case. Members therefore challenged the premise of the proposal and no further action needed.

#### **Actions**

## 8. USAG Objectives

The draft USAG workplan is adapted from the Business Plan Annex and sets out the key annual activities of the group accompanied by a RAG status on progress and proposals for future work. The group had agreed that a rolling one year programme was sufficient as an ongoing roadmap but this needs to be developed further and actions assigned to individuals via reformed working groups. This will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting and will be the optimum route for securing further engagement to progress USAG work.

#### **Actions**



9. USAG Meetings 2023	
<p>Meeting dates for the remainder of the year were revised and set as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September</b></li><li>• <b>Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December</b></li></ul> <p>Meetings to be held in person at the ENA offices in London unless otherwise agreed, and a Teams link will be provided as required.</p>	
<b>Actions</b>	

10. AOB	
<p>SW reported that the Scottish Government had written to SGN to inform them of a planned consultation on guidance for funerals and burials in private ground. This is in the early policy stages, but any guidance will need to include the requirement to check for any underground assets in the vicinity and provide advice and links to safe excavation practices.</p>	
<b>Actions</b>	