

1. Response form

Getting a good deal for road users

We have developed these ideas so that all those using local 'A' roads have better journeys, whether they are travelling for leisure, business, or commuting - especially at weekends. So first, we have some questions for road users, before moving onto questions aimed at local authorities and those carrying out works on the roads.

Question 1: As a road user, do you support the aims of these proposals?

Comments:

With more than eight million members, the RAC is the oldest and one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. As such, it is committed to making driving easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for all road users.

The RAC, which employs more than 1,500 patrols, provides roadside assistance across the entire UK road network and as a result has significant insight into how the country's road networks are managed and maintained.

The RAC is separate from the RAC Foundation which is a transport policy and research organisation which explores the economic, mobility, safety and environmental issues relating to roads and their users. The RAC website can be found at rac.co.uk

The RAC supports the proposals outlined within the consultation document. Whilst it is not always possible to completely remove road works or eliminate congestion on local A roads at weekends and during public holidays, the steps outlined here provide incentives for those who carry out the works to take steps to finish them as quickly as possible or remove them (if practically possible) to assist traffic flow and reduce congestion.

Outside of weekday rush hour periods, the UK's roads are at their busiest during public holidays or extended holiday periods, such as Christmas and on weekends in August when families are travelling to and from holiday destinations. Highways England has started to remove many miles of road works where possible to assist in traffic flow and these proposals will extend this practice beyond the strategic network.

According to the 2015 RAC Report on Motoring, 69% of motorists say they now see more roadworks than a few years ago, while a majority (53%) report that their journey time has increased, either as a result of lane closures or general congestion. Thus it is clear motorists will support these proposals.

The RAC also welcomes proposals on speeding up the removal of temporary traffic signals. It is important to remember that where these lights need to remain in place to allow new road surfaces time to set, motorists are made aware of this through appropriate signage. We would not like to see the completion of resurfacing work rushed before surfaces are ready for use. This will only lead to them needing repair works once again soon after – this would be counter-productive.

Question 2: Do you have any suggestions about how those carrying out the works could communicate better with road users to minimise delays and frustration? Please give examples.

Comments:

The RAC believes communications between utility companies and motorists have improved markedly over the last decade. Better advanced warnings have allowed motorists to plan alternative routes; however more can still be done.

Better quality signing by affected routes indicating when works will be completed and the reason for the works would be useful, but online platforms can increasingly play their part. Much of the information on planned works can be found here:

<https://www.roadworks.org/>, however there isn't particularly wide public awareness of this website, and certainly combining the data here with the functionality of Sat-Navs and other mobile/GPS technology could help minimise disruption.

Weekend works

We would like to know the proportion of works that would be affected by the proposed weekend working measures. Our analysis suggests there is a big difference in outcome depending on whether the works' promoter chooses to clear the site or to continue working through the weekend. To help us assess the impact of the proposed measures, please provide the following information.

Question 3: For works' promoters (authorities and utilities), please specify the annual number of works in each category carried out by or for your organisation below. The total of your answers to e, f and g should match your answer to c.

	Major	Standard	Minor	Immediate-emergency	Immediate-urgent	Total
a. How many works in total do you carry out on local roads?						

b. From your answer to a) How many works are in the carriageway of local 'A' roads?						
c. From your answer to b) How many works span one or more weekend(s)?						
d. From your answer to c), how many deploy temporary traffic lights (portable traffic signals)?						
e. From your answer to c), how many sites do you estimate you would clear at weekends?						
f. From your answer to c), at how many sites do you estimate you would continue working at weekends?						
g. From your answer to c), at how many works could you re-schedule to avoid weekends?						

Question 4: Please tell us the average daily cost for a work gang at minor, standard and major works? (We recognise that larger scale works may require more manpower).

Comments:

The RAC is not qualified to answer this question

Question 5: Please tell us what the percentage uplift on labour costs might be for working a) Saturday and b) Sunday?

Comments:

The RAC is not qualified to answer this question

Question 6: What other costs would be incurred by working at weekends? Please give values if you can. Please also tell us if there may be ways of reducing or avoiding these costs.

Comments:

The RAC is not qualified to answer this question

Question 7: How long would it typically take to return a site to traffic on a Friday, and re-install it on a Monday for each of major, standard and minor works? Please provide costs if you can.

Comments:

The RAC is not qualified to answer this question

Question 8: Is there anything preventing all minor works being started and finished during Monday - Friday?

Comments:

The RAC is not qualified to answer this question

Question 9: Do you agree that works' promoters could be required to self-report that they have complied with the weekend requirements by providing timed photographic evidence?

Comments:

The RAC believes that on-site inspections may be a more thorough way of achieving this objective; however, where this is not cost-effective, photographic and/or video evidence should be considered for weekend work compliance checking.

Question 10: Please tell us how you would deal with any costs that might be incurred from these proposals. Please provide any estimates of costs and impacts.

Comments:

Generally, the additional cost will need to be borne by the organisation funding the work. In a recent survey of public opinion conducted by the National Joint Utilities Group with RAC involvement, the public were evenly divided on their views as to whether additional cost of weekend working on street works is justified by the benefits of reduced disruption to traffic flows. Each case therefore needs to be considered on its merits in terms of the likely level of disruption and the additional cost of working outside normal weekly working hours.

Question 11: Do you think we should set charges on the same basis as over-run charges that are intended to reflect the cost of congestion caused, or is there another basis that would be more effective?

Comments:

From a motoring point of view, the RAC believes charges should be reflective of the amount of disruption that they will cause.

We would like to gather data relating to the cost of congestion in local highway authority areas on 'A' roads. This information is most likely to be available to authorities who have developed a cost benefit analysis related to traffic management such as where they have recently developed a street works permit scheme using 'Quadro'.

Question 12: For local authorities, if you have it, please provide data on the cost of congestion for the 'A' roads in your area, by day of the week if possible.

Comments:

The RAC is not in a position to answer this question

The following questions concern the co-ordination or network management carried out by local authorities.

Question 13: Do you think that local authorities should be able to remove the new requirements in relation to works carried out on specific roads if they think that local considerations make them unnecessary? Please provide examples of where this may be justified.

Comments:

The RAC is not in a position to provide specific examples but clearly, in situations where the cost of complying with the new requirements is high and the level of disruption and inconvenience to road users by not doing so is low, then local authorities should be able to take the economically sensible decision. However, they should be required to document the business case so that local authorities do not remove the requirement purely as a cost saving measure.

Question 14: If legislation were to set *maximum* charges, please specify in what circumstances you would use discretion to charge a lower amount

Comments:

The RAC is not in a position to respond to this question

Temporary traffic signals

We are proposing that a charge be applied to works' promoters who fail to remove temporary traffic lights from a works site on 'A' roads promptly when works have been completed. We recognise that where hot-lay materials or concrete have been used, time will need to be allowed for the materials to set.

Question 15: For highway authorities, do you agree that the works' promoters should be required to self-report the time that works have been completed and that the lights have been removed by providing timed photographic evidence?

Comments:

From a road user perspective, this would seem a reasonable requirement if on-site monitoring is not affordable.

Question 16: For works' promoters, when deploying temporary traffic lights at work sites, are they installed / removed by the team that carries out the reinstatement or by a separate team or organisation? If the latter, how does it work?

Comments:

The RAC is not in a position to respond to this question.

Question 17: For works' promoters, what is the average time taken to remove traffic lights from works once completed on 'A' roads?

Comments:

The RAC is not in a position to respond to this question.

Question 18: For works' promoters, would you need to change how you operate to satisfy the new requirements for temporary traffic lights from works on 'A' roads? Please provide examples and details of any one-off or ongoing costs.

Comments:

The RAC is not in a position to respond to this question.

Question 19: Do you think that a daily charge should be set for this failure to comply, or a shorter period? If a shorter period, to what period do you think the charge should apply (e.g. 2, 4, 8 hours)?

Comments:

The RAC is not in a position to respond to this question.

General considerations

Question 20: As well as Saturday and Sunday, should the proposals also apply to public holidays (other than Easter Sunday and Christmas Day)?

Comments:

Yes. The RAC believes that public holidays should also be included in the proposals. During the 2016 Easter break, an estimated 16.8 million car journeys were made over 4 days, making it one of the busiest driving weekends. We also estimated that during the early May Bank Holiday, on the bank holiday Monday an estimated 4.8 million car journeys were made. It is during these particularly busy periods that motorists find unattended road works on local A roads (as well as on other routes) particularly frustrating.

Highways England already operates a policy to remove road works on the strategic road network where possible, so it is logical that those carrying out road works during public holidays should be encouraged to remove works if possible, or speed up completion by continuing the works.

Question 21: It may be necessary to update the Electronic Transfer of Notices (EToN) to take account of these changes. If changes were to be made, how much would it cost your organisation to implement? (This could include licence fees, management fees, and training).

Comments:

The RAC is not in a position to respond to this question.

Question 22: Please tell us any other thoughts or suggestions you have on these proposals.

Comments:

We have no further comments to make on these proposals.

2. Your details

Your details

Name: Nicholas Lyes

Responding as an individual? No

Responding as an Organisation? Yes

Name of Organisation if applicable: RAC Motoring Services

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