



Public Liaison for Out of Hours Working

City of London/ Westminster
Lane Rental Industry Publication

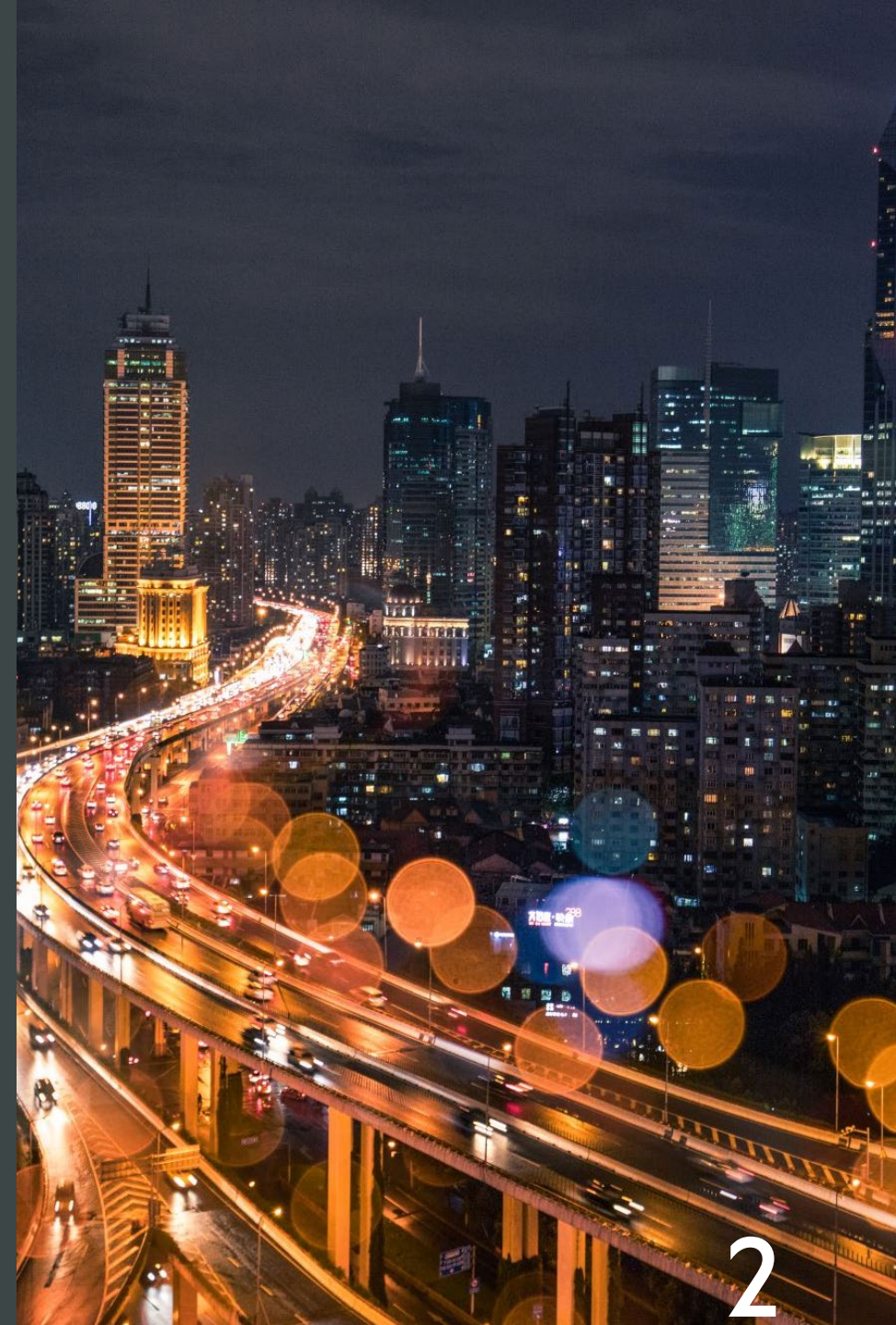
Introduction

Population increase and strong economic growth have resulted in an increase in building and construction, equating to more traffic and congestion. In addition to this, more pressure is placed on works promoters to minimise highway occupation and reduce disruption, often by working at the least traffic sensitive times.

The expectation to work at less disruptive times whilst adhering to noise restrictions can lead to conflict, as minimal time is left to carry out activities. Restrictions placed upon working hours due to noise and congestion can potentially lead to projects taking much longer in terms of the number of nights worked. The Secretary of State for Transport stated that prolonged roadworks with lengthy periods of inactivity are very unpopular with customers and has been identified as a 'pain' point.

It is accepted that Transport of London, Westminster City Council (WCC) and the City of London (CoL) have overlying statutory duties to ensure that the network duty of all affected authorities is adhered to.

The project set out to develop guidelines for street and road works with regards to working out of hours, noise mitigation measures and engagement with the community, while still minimising the impact on traffic flows. Guidelines were developed by engaging with stakeholders including works promoters, network teams, Environmental Health Teams, Highways Teams, Transport for London, works contractors and other stakeholders, as well as residents' associations and community liaison groups.



The Project

The feasibility of agreeing a set of consistent working hours for noisy works was firstly assessed. It was determined that extended OOH noisy working may be agreed.

Mondays to Friday 08:00 - 23:00

Saturday and Sunday 09:00 – 18:00

However, it was determined that each proposal must be individually assessed due to the differing levels of impact between them. Best Practicable Means (BPM) for OOH working was defined (right).

Site hours variation forms mandate noisy working conditions (including but not limited to plant/and or tools used, mitigation measures to minimise noise levels and the required residential/ business unit notifications) ahead of commencing. Site meetings with statutory undertakers and the highway authority similarly provide assistance when necessary.

Restricting periods of operation for noise

Using methods and equipment to mitigate noise

Using measure to reduce noise
(acoustic barriers or compressors)

Avoiding unnecessary noise
(shouting/banging)

Regular equipment maintenance to minimise noise

Training employees to appreciate the impact.



Workshops

Two workshops were conducted during the project with utility industry representatives who were invited to provide thoughts and share experience relating to OOH working.

The main function was to engage with them and canvass thoughts on carrying out OOH works. As main stakeholders in the OOH working domain, their opinions, experiences and thoughts were considered crucial to the outcomes of the project. Both saw a valuable exchange of ideas, with liaison officers identified as key points of contact for OOH works and positive feedback received.

Focus was given to Best Practicable Means, what they mean and how they can be implemented safely and effectively, with further emphasis was given to the benefits of adopting BPM for undertakers and wider community. This was supplemented by an interactive demonstration of noise reduction from Echo Barriers.

In addition to these, liaison officers were invited to site meetings and quarterly coordination meetings. These forums encouraged greater collaboration and the full use of extended hours. In addition, stakeholder engagement, signal contingency, customer communication, resident consultation, bus/coach support and working with adjoining authorities also play a part in achieving success.

Outcomes

Over the duration of the project, analysis concluded a steady decline in the number of complaints received in relation to OOH working, while conversely, the amount of site hours variation requests increased. This in view of increased OOH working over the same time frame should be viewed as a tangible gain.

A focal point of contact to resolve any issues that may arise in the planning or execution of OOH works was determined beneficial, along with working relationships of officers, who are able to advise on local issues and measures to mitigate potential complaints. Moreover, in the inclusion of officers, residents have a direct reference they can liaise with should they have any concerns.

Prior to the introduction of the OOH working project, requests in WCC were handled via email and no records of request made were stored or linked to street works complaints. Following an internal process review and recommendations, the OOH working application form used by project partner CoL was adopted to streamline the process.

An OOH working code of practice for street works was created, allowing processing and storage of OOH working requests, along with the issuing an OOH working agreement reference to demonstrate agreement by the Noise Team. This improved efficiency in the permitting process, by eliminating delays previously linked to email. With the new system, work promoters could prove consultation and adjust works dates without the need for a new application. It also ensures that required information such as works details, reason for OOH working, works contact, noise mitigation measures and public liaison are provided at first contact, improving lead times for approval.





Conclusion

Overall the project was a huge success, with stakeholders expressing an appetite for the project to continue. With individual constraints, conflicting priorities and variances in governing legislation, the need to establish cohesion between permitting/ traffic management teams and local environmental health teams across London is essential.

There are also other factors which still need consideration which could be address as part of a further project:

- Increasing focus on collaboration: Levels increase perceptively when an extra noise source is added. Will this result in higher complaint volumes?
- Introduction of Street Manager: this will alter secondary legislation to implement a new digital service. Furthermore, national conditions for permit schemes regarding temporary traffic lights and the location of works and the framework for road restrictions will be changed. How will this impact OOH working?
- Proposed TfL Lane Rental Scheme changes: The inclusion of key pedestrian footways within schemes and variation to both operational hours and charging regime. Will this increase the volume of work undertaken OOH?

Any further work in this area would require participation from TfL to help formalise links with other highway authorities their network intersects, as well as the statutory undertakers that carry out works on their network.

TfL Lane Rental Scheme

Optimising customer journeys through the delivery of safer, innovative and sustainable roadworks



Author

WCC/CoL

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Email: LaneRentalFunding@tfl.gov.uk