

**FULL COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH 2017**

**Written question from Steve Stotesbury to Councillor Jon Gilbey, Executive Member for Major Contracts Management**

It is with great disappointment that I read again that the main Newport to Cowes Road is to be dug up once more for the utilities to service their network.

Whilst I do understand that this will always be inevitable when services are run under the roads and the work force of the utility companies must be allowed to conduct their works in a safe manor.

Can the council not implement the "lane rental Scheme" that "TfL" and Kent council have and insist that, through a financial leverage system, the works are completed without delay and most importantly without work stopping because it's simply the weekend.

With Fines of £5000 a day being served upon the companies that are causing misery and unnecessary delays to the traveling public the Isle of Wight council would have received £70,000 (at the time of writing this) for the roadworks at Brading / Yarbridge Cross.

Also the scheme would allow councils to demand that the road surface is returned to an equal or higher standard than before and if the utility company's under-performed the council would be able to fine for the substandard work and then for the reinstatement works to be carried out.

It has been demonstrated that the island can and does possess the ability to deliver a 24/7 service as Island Roads demonstrated this whilst undertaking the resurfacing through Arreton and not only completing the job within the given timescale but actually finishing the task ahead of schedule.

***Response***

I thank you for your question regarding the possibility of implementing a lane rental scheme. I am advised that options for a scheme similar to the ones to which you refer were considered by the council's highways department a number of years before the procurement of the Island Roads contract to which you refer. I am not completely clear as to why the options were not pursued although I understand one may have been that the volume of work undertaken by the statutory undertakers at that time may not have made it cost effective to manage. As you say however that position may now be in need of a review. However the matter is somewhat further complicated in that the PFI contract has within it control measures that limit when Island Roads may work on certain categories of roads known as the Availability Matrix. It would therefore be more complicated introducing such a scheme and ensuring that it could operate effectively alongside the Availability Matrix ensuring that it did not adversely affect the delivery of the PFI Core Investment Period works. One of the core principles of such schemes is that they need to treat all activities covered by the scheme in an equal manner irrespective of whether they are works by statutory undertakers or works by the highway authority ( in this case effectively Island Roads) given the budget position of the council have asked officers to revisit this option and provide me with a paper setting out the practicality given the position where there is a significant amount of work on the highway being undertaken by Island Roads under the PFI contract.