



Electricity North West

Proving street works compliance with Affinity Fieldreach®

Key points

- Provides proof that proper procedure is followed on job sites
- Mitigates risk of fines and reputational damage
- Improves communication between staff, and with customers

Summary

Electricity North West wanted a fail-safe way of proving that its field operatives were conducting street works efficiently, safely, and in full compliance with the Traffic Management Act.

The distribution network operator developed a mobile working solution based on Affinity Fieldreach from AMT-SYBEX, which helps field based teams quickly and easily capture and log images and information on-site during every stage of a project.

With photographic evidence of job site conditions, Electricity North West can provide irrefutable proof that proper procedure is followed when performing street works, reducing the risk of legal challenges, penalties or damage to the company's reputation.

Overview

Traffic Management Act
Utilities must comply with the Traffic Management Act when carrying out maintenance and improvement works on highways.

The challenge

The Traffic Management Act has introduced stricter penalties for utilities companies that fail to minimise the disruption caused by maintenance and improvement works that take place on highways. To avoid costly fines and reputational damage, Electricity North West sought a way to prove that its teams are following proper procedure when carrying out street works.

The solution

Using ruggedised iPhones running Affinity Fieldreach software, Electricity North West developed a new mobile working solution that allows operational teams to take photos and capture information from project sites, and prove that street works are safe, efficient, and undertaken in full compliance with the Act.

Documenting evidence
Using Fieldreach, teams can capture photos before, during and after street works on highways. These photos can be stored to prove compliance if necessary.

The benefits

- Allows field teams to easily document the conditions of a job site before, during and after works take place, providing photographic proof that proper procedure is followed.
- Mitigates the risk of legal penalties, reduces the amount paid out as goodwill payments in response to complaints, and protects Electricity North West's reputation.
- Enables front-line teams and contact centre workers to communicate more efficiently, boosting productivity.
- Improves responsiveness to customers by providing real-time information on the status of maintenance and repair works.

About ENW

Electricity North West owns, operates and maintains the electricity distribution network in the north west of England. The company delivers nearly 24 terawatt hours of electricity each year to more than 5 million people and 2.4 million properties.

Compliance with Traffic Management Act

As part of its ongoing investment in its network, Electricity North West must frequently undertake essential street works in order to access, repair and install new equipment. However, in recent years, new legislation, such as updates to the Traffic Management Act, has placed increasing pressure on utilities companies to reduce the disruption caused by street works.

Local authorities are getting much stricter about enforcing penalties and fines for violations of the Traffic Management Act. Utilities can

be penalised for a variety of infractions, such as failing to post correct signage, not setting up barriers around excavations or blocking footpaths with vehicles.

Each year, Electricity North West undertakes approximately 67,000 works that require the company to excavate in the public highway. With such a huge number of works to be carried out, Electricity North West wanted to find a better way to demonstrate full compliance with the Act, not only to reduce the risk of financial penalties, but also to protect its reputation for good practice.

Difficulty proving compliance

Electricity North West wanted a robust way of documenting that its teams had followed correct procedures on site to prove compliance with regulatory guidelines.

Steven Bradwell, Operations Change Manager at Electricity North West, elaborates: "Our teams are trained to carry out street works as effectively and considerately as possible, and we have confidence that they follow proper procedure. However, we had no easy way of proving our compliance if challenged.

"For example, the Traffic Management Act now requires us to apply for a permit if we want to carry out excavation works. Once a project is approved, we receive a permit number, which must be visibly displayed at a job site. Our teams will take all the necessary steps to post the correct signage, including this permit number, and leave a work site in perfect condition, but there is nothing to stop someone from passing by after hours and knocking down a barrier or removing a sign.

"We wanted to provide our teams with an easy way of documenting that they follow proper procedure when street works are taking place and that sites are left in good condition once these works have been completed. This would allow us to ensure that sites are kept safe, prove compliance with regulatory guidelines, and reduce the amount we have to pay out in fines or goodwill payments."

New mobile solution

Electricity North West saw an opportunity to extend its existing asset management landscape – based on Ellipse and Affinity Fieldreach technology from AMT-SYBEX.

Trusted solution

Happy with existing business improvements delivered by Fieldreach, Electricity North West expanded its use for its broader mobile working needs.

"We were already using Affinity Fieldreach for a small subset of our asset management activity – specifically, capturing the condition data of our above ground assets – and were very pleased with the improvements it has delivered," comments Steven Bradwell. "Based on this success, we wanted to go a step further and use Fieldreach as the basis for a broader mobile working solution."

Electricity North West started a discussion with AMT-SYBEX about expanding its use of Fieldreach to capture photographic evidence of conditions at street works sites, and ran a series of workshops to design and test scripts for the new mobile solution.

The next step was to issue field teams with ruggedised iPhones, which replace older mobile devices. Electricity North West selected a pilot group of 40 users to test the new solution and provide feedback. With this pilot phase completed, the company is currently working to roll out the solution to a further 460 staff.

Photographic evidence

Capturing time and date-stamped images from the field via Fieldreach will enable Electricity North West to prove compliance, save money and protect its reputation.

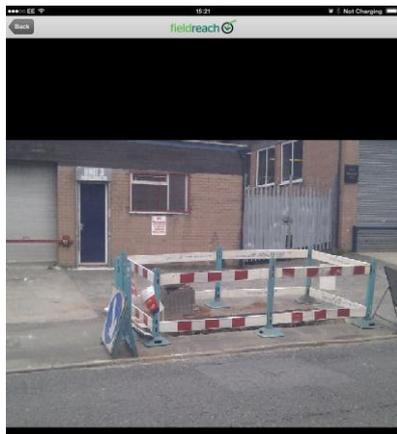
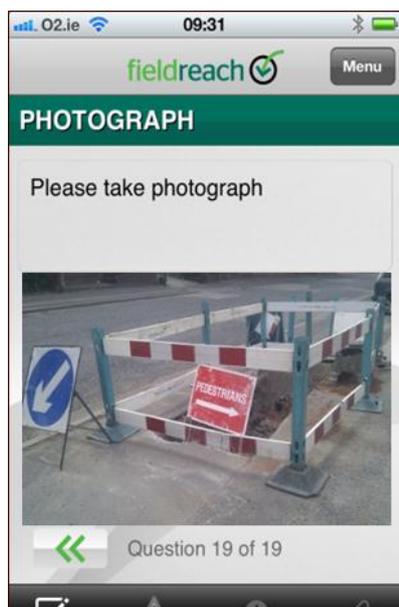


Image capture

Through Intelligent Scripting, users have a specific checklist driving the type of photos that they need to capture.



Recording the lifecycle of a project

Field teams will be able to take advantage of the Fieldreach solution to capture photos and information at key stages throughout the lifecycle of a job.

“Having photographic evidence of the condition of a job site before, during and after works will be a huge benefit for our business,” notes Steven Bradwell. “In the past, a customer or local authority could make a claim against us for damage or code violations, saying, for example, that one of our teams damaged a wall and failed to repair it. We would usually pay out as a gesture of goodwill because we had no way of proving otherwise.

“Now, with a full record of job site conditions, we will have a fail-safe way of verifying whether such claims are justified. We anticipate that this will save us a huge amount in fines, penalty and goodwill payments, and will go a long way to helping us protect our reputation.”

Capturing the context with images and data

Electricity North West has used the Intelligent Scripting® capabilities of Fieldreach to help guide teams through the process of taking site photos, and ensure that the right images are captured at every stage of a project.

Steven Bradwell explains: “We can’t just take a photo and leave it at that – we need to make sure that a photo shows the relevant context and proves what it is supposed to prove. For example, a close-up image that shows a van and nothing else is not useful; we need to show where that van is parked and the surrounding conditions. This is why we have built a script that provides users with a specific checklist of the types of photos that need to be taken at different stages of a job, and instructions that help them capture the right content.”

We worked jointly with AMT-SYBEX to develop a portal that allows off-site operations teams to review incoming photos via a browser-based application and verify that the quality and content is suitable. All photos are stored on a central file server and can be accessed from a web browser. To ensure that staff can easily search for images, photos from each job are tagged with the permit number originally assigned to the project.

“If we receive a complaint or claim of a TMA violation, it will be quick and easy to search for the relevant photos and information,” says Steven Bradwell. “All the user has to do is enter the specific job number and the system will bring up all the photos associated with that particular job. This will save time and effort, and enable the business to act much faster on requests, helping us maintain a good relationship with customers and local authorities.”

Better communication and customer service

As use of the mobile working solution takes off, Electricity North West anticipates that it will be much quicker and easier for field teams to communicate with staff in the company's contact centre. The ability to rapidly deliver feedback from job sites on the status of maintenance and repair works will ultimately help Electricity North West to deliver a more responsive service to customers.

Customer satisfaction

The Fieldreach mobile solution will help Electricity North West achieve its target customer satisfaction rate

of **85%**

Steven Bradwell remarks: "Not only does the solution mitigate the risk of costly permit non-conformance, it allows us to provide customers with real-time information about when their lights will be back on. It's a quick and easy way for our people on the front line to communicate with the contact centre – all of which will help us achieve our target of 85 percent customer satisfaction.

He concludes: "We are constantly working to find better ways to cater to our customers and deliver the services they really need. With Affinity Fieldreach, we are making the right steps towards becoming a more efficient, responsive organisation."

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