



Reviewing the SWA code list, improving confidence in streetworks everywhere.

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If you don't have a unique Street Works Act (SWA) code, then you cannot carry out works in the street – but the list of SWA codes itself must be usable, dependable, and authoritative which this review set out to ensure

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The challenge

If you don't have a unique Street Works Act (SWA) code, then you cannot carry out works in the street – but the list of SWA codes itself must be usable, dependable, and authoritative.

SWA Codes (also known as Department for Transport Data Capture Codes), are as fundamental to the management and coordination of streetworks as Unique Street Reference Numbers (USRN). Allocated as and when they're needed to authorities and statutory undertakers, the SWA code list defines which organisations are actually capable or have the authority to carry out works in the street. However, that list had not been reviewed for some time. Therefore, we undertook a complete review and rebuild of the SWA code list, using our experience in data management to overcome some inherent challenges.

The background

Each organisation is given a four-digit code, with an alphanumeric prefix, which identifies them clearly at all stages of the street works process. Technically, this is much easier and more efficient than using department or organisation names, but the issue of a code also reassures other stakeholders that the teams in questions are appropriately licensed and authorised to be undertaking street works. Confidence and authority are the foundations on which successful, efficient works are organised via noticing or permitting.

Any organisation that has statutory powers to work in the street can apply for a code. Most of the time, their authority comes from the Highway Act, the New Road and Street Works Act (NRSWA) or Traffic Management Act (TMA), although others are possible. Organisations that would need a code fall into three broad areas:

- Local authorities
- Statutory undertakers
- Other government or statutory bodies

Under the Electronic Transfer of Noticing (EToN) process, organisations with a code could send notices and permits of intent for works in the street. EToN has been superseded by the Department for Transport's Street Manager and SWA codes are now needed for access instead.

Unless they are contracted to do so by an organisation that does have one, an organisation without an SWA code can't access the [National Street Gazetteer](#) (NSG) to plan or raise an intent for works.

How to get a code

GeoPlace has been managing the allocation of new SWA codes since 2012. But there's a lot more to it than simply handing out a code when an application comes in. There are serious responsibilities involved in authorising the right organisations to work in the street.

Against any new request for an SWA code (the service can be found [here](#)), GeoPlace does a comprehensive series of checks to make sure core requirements have been met:

- Background checks, such as verification against Companies House
- Confirming the applicant is a Statutory Undertaker as opposed to a contractor
- Confirming the applicant is subject to an official regulator (Ofgem, Ofwat and Ofcom).

When it's clear that an application meets all of those requirements, a formal sign off can be given to the issue of a new code by HAUC(UK).

So why did we want to review the SWA code list?

In a recent High Court case (Norfolk County Council vs. Calor Gas), it was determined that an authority may refuse to adopt a road if the infrastructure is owned by an organisation that doesn't have statutory powers (a status that's confirmed, or not, by having an SWA code).

This is just one example of the problems that might arise if the SWA code list isn't up to date and managed effectively. However, when we took over the list's day-to-day administration, there was no protocol in place for managing organisations that already had codes, nor was there an agreed process to manage information updates on or about those organisations.

Changes in the streetworks management industry are frequent, with organisations changing names, being subsumed into another, or even ceasing to exist. In addition, to mitigate any licensing problems, access to Street Manager is based on the SWA code list – so we wanted to improve confidence levels all round in the codes being issued.

We focused on three issues: currency, absence of information, and incomplete information.

Currency of the SWA Code List

Some information held against the SWA codes themselves was 30 years old and had never been reviewed. The issues included:

- Organisations without the necessary rights should have been removed
- Organisations had stopped trading
- Organisations had been acquired by other companies, subsumed, or evolved
- Organisation names had changed over time and not been updated

As well as bringing the SWA code list up to date, we introduced fixed protocols to ensure it will remain current.

Absence of history

Some records on the SWA code list had no indications of its history such as an organisation's previous names, or which codes it might have subsumed. In terms of historic liabilities, this could have a significant impact for many stakeholders.

Absence of information

The information held with SWA Codes was limited. We could not determine if an organisation was active, some contact information existed but we couldn't verify it, or the information that

did exist related to an organisation's relationship with GeoPlace rather than the street works industry.

Also, when an organisation applies for an SWA code, they are checked against the regulators to make sure they are correctly licensed to undertake street works. However, after being checked, many organisations either go on to gain extra powers under a different regulator, or indeed may lose their powers.

With the acceleration of competition, these changes to licenses, as well as the number of new small to medium size companies seeking code powers, has meant that the SWA list becomes extremely important in keeping track of which licenses organisations actually hold. Without this detail, works might be done by organisations that aren't licenced (trained, insured, or able) to do those works adequately.

What we did

We managed the project in four stages:

1. Review the allocation of 4-digit codes and prefixes
2. Review all of the organisations on file, and the information being held about them
3. Review the pertinent information held or needed for street works
4. Deliver the report and recommendations to the industry

Reviewing the allocation of codes

SWA codes and their prefixes are integral to the coordination of street works. They're hard coded as a prerequisite in the work streams of the Street Manager system. However, with a larger number of Statutory Undertakers applying for codes now, the code *structure* was no longer fit for purpose. We concluded that:

1. The 4-digit code itself is still appropriate and there are enough codes for growth
2. The SWA_ORG_PREFIX codes need an extension, so a new alpha-numeric convention will apply to any **new** SWA code being created. All new SWA_ORG_PREFIX allocations will now have a single character prefix and then a numeric value between 1 – 9.

This ensures the generation of codes is future proofed with no risk of duplication.

Reviewing the organisations on file

The current SWA code list had organisations that broadly split into the following types:

- Local highway authorities
- Statutory Undertakers
- Scottish organisations
- Fire & Rescue services
- Software providers
- Government bodies

We were confident the data collected for local highway authorities was up to date, as it's needed for submitting data to the [NSG](#). However, we decided the other organisation types should undergo a detailed review – 436 organisations in all.

The information we needed

We needed to understand what data had already been collected and where from. From our work with [HAUC\(UK\)](#), and Elaine Coope's previous great work (first at Derbyshire County Council, now at Highways England) we could then work out what else would be useful. Data fell into three categories: company details, extra information, and regulatory information.

Company details

What we needed: Current company name, previous company name

Why: An organisation's name is essential for search purposes, as are its previous names – enabling users to be confident about an organisation in question.

Where and how the information was collected: Companies House is the most up to date and accurate source of information for core company details. Every organisation must be registered there with up to date information. Crucially, it is readily available for public use and holds a lot of relevant information. We made the decision to fully align our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) information with the data at Companies House including the Companies House ID, the organisation's current name and any previous names.

Additional company information

Required information: Linked/Parent Company details, website and plant enquiry information

Why the information was needed: The SWA code list tries to provide as much information as possible that's relevant to street works. Keeping this information centrally located would save time and money for everyone involved.

Where and how the information was collected: No one place holds the data, so research was carried out once the organisations had been identified through Companies House.

Regulatory Information

Required information: Who regulates the organisation, what licence do they have?

Why the information was needed: Being regulated underpins the need for an SWA code. By identifying licenced organisations, and understanding what they can do, stakeholders have the confidence to move ahead – knowing street works are being done under correct licences and regulation.

Where and how the information was collected: Each regulator has its own website with a list of organisations that have a relevant licence. Each organisation on the original SWA code list was cross checked against the licence list.

Inactive organisation information

Required information: Where one organisation is subsumed by another, who is the new organisation and which SWA code is taking on the liability?

Why the information was needed: The organisation that owns the apparatus is likely to be the organisation that has responsibility and liability for the streetworks. But if an organisation is subsumed, then that liability and responsibility passes on – and the highway authorities need to know this in advance.

Where and how the information was collected: Much of the information was gathered through research and review of the organisations’ commercial histories.

Verifying the data

Every good database needs to have its content verified, regularly. Within our review, we found that some organisations had more than one entry at Companies House, particularly where an organisation had been subsumed. We also wanted to be confident that the review we undertook was right and comprehensive, so a communication was sent out to establish this.

Example of data held before and after the review

Current Information Held

SWA Code List		
Code	Name	Prefix
7348	ENERGY ASSETS PIPELINES LTD	TD

Proposed Information Held

Company House Information		
Active?	ID	Name
Yes	0130268	ENERGY ASSETS PIPELINES LIMITED
Address		
Shop Canal House 25, King Street, Manchester, M2 4BB		
Previous Names		
Company Information		
Parent Company	Energy Assets Limited	
Web Address	https://www.energyassets.co.uk/	
Plant Enquiries	plantenquiries@energyassets.co.uk	
Regulation Information		
Ofgem – Electricity		
Ofgem – Gas	Gas Transporter	
Ofwat		
Ofcom		
Inactive Company Information		
Company Subsumed by Another?	SWA Code of New Company	

Ensuring the information remains current

Companies House broadcasts alerts when data is updated. We have set up an alert to follow every organisation we have reviewed, thereby ensuring our information's integrity. In addition, we will be talking to the regulators – getting a feed of information that notifies us when organisations join and leave the published list – and we hope this review in itself will encourage organisations to contact us when changes happen.

Delivering the review

Increasing visibility of information

We wanted to increase the visibility of this information to the industry. Previously the focus had been on publishing a very basic dataset, with a downloadable file for suppliers to use.

Working with HAUC(UK), we decided to deliver the data in additional formats. An excel report, filterable makes it much more user-friendly, while still protecting the data itself.

General				Companies House Information			
SWA Code	Account Name	Prefix	Account Type	Registered for Street Manager	Account Status	Companies House Number	Previous Company Names
10	CADENT GAS LIMITED	AZ	Statutory Undertaker	Yes	Active	10080864	NATIONAL GRID THIRTY SEVEN LIMITED, NATIONAL GRID GAS DISTRIBUTION LIMITED
12	SOUTH WALES TRUNK ROAD AGENCY	VU	Regional Highway Authority	No	Active		
13	MID WALES TRUNK ROAD AGENCY	VV	Regional Highway Authority	No	Active		
14	NORTH WALES TRUNK ROAD AGENCY	VW	Regional Highway Authority	No	Active		
16	WELSH GOVERNMENT	PD	Regional Highway Authority	No	Active		
17	BAA INTERNATIONAL LIMITED	AF	Statutory Undertaker	No	Active	2423041	HEATHROW AIRPORT (INVESTMENTS) LIMITED, PRECIS (952) LIMITED
20	TRANSPORT FOR LONDON (TFL)	YG	Regional Highway Authority	No	Active		
30	BRITISH TELECOMMUNICATIONS PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY	BC	Statutory Undertaker	Yes	Active	1800000	
50	MERCURY COMMUNICATIONS LTD	GZ	Statutory Undertaker	No	Inactive	6344206	
60	IN FOCUS PUBLIC NETWORKS LIMITED	RE	Statutory Undertaker	Yes	Active	6463216	IN FOCUS MEDIA LIMITED CABLE AND WIRELESS EUROPE (UK) LIMITED, CABLE AND WIRELESS EUROPE (UK) LIMITED, 861ST SHELF TRADING COMPANY LIMITED
70	VODAFONE ENTERPRISE EUROPE (UK) LIMITED	QL	Statutory Undertaker	No	Active	3137479	
114	BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL	QD	English Unitary	No	Active		
116	BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL	QF	English Unitary	No	Active		
119	SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL	RZ	English Unitary	No	Active		

A new landing page

An improved landing page was created [here](#), to explain why the SWA codes exist and provide access to the files and report.

Informing the industry

Initial discussion and sign off was sought from both the DfT and HAUC(UK) that both the redesigned reports and new homepage met the high-level requirements for SWA codes and the industry. The industry and specifically organisations that were being reviewed were updated throughout the process.

Outcomes

In total, we reviewed and recorded over 6,500 pieces of information, splitting the organisations (including highway authorities) into three categories:

Number of active organisations	446
Number of inactive organisations	194

Organisations registered for Street Manager	118
Number of organisation names updated	266
Number of licences recorded	194
Plant enquiry details identified	7
Organisations websites recorded	173
Previous and/or other organisation names collected	543

The value we're delivering

Greater clarity in access to Street Manager

The DfT endorsed this review, as we were sure it would better clarify who should have access Street Manager (and confirm they are correctly regulated).

Better governance of the SWA code list

While organisations do stay in the system for historic purposes, we've been able to remove those organisations from the published list that are no longer regulated or were given the code incorrectly.

Better understanding of the history of an SWA code

The information we reviewed now enables users to see the history of the SWA Code, and where liabilities for reinstatement and apparatus existed previously.

Future-proofing – ensuring the integrity of SWA codes

SWA codes and prefixes are fundamental to the integrity of streetworks. By making the prefixes alphanumeric, this review made sure of continuous code provision. In addition, the SWA code list is now aligned to the most up-to-date information at Companies House.

Improved presentation of information

With user-friendly filters in place, the new report is much easier to understand than the previous .CSV format (although active organisations (as per Companies House) are also still published in the original format file).

Clarity as to each organisation's authority

The inclusion of regulatory status is perhaps the most important output from this review, as it ensures greater visibility for both DfT and local authorities when coordinating street works.

Client feedback and testimonials

"THERE ARE CLEAR DOVETAILS HERE WITH STREET MANAGER. THE DfT WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORT THIS."

Paul Chandler – DfT Product Owner

"THE SWA CODE LIST IS ONE OF THOSE ESSENTIAL THINGS THAT LET UTILITIES ACCESS THE HIGHWAY AND UNDERTAKE WORKS BOTH EFFICIENTLY AND LEGALLY. THE REVIEW HELPFULLY BRINGS THE LIST UP TO DATE AND WEEDS OUT THE IRRELEVANT ENTRIES. THIS WILL LET US ENSURE OUR DATA IS CURRENT, AND HELP US TO PROMOTE TWO OF OUR CORE OBJECTIVES: GOOD COORDINATION AND GOOD RELATIONSHIPS. WITH INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF SERVICING AND REPAIRING IN MIND, AS WELL AS THE BASIC NEED TO PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE MAINTENANCE OF THIS INFRASTRUCTURE, HAVING CONFIDENCE IN THIS REGISTER IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER."

Clive Bairstow – CEO Street Works UK

"THE SWA CODE REVIEW IS OF REAL VALUE TO THE STREETWORKS COMMUNITY. ORGANISATIONS MUST STAND UP TO SCRUTINY AND BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS. COMPETITION IS CRUCIAL BUT NOT AT ANY COST – THIS REVIEW SHOULD GIVE AUTHORITIES THE CONFIDENCE TO KNOW ORGANISATIONS ON THE SWA CODE LIST ARE OF SUBSTANCE. THE SWA CODE LIST AND THE WORK DONE BY GEOPLACE SHOULD HELP BUILD CONFIDENCE AND PROVIDE A SOUND PLATFORM FOR MANAGING THE NETWORKS."

David Capon – CEO JAG UK

Helping us keep the SWA Code list current

- 1) You can download the latest reports [here](#)
- 2) You should contact us [here](#) if you;
 - have updated contact info
 - info on organisations having new powers under a different regulator
 - are organisations that are changing or merging or know of one
- 3) You should contact us [here](#) if you;
 - are a new organisation with Streetworks or road works powers and require an SWA code.

Note: Contractors are not allowed to have an SWA code in their own right. They must use the codes of the organisation they are working on behalf of. Please find out more information under our FAQs [here](#).