ATU Newsletter 2015

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**Annual Event 2014: Streetworks Decision Support**

Assessing the Underworld (ATU) held its **second annual meeting** on 11\(^{th}\) December 2014 at the University of Birmingham. The event, which attracted over 50 project partners, featured stakeholder presentations.

In contrast to the 2013 ATU annual meeting, the day was ‘practitioner driven’, with the ATU team serving as facilitators. ATU project dissemination at the event was primarily through the use of posters to outline the progress made in the different work streams. The event also featured an exhibition area for practitioners and the ATU team (Figures 1 and 2) to showcase both products and examples of recent innovation.

**Presentations**

Themed ‘**Informing Streetworks Asset Management**’, the annual meeting featured the following stakeholder presentations:

- **Andy Rhoades (Heathrow Airport Authority):** ‘The Challenges Facing ATU: What are the potential consequences of not knowing where your assets are?’ Andy demonstrated the complexity of the utility network at Heathrow and showed case studies of (dramatic) near misses and utility strikes.
- **A Case Study presented by Helen Reeves (BGS) and Andy Rhoades,** on decision support requirements and visualisation capabilities. This highlighted how information from a number of different sources can be readily combined onto one platform and demonstrated the added value this can bring.
- **Tony Rachwal (Chairman of UK Water Research and Innovation Partnership):** ‘A Water Utility Perspective of ATU Challenges’. Tony, questioning: “assets or liabilities?” and “what (information), why, when and who (to provide and store it)?”, raised the important concept of stewardship and the need for a bodyscanner for the street.
- **Erica Utsi (formerly Utsi Electronics):** ‘ATU — Creating a Decision Support System for Streetworks: The GPR Challenge’. Erica demonstrated the limitations of GPR, but also highlighted the potential of GPR and the range of information that can potentially be obtained from GPR data.
- **Steve Crossland (Balfour Beatty):** ‘Advances made by the Utility Strike Avoidance Group (USAG)’. Steve posed the question: “is there a need for a Common Ground Alliance?” and highlighted the work done by USAG with respect to collecting utility strike data.
Another new feature at the annual meeting included the use of electronic voting to provide direct feedback to the audience and form the basis of the discussion in breakout groups (see also next page). The electronic voting was used to capture feedback on the potential uses of ATU’s streetworks Decision Support System (DSS) and deterioration assessments of the three infrastructures (road, buried utilities, and ground that supports them both). A detailed assessment of the responses is currently being carried out. Figures 3 to 6 provide some examples of the voting results, distinguishing between academic and industry responses. Interestingly, in many categories the academic votes were very similar to the industry votes, although industry is clearly happier to accommodate an occasional loss to the utility service delivery, while academia strived for zero service disruptions (Figure 3). A few more differences were also apparent with respect to the design of the DSS, where academia was split between a bespoke software and a web based design, while industry was split between GIS and a web-based design. The remaining results will be analysed in due course and made available to a wide audience.
Outcomes of Discussions During Breakout Sessions

Key outcomes of the discussions from the breakout groups included:

- Promoting PAS 128 usage for the delivery of a structured level of service and to reinforce the advantages of existing survey technologies.
- The need for a public framework agency for the ‘underworld’, and to reinforce the seriousness of consequences from practices, including a guide on responsibilities.
- The need to improve knowledge of asset condition and asset life was reiterated, particularly from the perspectives of integrated performance and asset co-location.
- The DSS must be easy to use and be applicable from the early (i.e. design) stages, have clear outcomes, define failure, require accreditation / certification to improve quality of performance, provide guidance for the industry, and recognise variation in sectors and asset owners as well as their interests and requirements.
- The management and ownership of data must be addressed and a value assigned to survey data. A central data repository may prove the ideal outcome, although it should have variable access levels.
- The DSS should describe the pros and cons of methods and practices, with links to technical information.
- Direct costs will always be a limiting factor, so the concept of value for streetworks is critical; i.e. value vs costs; value vs risk of cost; and risk vs cost.
- Condition data should be a requirement for all streetworks surveys.
- The DSS should guide and inform risk management for streetworks, and delineate responsibilities for actions and reactions.

The annual meeting was deemed to be a success, with participants pleased with the format of the event and the opportunity to provide feedback on priority concerns for supporting decision making, as well as managing and undertaking of streetworks activities.

In order to get wider views, it is important to engage with a range of industries, including practitioners, utility providers, contractors and consultants. We therefore ask that you continue to support the research — your opinion is immensely valuable to us.

ATU project partners continue to grow in number and sector diversity. If you are interested in becoming a project partner, please contact the ATU project manager Mark Hamilton.

Book your place at the next annual event on the 14th December 2015 at the Ordnance Survey in Southampton. Contact Mark Hamilton to register.

For further information please see the Assessing the Underworld website: [http://assessingtheunderworld.org](http://assessingtheunderworld.org) or contact Mark Hamilton, the ATU project manager, via email at: M.Hamilton.3@bham.ac.uk