

Ordnance Survey to Create Pilot Map for Underground Assets



Ordnance Survey (OS) and partners are to create a digital map of underground pipes and cables to help save lives and reduce the disruption caused when they are struck by mistake.

It is estimated that the cost of accidental strikes on underground pipes and cables is £1.2 billion a year to the UK's economy. Workers who hit gas and electric pipes by mistake can also put themselves in danger.

To help prevent such accidents, the government's [Geospatial Commission](#) has announced its ambition to bring together the existing data on underground pipes and cables to create an Underground Assets Register. This has begun with pilot projects in London and the

North East, to test the feasibility of the project.

Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden, visited Sunderland to see the work which is already underway to map the area's underground network. "When workers strike pipes and cables, it risks lives, costs money and causes havoc for residents and road-users. Our investment in this cutting-edge underground map is just one way that the government is working smarter, so that we really make a difference to people's everyday lives," said Dowden.

No Definitive Map

There is currently no comprehensive underground map of the UK's service network. Different organizations have their own maps showing where such things as gas pipes and electricity cables are, but the lack of a combined map creates an increased risk of potentially lethal accidents.

Work to tackle the problem has so far seen working prototypes created in Sunderland and London. This allows workers to see underground pipes and cables on mobile phones or laptop computers before they start a dig.

In the North East, the project has been led by OS, who have worked with Northumbrian Water, Northern Gas Networks, Northern Powergrid, and Openreach. In London, work going forward will be led by the Greater London Authority, who are working closely with infrastructure providers and local authorities.

David Henderson, the managing director of OS Great Britain, said "The creation of an underground map of utility assets has long been an ambition of Ordnance Survey. And over the last year, we have been working closely with Northumbrian Water and a consortia of utility companies and local authorities in the North East of England, to explore how accurate geospatial data can improve underground infrastructure maintenance and inform new-build development projects. The investment being made by the Geospatial Commission will ultimately enable the utility industry to more efficiently access, use and share data describing otherwise hidden infrastructure, thereby reducing operational costs, minimizing disruption and accelerating completion of site works."