

Dreadful Section of Road Rectified (but not by the people who caused it!)

There is no one who lives in the Cowes area that would not have been aware of the dreadful section of road leading into Northwood from Newport, where Southern Water's new mains trench backfill collapsed, leaving a road surface that could easily throw a vehicle off course, especially if only two wheeled.

Because the failure occurred outside the contract defects liability period, Southern Water claimed not to be responsible, when it was plain that they were, as the bad road surface was caused by their defective workmanship, and for no other reason. Ducking moral responsibility by hiding behind the letter of the law seems to be a modern trademark with these Utilities. It is reflected in the current finding of OFWAT, who stated that a cultural change was needed in the water industry to improve delivery, performance and to stop blaming failings on anything or anyone else. Its called moral backbone!

If Southern Water were serious about their image, and the service that they give, they would have recognised and risen to the opportunity to take responsibility and do something that led to making a bad situation, brought about by their actions or inaction alone, right. Instead, they declined responsibility and neglected to make any response when the issue was taken up by the IW Observer, leaving it to Island Roads to step in and do the decent thing, put the road right at no extra cost to the tax-payer. I thank Island Roads for their public spirit in this matter.

I am afraid that this careless, mercenary attitude exists amongst other Utilities as well. It may be because their overall management is so remote to the communities that they serve, but it would not be the first time that I have caught a Utility closing a road for their own convenience, when it was perfectly possible to keep it open. The recent failure of SSE to consider the impact of their works outside Medina Road toilets and notify, even coordinate with, an affected stakeholder, Cowes Town Council, to safely manage the toilet access and to make sure the doors could be opened so that reinstating the pavement up to the thresholds could be completed properly and safely, smacks of irresponsibility. Its obvious that they failed to complete their statutory obligation to asses risk, and it indicates to me that, by and large, Utility Companies hold the public, that they serve, in contempt, and we should not put up with it!

The Dilemma of Success

You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, or so the saying goes. You can't have activity without repercussions. You can't have your cake and eat it. Etc, etc.

You can't have a vibrant community without activity, and that activity will affect some people, in some places, some of the time. If you build a road to connect communities, you have to put up with the traffic it generates, the consequential pollution and the hazard it now presents and you have to negotiate around it. Look left and right before crossing, etc. You cannot carry on as before, you have to adjust for the greater good.

Is the success of our venues the same? Take Northwood House, gifted to the community, sorely neglected to decline to the brink of ruin under the tenure of the Local Authority, taken on by a group of people that care and who put time and effort in, mainly for free. Through their efforts, innovation, enterprise, they have created a notable venue that stands out for the quality of events that it facilitates. There is still a long way to go, as far as funding the cost of full repairs and renovations, and, as with any building, maintenance costs will be ongoing. So, fund raising is an ongoing requirement, and they do it, by and large, standing on their own feet. So when we get complaints about nuisance endured through their activity we need to make an assessment of balance on what we want, success or decline?

I have to say, that Northwood House's attitude and sensitivity to their impact is impressively considerate and they are actively doing what they can to mitigate. It would be fair, therefore, and I am not saying that it isn't already being done, for people who are affected by the impact of such success to exercise due tolerance and adjust where they can in giving support to the success and vibrancy of a community. After all, we don't want people who might move to the country then complain about the cock crowing or church bells ringing!

I use Northwood House as an example, but the principal applies to other venues too, Northwood Show Ground, Cowes Town Centre, Lallows Boatyard (aimed at our LPA), Birmingham Road and, yes, at the risk of being unpopular, Mornington Car Park!

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