DIGGING UP BRITAIN 2022

CONSUMERS STRENGTHEN THE UK'S SAFE DIGGING COMMUNITY

The industry's annual review by LSBUD

Linesearch beforeUdig

FOREWORD

Another turbulent year has been and gone, leaving many uncertain of what the future holds, economically and environmentally. We have made it this far, so let's pull together and make sure 2022 and beyond is better for everyone.

One thing is for certain - safe digging practices are continuing to rise across the length and breadth of the UK. More people, ranging from construction workers through to everyday consumers are searching, with record numbers passing through our portal in 2021.

The rise of the UK consumer is a fantastic trend that we are witnessing, with our safe digging messaging reaching far and wide, not just to those that dig as part of their job. We have seen an increase in searches from people at home, whether they are doing some home improvements, building a new shed or replacing a garden fence, it doesn't matter. What matters is they are aware of the dangers, and are searching before putting a spade in the ground. A major win for us and the whole digging community.

As well as good news on the enquiry front, we now have over 100 Members on board, sharing their asset data through the collaborative portal. Indeed, at the start of 2022, LSBUD has two thirds of the UK's utility operators, which includes 90% of gas distribution networks, 92% of electricity distribution networks and 99% of fuel/oil pipeline operators. Sadly, some water companies are still being less proactive about sharing their information, but we have high hopes for 2022.

Couple those numbers with the fact that the portal now houses over 1 million kilometres of the UK's utility network. It certainly seems like an increasingly aware community of people wanting to keep themselves and others safe, whilst protecting their underground infrastructure, has firmly established itself.

We remain as determined as ever to keep people safe and protect the UK's underground infrastructure.

Richard Broome
Managing Director
LSBUD (Linesearch BeforeUdig)

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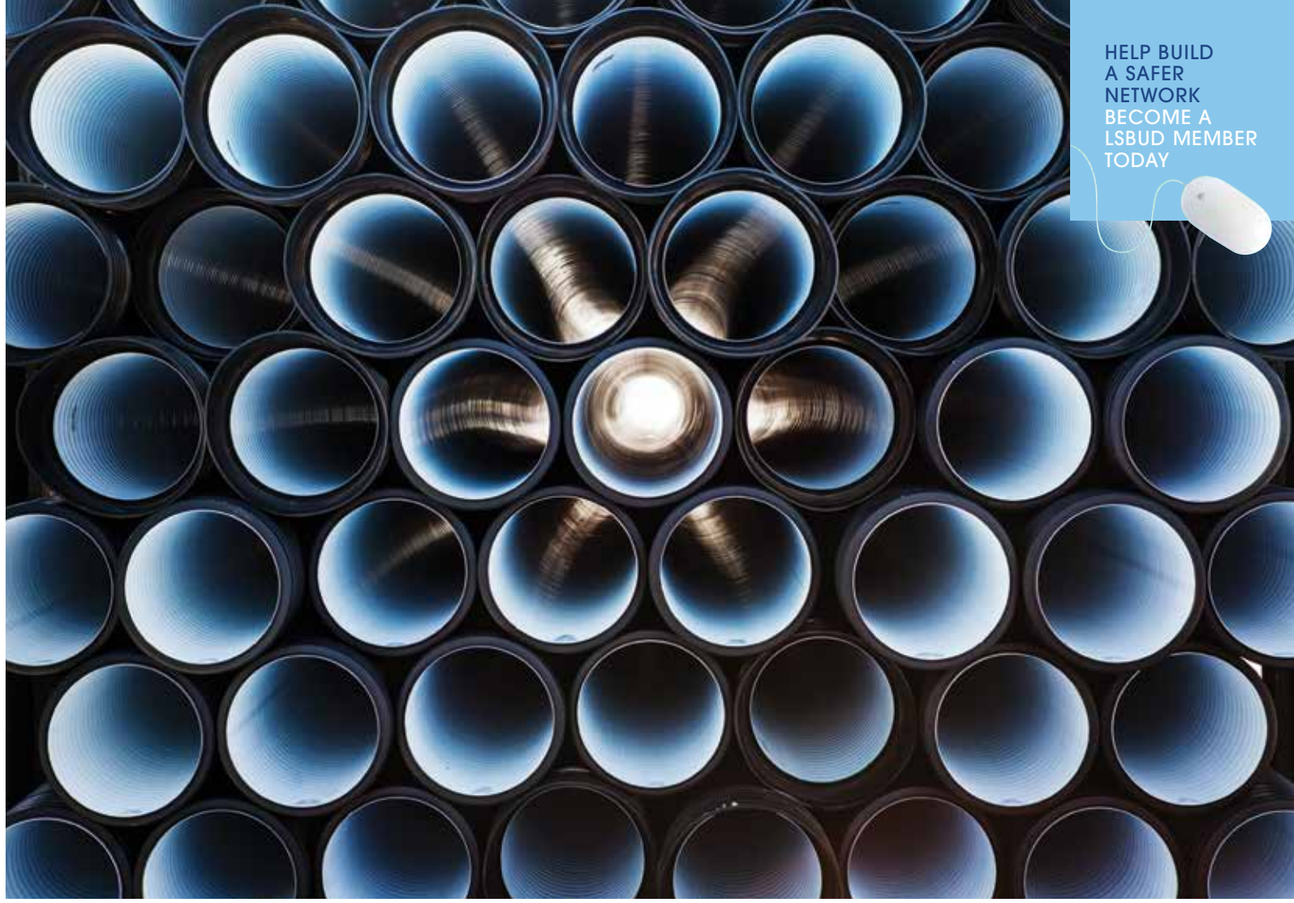


About LSBUD

LSBUD is a free to use online safe digging service, providing the location of underground assets and infrastructure across the UK. Any individual or organisation can use the collaborative portal to check their works against more than 100 asset owners' utility networks. These assets include over 1 million kilometres of underground and overhead pipes and cables in the electricity, gas, high pressure fuel, water and fibre optic networks. The service processes over 3.4 million enquiries per annum - that's more than one every six seconds.

For those construction companies, contractors and general public doing the digging (Users), the service quickly and effectively provides information about LSBUD's Members' assets, allowing excavation works to be carried out safely.

For asset owners (Members), the collaborative portal helps protect underground infrastructure by increasing third party knowledge of where assets are. This encourages safer working environments and reduces asset strikes, increasing the resilience of networks and protecting the service to customers.

Members registered with the service range from leading utility operators such as UK Power Networks, National Grid, Portsmouth Water, Northumbrian Water, SP Energy Networks, Cadent, Western Power Distribution, Electricity North West and SGN to fuel suppliers like BP, Valero, Esso and Shell and telecoms providers including Zayo, EU Networks and Gigaclear.

LSBUD's goal is clear: encourage all UK asset owners to make their asset information available via its collaborative service, keeping assets and workers safe in the process.

Methodology

The report draws on data from a number of sources, the main one being LSBUD's own records of the 3.4 million searches conducted through its portal between January and December 2021.

It also references data provided by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), based on an information request for the number of underground electrical cable or gas pipeline strikes reported in 2021.

Finally it contains information and content from the 2020 Utility Strike Avoidance Group's (USAG) Damages Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Searching before digging is a best practice adhered to by 84% of all people taking on a digging project, no matter its size and scale. Historically this has been mainly amongst construction workers and contractors, but the general public has now firmly added themselves into the 'protected' category.

In 2021, the number of search enquires that passed through LSBUD's portal reached 3.4 million. That is 84% of all digging work. It is up 10% on last year and equates to a search every six seconds.

What's also apparent is that the safe digging community has never been stronger. More searches than ever, and more utility operators sharing their data. With over 100 Members now registered on LSBUD's portal, this collaborative approach has led to a safer environment for all.

Similar to previous years, the majority of digging work has been performed on behalf of the telecoms sector, followed by the water industry. Together these two sectors account for 77% of all digging work.

Private individual searches now make up a significant six percent of enquiries, highlighting the surge in consumer awareness, and the change in lifestyle choices over the past few years.

Consumers also have a major say on the type of digging activity taking place, with home improvements on the rise, better broadband becoming a necessity and more people driving electric vehicles than ever before.

The water sector once again remains the least proactive industry when it comes to joining a central portal, with just 15 percent of asset owners subscribing to LSBUD's. Put simply, they are missing out on utilising the benefits of increasing network resilience, reducing leakage and unplanned interruptions. Pleasingly, this is not the case for the gas and electricity sectors which currently have 90 and 92 percent representation respectively.

Data from USAG's 'Damages Report' shows that for the first time, strikes peaked in September. This anomaly is thought to be down to the pandemic and is expected to revert to the norm for next year's iteration. Wednesdays are when the highest number of accidents are recorded, with the level of incident severity seeming to increase as the working week goes on.

Reporting to the HSE for electrical incidents has improved yet again, with more being reported than the previous year. However, information around gas related incidents is unable to be deciphered, showcasing more needs to be done when it comes to learning from important industry data.

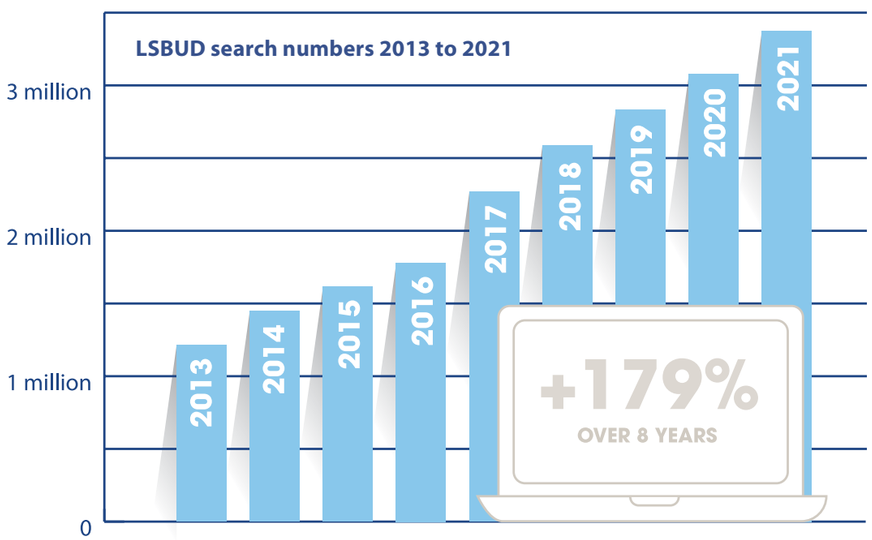
If everyone in the safe digging industry follows the basic rules of 'subscribe, share and search', we will continue to grow on the already incredibly promising numbers.

USAG's 'Damages Report' shows that for the first time, strikes peaked in September. This anomaly is thought to be due to the pandemic.

I. SEARCH ENQUIRIES CONTINUE TO RISE

In 2021, LSBUD saw the number of search enquires through its portal reach 3,375,938 (3.4 million), up 10% on the previous 12 months.

This built on the growth of 9% seen from 2019 to 2020. The consistent growth highlights the digging industry's willingness to improve, and its continued reliance on LSBUD's service, with more construction companies, contractors and the general public understanding the benefits of searching before digging. When comparing these numbers to those of just five years ago, the portal is receiving almost double the amount of search enquires (up 89%), which shows a joined up, effective system, getting better and more collaborative each year.



What this also means is that 84% * of all digging activity taking place in the UK in 2021 took place after a LSBUD search had been made. This continued improvement is vital in the battle to keep people safe and to protect the UK's underground infrastructure.

Whilst the number of total enquiries increased sharply in 2021, there was a noticeable decline in 'Initial Enquiries', only making up 20% of all searches in contrast to 29% in 2020 and 24% in 2019. This may be due to the changes in the way the UK worked during the effects of the pandemic. In 2020, we experienced a series of enforced lockdowns, which caused many building and excavation projects to be postponed. This meant that companies, contractors and the general public had to adapt and focus on scoping possible future projects, rather than completing the planned works they had initially anticipated. In 2021, some form of normality started to return, with a major emphasis from the UK Government being put on large-scale infrastructure projects in a bid to kick start the economy.

Indeed, industries are now beginning to witness pre-pandemic levels of work. The Government's latest 'Output in the construction industry' report highlighted that total construction output increased 12.7% in 2021 compared with 2020. This is the largest increase since annual records began in 1997, surpassing the previous record of 9.9% in 2014. It follows a record fall of 14.9% in 2020.

The data collected by LSBUD reflects this trend, with the rise in 'Planned Work' enquiries making up 73% of the total searches in 2021, up from 65% the previous year. It is reassuring to see that as projects begin to pick up within the UK, searches are increasing in unison.

84% of all digging activity taking place in the UK in 2021 took place after a LSBUD search had been made. This continued improvement is vital in the battle to keep people safe and to protect the UK's underground infrastructure.

* Percentages of digging activity are based on the long established (but unconfirmed) industry statistic of 4 million excavations per annum across the UK.

II. INDUSTRY COLLABORATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

One thing that is clear from the report is the positive impact a collaborative approach by asset owners is having on safe digging. And for good reason - more utility operators sharing their data creates a safer environment for all - protecting lives and assets in the process.

As of December 2021, there are over 100 Members signed up to LSBUD's portal.

This is two thirds of the UK's utility operators, and includes 90% of gas distribution networks, 92% of electricity distribution networks and 99% of fuel/oil pipeline operators. Couple that with the portal hosting over 1 million kilometres of the UK's pipes and cable networks on its portal, and you can see the positive place the community is in. This collective effort means that all parties are receiving more search enquiries than ever before - over 280,000 per month. This is a 90% increase over the figure five years before.

Geospatial Commission

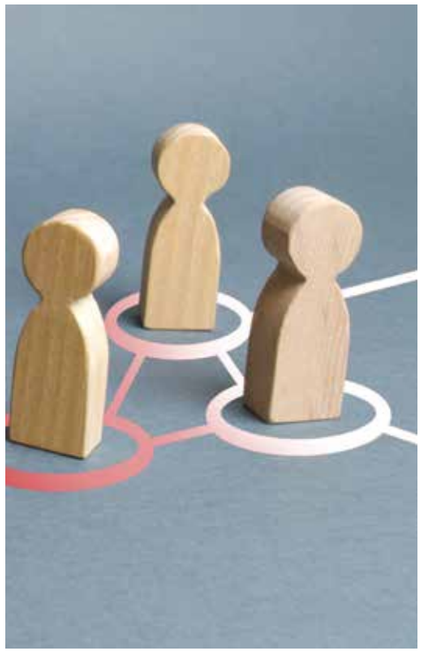
The Threat to this Equilibrium: The Geospatial Commission

The Government acknowledged the need for collaboration within the industry when it formed the Geospatial Commission in 2018, with the aim of making geospatial data more accessible. However, rather than make improvements to an industry that is performing well, the Commission (part of the Cabinet Office) has preferred to portray a disjointed community in order to fulfil its own agenda. Whilst this couldn't be further from the truth, it helps justify ploughing millions into creating The National Underground Asset Register (NUAR).

In November 2021, the Geospatial Commission published its 'NUAR Economic Benefits Paper'. That document outlines that the amount saved from preventing accidental utility asset strikes will be its core focus, claiming that accidental strikes cost £2.4bn every year. Interestingly this is double what it stated the previous year and many times higher than what previous research has suggested, including studies it has heavily relied on in the Economic Paper.

Amongst the numbers, without any reasonable justification, NUAR states it will reduce strikes by 30% – a saving of 'approximately £347m per year - £12m in savings from direct costs and £341m in savings from non-direct costs' according to the Paper. To the expert eye, these seem heavily exaggerated and quite literally don't add up.

In reality, LSBUD and its 100 Member organisations demonstrate the industry's willingness to share information, allowing the portal's Users to access the information



for free. Whereas, NUAR has already committed to spend more than £30m of taxpayer money and it still remains in the pilot phase. In fact, recently Atkins Divisional Digital Director and NUAR Programme Director, Guy Ledger, was quoted as saying "We'll look back in five or 10 years and think 'why wasn't this done before?'".

Well, the answer is, it has. It already exists.

Given all of this information, it is hard to understand why the Government and its NUAR Team is continuing to spend so much taxpayer money, especially as that money will need to be recouped and the expectation is that the safe digging searches market will be the target.

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III. THE DEEP DIVE

The Leading Sectors

Telecoms

Telecoms has remained the dominant industry in need of detailed underground mapping, amassing a total of 1,204,984 searches over 2021. Contrasting this with last year, this is an increase of 79,141 searches, (7%).

However, when looking at the total enquiries, Telecoms' share accounted for less in 2021 than it did in 2020, with the sector's overall stake at 44%, down from 45%. This illustrates an interesting point. While enquiries are rising year-on-year, and Telecoms is still leading the way in terms of enquiries, the slight dip in share of total enquiries shows that other sectors are continuing to grow too, and at a faster rate.

The continued reliance on LSBUD's service within Telecoms can be attributed to several trends witnessed over the last year. One of the most prominent of course is the Government's £5bn 'Project Gigabit' announced in March 2021, outlining the Government's plans to dramatically improve the UK's broadband capabilities, bringing faster speeds to homes and businesses. Consequently, 2021 witnessed the plan in action, with huge areas of the country undergoing significant work to facilitate the UK's superfast internet connections.

On top of this, we have the rise to prominence of 5G. With the Government's plan to have most of the UK capable of connecting to a 5G signal by 2022, it was crucial for the UK's operators to establish wider 5G coverage across the country's most populated areas..

Water

Mirroring last year's rankings, the water sector came the second highest in terms of the total enquiries submitted during 2021. Over the 12 month period, a total of 914,886 enquiries were made, an 11% jump from 2020. The sector accounted for 33% of all enquiries made throughout 2021, meaning the Telecoms and Water sectors collectively accounted for 77% of all searches made.

In Water UK's 2021 discussion paper 'Developing a 2050 Vision', the need for adequate infrastructure that can support the growing population and protect people from future water scarcity was brought to the industry's attention. Asset protection should now be the number one concern for the industry, as it not only lowers costs but reduces the chances of leaks and consequent wastage – which is expected to rise over the coming years. This signifies that the number of searches coming directly from the water sector is only going to increase over the next few years.

Private Individuals

Across 2021, the number of searches made by private individuals increased by a significant 25%, up to 157,428. Whilst these numbers do not match the likes of the Telecoms or Water sectors, the huge growth experienced over the last 12 months, does mean that private individuals now make up 6% of all searches placed.

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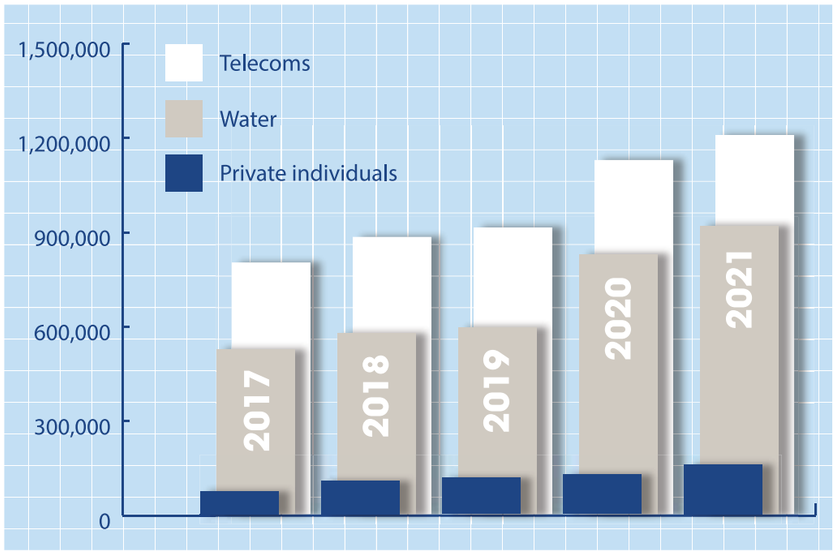
Enquires by sector 2017 to 2021



This rise can be attributed to a number of trends over the past year, with the most prominent influence being COVID-19. According to Rated People, there was a 32% rise in demand for home improvements in 2021, with homeowners feeling more affluent due to a lack of spending the previous year. With international travel intermittently on pause throughout 2021, some people found themselves with increased savings and more disposable income than normal. This rise in renovations and home improvements resulted in an increased use of LSBUD by homeowners.

Alongside home improvements, the consumer drive for electric vehicles is also having a significant impact on the volume of searches being placed across the breadth of the UK. Whilst searches for EV charging points don't fall within the 'private individuals' grouping, consumers are the ones pushing for change in this area. There were over 395,000 pure-electric cars on UK roads at the end of December 2021, and 744,849 plug-in models including hybrids (PHEVs). In fact, the number of PHEVs increased from 439,568, which is a significant 69.45% rise, and is the highest year-on-year growth ever registered.

With consumer demand rising, and the Government providing grants of up to £1,500 for electric cars priced under £32,000, there is an inevitable consumer pressure for a more robust EV infrastructure to support this growing market. In 2021, rapid charging points grew from 9,285 to 11,623, meaning even further reliance was placed on safe digging to minimise the risk of damage to assets and the surrounding environment.

The Leading Categories

Breaking down the numbers further, we can delve into the type of work taking place and the most commonly recorded activities within each subset.

157,428

157,428 - The number of searches made by private individuals increased by a significant 25%.

Utility Works

As expected, utility-related work remains the most popular search category through 2021. With both the Water and Telecom sectors dominating searches, it was anticipated that this category of work would come out as the highest ranked. With over 2,711,276 enquiries for utility works, they accounted for 80% of all enquiries. This was significantly up on 2020 which recorded 2,233,573 enquiries, being 73% of all enquiries.

Highways

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the level of highway work completed has dropped. However, it did see a return to growth during 2021, rising from 369,138 to 411,982. It now makes up 12% of all enquiry types. Interestingly, when you compare this to pre-pandemic levels, that is still a 2% overall drop, suggesting that highways works whilst on the up, have not fully recovered to 2019 levels. As the UK continues to recover from the past two years, highways works are expected to increase dramatically, especially given the Government's reliance and focus on kick-starting the economy through large scale infrastructure projects.

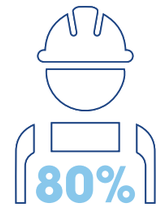
Development Projects

2021 saw planning applications drop, generating a substantial rise in development projects. Planning applications had previously accounted for a 9% share of all types of work. But this year the share was just 1%. The 280,014 planning related enquiries of 2020 fell to just 23,729 in 2021. The main reason for this is that one high volume contracting company working in the highways sector was using planning applications as the work category for C2 enquiry requests; this has since been rectified.

Interestingly, searches for development projects increased from 69,421 total searches in 2020 to 88,445, accounting for 3% of all searches made.

Agriculture

Agriculture saw another substantial increase over the year, with the total number of searches increasing from 3,446 to 6,067. This is a massive 76% growth in using the portal for such a disparate sector - a huge win for the industry awareness campaign.



711,276 enquiries for utility works accounting for 80% of all enquiries.

IV. WHICH SECTOR IS MOST VULNERABLE TO STRIKES?

As it currently stands, more than 100 asset owners in the UK are LSBUD Members. This means that over 1 million kilometres of pipes and cables are safer due to LSBUD.

This leaves one third of the nation's utility infrastructure still unprotected and very much exposed to the risk of strikes. So, which parts of the country and utility network are most vulnerable?

A. Gas

Similar to previous years, the gas sector is well protected. Indeed, 90% of the UK's gas network are currently Members of LSBUD's service, which is a 10% increase on 2020.

The highly dangerous nature of gas is likely the largest contributing factor towards this, with companies recognising the consequences of their pipelines being 'hit' and the ramifications it will likely have on the safety of teams or general public doing the digging.

However, with 10% still at risk of third party strikes, this presents a worrying concern for the industry, particularly as this is focused in the North East of England.

- Area at highest risk of strikes
- Area protected through LSBUD

B. Electricity

The story is the same with the UK's electricity infrastructure, with 92% of electricity distribution networks currently registered with LSBUD's service.

With 8% still unaccounted for, again being focused in North East England, it is people in this particular region who remain at serious risk.

- Area at highest risk of strikes
- Area protected through LSBUD

C. Water

Whilst the other sectors have made significant progress, the water sector continues to be a major challenge. While LSBUD has grown the number of water companies signed up to its portal, this still only accounts for 15%. This presents great concern when considering that it has the largest network of utility assets, with over 350,000 kilometres of underground pipes across the UK.

Given Ofwat's objective of reducing leaks by 16% by 2025, and by 50% by 2050, a more proactive approach in protecting assets clearly needs to be adopted. Due to the lack of health and safety or environmental ramifications when a water pipe is hit, there has been very little urgency by water companies to join the portal. However the drive to reach leak reduction targets will hopefully prompt more water companies to eliminate needless asset strikes by joining the LSBUD portal.

- Area at highest risk of strikes
- Area protected through LSBUD

D. Other

It is not just gas, electricity and water networks that people need to pay attention to, but also:

- High pressure fuel pipelines
- Fibre optic networks
- District heating networks

Over the last 12 months there has been a considerable increase in the number of 'other' assets being registered on the portal, with 99% of fuel/oil pipeline operators now on board LSBUD's system. It has also been very pleasing to see 5 new LSBUD members in 2021 from the telecoms sector.

Other LSBUD networks protected

V. SEEING THE POWER IN ACTION

All the data throughout this report depicts a collaborative and healthy industry, working together to keep people and assets safer than ever before.

One example of this in action comes from Last Mile, which adopts and operates an impressive portfolio of electricity and gas distribution networks across the UK that are designed, installed, and commissioned by Lloyds Register accredited organisations.

Last Mile supplies electricity and gas to 400,000 customers, meaning that network reliability and availability is a key priority. In 2021, it joined the LSBUD system in a bid to better protect its networks and the people working nearby.

Historically, Last Mile would respond to requests for network drawings through a manually intensive process that involved a small team of administrators. With the business, and network, growing, it started to receive an ever-increasing number of requests, requiring more and more resources.

Before joining a collaborative portal, Last Mile was receiving 6,000 enquiries a month, which in turn typically led to 100 positive 'interactions' – a situation where the enquirer is working close to its network. Through LSBUD, Last Mile now receives around 290,000 enquires a month and this leads to 5,000 'affected' interactions – a 4,900% increase.

Through making it easier for people to be aware of the location of its apparatus, Last Mile has taken the right steps to better protect its assets and all those working nearby.

By successfully partnering with companies such as Last Mile, the LSBUD network is able to grow, and the service's ability to accurately map and highlight critical areas of concern further improve - benefiting every party involved.

lastmile

Michael Blake, Associate Director – Asset Management at Last Mile, comments on the success of the partnership:

"We put performance, safety and reliability at the forefront of what we do. We are thrilled to be working with LSBUD to help us keep our networks protected and our customers connected to important utility infrastructure.

"LSBUD were incredibly supportive through the transition to its portal, and we can rest easy knowing that we've now taken the best possible approach to keep our apparatus and people safe."

"We are now looking to the future and starting to explore the hosting of our water and wastewater records in the same way."

VI. PREVENTING FUTURE STRIKES

In a bid to further the industry's knowledge and embed best safe digging practices, there's merit in taking a more detailed look at when and where strikes are likely to occur, and the type of projects that are the most likely to inflict damage to underground infrastructure.

For this, USAG's 2020 'Damages Report' provides valuable insights. It helps identify trends, highlights key areas in need of attention and encourages those responsible for excavation work to factor these into future plans.

When Do Strikes Occur?

Across the pandemic period, the month with the most strikes reported was September. This is the first time September has topped the chart in terms of number of reports, with July the usual owner of this unwanted accolade. Given the number of lockdowns and inactivity much of the UK experienced across the pandemic period, it is perhaps no surprise to see unusual data being reported. As things continue to return to our 'new normal' we would expect to see things shift back to July being the most likely month for a strike, given its long working hours, good weather and temporary workers covering for holidays.

Reporting across the winter months was also impacted significantly, seeing significant peaks and troughs usually uncommon during this period. While this discrepancy speaks volumes for the impact COVID-19 had on various sectors, 2021's data is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Strikes are most likely to happen during the summer months, when working hours are long, the weather is fine and temporary workers are covering for holidays. Whilst the worst month is usually July, it is important to remember the impact of the initial lockdown in 2020 when excavation projects were only slowly reintroduced later in the summer, which may help explain why the peak month was September.

Mid-week (Wednesday) is when the highest amount of accidents are recorded. However, the number of incidents classed as 'high' in severity has most recently been seen to rise throughout the week, suggesting week-long tiredness or a rush to get jobs done ahead of the weekend may be an influencing factor as the week progresses. This is something that on-site managers can watch out for, re-emphasising safe digging measures to their teams. Having this level of understanding will also allow decision

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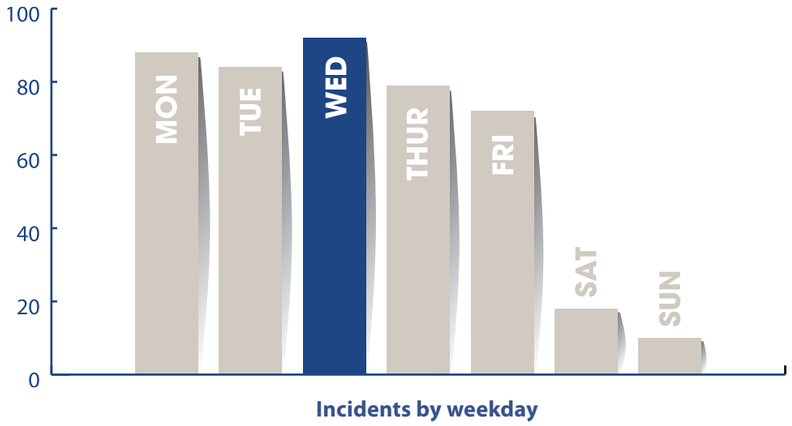


Incidents by weekday

makers to plan for future work more effectively.

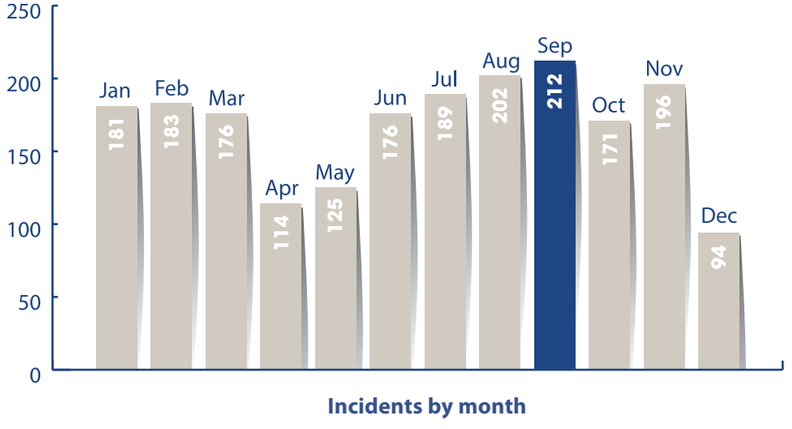
Similarly, the most recent analysis of the time of day strikes occur suggests things peak during the middle of the working day. Could this be when workers are rushing to start or complete a task before their lunch break?

Where Do Strikes Occur?

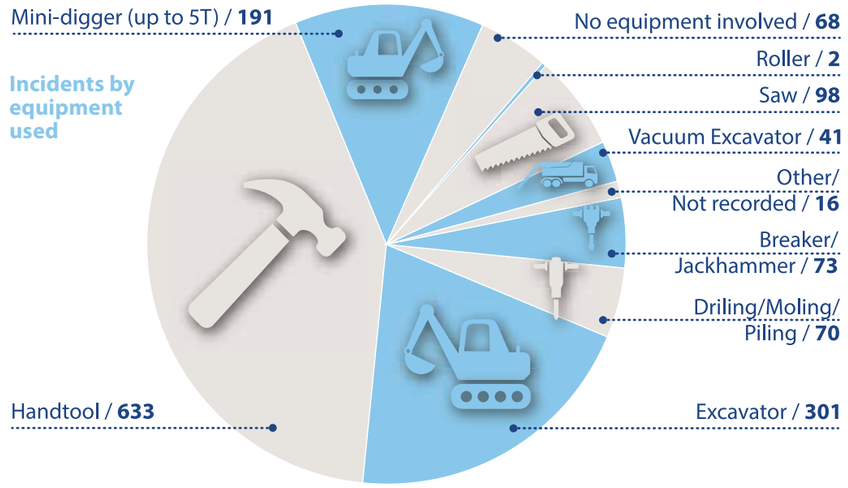
Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most frequent location where most strikes occur are footpaths at 60%, followed by carriageways at 13%. This means that between them, they make up almost three quarters of all incident locations across the UK.

There are several reasons for this. The most obvious being that this is where the underground assets are located, being the most congested and most difficult places to dig. As a result of the assets being in these areas, it is also the place where the work is being conducted.

These areas also present unique challenges to teams carrying out digging, as the higher density of utilities mean that there are more that are shallower than expected. On top of this, these areas usually contain a heightened likelihood of smaller services that are both more difficult to locate and not featured on many asset maps.



Incidents by month



What equipment causes the most strikes?

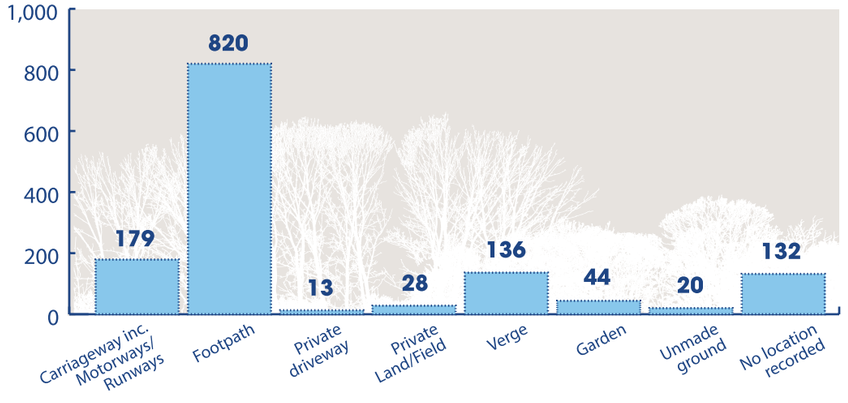
Knowing how an asset was damaged provides valuable intelligence for proactive asset owners looking to avoid damage to their networks and to formulate part of proper safe digging practices.

The most common piece of equipment causing strikes is hand tools, which come in first by a significant margin. Indeed, hand tools resulted in 633 incidents across 2020. This could simply be down to them being used the most. But if that's the case why do the combined categories of 'excavator' and 'mini digger', classed as mechanical excavation, usually surpass the hand tools figure? Why was this not the case in 2020? Could this herald a new trend?

This, in combination with the presence of strike incidents involving 'saws' and 'jackhammers', is a cause for concern. It suggests that the pipes and cables being hit must have been close to the surface, and that the workers are operating close to them, increasing the chance of these incidents being more severe.

The clear recommendation here is that anyone performing any kind of digging work should start with a clear understanding of strike data.

Incidents by location



VII.
IMPACT OF STRIKES

H&S

Amongst all impacts of strikes, of which there are many, the health and safety of people is always the highest priority.

The data that follows has comes straight from the HSE, highlighting the number of people that have reported injuries in 2021. While this data provides us with a good platform to understand the type of injuries being reported, it must be acknowledged that not every incident is reported, meaning the figures should be used as indicators, but not absolute figures.

During 2021, the HSE recorded 1,895 safety related electrical incidents (ESQCR incidents). Comparing this to 2020, the number of incidents reported has increased from 1,526. This is an increase of 24%. Whilst the number of incidents rising could be a perceived as a worrying statistic, it is likely due to more projects being commissioned post-pandemic, and better and improved reporting to the HSE, which is a positive thing.

Of all the safety-related incidents reported in 2021, just 41 were recorded as injuries, with none being fatal. This represents a 48% decrease on 2020. This is excellent news and is promising to see. It suggests more precautions are being taken to reduce injuries and that the messaging behind reporting incidents is getting through to companies.

Historically, The Digging Up Britain report has reported on gas related incidents, as reported to the HSE. However, in 2022 these figures could not be deciphered, making it clear that the need for better data and clearer reporting is crucial. Without this information there is no benchmarking year-on-year.

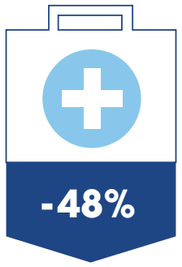
Whatever the reasons are for the lack of data, it means we don't have anywhere near enough clarity on the number of incidents, and we are missing out on vital information that can help the sector minimise these dangerous accidents from happening.

Financial

Hitting underground pipes and cables inevitably has financial implications. Indeed, repairing damaged assets can significantly inflate the cost of a project.

However, when thinking about the cost of a strike we should look beyond the direct cost of the utility repair. The loss of production, damage to equipment and machinery and the disruption to utility services, businesses and consumers in the local area all must be factored in. When they are, the cost of strikes is often substantially higher than expected. According to research by The University of Birmingham, the true cost of an asset strike is 29 times the direct cost; so for every £1,000 of direct repair cost arising from a utility strike the true cost is £29,000.

Using research conducted by USAG, it was found that the estimated average cost of a single strike was £3,600 and that the total cost for strikes reported was £9 million. Therefore, using the data provided by The University of Birmingham, we can approximate that a single strike has a true cost of £104,400 and that the total true cost of strikes reported was £261m.



Of all the safety-related incidents reported in 2021, just 41 were recorded as injuries, with none being fatal. This represents a 48% decrease on 2020.

Reputational

In the short-term, the cost of strikes on a brand's reputation can be significant, especially given the power of social media and online reviews, and the propensity for 'bad news to travel fast.' Indeed, a survey by Coca Cola found that unhappy customers tell an average of 9-10 customers about their bad experience, whereas happy customers only tell 4-5 people.

The fear of such reputational damage should be a big driver for both those doing the digging to search properly and asset owners to avoid such damage to their assets by providing them to as wide an audience as possible.

Yet, the fear of reputational damage is also creating a problem in the safe digging community. It is often the reason why companies are reluctant to disclose strike information. However, this mindset is dangerously short-termist. There are long-term implications of withholding strike information. Lessons aren't learned, processes aren't improved, trends aren't spotted, and it prevents asset mapping from advancing further.

VIII.
CONCLUSION

With more Members joining the LSBUD community every year, the asset information its service is able to provide just gets better and better. By enabling quick, accessible underground digging data, LSBUD has assisted in the reduction of strike incidents throughout the UK reported by the HSE.

However now is not the time to rest on our laurels. During 2022 and beyond, detailed asset information will play a significant part in the speed, safety and success of the multiple Government and private projects planned over the coming years. Without an integral utility network accurately mapped, projects such as 5G, Net-Zero and Project Gigabit will be significantly hindered in their establishment.

Let's stay safe and search before we dig.

DIGGING UP BRITAIN 2022

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