

Affinity Water Limited
Tamblin Way
Hatfield
Hertfordshire AL10 9EZ

4 April 2025

Sonia Hayes

Area Coroner for Essex

Seax House

Victoria Road South

Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

Dear Ms Hayes

Inquest into the death of Paul Collingridge: Report under Regulation 28 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 (Your Ref: 2025-0100)

We are writing in relation to the above inquest and in particular the above-mentioned report of 20 February 2025 (the "PFD Report") that Affinity Water Limited ("Affinity") have received from yourself. We have duly considered the issues raised in the PFD Report and this letter serves as Affinity's formal response to the same.

In the first instance, Affinity extends its deepest sympathies to the family, fiancée and friends of Paul, and to anyone else who may be affected by his loss.

Secondly, we thank you for forwarding us a copy of the PFD Report that was made following the inquest into Paul's death. Affinity always strives for high standards of safety and welcomes opportunities to improve the services it provides to the public.

Affinity has a shared vision that "we all have a responsibility to make sure that everyone goes home to friends and family safely everyday" and we are committed to achieving zero harm by promoting a culture of collaboration, awareness and prevention. In helping achieve this vision, Affinity has in place robust health and safety measures and a good and collaborative relationship with its various stakeholders including local councils and its contractors.

Matters of Concern

You have asked for a response to several matters of concern in your report and our responses to these concerns are set out below, including details of action taken or proposed to be taken and setting out a timetable for action, or alternatively explaining why no action

is proposed. We have not provided a response to the second matter of concern as the Safety at Street Works Code of Practice (the "Code") is published and controlled by the Department of Transport (DfT) and therefore we do not believe that Affinity is required to respond to that point.

- (1) **Matter of concern:** Where Road Works Permits are required by utility companies these are often urgent to carry out vital repairs. This can mean that roadworks are set up in hours of darkness and may cause difficulties calculating distances as set out in the Safety at Street Works Code of Practice.
- (2) **Matter of concern:** A road works warning sign was placed at the junction that joined the carriageway of a road that obscured visibility of traffic joining the main carriageway. Whilst this did not cause or contribute to this incident this was not in accordance with the Code of Practice.

As recognised in the PFD Report, it is sometimes necessary for utility companies to carry out urgent works, meaning that roadworks are set up in the hours of darkness, which can cause difficulties in the calculation of distances set out in the Code.

Public safety, as well as the safety of its personnel, is of paramount importance to Affinity. To ensure this, Affinity has in place robust processes for ensuring compliance with roadworks requirements, including ensuring all personnel are trained and qualified to carry out works under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 ("NRSWA"); that all operatives carrying out street works understand the requirements of the NRSWA and the Code; that all operatives are trained on and understand our common standards relating to safety when carrying out works in the public highway; and the production of site specific risk assessments and safe systems of work for all street works.

Affinity use traffic management contractors to set up its roadworks. All of our contractors are appointed following a rigorous procurement process that assesses the contractor's health and safety compliance, and all of our contracts contain requirements for adherence to health and safety standards and KPIs regarding the conduct of street works. Affinity's zero harm policies are also fed down to its contractors, including regular partnership forums to discuss health and safety matters. There are also monthly and weekly reporting of street work performance to ensure compliance with health and safety and street work legal requirements.

Following Paul's death, Affinity reviewed its traffic management practices including the strengthening of our planning and execution of emergency works and have already implemented stricter protocols with regard to oversight of our contractors. Regular audits and assessments are carried out to monitor adherence and identify areas for continuous improvement. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of street works requiring emergency permits.

- (3) **Matter of concern:** The fatal incident that occurred on 6 December 2022 was not notified on the retrospective permit application for roadworks on the following day. There is no requirement for a fatality within roadworks be notified on application for an application for a permit.

Affinity has a good and proactive relationship with the local councils in its supply areas, and we regularly attend stakeholder groups to discuss any issues with health and safety when conducting street works.

Affinity carried out a review of its permit application processes following Paul's death and again following the inquest, and we have made a number of changes to our processes, including additional resourcing to ensure for prompt permit applications, better communications with councils regarding permitting and improving our training and operational protocols to reinforce compliance with all permitting requirements, particularly for emergency or out-of-hours works.

Affinity will also work collaboratively with DfT and councils in relation to any proposed revisions to the Code and/or any new rules with regard to permit applications and the safe conduct of roadworks.

Yours sincerely



Director of Customer Delivery