KINGSTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

5 May 2025

[redacted]
Chief Executive Officer
Wales & West Utilities

Dear [redacted]

Re: Work to upgrade the gas main in Kingston St. Mary

Apologies for contacting you directly but I'd like to bring to your attention residents' concerns regarding the replacement gas main works, Wales & West Utilities (WWU) are currently undertaking in Kingston St Mary, near Taunton, in Somerset.

Replacing the 4,700m gas main along Kingston Road has commenced and is scheduled to be completed by 23 September 2025. The approved diversion route follows the only viable alternative for the same classification of road and is some 14 miles long. There are however, alternative shorter routes available for traffic via unsuitable country lanes, which are used by large farm vehicles and in many places are only wider enough for a single vehicle.

The use of these country lanes by vehicles attempting to bypass the official diversion is causing significant problems to local residents, when going about their daily lives. Queues are forming at pinch points and reversing is difficult due to the volume of traffic and the nature of the carriageway. We've already received a report of a car being hit and I fear it won't be the last, consequently road safety and delays to emergency vehicles are a major concern to local residents.

Residents' frustration has been fuelled by the lack of information they received prior to the commencement of the gas works. Many residents were unaware, despite the Parish Council's best efforts, that works were planned to commence on 28 April until road signs appeared advising that Kingston Road would be closing for **150 days**. A WWU newsletter wasn't made available until 28 April, providing details of the planned works and unfortunately WWU's 23 April press release was hidden behind a paywall, so unlikely to have been seen by residents.

Residents are also finding it difficult to understand why these works are taking 150 days to complete and are asking why work cannot take place during evenings and at weekends.

It would be very much appreciated if WWU representatives could attend Kingston St Mary's Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm on 22 May 2025, in Kingston St Mary's Village Hall, to address residents' concerns. It would also be appreciated if action could be taken to reduce the length of time Kingston Road needs to be closed and to improve road signage, to deter traffic from using country lanes to bypass the official diversion. Unless action is taken to expedite these gas works, accidents will continue to happen and injuries or worse may occur.

Thanks for your understanding and assistance with the above and I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards

Paul Townsend

Chair
Kingston St Mary Parish Council

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