

Response to consultation on a three-digit number for the national power cut and electricity network safety service

Submitted by: Mr T. Drapper

I have noted that you are currently undertaking the consultation for the use of a three digit number for the electricity industry and the reporting of power cuts. This is an idea that I fully support and I am glad to see this approach being taken.

I would also like to suggest a similar approach, using a three digit number, for motorists stranded on motorways and trunk roads, to contact the Highways Agency Traffic Officer service.

The motorway network carries a third of the nation's traffic and is a very hostile environment. The events of the last weekend demonstrate quite how dangerous the motorway network can be when it goes wrong.

Motorways have Emergency Roadside Telephones (ERT) along their length at 1 mile spacing, nominally, for motorist to use in the event of an incident or breakdown. The ERT philosophy dates from a time when few people had phones in their homes let alone in their pockets. The HA deployment of ERT has yet to come into the 21st century. In other countries where roads are being built, especially in the middle east, ERT are not considered as a viable option and therefore not included as mobile phones will be used instead.

The situation now is that the convenience of mobiles phones, motorists are reluctant to walk any distance to make a phone call and hence the HA Traffic officers are not always aware of a stranded motorist. This is the type of situation that can lead to fatal incidents that have recently been witnessed. Motorists will more likely contact their own rescue service or family member/friend before they even think of walking along the hard shoulder, assuming they can, to call the Traffic Officer.

This approach would greatly assist any disabled or elderly motorists and the technology available will enable a faster response than the current system. There will of course be a number of issues to be considered such as network coverage, abuse of the systems etc. however this cannot be fully judged without a consultation.

Through my profession I personally have experience of the HA telecoms network and that of the mobile operators and I can see the benefits as well as the hurdles and hazards. If it is possible that this matter be considered, I am willing to contribute further.