

Mapping the Underworld transcript

Title: Nicole Metje, Mapping the Underworld

Duration: 6.09 mins

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3yzzATSMbE> (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3yzzATSMbE>)

Speaker Names:

- S1 Voiceover
- S2 Dr Nicole Metje, Research Fellow, School of Civil Engineering
- S3 Lorely Burt, MP for Solihull
- S4 Mike Farrimond, Director, UK Water Industry Research
- S5 Keith Davenport, Traffic Manager, Warwickshire County Council
- S6 Les Guest, National Joint Utilities Group
- S7 Councillor Andrew Carter, Leeds City Council
- S8 Professor Chris Rogers, Lead Academic on EPSRC funded MTU Project, Professor of Geotechnical Engineering, School of Civil Engineering

Start

S1 All of us have experienced the frustrations of road works and traffic delays. The University of Birmingham's School of Civil Engineering is immersed in a project that could have a positive impact on all of our lives: Mapping the Underworld. It hopes to change how street works are carried out and improve the management of assets under the ground. Every year around four million holes are dug in the United Kingdom, many unnecessarily. Finding the utilities in the right location, then determining what the problem is, can be a complex situation. It's busy down there and current technology is not 100% effective. Mapping the Underworld is aiming to provide a solution that benefits all parties. This 25 year long project has now reached an important stage. Nicole Metje and a team of specialists are looking to seek wider engagement from policy makers and the general public.

S2 The background to this whole thing is a project called Mapping the Underworld and that is looking at developing technology to locate and find buried pipes.

S1 Part of the solution includes the University of Birmingham's high tech multi-sensor location device.

S2 What we don't really have access to is these local councillors and politicians and so on so we employed Susan Juned who was a local councillor to do some research in the background but also to make these initial contacts and it all sort of culminated in a workshop event that was held at the Institution of Civil Engineers.

S1 This London venue is located in the heart of Westminster, accessible for politicians and an historic setting in which to try and spread the words that how we locate and manage utilities under the ground needs to change.

S2 Once we developed the technology, which is hopefully going to be – a sort of prototype will be ready by the end of next year, 2012, we will hopefully need the buy-in from the politicians so that we can roll it out, so that was the main aim.

S3 We as members of Parliament get enough complaints about the repercussions on the surface, you know, but what we all take for granted is the service that's delivered to our homes and to our businesses underground. So I don't think you'll see much resistance to this type of project because it's absolutely vital.

S4 Bringing stakeholders together can always be difficult so you need to establish a common purpose and once you've done that and everybody understands what they can gain from working together then it makes it easier. I see willingness here today to make things better and technology is one way to do that.

S5 I've been very pleased with the reaction that – from everybody. I think they've found some usefulness in what I was trying to get over in the cost to people's journeys. I hope that the people who can will make a difference in terms of mapping their assets, because unless they do then we're going to have more of what I was saying about the disruption, the delays and the disruption generally to people's lives.

S6 I really did want to get over today the impact of how the National Underground Assets Group has been working together to be able to exchange records in a far easier way than we currently do so that we can avoid damage to plants, that we can make it safer for our employees and safer for the general public and to reduce congestion across the UK. My aim is to lift that standard so that street works become the envy of the world.

S7 We know that under the ground is ever more complicated, as was easily demonstrated today. Explain to people why there are delays, don't just walk away and leave the job half done and expect people not to react. The whole project, Mapping the Underworld, the end product of that hopefully will be some new technology which all the utility companies and indeed local authorities can use to their mutual advantage. I must say I was absolutely fascinated with the details of the project that Birmingham University are leading and it could lead to something extremely valuable.

S8 I was here expecting to see a different group of stakeholders to those with whom I usually consult and what I wanted to do was first of all to raise awareness, secondly was to engender engagement so that when I now come to advance this work I'm going to have them on my side, quite willing to work with us to deliver the impact from this project. And did it do it? I would say it did. Absolutely brilliant.

S2 I think the event went very well. It was very well attended. We've now received a long report from Susan Juned who we employed to write this report as sort of outcomes. We've been contacted by one councillor who wants to talk further and we have an invite to the local Government Association conference in September this year and hopefully we'll get even more buy-in there and we think this is a sort of long term engagement. We're hoping that with this event we have started this negotiation, discussions, we've made the contacts and hopefully we can take it from here.

S1 Nicole has also commissioned a video that she hopes to use to great effect in letting more people know about mapping the underworld.

S2 The person on the street, what the whole project is about and who's affected by it and I think it's the who's affected by it is the real important element to it. The technical side we can solve but it's the who's affected, therefore who will pay at the end, who will benefit and what will be the wider impact and so hopefully this video will really make a step change.

S8 Well the presentation I think went down extremely well. It really caught the imagination of the people who don't know about Mapping the Underworld. There are lots of people who know about this project from a professional point of view but those who came from different spheres were really engaged and had their eyes opened.

S2 At least they know about us so I think that's important, we've put our name on the map and I think that's really what we've achieved through this.

End of recording

