

# Ofgem Customer Service Reward Scheme

## Wider Communications

### WPD's overall communication strategy is to:

- make our information clear and accessible
- make information relevant to different groups of customers, stakeholders and staff
- use a range of different communication channels from our website, leaflets, telephone and text, workshops, public meetings and the media
- improve communication by listening to our customers and stakeholders, and training our staff.

We have applied this strategy across a range of issues identified as important by our stakeholders including information about WPD, pricing methods, low carbon initiatives, flooding and metal theft.

### Customers

#### UPDATE Customer awareness

Research in 2010 told us that 60% of customers would like general information about WPD as awareness of WPD is very low. A key part of our strategy is to raise customer awareness of who we are and what we do, so that they know we are here to help:

- **Customer campaigns** – we are running a further TV and media campaign with an information leaflet sent to the home of

every customer encouraging them to get involved in our stakeholder engagement programme.

- **Stakeholder report** - we are publishing a second stakeholders' report focusing on KPI information that customers rank most highly.
- **Age UK** - we continue to work with Age UK and local media to promote awareness of WPD and our emergency telephone number to older customers.

**RESULT** We now have 182,000 on our PSR an increase of 17% during the year.

#### NEW Pricing workshops

We used the opportunity of the new national pricing methodology for large users to develop relationships with these stakeholders over a series of six well-attended workshops.

**RESULT** we informed larger customers about the changes to pricing methods, discussed possible solutions to problems identified and feed this in to the national consultations. We were also able to improve the provision of our own pricing information.

#### NEW Customer feedback

2010 saw a dramatic increase in interest in low carbon generation. This was the main focus of our customer feedback.

We used the following mechanisms to obtain customer feedback:

- A **telephone survey** of 1,000 customers who had contacted us for a range of services. This looked at how well we communicate with customers.
- **In-depth interviews** of 20 customers who had contacted us with a connection enquiry, to evaluate their needs, including how they want to communicate with us and what type of information they want.
- We received feedback from customers and developers via **our staff**.
- We carried out an **online survey** seeking feedback on our generation connections webpage. We also asked the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to review our generation connections website content.
- We worked with Regen South West on a **survey of 40 installers of renewable energy**. This elicited detailed feedback on our connections processes.

The research told us that:

- telephone contact is still very important to many customers, especially during a power cut or for connection enquiries
- we need to make our generation connections processes easier and quicker to use
- we need to improve our generation connection information.

**RESULT** Based on this feedback we took the following actions;

#### Training for Contact Centre staff

- **Small scale renewables** - we asked the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to train our Contact Centre staff to deal with enquiries from customers about small scale renewable generation.
- **Power cuts** - we continued developing our Contact Centre staff to be aware of the needs of older customers and those with special communication needs, especially during power cuts.

The performance of our Contact Centre is measured through Ofgem's satisfaction survey which is being extended across all our processes.

#### Making our processes more flexible

- **High volume installations** - we helped developers working with local Housing Associations to install a large volume of photovoltaic panels to find the most cost effective sites and volume of properties. This reduced the amount of paperwork needed, saving time and money.

#### Improving our low carbon information

- **Customer guide** - we asked the Centre for Sustainable Energy to produce a micro-generation guide for domestic customers.
- **Website** - we improved our generation connections webpages in response to specific feedback.



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### UPDATE Website improvements

We are continuously improving our website to meet the changing needs of users. In 2010 we redesigned it again to ensure the content is more relevant and easy for customers to access.

**RESULT** average monthly hits have increased fivefold from just over 10,000 to 50,000 hits a month.

### Stakeholders

We worked with stakeholders to improve communications in a number of areas.

### NEW Smart Metering

We have held bi-lateral meetings with an energy supplier to discuss their early roll-out of smart meters in our area. This work has resulted in many requests for emergency call-outs to replace our cut-out equipment.

We are working with the supplier and their meter operator to improve communication processes and working practices in order to avoid unnecessary call-outs and minimise the impact on customers.

**RESULT** This initiative will help to facilitate the roll-out of smart metering by suppliers. We are sharing lessons learnt with other industry participants through national working groups.

### NEW Severe Weather & Flooding

The risk of flooding emerged as a new challenge over the past 5 years. During our regulatory review stakeholders supported our request for £16m to improve our substation flood protection.

In support of this major investment programme communication with stakeholders and customers is vital.

We take an active part in Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) with stakeholders such as the Police, local authorities, the Environment Agency, emergency services and the NHS. In particular we seek feedback from these bodies on how well we communicate during emergencies and work with them to improve our processes.

- **Exercise Watermark** - We recognised the need to test our policies and procedures under real life scenarios and dealing with the community. In March 2011 we took part in the government's UK wide Exercise Watermark led by the Cabinet Office (see supporting information for details).

- **Flood monitoring** - we have worked with the Environment Agency to adapt their flood warning information to provide our Control Centre with online infrastructure flood warnings so that we can monitor flood threats to our equipment.

- We have shared this innovative system with the other DNOs through the Electricity Networks Association.

- **Customer information** - during flooding in Cornwall in 2010, WPD staff attended 3 public meetings in conjunction with other LRF members. WPD was asked to give advice to local residents about flooding and their electricity supply. As a result of the customer feedback from these meetings we looked at best practice from the Environment Agency and produced a plain English customer leaflet on flooding and electricity.

- **Resource sharing** - Improved relationships with LRF members meant we were also able to assist local hospitals during the severe snow with the loan of 4x4 vehicles to paramedics.

**RESULT** These initiatives have enabled us to test and improve our information and procedures, raise the profile of flooding in the company, provide training to senior managers, to learn from the experience and share best practice within the industry.

### NEW Metal Theft

During our regulatory review, stakeholders supported our request for additional funding to improve substation security.

As well as our own internal security initiatives, we work on a national level with the ENA, British Transport Police and the Home Office. Locally we worked with the Police to highlight the problem to the public through Crimestoppers and the local media and ask for assistance in detecting and reporting these crimes.

### RESULT

We provided detailed data to the local police on the number of recorded incidents. This helps them focus on this issue and allocate resources.

### NEW Major Works

We used a range of communication channels when planning a major scheme in the holiday area of Torbay recently. The 6 month scheme involved laying 6km of 33kV cable. This meant digging up the road across the busy town centre. We chose a contractor who had a 24 hour information line and agreed to provide their local manager's mobile phone number in our letters to customers.

We discussed the route with Torbay Council and tried to tie in with works planned by other utilities to reduce disruption. Then we worked with the local newspaper to run stories about the project and publicise the information line numbers.

Every local resident received a letter from us, and business properties got a personal visit from the contractor. Yellow warning signs were displayed in advance of each stage of the works to ensure that drivers who do not live locally were aware of the works.

### Staff

**UPDATE** Communication with our staff plays a key part in delivering our customer service strategy. Each year our Chief Executive and Directors visit our 2,500 staff at their offices and depots to give an update on our business goals and respond to questions and feedback.

We ask them how well we communicate with them each year in our staff survey which measures 12 communication KPIs. Although 95% of staff said that they understood about the company's culture and performance, nearly 30% said they didn't feel up-to-date about issues affecting the company.

**RESULT** We changed the format of our staff publication "Powerlines" in response to the survey to provide more updates on the business.

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### Supporting Information

How we make our information accessible		
Service	Ongoing	Updated for 2010-11
Improved Website Accessibility & format	√	√
Dual Language Website & material	√	
Corporate Member of the Campaign for Plain English	√	
Easyread leaflet prepared by Mencap aimed at those with reading difficulties and reviewed by RNIB	√	
Language Line for customers with little spoken English or Welsh	√	
Leaflets in Braille (including Welsh Braille) available on request	√	
RNID Louder Than Words Charter to ensure good communication	√	
Promoting information to customers through RNIB clubs	√	√
Deaf Interpreter Service & annual reminder to staff	√	
Disability awareness training for Contact Centre	√	
Age awareness programme developed with Age Cymru		√
Dedicated telephone number for PSR customers which bypasses messaging system	√	
Promoting energy efficiency grants & advice to vulnerable customers in conjunction with EAGA. Further mailing to Devon customers. EAGA grants now on hold by government.		√
SMS texting alerts on power outages -over 150,000 texts sent so far. Feedback from customers monitored and process improved.	√	√
Info@westernpower.co.uk general email address, moved to Contact Centre for faster response	√	√
Media training for senior managers & local team manager		√

### Working with Stakeholders to improve communications

#### Flooding – Exercise Watermark

One of the Pitt Review recommendations was to test the UK's flood response capability under conditions of tidal, river and flash flooding scenarios. WPD contributed exercises covering the coastal area of Devon & Cornwall and the rural area of Dyfed Powys. Each event lasted 24 hours and involved scenarios of flood damage to substations serving around 10,000 customers.

Two senior managers took part in Gold Command led by the local Police. This enabled WPD to test its "warn and inform" procedures with the media, other utilities including telecoms providers, government agencies and hospitals.



For effective flood response WPD has its own fire engine.



#### Metal Theft

Metal theft from our substations and power lines is another growing national problem due to the increase in metal prices. WPD has seen recorded incidents rise from 6 in 2005, to 195 in 2010. This causes danger to the public, disruption to customers caused by power cuts and ultimately higher bills to repair the damage caused.



Gary Boshier, South Wales Project Manager briefs police officers at a local scrapyard.

Mark Shaw, South Wales Networks Manager is interviewed by BBC news to raise public awareness.

