



2013-14 DISCRETIONARY REWARD



SUBMISSION PART 2

INTRODUCTION



PHIL JONES
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

We engaged in a huge amount of consultation to help prepare our business plan, which has been very well received, we feel we're in a good place in terms of understanding what our customers and wider stakeholders expect of us. Relationships have been formed and are growing stronger. They are enabling much more meaningful engagement that is benefiting both our stakeholders and our company as we continue to engage and develop innovative initiatives.

The clear message from all our stakeholder groups has been to keep costs down whilst making improvements in all areas. This is a message we take seriously and is something we have committed to in our 2015-2023 business plan; we are very aware of it in our day-to-day business ahead of that period. To help us to do that we are reinvesting last year's incentive reward, and more, allowing us to make an early start on some of the key improvements our stakeholders have told us they want.

Engaging stakeholders in developing our business plan really opened our eyes to the value of this in terms of stronger outcomes for our customers. Stakeholder engagement is increasingly becoming 'the way we do things around here', helping us to make better decisions and to communicate them more effectively. If our stakeholders like something, it makes sense and we can deliver it, then why wouldn't we? In that respect, engagement is also playing a key role in sense checking our plans meaning we hit the mark first time, more often.

What's been really positive for me and my senior team over the last year is that in speaking directly to our stakeholders about our plans we have been able to identify emerging issues and themes; allowing us to get on the front foot in developing solutions. The collaborations coming out of these discussions have increased the business's level of ownership of the outcome and I'm positive they'll make for much stronger performance and, crucially, stakeholder satisfaction.

Whilst it is great to see the quick, immediate changes we can make on the back of stakeholder feedback, some of these longer burn initiatives are the ones which I am excited to see come to the fore. These will make a significant difference for our business and our customers. Our partnership with Voluntary Organisations' Network North East (VONNE) which began with them simply helping us to reach our vulnerable customers is now proving essential in setting the agenda for our community energy offer.

Looking internally we're aware that we have set some challenging targets for the next 10 years. The only way we'll achieve these is through a strong, engaged and enthusiastic workforce and we know we have to constantly work towards that end.

The key areas of interest for our stakeholders are set out within the strategy and, as you would expect, a number of them are the focus for this submission. The priorities remain largely unchanged from the ones we set out last year and we are pursuing new national initiatives arising from our review of the winter storms that caused power cuts in many parts of the UK. As we continue our engagement around our social agenda it is clear that our stakeholders remain interested in our wider impact and involvement in the communities we serve and in the positive role we can play in the issues those communities are facing.

Our stakeholders are diverse and the initiatives we deliver as a result of their feedback are too varied and numerous to list here. In this submission we focus on initiatives which provide improvements and support for our vulnerable customers as well as focusing on customer service improvements for our domestic and business customers. We close by setting out how we are engaging our employees and how this is creating change for them as well as our customers and other stakeholders.

Looking back over the last year I am especially proud of our Trussell Trust Food Banks partnership and of the many improvements to how we notify our customers of power cuts. I'm looking forward to the coming year as some of our recent engagements also start to come to fruition.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P Jones'.

Phil Jones
Chief Executive

SUPPORTING OUR VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS – HELPING THOSE MOST IN NEED WHEN THEY NEED US MOST

Social responsibility is not new to us as a business but the extent of what we deliver and how has seen a huge ramp-up over the last year under a far more focussed and strategic plan, informed by expert stakeholder engagement.

ENGAGING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Over the last year we have engaged with some of our more vulnerable customers, the people that represent them and experts in this area to better understand and inform how we can support them.

This has included a telephone interview with 1,000 customers on our [Priority Services Register \(PSR\)](#)^{*}, regular engagement with experts through our social issues expert group and focus groups

with experts facilitated by voluntary sector organisation Involve Yorkshire & Humber (Involve) and market researchers Explain. We have participated in a number of meetings and events with other groups and key stakeholders including but not limited to Involve, VONNE, the debt charity Step Change, Citizens Advice Newcastle, Northern Gas Networks on fuel poverty and the Association of North East Councils Public Health leads.

YOU SAID...

- You have an important role to play in referring and signposting vulnerable customers to key partners for advice and support
- You need to better communicate and raise awareness of your [Priority Services Register \(PSR\)](#)
- When customers are at their most vulnerable they need personalised and tailored support
- There are a number of existing and trusted channels to reach your more vulnerable customers and those who are hardest to reach; these agencies have less and less practical resource and information available to them in order to communicate.
- Citizens Advice Bureau and contacts in public health told us that the resources available to them for communicating advice to individuals experiencing fuel poverty (including energy efficiency and debt advice) had decreased significantly

WE DID...

SUPPORTING OUR VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS £262,000 INVESTED

THE INITIATIVE	THE IMPACT	THE BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In January 2014 we refreshed and re-launched the PSR area of our website to incorporate online registration, and whilst we have our PSR customers' attention we also provide energy efficiency advice and sign post further support from key organisations offering advice on debt, energy efficiency and more, including Ofgem's recent switching information. • We recognise that some people may be temporarily vulnerable. For example, someone recently bereaved or returning home from hospital. To accommodate this a broader group of our customers can now sign up for the PSR and they can set an end date as a PSR customer, online or through completing a hard copy form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,800 page views on the refreshed site since January 2014 • Overall around 60,000 new customers have signed up to our PSR in 2013-14 compared to around 46,000 the previous year • According to a member of our online community, the new PSR pages are "neat and intuitive, well laid out and easy to follow" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced support and advice to our customers • Choice of ways to sign up to our PSR • Encouraging temporarily vulnerable customers to sign up, including new and expectant mothers or customers leaving hospital after an operation or illness etc. • Closing the loop through our online community and a focus group helped us to refine the design and we received feedback that our information is easy to understand and access

* www.northernpowergrid.com/powercuts/priority

** <https://northern-powergrid.explainonline.co.uk/>

THE INITIATIVE	THE IMPACT	THE BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We worked with the other utilities in our region, through Infrastructure North to provide a toolkit for communicators to deliver joint messages on safety, efficiency, vulnerability and the support available to our shared customers. We all currently share this information as individual organisations but this multi-utility approach makes sense in terms of efficient use of resources and more importantly it delivers coherent messaging to our more vulnerable customers through trusted partner channels e.g. a poster and leaflet in a doctor's surgery or more information available through Citizens Advice Bureau. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential reach of campaign/portal to over 25,000 individuals and organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater reach of our services to our most vulnerable customers through trusted referral networks Raising awareness of key issues like fuel poverty and advice and support for those experiencing it Efficient use of resources Joint utilities messaging for our vulnerable customers and other stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on our work with National Energy Action (NEA) in 2012-13 to provide energy efficiency and signposting advice through the 'Switched On' booklet, we have moved a significant step forward in collaborating with other organisations to improve the advice we offer and the people we reach. We have an agreement in place with Involve and VONNE, the umbrella organisations for the voluntary, community and charity sector in our regions, to regularly communicate out to their members and the people they represent about our PSR and wider support for vulnerable customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated reach to 21,000 experts through VONNE and Involve and much wider through their own networks. <p>"VONNE is proud to be working in partnership with Northern Powergrid in reaching the more vulnerable communities the company serves." VONNE website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness of PSR with key agencies Increased sign up of harder to reach customers to our PSR Raising awareness of key issues like fuel poverty and advice and support for those experiencing it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding three additional high specification customer support vehicles to our fleet we now have five vans to deploy; supporting our customers and local communities when they need us most. Offering warm drinks, food, somewhere to microwave babies' bottles, keep warm, watch television and get Wi-Fi, charge phones and be reassured that we are working as quickly as possible to get the power back on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between April 2013 and February 2014, we have reached over 6,000 customers. A further 476 vulnerable customers received additional support from the British Red Cross 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct support targeted and tailored when and locally where it is most needed Increased customer satisfaction Vulnerable customers reassured directly and personally Employees engaging directly with communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through Involve and VONNE, we have piloted a mapping exercise; collating community contact information in rural and urban areas to test how it can inform support for vulnerable customers. We had very supportive feedback from these communities and are now testing how we can use this information to target support during power cuts before scaling up the mapping to company wide use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through piloting in two rural and two urban areas we now have contacts for 73 grass roots community contacts who can help us to reach many more vulnerable customers with a more tailored service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness of PSR with key agencies Tailored grass roots support for our vulnerable customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013-14 we appointed a dedicated customer experience training manager: All contact centre staff have received training to support them in delivering an experience which feels personalised to our customers, specifically with regard to identifying customers who may benefit from being added to our PSR. In addition, we have provided specialist training on recognising and supporting hard of hearing and other vulnerable customers through NEA and Action on Hearing Loss. This training is incorporated into contact centre induction and the improved call overflow training for over 100 staff providing additional personalised support when it's needed. Training materials and signposting literature are prominent within the contact centre and our call quality form has also been enhanced, with advisors 'measured' on how they identify customers who may benefit from additional support, receiving feedback and where required additional coaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 100 front line staff trained to recognise and offer support for vulnerable customers Following the training, the number of vulnerable customers identified during calls has doubled NEA provided training to our contact centre, customer care and overflow staff to help identify customers who may be vulnerable and feel they may benefit from additional support, sensitively drawing out information Action on Hearing Loss provided training to 30 contact centre staff to support them in conversations with our customers who have hearing difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced and improved support and service for our vulnerable customers Our staff feel confident that they are providing excellent service to our vulnerable customers Our staff have greater understanding and can be more proactive in offering support to vulnerable customers

IN THE PIPELINE...

Our social issues expert group and an external consultant who previously headed up engagement for Warm Front have been helping us to develop our Indicator for Care Quality to be rolled by April 2015. This is helping us to develop referral mapping, identifying key stakeholders for social collaboration so we have many more projects planned for the coming year. This includes a pilot fuel poverty advisor post with CAB North East, our PSR data cleanse with energy suppliers and other key partners, and further development of our social collaboration through Infrastructure North.

"I would like to pass my thanks on to one of your call centre guys Michael Handsford he helped my mum when she had a power cut last week. She lives alone and is 83 and I'm told he was very kind and compassionate and made sure she was okay and explained what he was doing in a very easy to understand way. It's a rare thing in this day and age to have such care for the older generation I would like to also thank the electricians who fixed her power cut. I'm proud of the job your company does thank you god bless you."

**SYLVIA BURNAM,
CUSTOMER, JANUARY 2014**

COMMUNITY IMPACT – SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH WE LIVE AND WORK

As a vital part of the regional infrastructure and with over 2,500 employees living and working in the region we serve, we know that we have the potential to make a positive impact on those communities – and our stakeholders agree.

ENGAGING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Through much of our engagement over the past year, a key theme that keeps arising is the key role we have to play in supporting the communities we live and work in; some of these are directly linked to our core business of managing the power network while others go further into areas like employability, local groups and activities. This message

has come through a range of different engagement channels, including a survey of over 1,200 customers and wider stakeholders, our stakeholder panel, a session with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire, participation in national groups like the off-gas grid working group and feedback from our staff.

YOU SAID...

- Community energy is an emerging issue and one which Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) have a role in enabling and encouraging
- You should do more and communicate more about your work in local communities
- You should work more closely with other key partners, like the voluntary sector and local authorities, to deliver more coherent support for vulnerable customers
- You have a role as a major employer in the region to not only inspire and support young people into your organisation and sector but to support them in developing general employability and life skills

WE DID...

COMMUNITY IMPACT £241,000 INVESTED

THE INITIATIVE	THE IMPACT	THE BENEFITS
<p>We partnered with Involve, VONNE and Community Foundations in the North East to better understand community energy activity, barriers and the potential role for DNOs. This culminated in two public events to share learning and take the first step in forming community energy networks for the North East and Yorkshire.</p> <p>Through our online community and a commitment to running these events annually, we are continuing to share and facilitate learning between these interested parties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 170 people from communities, local businesses, charity and voluntary sector, DECC, Ofgem and ourselves interested in community energy, networked and receiving support from each other • 99% satisfaction with the events • Both events oversubscribed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks of interested parties brought together to share learning • Encouraging the development and support for Community Energy projects • Influencing policy and decision makers

“On behalf of the Knottingley Food bank may I thank you for the kind donation. We were fortunate to be chosen from the Northern region to receive the money. This boost to our bank balance is tremendous to say the least. We are a new food bank who is opening its doors for the first time on the 15th of this month. This will be a great day for us and the culmination of a great deal of hard work and organisation.”

JANET BURNS,
PROJECT LEADER, KNOTTINGLEY FOOD BANK

- *Thanks! Very worthwhile day, made all the better for the range of delegates and the wealth of experience and views they brought*
- *Excited about new potential role and involvement of DNOs*
- *Useful network links created. Lots of contacts made. Interesting – demonstrated there are still lots of issues to be addressed linking agencies and community initiatives*
- *Excellent opportunity to network, share thoughts and ideas and have hope for the future. Well done NPg and VONNE for pulling this together*

DELEGATE FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY ENERGY EVENTS

* <https://northern-powergrid.explainonline.co.uk/>

<p>We are rolling out our new Community Energy Investment Fund set up to support a number of projects in local communities to address their own energy issues; encouraging efficiency and sustainable communities. This seed fund aims to help communities get organised in the early days of projects, which is crucial, and will also allow us to identify and support schemes at inception rather than become a barrier at the end.</p> <p>Alongside the fund we are collaborating with key contacts and existing partners from these events to look at a viable model for community energy networks and support, our aim is to develop a scalable and enduring model across our service area and beyond in which DECC have shown a keen interest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £50,000 available to seed fund projects in our area • 7 households are potentially being connected to the electricity grid in stage one of the Northumberland project • Additional 6 houses potentially benefit from stage 2. The average UK electricity bill in 2013 was £577 while these residents currently pay up to £1,500 a year for heating oil alone • Residents in Newcastle could benefit from affordable, sustainable energy solutions • A similar large scale community project at Wynford Estate with Cube Housing saw a reduction of 50% or more in tenants heating bills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model of support available for future projects • Cost effective energy solution developed for urban and rural customers • Increased number of customers connected • Reduction in customer connection cost for community versus individual connections • Communities supported to find efficient/cost effective solutions that work for them • Learning around low carbon/cost effective solutions being shared
<p>We continue to work with key partners on finding affordable and sustainable energy solutions in both rural and urban settings. In Northumberland we are helping communities connect to the electrical grid and in Newcastle we are working with the council and Northern Gas Networks to find innovative energy solutions for tower blocks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the food banks in our region to reach over 43,500 vulnerable people with immediate support and longer term advice • In 2013 donations to food banks in our region included funds to help establishment of a new food bank in Knottingley, West Yorkshire • To date £15,000 has been granted to 6 food banks to fund public transport to allow clients to carry food home, fund new distribution points to get food closer to clients including one mobile centre and provide benefits and housing advice in foodbank centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging our employees in issues that matter to them in their communities • Benefits to the individuals our charities support • Increase reach to fuel/food poor – advice and support • Increased support (food) to fuel poor in our region • Supporting sustainable communities
<p>Closely aligned to addressing fuel poverty our key charity partner in 2013-14 is the Trussell Trust, the umbrella organisation for food banks in the UK. We have established a fund of £30,000 a year to increase the reach of the 28 food banks in our region. In 2013 these food banks helped 43,500 people, including almost 15,000 children. The grants are available to food banks for equipment and resources like new vans or to start up new food banks enabling them to support those people out in communities facing the distressing choice of 'heat or eat'.</p> <p>This is not just about cash donations, our partnership with the Trussell Trust also involves food bins for staff donations at each of our offices which our volunteers take to the local food banks regularly and is closely linked to our employee volunteering project, being rolled out in June this year. The Trussell Trust spoke at our management conference and the video has been shared and warmly received by our staff. We are in discussions around how we can better train their volunteers and share information about energy efficiency and debt relief advice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £25,000 invested in over 15 local community projects supporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged communities • Youth groups • Community energy • Environmental improvements • And more... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging our employees in issues that matter to them • Benefits to the individuals our charities support • Supporting sustainable communities.
<p>For over twenty years we have supported local community projects through grants made through the Community Foundations working in our region. In 2013-14 this saw £25,000 delivered to over 15 projects including installing solar panels for community buildings, repairing a heat pump for a community association building, providing electric heaters for a village hall, an outdoor activity programme for young people and facilitator training for community groups working with young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23,000 school children reached with key safety and career opportunity messages: <p>“Thank you Northern Powergrid for giving me electric and making me like Maths.”</p> <p>Primary school student, Barnsley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging our employees in issues that matter to them in their communities • Increased confidence of children in applying for jobs • Improved quality of applications to our roles • Improved awareness of available career opportunities

IN THE PIPELINE...

2014-15 will be an exciting year as we begin to see the results of the initiatives we have been busy developing this year like the Trussell Trust and Ahead Partnership. It will also be the year of community energy as we continue to develop this agenda and when we hope to see the positive impacts of the networking, funding and wider support we have put in place. Systematically measuring the impact of these initiatives is also high on our agenda.

CUSTOMER SERVICE – PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND ACCESSIBLE

Our customers want to experience a high level of customer service and satisfaction, delivered quickly, reliably, professionally and through the channel they prefer. Our satisfaction scores showed our best performance yet in March and April 2014 but we know we have much more to do to deliver the excellent and consistent service we are aiming for.

ENGAGING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

The key themes identified through our business plan consultation continue to be supported through our ongoing engagement on customer service and satisfaction. Our customer experience expert group really challenged us to develop and clarify our long-term plan and is now working with us to turn this into actions that start making

a difference for our customers. Engagement with our staff through our Customer Relationship Management roadshows have resulted in a number of ideas and initiatives and independent online interviews with over 200 customers are helping to inform how our customers want to engage with us and experience our service.

YOU SAID...

- Improve customer and other key stakeholder access to information and communication during storms
- Raise awareness of who you are and what you do
- Provide timely information and communication for planned power cuts
- We want multiple channels of communication; being able to communicate with you when we want and how we want

These initiatives and the associated costs are additional to those needed to meet our DPCR5 output commitments. They have therefore not been pre-funded through the price control.

CUSTOMER SERVICE £406,850 INVESTED

THE INITIATIVE	THE IMPACT	THE BENEFITS
<p>We're investing in our Customer Relationship Management programme which aims to make it easier to do business with us through cutting down on duplicate contacts, improving internal communications and creating a system which allows us to see all interactions a customer has had with us in one place.</p> <p>This programme sees us investing significantly in new systems but to make the real difference we are also improving our people, processes and technology to support what we think will be a step-change in how we serve our customers.</p>	<p>Nine Roadshows with over 261 staff, leading to some immediate initiatives and improvements like equipping our customer support vehicles with a detachable electronic display screen, an automated survey which customers could complete at the end of their call with us and using short videos during faults on the network to explain what is happening to customers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved services and satisfaction for our customers • Our advisors appreciate the support and want to know how they are able to support our customers better • Creating a culture of putting the customer at the heart of what we do
<p>Our quality assurance team is now at full strength, set up to work with the business to ensure that we are delivering and measuring the quality of our customer service alongside traditional measures of activity, volume or speed.</p>	<p>Initial quality scores sat at 69% and increased to 75% on the back of monitoring and feedback. In March 2014 call quality monitoring had improved to 80% and feedback from our employees has been positive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our advisors appreciate the support and want to know how they are able to support our customers better • Customers experience a service that is more personal to their local situation
<p>One of our major steps forward has been in how we communicate and raise awareness of who we are and what we do through enhanced communications. Through <i>Your powergrid</i>[*], which we talk about in more detail in our part 1 submission, we have become much more proactive, open and transparent in the ways we communicate and engage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,000 stakeholders receive regular updates through our e-bulletin • 2,200 page views of our stakeholder annual report^{***} • 10,000 visitors to our business plan website^{**} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better informed customers and stakeholders • Better informed plans that meet customer and other stakeholders needs • Accountable to our customers and stakeholders for delivery

* www.northernpowergrid.com/yourpowergrid/

** www.yourpowergridplan.com

*** report14.yourpowergrid.co.uk

<p>Although Northern Powergrid was less affected by the Christmas storms, we managed two storm related major incidents during the winter. We assisted DECC with their review identifying opportunities to improve customer contact information; volunteering to lead a national action on behalf of the industry to improve service. The delivery of the customer contact data refresh is subject to review and agreement under industry governance arrangements that are in progress.</p> <p>Northern Powergrid also volunteered to lead the procurement and technology sub-groups within the national project pursuing the establishment of a single national three-digit enquiry number for power cut customer calls.</p>	<p>The initiative provides a full refresh of contact details for all customer premises from energy suppliers to network operators. Expected to include landline and mobile contact numbers and e-mail – key data that DNOs have not historically had routine access to.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Operators will have access to better customer contact details, allowing proactive contact with those who are disrupted to provide accurate information before winter 2014. • An enduring change to nightly data flow information from energy suppliers to DNOs will maintain the data beyond the initial refresh.
<p>We have been using our social media channels extensively before, during and following power cuts** to keep customers informed. Increasingly we have been using partners' channels to reach our more vulnerable customers. Our social media strategy has been developed to differentiate corporate and operational service messages and to make it easier to engage our stakeholders whilst ensuring we have a consistent and appropriate approach to how we use other organisations' social media channels to reach our customers and other stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,240 followers on Twitter. • 606 likes on Facebook <p>Involve Mar 28, 10:25am It's #FuelPovertyAwarenessDay today. Could community energy schemes be part of soln. to fuel poverty? bit.ly/1gKFHvK@Northpowergrid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and access to information, services and support • Increased communication channels for customers and stakeholders • Reaching out to hard-to-reach customers through existing channels • Coherent approach and messaging for our customers
<p>Our work with telephone directory operators, increased online visibility, our programme of local events and meetings, continue to raise awareness of who we are, what we do and how to contact us. We are aware that there is more that we can do and we are currently researching to inform our 2014-15 campaign; we need to ensure that we invest in the right channels to raise awareness whilst being ever aware that customers want us to keep our costs down.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We advertise in various directories with a reach of over 6.5 million individuals • Our continual web optimisation ensures that we are always high on the various search engines for our services, based on the latest customer searches 	
<p>We launched a Communications Toolkit in 2013 providing gold, silver and bronze packages based on the level of impact our local investment scheme will have. We have developed a planned power cut system, where our managers review and approve outages and related communications before they are sent to customers.</p> <p>Our customer letters have been reviewed through our online community* and our customer experience expert group. We have introduced QR codes to our planned power cut letters allowing customers to simply scan the code and automatically create a calendar entry to remind them of when our work is taking place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine schemes have been trialled to date and used to contact approximately 8,000 directly impacted customers with improved communication and information • One member of the online community said about the redesigned letters: "To me it looks much neater and clearer. I'd say you've hit the nail on the head. 10/10." Another member commented: "Seems quite efficient, well done!" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced impact of planned works • Ease of communicating with us • Improved quality and consistency of information to our customers • More detailed information available for our contact centre staff • Ease of remembering/recording planned power cut information for customers
<p>The power cuts** pages on our website are one of the highest volume areas. We recognise that investing in making this easy to use is a priority for our customers and we have made a number of improvements. For example, the search box has now been split into two parts to emphasise that customers can search on partial postcodes. If a customer starts typing in a postcode that is out of area a message pops up linking them to the distribution map of the UK, saving them from undertaking an unnecessary search.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 160,000 customers using the online power cut checker over the last year • Since redesigning our power cuts web pages in June 2013 we have had over 377,000 page views • For the year-to-date 55% of power cut checking is done online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased choice of communications channels for our customers • Quick and easily accessible information available to customers • Time savings for our customers in re-directing them to the correct DNO for information
<p>We launched "Report a problem" as a new function on our website. This enables customers and other stakeholders to use a smart-device to upload photographs, provide GPS co-ordinates and place a pin on a google map to 'report a problem'. If a customer selects a dangerous issue such as 'substation door open', a notification is given to call us immediately. Our customers can choose to be kept updated on the problem through SMS, email or telephone call.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have soft launched the function to ensure we work through any technical issues before promoting more widely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased choice of communications channels for our customers • Quick and easily accessible information available to customers • Issue location identified quickly and information received more specific as we can see the issue

IN THE PIPELINE...

We have some exciting technology projects underway behind the scenes to help us provide the information our customers need quickly and reliably. We are continuing to invest in our online services, extending our power cut checker to allow customers to log incidents via the website and smart-phone and making our website fully 'adaptive' to the hardware our customers are using. Engaging our people and changing our culture to put our customers at the heart of what we do remain a focus for us moving forward.

* <https://northern-powergrid.explainonline.co.uk/>

** www.northernpowergrid.com/powercuts

BUSINESS TO BUSINESS – MORE INFORMATION AND A PERSONALISED SERVICE

Our business customers support the feedback from our domestic customers in terms of using technology to improve services and providing a professional service at all times, yet they also have other needs and expectations. The complexity of the work we deliver to them, and the impact our work can have on them, needs to be better recognised and we are adapting our services in order to respond.

ENGAGING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

We engage with our business customers through a range of channels, many specific and tailored to the working relationship we need to have with their organisations. We have already mentioned the regular connections workshops and surgeries which we have been running for a number of years for our connections customers and independent connections providers. We have strong operational engagement with the local authorities in our area and since early 2013 we have been

engaging at a more strategic level through Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) and the Association of North East Councils (ANEC). We run regular briefing sessions with energy suppliers to discuss the outlook for network changes charging and have attended the small energy suppliers forum. In addition, for many of these organisations we offer and have had face to face individual meetings during 2013-14.

YOU SAID...

- The earlier you can share your investment plans the better
- We need a more personalised service
- Understanding quickly when unplanned power cuts happen in our area would be really helpful
- Use technology to improve and extend online services
- Your charging methodologies can be difficult to understand and keep up with

WE DID...

BUSINESS TO BUSINESS £118,450 INVESTED

THE INITIATIVE	THE IMPACT	THE BENEFITS
<p>For the first time in January 2014 we published our headline investment plans online, making them available to everyone interested through an interactive map*. The plans show headline information on our plans for the next two years. We will be publishing our 10-year plans in this format in July 2014.</p> <p>Through periodic meetings with key contacts in local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships to share investment and infrastructure plans; we are keeping apprised of each other's plans to aid strategic alignment and support growth in our regions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 430 people accessed our investment plans online since we launched in January 2014 • Members of the online community gave positive feedback when comments were sought on the map: "Really impressive! I also had no idea that this type of information was available." Another said: "Very interesting and useful" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater transparency of plans • Increased channels of communication • Better informed customers and management and coordination of infrastructure investment plans in our regions

* www.northernpowergrid.com/yourpowergrid/investmentsinyourarea/

<p>Local authorities were particularly keen to understand when the power in their locality is affected. We have been working with Leeds City Council to pilot a system where they receive a text message should a power cut meet certain criteria. The successful pilot ran for six months and was extended until the automated trial was launched.</p> <p>15 notifications have been issued to the council, reaching their 3,000 twitter followers with a typical potential for it to be retweeted to a further 50,000 people. Following a successful pilot, all 34 local authorities in our area will be able to access this automated service from the summer of 2014.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One local authority currently benefitting from receiving notifications • Through Leeds alone 3,000 stakeholders have been receiving tailored communications for each of the 15 power cuts • Following successful pilot all 34 local authorities in our area will be able to access this service from summer 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local information is quickly distributed via media outlets and LAs' own followers • The ability to add local input to NPg's own messaging has enabled the public to get a more tailored local perspective • Promotion of the NPg website and contact number helps increase NPg customer engagement • Greater confidence by LAs of having awareness of disruptive events in the area and ability to then mobilise more readily if the event is prolonged
<p>We have made enhancements to a number of our online connections services* as a result of stakeholder feedback including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplifying our 'G59' solar panel installation form • Improving the accessibility of information on the connections landing page • Designing new reports for connections customers • The ability to upload site plans and other attachments to online connections applications and enhanced the drawing tool on connections applications • We refreshed our connections FAQs in March this year; to make it easier for our customers to understand and process <p>In 2011 we launched the safety shrouding online service, which allows customers to manage their shrouding requests from inception to completion. In 2013 we upgraded the online service and added shrouding to the 'my account' area of the website allowing our customers to see all of their jobs in one place whether it be a connection, a meter move or a shrouding job.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since we made enhancements to our online connections services in August 2013 the pages have been viewed over 44,000 times • Since August 2013 the attachment upload and drawing tools have helped 3,374 customers with their applications • The connections FAQ page has been viewed over 2,000 times • 1,400 customers have signed up for our new Shrouding my account service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quicker, faster services • Improved choice of service channels
<p>In March we hosted a joint webinar on DUoS charges with Npower. We communicated who we are; our impact on energy bills; the rules we have to operate within as an electricity distributor; background to charging methodologies; tariff structures and what customers can do to influence their bill.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 175 delegates signed up to hear about charging. Those who dialled in included; customers, energy suppliers, energy consultants and Ofgem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex DNO charging policies explained clearly to interested Npower customers



"@LeedsEmergency is a recognised account in the city and as such most local information is quickly distributed via media outlets and our own followers. The ability to add local input to NPg's own messaging has enabled the public to get a more tailored local perspective.

Greater confidence by LCC of having awareness of disruptive events in the city and ability to then mobilise more readily if the event is prolonged. Reputational impact of being able to inform the public of incidents and evidence joint working of the local authority alongside Northern Powergrid. This has been a positive both internally with the Chief Executive and senior levels as well as services confident that we can inform them if an issue warrants further action. In the past we often did not know which meant we were on the back foot with providing good quality information to services and/or stakeholders such as Councillors/MPs."

**ROGER CARTER,
PRINCIPAL EMERGENCY PLANNING OFFICER, LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**

IN THE PIPELINE...

Personalised account management will be a key development for our local authority and major connections customers in 2014-15. As we continue to engage more strategically with this key

stakeholder group we think there will be a range of new developments and improvements that emerge over the coming months and years.

* www.northernpowergrid.com/page/getconnected.cfm

ENGAGING OUR EMPLOYEES – DELIVERING IMPROVEMENTS FOR OUR STAFF AND OUR CUSTOMERS

Our newly developed employee engagement framework provides a real opportunity for our employees to work together effectively in achieving our organisation goals and delivering improvements for our customers.

With a workforce of around 2,500 employees made up of many trades, professions and specialisms spread over a large geographical area we have faced several challenges in the past in engaging with our employees.

We have demonstrated the importance of engagement with employees and their representatives over the last year through:

- Developing more accessible employee communications, including:
 - Many of our field-based staff now have tough books or smart phones and we have developed our media rich intranet *the grid* to be mobile for this purpose. Customer service and other stakeholder engagement are incorporated into the training packages for use of this equipment. Almost 60,000 page views have been counted via mobile access since the launch in May 2013.
 - There were over 3.3 million page views by office staff on *the grid* in 2013-14.
 - Our regular Chief Executive briefings have been reviewed and refined to focus on key or developing issues identified within the business; these include conference calls open to all staff.
 - We engaged 250 employees through 28 independently run focus groups to ensure we encouraged open and honest feedback in developing our business plan
 - We continue to meet regularly with trade union colleagues to identify and develop solutions to emerging employee issues. This engagement led to endorsement of our business plan by Prospect, one of our key trade unions.
 - As referenced throughout this submission we continually engage staff in training around service for vulnerable and wider customers as well as wider developments like CRM and other new technologies and developments.
- In 2013, 110 senior managers conducted 363 safety engagement site visits and in 2014 so far 60 managers have visited 94 field sites to talk directly to our staff about their work and their experiences in

Northern Powergrid. These visits were primarily to promote safe working but increasingly this is proving to be an excellent way to talk about broader issues. Management and the staff are both feeding back that this opportunity to talk directly and understand different areas of the business is invaluable. Over 500 improvements have been identified on the back of these visits, some relatively minor and others where changes could be considered to deliver companywide improvements including the planning of work, changes to procedures and equipment improvements.

- Our staff are proud to live and work in the communities we serve and our Global Days of Service programme supports and celebrates the voluntary contributions our employees make to non-profit organisations in their local communities. The programme has been running for a number of years and in 2013-14, we match-funded 11,022 hours of voluntary activity for £40,000 across 49 community organisations ranging from local guides and sports clubs to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.
- To complement our current volunteering programme, we have committed to granting a day per year for our staff to participate in the programme; this links closely to our community strategy and key partnerships mentioned earlier in this submission like the Trussell Trust and 'Make the Grade in Energy'. Following extensive development and piloting over the last six months the programmes will formally be launched in June 2014.

In 2013-14 we invested almost £100,000 in engaging our employees and established a new role within our Organisation Development team with a strong focus on employee engagement; pulling together the many strands of employee engagement activity which are currently taking place to create 'one view' as well as develop our future approach to employee engagement through the employee engagement framework. Implementation began in earnest in March 2014 through 7 employee focus groups with 44 employees. We have already begun to make changes as a result of these groups and they have informed our new employee survey which is being conducted throughout July 2014.

IN THE PIPELINE...

We look forward in 2014-15 to rolling out our new framework which will allow employees to comment, influence and be involved in decision making, organisational changes and continuous improvements in our operational delivery as well as help them

understand organisation challenges and achievements. It will also help us understand our employees better; what drives and motivates them and what we can do to ensure they are happy, healthy and productive at work.

