

# PART TWO

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVE SUBMISSION

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**The locational workshop  
is a useful forum.**

**Very well facilitated and a really good  
range of subjects covered.**

**Open forum – everybody was invited to  
participate.**

**This is the first Wales & West Utilities  
event I've attended so wasn't sure what  
would be included – happy with the  
agenda and presentations.**

**Really interesting presentations and  
topics.**

**Good broad range of subjects with  
something of interest to all.**

**Every comment and person was valued.**



## INTRODUCTION

### A productive year yields positive results

Wales & West Utilities had a productive year of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. It's brought mutual benefit and helped us to enhance the services we provide.

We are a people business and in one way or another we all have a role to play in engagement with others. We run locational workshops and colleague roadshows regularly to stress that engagement is important and relevant to everyone in our company.

We have a dedicated team of stakeholder professionals, and in the last year we made a number of organisational changes to give them greater resources and support.

Effective engagement gives us information to help shape our business plans. We actively listen; we create new opportunities for two-way communication, such as the locational workshops we hosted at key areas in our network – introduced in 2016/17 following feedback from our Critical Friends Panel. Our locational workshops feature round table discussions and presentations on various aspects of what we do, with opportunities for



our stakeholders to vote on our priorities in order to give quantitative outcomes which genuinely shape our investment priorities.

Our revitalised engagement strategy is already delivering great results – 212 outputs and benefits in 2016/17 for a total investment of more than £1.2 million at a cost of 17p for each of the 7.5m customers we serve across Wales and south west England. A full overview of our outputs and benefits can be found at the end of this report.

Stakeholders trust us and know that their input is listened

to and acted upon. Our locational workshop presentations have the theme: “You said, we did”.

Our commitment is that in the years ahead we will build on our successes to deliver the ever-improving standards of services our customers and stakeholders deserve.

**Graham Edwards**  
Chief Executive

## TAKING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

We are a values-driven business and people are at the heart of everything we do. We adopted an ‘inside out’ strategy, recruiting for and rewarding behaviours that exemplify our values in action – embedding a culture that puts people first. Listening to and integrating the views and feedback from both our internal and external stakeholders into our business strategy and operations has helped us develop a stakeholder-centric culture.

We focus our engagement on a wide range of stakeholders, driven by our directors but ‘owned’ and delivered by colleagues throughout our business. Stakeholders’ feedback is carefully considered, and our subsequent proposals are further subject to stakeholder scrutiny and refinement, maintaining communication throughout. This forms our virtuous circle of engagement.

We regularly review our extensive stakeholder database and work with partners, such as Care & Repair – an organisation that supports older people, to identify and access harder to reach stakeholders. We monitor and measure the results of our engagement, and independent engagement specialists review our engagement reporting.

Our engagement considers our different stakeholder groups, with differing levels of knowledge and interest in our business, tailoring engagement channels and content to the relevant stakeholder group.

We’ve strengthened our stakeholder engagement activity, increased the resources of our stakeholder team and moved it into our People & Engagement directorate, consolidating our communications activities. This has enhanced our management of engagement activity, benefiting our business as well as improving our engagement capability for stakeholders.

Stakeholder feedback is considered and proposals for business improvements as a result are taken by the

relevant director to our monthly Business Operating Committee to be discussed and agreed by our leadership team, led by our chief executive.

Our stakeholder engagement focuses on seeking feedback on our key business activity areas; to make sure our stakeholders influence and help improve our business planning in these key areas of importance. They are:

- Helping customers in vulnerable situations
- Customer service
- Emergency response
- Colleagues
- Sustainable future
- Innovation
- Government and parliament

Following the ranking of our priority areas by stakeholders at our locational workshops, we have focused on the activities rated most highly by our stakeholders (see right).

### STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIES

Rated out of five

CO poisoning prevention and awareness	3.88
Lower carbon future	3.74
Theft of gas	3.73
Supporting the fuel poor	3.72
Meeting future demand	3.71
Major incident planning	3.71
Vulnerable customer support	3.65
Innovation	3.60
Protecting the environment	3.41
Smart metering	3.31

We will continue to do this annually to track changes in stakeholders’ priorities.

**Our revitalised engagement strategy is already delivering great results – 212 outputs and benefits in 2016/17 for a total investment of more than £1.2 million at a cost of 17p for each of the 7.5m customers we serve across Wales and south west England**

**Gold award status**  
for the fourth year in row – only gas network to ever achieve this



**British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision (BS18477)**  
First gas network to ever achieve this

**bsi.**

# HELPING CUSTOMERS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

**Making sure our customers stay safe and warm is very important to us. And we want to do all we can for those customers who are in the most vulnerable situations in our society.**

## OUR STAKEHOLDERS HAVE TOLD US TO:

- Focus on those who need most help
- Make information easily accessible
- Build relationships with partners to help promote our services, and
- Achieve a British Standard for the quality of our work

## AS A RESULT OF ENGAGEMENT, WE HAVE ACHIEVED 44 OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS FOR AN INVESTMENT OF £396,784.94, INCLUDING:

- The revision of our carbon monoxide (CO) strategy, to focus on those most at risk
- A new online initiative, for wider awareness of CO safety
- Gaining BS 18477 – British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision, and
- Initiating a multi-utility conference on vulnerability

## Carbon monoxide

### Revised CO strategy

Our stakeholders support raising awareness of CO safety, particularly among people who are most vulnerable to CO. We've therefore revised our CO strategy to focus on:

- People under 14 and over 65
- Customers who are in a vulnerable situation, for various reasons
- People living in 'CO hot spots' – areas with a proportionally higher than average number of CO-related emergency call outs

We need our safety messages and free CO alarms to reach the groups we focus on in our revised CO strategy, but as we don't hold customer data this can be challenging.

Our stakeholders recognised this and the theme of more and better partnership working was something that came across when we asked them to comment on our proposed approach in this area.

Since the start of 2016/17 we've created new partnerships with four more Fire & Rescue Services (FRS) in our network, taking our total to six out of seven.

During their Home Safety Visits the FRS encounter people in vulnerable situations and can provide them with our CO and gas safety-related information and CO alarms. They give us monthly updates to monitor progress against targets.

We've looked at other ways of identifying customers in vulnerable situations. These include targeting people who receive a 'Free of Charge meter alteration' – customers in a vulnerable situation who can no longer access their gas meter with ease, and those we sign up to the Priority Service Register – both these groups now receive a free CO alarm.

In 2016/17 we gave away 5,496 CO alarms, slightly more than in 2015/16 (5,262), with greater emphasis on targeting those most at risk of CO poisoning. Of those who completed our CO feedback form, 40% said their awareness of CO had increased. This was the highest increase for all the gas networks.

### Public events

In 2016 we attended the annual Royal Welsh and Royal Bath & West Shows. While we gave away 2,456 CO alarms, in future we want to refocus our distribution of alarms to target audiences that are more aligned with our CO strategy. Taking into account feedback from our Critical Friends Panel we decided that our presence at future shows will be scaled down and in partnership with the relevant local Fire & Rescue Service.

By partnering with emergency services, who are well-known and trusted by the general public and, importantly, those people in our target demographics, our messages will have more impact. Throughout 2017/18, we're going to be looking at further opportunities to work in partnership together.

We've trialled a new targeted approach to public events by visiting a shopping centre in a 'CO hot spot' postcode area in Bridgend. We gave more than 400 alarms to local people, with 34% of recipients living in the hotspot postcode area. This was a low-cost event with a successful outcome.

Stakeholders at our locational workshops, our Critical Friends Panel & Vulnerable Customers Forum have endorsed this cost-effective approach to raising the awareness of CO safety, which they consistently rate as a key priority for us.

### New leaflets



Our stakeholders have consistently emphasised at locational workshops right across our network that people must know who to call in a gas or CO emergency.

We've amended our CO leaflet to feature stronger branding. It contains clear information on how to get help if CO is suspected, including the national gas emergency helpline number. Importantly, it also has the Crystal Mark seal of approval.

Two of our safety-related partners, DangerPoint in Wales and LifeSkills in south west England, who we sponsor £5,000 each per year, helped us to promote CO safety to the 14,500 visitors they had through their doors last year.

We provided each centre with 8,000 CO and 8,000 gas-safety leaflets last year, as well as guidance on what the visible signs of CO are, which they include in their interactive safety scenarios for visitors to identify.

### CO Schools Safety Competition



Raising awareness of the danger of CO to young people in an engaging and interactive way is something that

is widely supported by our stakeholders. We support the UK-wide CO Schools Safety Competition, run in collaboration with the other gas distribution networks.

The competition is aimed at 5-11 year olds – a group that's particularly vulnerable to CO danger. They are tasked with creating a relevant poster, film, poem or song that warns of the dangers of CO.

We focused on maximising the reach of the competition by using various communication channels to make sure it was seen by a broad and inclusive audience. To do this, we:

- Used an endorsement from a celebrity (ex-international rugby star Tom Shanklin)
- Issued 2 area-wide and 13 localised news releases
- Wrote to head teachers in more than 2,500 schools asking for support encouraging them to get their schools involved
- Publicised the competition internally to all our colleagues, and
- Used social media to reach more than 147,000 people

We received 317 entries, 446% more than we did in the previous year.

### The COdebreakers

Stakeholders at our locational workshops as well as our Critical Friends Panel & Vulnerable Customers Forum have told us that CO safety should be a top priority for us.



Taking this into account, in early 2017 we developed a new online CO safety initiative. We created two 'superheroes', Chloe and Ben – the COdebreakers. They're the face of our new online game, called 'Crack the COde', which challenges people to answer questions related to CO safety to reveal letters. These letters can be rearranged to make a word to 'Crack the COde.'

Those who 'Crack the COde' can share their success on social media and challenge others to try. They also receive a letter and a CO safety related gift, to keep the conversation flowing.

More than 51,000 people have seen our Facebook promotion and more than 238 people have managed to 'Crack the COde' since it launched in March 2017.

Through the feedback survey that users complete once they've 'Cracked the COde', we've established that knowledge of the dangers of CO has increased by 25% and commitment to take further action was 79% after playing the game.

So far, 54% of users have agreed to allow us to contact them with relevant CO-safety information, and we will send them important information at key times of the year, like the start of winter, when appliances are starting to be used more frequently.

Visit [www.utilities.co.uk/crackthecode](http://www.utilities.co.uk/crackthecode)

### Partnerships

Stakeholders at our locational workshops, Critical Friends Panel and Vulnerable Customers Forum told us they supported new relationships with emergency services and charities, to help us engage with hard-to-reach customers.





As a result, we met with Fire & Rescue Services in our area and provided them with information on the services we can offer customers in the most vulnerable situations. We have increased the number of our Fire & Rescue Service partners from two to six.

To make sure our partners have all the information they need, we've devised a 'Partners Pack', which contains an easy to understand guide about the services we can offer. It includes a survey that partners fill in with information about the customers they meet, helping us to identify those who are in the most vulnerable situations.

All partners are now equipped to promote awareness of:

- CO safety
- Locking cooker valves – which help people with conditions such as dementia, to use gas appliances safely
- Warm Home Assistance – providing eligible people with around £2,000 towards the cost of a new gas connection, and
- Priority Service Register sign-ups – this makes additional services available to people in vulnerable situations

We also place gas and CO safety information in these publications:

- Wales Council for the Blind quarterly magazine – 1,250 issues/year
- Age Cymru's Ein Llais quarterly magazine – 900 issued/year
- Royal Welsh Show caravan passes – around 2,360/year
- Wychwood Festival – 4,000/year
- Urdd Eisteddfod – 10,000/year
- Cardiff Met University – 2,000/year

## Stronger Together conference

Stakeholders at our Vulnerable Customers Forum told us they would like us to collaborate more with other utilities to support customers in vulnerable situations.

With this in mind, and with the support of our fuel poor partner, Warm

Wales, we initiated the first multi-utility conference to focus on this topic. We worked in partnership with water company Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and electricity network Western Power Distribution.

The aim was to bring together utility companies that share a similar footprint to find a way of creating stronger relationships and improve collaboration to help support the most vulnerable in society.

The event was attended by 104 delegates from housing associations, local authorities, charities and the voluntary sector.

A Q&A session featured all three utility company chief executives, demonstrating high-level commitment. The key outcomes from the conference were that organisations wanted us to:

- Collaborate more
- Influence Government and regulators to create a unified Priority Services Register, and
- Work with other organisations to access more hard-to-reach customers in vulnerable situations

We're already in discussion with Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Care & Repair, an organisation which helps older people by repairing, adapting and maintaining their homes, about working together in partnership.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water shares a similar geography to ourselves in Wales, and Care & Repair have the capacity to cover the whole of our network, so working together makes sense as we can reduce duplication of effort and costs as well as increase the number of people in vulnerable situations that we can offer our support services to.

## Inclusive Provision Standard – BS18477 bsi.

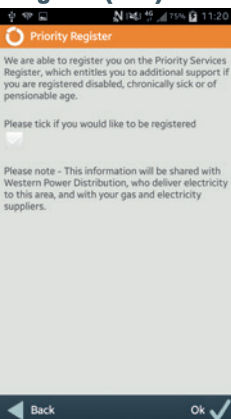
We believe that we are really good at making sure we look after our customers, especially those in the most vulnerable situations, but we wanted to receive external assurance. At our four locational workshops held around our network last year, stakeholders supported our decision to achieve a quality standard for our work to support customers in vulnerable situations. We identified British Standard 18477 as appropriate – to validate that our services are accessible to all our customers. The assurance involved a full audit of 1,250 customer-facing colleagues, including our back office, operational and contractor colleagues, more than 40 of whom had a one-to-one interview.

We've a range of support measures available to customers in vulnerable situations and we ask stakeholders from our Vulnerable Customers Forum to scrutinise and give us feedback on them.

We've worked hard to make sure that all our colleagues are aware of the support measures we can offer.

Below are some of the support measures that we have in place for our customers in vulnerable situations, which helped us to gain our accreditation, making us the first gas network to receive BS 18477.

### Priority Services Register (PSR)



In 2015/16, we trialled a PSR phone app for some colleagues to sign up customers more easily to the PSR. We saw the number of people signed up and referred to their respective energy suppliers increase by 185%. We therefore equipped all our customer-facing colleagues with the app in July 2016. This led to more than 2,100 PSR referrals during the year.

Early indications suggest we are on course to sign up around 4,000 during 2017/18.

To make things easy for our customers, we aim to provide them with a 'one-stop shop' for PSR sign ups. This means sharing information with other utility providers. We now have data sharing agreements with Scottish & Southern Energy, Western Power Distribution and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water.

We initiated these conversations, as we believe sharing the data of customers who are in the most vulnerable situations in our network is the right thing to do, as it means they gain access to benefits and services that can make sure their needs are prioritised, should they suffer from a loss of supply.

We have begun investigating similar arrangements with other similar organisations.

### Colleague training

In 2016/17 we gave Priority Customer Awareness (PCA) training to 1,250 of our colleagues. This involved 100 sessions at 19 locations – with 91% of training carried out face-to-face and the rest through e-learning. This training means our colleagues can provide our customers in the most vulnerable situations with the level of service they require. All new colleagues in a customer-facing role receive thorough PCA training.

We also provided Dementia Friends training to 108 of our customer service colleagues. These colleagues are now better able to identify the signs of dementia and can adapt the services we provide accordingly.

### Warm Packs

We issue Warm Packs to customers in vulnerable situations during a loss of gas supply to their home. Stakeholders told us during the year that our contact number should be prominent on the packs – especially to assist the visually impaired. It was also suggested that we should provide meal vouchers to customers in vulnerable



situations, who choose not to use our alternative heating and cooking appliances, instead of reimbursing them after an incident.

As a result, our contact number has been added to Warm Packs and we now offer all customers a £10 meal voucher which can be used in local food businesses for each day their gas supplies are off.

### Cooking and heating appliances



When a gas supply is interrupted, customers may not be able to heat their homes or cook food. We offer customers in vulnerable situations alternative heating and cooking equipment for temporary use. In such situations, we offer hotplates and fan heaters.

Our Vulnerable Customers Panel stakeholders highlighted that some people could potentially harm themselves through burns or even accidental house fires by accidentally touching or knocking over the hotplates and fan heaters. In response we've supplemented these with microwaves and oil-filled radiators which we offer to our most vulnerable customers. Last year we purchased 68 and 97 respectively. These do the same jobs, but even more safely.

### Free of charge meter alterations

When we are alerted to meters that are hard for customers in the most vulnerable situations to reach – if they couldn't turn their gas supply off during a gas leak, for example – we will, where possible, move their gas meter free of charge.

In 2016/17 we moved 123 meters at a cost of more than £68,000. The 'Partners Pack' we provide to all our partners contains details of the circumstances in which we will move a meter free of charge and, through this, we expect to increase this number considerably.

### Easy-to-understand communications



Our communications must be accessible by all – which is one of the reasons we worked hard to achieve BS 18477. Our website is Shaw Trust accredited, providing assurance that it's accessible to customers with a wide range of disabilities.

We also make sure all our leaflets follow the Plain English Campaign's guidelines for clear communications, and where appropriate are Crystal Marked.

We make communications available in large font, Braille and other languages upon request and have placed gas safety related films using sign language on our website.



### Vulnerable Customers Forum

Stakeholders at our locational workshops suggested we hold topic specific workshops and vulnerability was a key area on which they wanted us to focus. Our first Vulnerable Customers Forum was held in 2016/17 and attended by 12 stakeholders, representing people in vulnerable situations. It produced a number of suggestions, including working with other organisations to provide additional support to those who need it.

Whenever we identify a customer in a vulnerable situation, we now consider a referral to a body such as social services or the charity Speakeasy which provides free advice on various matters. One referral led to a customer having a full electrical rewire of their home, a new central heating system, house clearance and insulation assistance.

### Fuel Poor Hubs

Following feedback from our stakeholders, we have trialled 'Fuel Poor Hubs' in Cardiff and Flintshire.

We made a £45,000 investment so workers from Care & Repair could provide energy and financial advice to some of our most vulnerable customers. 226 people received support as part of the trial. We now plan to roll this initiative out in new areas across our network, such as Cornwall, Bristol and west Wales.

### Raising awareness of Warm Home Assistance

We provide free gas connections through our Warm Home Assistance scheme. It's available to people in areas defined as being in fuel poverty. As gas is typically cheaper for heating than other fuels, stakeholders at our Vulnerable Customers Forum encouraged us to do more to raise awareness of the scheme.

Our own research showed that a number of people who applied for new gas connection quotations, and who would have been eligible for free work, didn't benefit as they were deterred by the initial price quoted. We have, therefore, updated our internal systems to identify whether applicants' postcodes might indicate that they qualify for free connections. If so, the work is quoted as free. Since this change, there has been a reduction in the number of customers who might qualify for a free gas connection, missing out

We attended 17 events last year with the aim of raising the awareness of our Warm Home Assistance scheme. Events we attended included those held by Landlords Association, Care & Repair, Social Housing Tenants Association conference and local community group drop-in centres.

We also simplified our Warm Home Assistance literature which gives people all the information they need to apply for free connection.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

**We want to give outstanding service to all our customers so we listen to what they say.**

#### OUR STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US TO:

- Make sure that customers can contact us in the ways they choose
- Improve communication during disruptive work

#### AS A RESULT OF ENGAGEMENT, WE HAVE ACHIEVED 84 OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS FOR AN INVESTMENT OF £374,835.82, INCLUDING:

- New easy-to-understand literature on the key services we provide
- Expansion of resources for our social media team
- Hosting knowledge-sharing best practice events

### Perception research

We always want to improve the services we provide our customers and so, in 2016/17, we commissioned a perception research study with TTI Global of more than a thousand people – including those who have received services from us and others who hadn't.



Of those who we'd provided services to, 37% said they were unfamiliar with our brand. For the remainder it was 39%. The findings – supported by feedback from colleagues at internal quarterly roadshows (which said that updated vehicle livery and branding could better explain to customers what they were there to do) – led us to rebrand our vehicles with stronger imagery and information on who we are and what we do. The high visibility of our vans is intended to make more people aware of what we do and our role as the gas emergency service provider.

We've just started to rebrand our fleet of vehicles, and have applied the new branding to 48 vehicles so far during 2016/17. We plan to phase the rest of the rollout over the next few years so it's completed cost-effectively.

### New communications

#### Gas mains replacement communication

In 2015/16 we carried out a 'walk in our customers' shoes' exercise to understand fully how our work impacts on customers. The best way of doing that was to walk through the process from their perspective, to make sure we deliver the best service possible.

The scope of this exercise included all communications touch points with our customers during gas main replacement work, including the look, feel and content of correspondence and other printed materials.

It gave us insight into a typical customer's experience of







the work we do. We learned where we could improve, particularly in relation to communication about gas mains replacement.

With the support of our stakeholders and following this exercise, we've completely revised the information we give our customers. All communication uses our new and stronger branding and information was simplified. We rewrote 18 standard letters and 11 leaflets and all received the Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark.

For schemes that are likely to have a greater impact on the locality, we hold drop-in sessions. Members of the public can meet the team, learn more about the planned work and get more information – last year we held three of these sessions.

## Connections

Stakeholder feedback indicated that our connections applications forms and related information leaflets could be improved, so we rebranded and simplified them. Feedback has been very positive, with 97% of customers telling us the new forms were easy to complete, and 95% saying they were easy to understand.

By returning the feedback card that's issued with every application form, customers can give us feedback on ways we can improve the forms, such as amending our forms to add room so customers can draw a diagram to show the route they believe their gas service will need to take.

## Customer Support Officers

Customer satisfaction scores indicated that we could improve communications during gas main replacement work. Customer engagement through social media also indicated that customers would like more communication with us regarding gas main replacement schemes.

As part of our annual colleague Customer Service Championship Cup – an internal initiative designed to drive outstanding customer service across our operations – we trialled a 'door-knocking' exercise, visiting all properties which are likely to be affected by our mains

replacement work, to explain what we were doing. This exercise complements the 48-hour notification we provide all customers affected by our work.

During the trial, we received no complaints regarding our communication with customers.

We therefore decided to roll out this approach and create four new roles of Customer Support Officers, whose job it is to communicate with local people and organisations where we are working.

## Daily director-led customer complaint meetings

We want to resolve customer complaints as quickly as possible. To support this, we implemented a rota of scheduled daily meetings to discuss all of the complaints we've received in the previous 24 hours. These meetings are led by our directors, so that decisions can be made quickly for the benefit of customers.

This has proved to be highly effective in resolving complaints within 24 hours (Ofgem regulatory standard D+1). In 2016/17 we resolved 81% of our complaints in D+1 – a 17% increase on 2015/16's score of 69%.

## Institute of Customer Service Best Practice Showcase event

Our Institute of Customer Service scores, measured against all our service criteria and – and not just the most successful service-delivery areas – once again placed us alongside top retail brands.

Only nine out of the 500 ICS member companies have the Distinction level accreditation rating we achieved. Our score of 90.4/100, places us above John Lewis (83.9) and Amazon (87.2). This recognition evidences the importance we place on providing outstanding service.

Various organisations have asked if we would be prepared to share some of our customer service 'secrets'. We were invited by the ICS to host an event attended by 44 organisations. We shared our approach to customer service, our training techniques, our cultural journey – and some of the tools we use – such as 'Insight' – which provides colleagues with real-time management information.



The event gave the companies attending the opportunity to learn from our experiences, build on our best practices and adopt them, where appropriate, to their business.

Our stakeholders at locational workshops and at our Critical Friends Panel have told us that they endorse our approach to sharing such information as it helps to build reciprocal relationships. Alongside the Institute of Customer Service, we'll explore the potential to hold a similar event on a regular basis.

## Social media



We are seeing increasing levels of customer engagement through social media at all hours of the day and night, with followers on Facebook and Twitter increasing by 152% and 32% respectively since March 2016.

We needed to adapt our communication services to make sure we respond to our customers in ways that they prefer, so we've expanded our social media team.

By linking with our customer service and despatch colleagues, who assign gas emergency calls to our engineers, we have the ability to respond to customers on social media 24 hours a day, with an average Facebook message response time of two minutes.

To make sure we can monitor customer enquiries at any time, any place, we've given our customer service colleagues laptops and created a new mailbox that's monitored 24/7 – allowing our customers to communicate with us on their terms.

We've created a complaints dashboard, using our Insight tool, which provides colleagues with real-time management information. By having this information on the progression of complaints, we are improving the way they are managed and keep customers informed.

## Theft of gas

Stakeholders at our locational workshops told us that recovering money for 'stolen gas' is a priority.

We launched investigations into 'live' gas services where there were no registered customers. In cases where we have identified customers as being in vulnerable situations, we work with them to resolve the issue without the need to disconnect their gas supply.

During 2016/17 we recovered more than £630,000 – more than double 2015/16's figure. We will pass this to shippers in 2018/19 to reduce the overall transportation element of customers' bills. We are neither better nor worse off from such recovery, but it benefits customers.

## Customer support vehicle

On the rare occasions that the gas supply is interrupted, we set up local incident rooms, from where our customer service team supports customers and our operations team manages the repair of our gas network and the restoration of supply. These are usually located in local community centres and village halls.

However, customer feedback has shown that a location that suits as an operational base isn't always the best place for customers to come to for advice and information.

Instead, we've invested in a new customer support vehicle, at a cost of £33,000. This can be parked in an accessible location and is equipped to give customers up-to-date and accurate information relating to the incident.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Responding to loss of gas supply incidents on our network swiftly and efficiently is very important to us. We take the wellbeing of our customers very seriously, therefore having processes in place to make sure they receive the best service possible is vital.**

### OUR STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US TO:

- Have more knowledge of where customers in vulnerable situations are, so they can be prioritised in an emergency
- Share best practice with other gas networks, and
- Make sure we are prepared for major incidents – where tens of thousands of customers may have their gas supply interrupted

### AS A RESULT OF ENGAGEMENT, WE HAVE ACHIEVED 4 OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS FOR AN INVESTMENT OF £7,000, INCLUDING::

- Sharing best practice event
- Revising our major incident team and processes, and
- Improvements to our customer contact channels

## Major incident review

Following feedback from stakeholders at our locational workshops, a major incident review was completed during the year. We clarified the roles of our Major incident team, which would lead our operational response to a major incident and direct communication with customers and stakeholders when required.

Its structure and cross-functional approach has been tested in smaller scale incidents during the last 12 months and learnings continue to enhance the function.

So we can respond to incidents of this kind effectively, we have reviewed our communications with colleagues and customers. For colleagues, we've introduced an early warning text system. This consists of text updates, with three levels of severity (Yellow: You may have to take action/Amber: Prepare to take action/Red: Take Action) and makes decision making for colleagues and teams involved in our response to a major incident easier. The text updates are operated and managed by our despatch team, to assign gas emergency calls to our engineers. The system is flexible and reactive, and meets the needs of a major incident response.

## COLLEAGUES

**We recognise that our colleagues are vitally important stakeholders. They are responsible not only for delivering services and improvements as a result of stakeholder and customer feedback, but also for being a front line in that engagement.**

### OUR STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US TO:

- Create more opportunities for them to interact with our directors
- Raise the awareness of stakeholder engagement
- Make them aware of any key industry changes

### AS A RESULT OF ENGAGEMENT, WE HAVE ACHIEVED 6 OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS FOR AN INVESTMENT OF £58,931.29 INCLUDING:

- Holding stakeholder engagement workshops for our senior managers
- Colleague Roadshows which included stakeholder engagement as a topic
- Creating a new behavioural competency framework
- Rolling out an internal smart meter campaign

## Engaging our colleagues

Fully-engaged and motivated employees are essential

Taking advantage of commercially available messaging software, we have now added secure messaging application 'WhatsApp' to our company phones. This complements our new early warning system and allows effective sharing and review of photos, videos and documents. Significantly, it allows all messages sent to be extracted in the form of a text document for review after the incident is managed to completion.



Following stakeholder feedback on assistance to customers in the most vulnerable situations during a major incident, we carefully considered our options. Prioritising these customers may not be practical during a major incident, as doing so could greatly increase the amount of time before gas supply is restored – which is not in their interests.

A better method of support is through partnerships with local authority social services, emergency services, charities, resilience forums and other voluntary groups. This enables our engineers to focus on restoring the gas supply swiftly.

Partnership working with other utility companies in our area has also been pursued, and we work with other gas networks via mutual aid arrangements, to share equipment and resources when appropriate. This year we also offered communications support to one of our sister companies in Australia when they were managing a major electricity outage.

## Improved communications

In reviewing communication with customers, we have made sure that our call centre can handle the increased calls that would be expected during a major incident. Phone lines can handle up to 120 calls at once, with the potential to be increased to 600. This figure of 120, is a 900% increase on the 2015/16 figure.

Customers increasingly turn to the internet for information, so we have developed a specific major incident response page to be added to our website when required. In the event of incidents we will post regular updates and provide useful links to commonly asked questions. Our website is

able to handle more than 26,000 page requests/minute, with the ability to upgrade our server within 15-20 minutes should our website encounter heavy traffic during a major incident – meaning we're available when our customers need us to be.

During a major incident customers may be required to turn their gas supplies off and then back on again: 'Customer Self Isolation and Restoration' (CSIR). Making sure these instructions are clear and easy for our customers to follow, especially those in the most vulnerable situations, is important – as safety is a key priority for us. For this reason we have created a 'how to' leaflet, which is simple to understand and would be posted through customers' doors during a major incident.

## Sharing best practice

Our stakeholders told us that we should share best practice on preparing for a major incident. Since 2010 we've worked closely with other gas networks and regulators to develop the Emergency 3 ('E3 process') for major incident management. Taking on board feedback from BEIS (then DECC) and our stakeholders, we're now working with IGEM to develop an industry standard for managing such incidents. This builds on the preparatory work we have done following feedback from stakeholders, and adapts the E3 process – taking into account the increased expectations of customers, regulators and stakeholders.

The start of the process of putting together an industry standard was at a round table event – hosted by IGEM. It was attended by representatives of all Great Britain and Ireland gas networks. We presented the results of our major incident planning and discussed options and opportunities with other gas networks. Where appropriate, we modified our plans – taking into consideration other networks' experiences.

We're committed to further developing this standard.

*\*The E3 process was developed in 2012 and stipulates the management procedure for Preparation, Testing and Maintenance of gas distribution networks emergency arrangements – the so-called emergency three – or E3.*

to success. To embed our 'inside-out' strategy, it was important that commitment was gained from all. Our colleagues have contributed to our company's defined Ambition, Priorities and Values and therefore have 'ownership' of them.

### Behavioural Competency Framework

December 2016 marked the launch of our new 'behaviours', which complement the delivery of our stakeholder strategy and act as guidance for our colleagues. Included in the launch were:

- A Behavioural Competency Framework – which



clearly defines the behaviours we expect from all our colleagues – back office and operational – and stresses the importance of stakeholder engagement and how we, as a company, expect colleagues to conduct themselves

- A Managers' Pack – containing hints and tips on best practice for their teams, and
- An animated film – voiced by colleagues – to reinforce our new values in an engaging way.

All colleagues received our new Behavioural Competency Framework. More than 300 attended the premiere of our animated film and a link to it was circulated to all colleagues afterwards to make sure everyone was aware of the importance we placed on our new behaviours.

### Stakeholder Engagement Workshop

In January 2017 we held a workshop for more than 30 senior managers to raise awareness of stakeholder engagement. It highlighted how important engagement is to their jobs and identified ways in which our Stakeholder Engagement team can give support.

We anticipate that this will not only drive understanding of



the stakeholder engagement process, it will also result in sharpening the focus of various parts of our business on our stakeholders' priorities.

In order to measure the impact of our workshop, we are planning on issuing a stakeholder engagement-related survey on an annual basis.

### Colleague Roadshows

Our Quarterly Colleague Roadshows are for business performance updates and two way communication –



something our colleagues told us they valued.

Two roadshows last year focused on stakeholder engagement, reflecting the importance we place on it. 110 colleagues attended the roadshows, and a film was made of the events and shared with all other colleagues. This was all part of embedding stakeholder engagement in our company.

### Smart Meter campaign

The Government aims to install a smart meter in every house in the UK by 2020: that's around 53 million meters.

Stakeholders at our locational workshops told us that one of the barriers to the roll out of smart meters was confusion on the part of customers and a lack of knowledge of the benefits.

To address this we created the 'A smarter future' awareness campaign. The aim was to inform colleagues about what a smart meter is and what to look out for if a



customer with one reports a loss of gas supply.

As a result of our campaign the understanding of smart meters amongst colleagues increased by 57%. We're sharing our campaign with other gas networks too.

## SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Independent studies, publications and our Critical Friends Panel highlight the need for us to fully engage on the role of the gas network into the future and we've invested heavily in research projects. They include a unique energy simulator, which is a high-resolution model that simulates future energy supply and demand across a variety of future scenarios. This is supported by customer research on ability and willingness to pay for the energy systems of the future. These pathfinder projects are helping us to assess future energy scenarios and how to address the challenges of providing a secure, affordable and sustainable energy system.

#### OUR STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US TO:

- Raise awareness of 'green' gas, particularly among farmers and landowners
- Continue to minimise our impact on the environment
- Do more to promote the benefits of alternative gas and target Wales, where take-up has been slow compared to the success we have seen in south west England

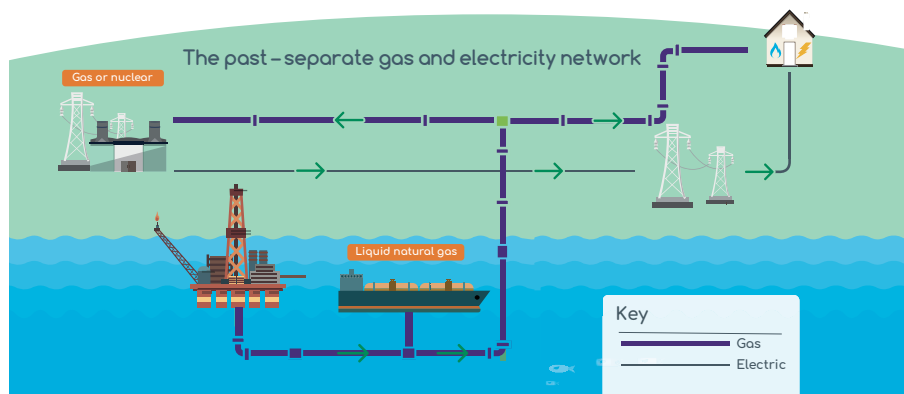
AS A RESULT OF ENGAGEMENT, WE HAVE ACHIEVED 56 OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS FOR AN INVESTMENT OF £53,251.74, INCLUDING:

- Holding an industry-first 'Alternative Gas Workshop'
- Attending and speaking at many conferences, to inform a wide audience of our 'future of energy' work
- Hosting a visit from the Government's Business Energy & Industrial Strategy Heat Team, to discuss our future of energy work

We are also currently investigating how best to set up a Wales alternative gas panel to encourage more green gas connections.

### The role of the gas network

For decades, gas and electricity transmission and distribution systems have operated independently, with gas providing the heat source for most homes and businesses, and electricity generation relying on nuclear, coal and gas.

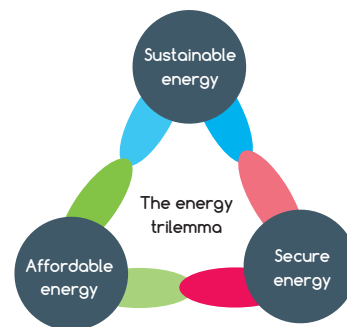


This has become more complex in recent years, with the introduction of renewable sources of energy. Engagement between the gas and electricity networks has undergone a shift change in the move to create a dynamic, flexible integrated energy system to support a greener energy UK.

The gas networks are working together to investigate and share information on the various technologies available to play a role in meeting the challenges of the energy trilemma. An independent report by KPMG was commissioned by the gas networks on their role in Britain's energy future. The report found that evolution of the gas networks, injecting green gas – including hydrogen, can offer significant cost savings against alternative low carbon heating sources.

### Alternative gas workshop

We are determined to play our part in resolving the challenges posed by the 'energy trilemma.'



At our locational workshops, stakeholders told us that we should be doing more to raise awareness of our work in this area, so we hosted an industry-first 'Alternative Gas Workshop'. It attracted 64 organisations from across the UK, including the National Farmers Union, developers and landowners, as well as people from academia and energy industry organisations.

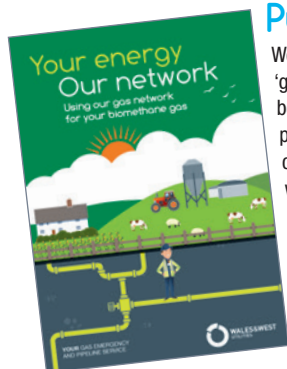
The event was chaired by our Director of Asset Management, Safety & Environment and included detailed presentations from our senior managers. There were round table discussions with our stakeholders, hosted by independent facilitators.

Of those who completed our feedback form, 100% said they found our event 'very interesting' or 'interesting' and, so far, 45 attendees have asked us for more information about how to connect their alternative gas to our network. This is helping us to achieve our aim of playing our part in resolving the challenges posed by the 'energy trilemma'.



## Improving our impact on the environment

We are continuing to reduce our impact on the environment from gas leakage through our extensive mains replacement programme and proactive pressure management. Last year we invested more than £64 million to replace 437 kilometres of gas mains, reducing leakage by 4% in the year.



## Publications

We have created a new 'green gas' connections booklet to simplify the process of applying for a connection. Stakeholders were asked to scrutinise it at our 'Alternative Gas Workshop' and we are re-viewing the feedback before deciding which changes will add the most value.

We have also produced a paper that describes the road to a green energy system to help inform policy makers, government and other interested bodies. We've shared these with our stakeholders at our locational and 'Alternative Gas Workshop', and as our work on the future of energy evolves we'll continue to publish articles and research.

## Working in collaboration

In addition to working with the other gas networks, we are engaging with other organisations on future energy system projects. We are working on Flexis, a £25 million European funded Welsh project examining the development of smart energy distribution systems. Our Director of Regulation & Commercial has a place on the advisory panel, providing leadership on the delivery of the project.

Working in partnership with Western Power Distribution, we are jointly leading the FREEDOM project; a £5 million innovation that is addressing the market barrier to adoption of new low carbon hybrid heating.

Together with partners we developed a unique 'energy simulator' that accurately models energy supply and

demand requirements for specific locations. It takes account of the changing needs for heat and power in summer and winter and, with more than 80% of peak time demand being met by the gas network, it highlights the reliance the UK has on gas when renewables aren't generating.

Our work is underpinned by a customer research project on ability and willingness to pay for the energy system of the future.

## Community consultation

We communicate closely with stakeholders on complex environmental projects in residential areas. The remediation of an old gasholder and surrounding area in Honiton, Devon, was a sensitive operation in a densely populated area. Through planned, structured and genuine engagement with local people a difficult job was completed without complaint. Similarly, two-way communication with the community in Gunnislake, Cornwall, enabled another tricky remediation project to proceed to local community satisfaction. Another situation where effective engagement delivered mutual benefit.

# INNOVATION

**We are always looking for new and innovative ways to improve the services we provide to our customers.**

### OUR STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US TO:

- Promote innovation in the gas industry more
- Collaborate more with other networks
- Look at partnerships to renew the workforce

### AS A RESULT OF ENGAGEMENT, WE HAVE ACHIEVED 5 OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS FOR AN INVESTMENT OF £322,655.50, INCLUDING:

- Sharing our innovative ideas at a number of events
- Collaborating with other networks on a number of projects
- Created a partnership to make sure we have a workforce long into the future

## Attending events

We had a presence at the 2016/17 Low Carbon Network Innovation conference, which was attended by more than 1,300 people. We displayed five successful projects, distributed information on 33 case studies and learned what other networks have successfully developed – something that stakeholders told us we should increasingly be doing.



## Working with others

In 2016/17 we took part in 33 innovation projects – 20 with other network licencees. Additionally, three projects were part of an industry-wide collaboration.

This included development of an innovative tool that we introduced, the ductile iron window cutter, which allows our operational teams to cut a 'window' in iron mains, allowing for a new plastic gas main to be inserted easier and quicker. On average, using this tool saves around 30 minutes per window, meaning the disruption to customers during mains replacement work is reduced, therefore improving the service we can provide.

The wellbeing of our colleagues is also very important to us, so we've introduced a tool called a Hornet Rock Drill. This tool is lightweight and easy to move, and reduces the vibrations our operational colleagues would experience if using a pneumatic drill. Feedback from our colleagues has been positive, as it reduces vibration from 15m/second to 2.5m/second which we expect to significantly reduce the hand-arm vibration experienced by our operational colleagues in the future.



Our colleagues are vital to the success of our company now and in the future, and we always want to make sure they have the skills needed to provide the best experience. The energy and utilities sector needs

221,000 new recruits by 2027, to provide the essential services customers seek and the infrastructure the UK needs for economic growth.

Stakeholders at our locational workshops suggested we work with partners to help us do just that – and we have. In partnership with Energy & Utility Skills and other utilities and contractors we've created the first joint Workforce Renewal and Skills Strategy for the sector.

The Strategy makes steps towards making sure the UK's energy and utilities sector retains a safe, skilled, resilient and sustainable workforce. It sets out for the first time, in one place, the reality of the challenges faced, immediate initiatives underway and the shared ambitions of moving towards achieving a more sustainable future.

This Strategy focuses to 2020, and then will continue to evolve as the Skills Partnership, working with our key stakeholders, interest groups and other sectors to deliver an extensive programme of change and co-operation.

To make sure our colleagues have the skills they need for the future, so we can continue to deliver outstanding customer service, we have a comprehensive skills development programme in place. Last year we recruited 24 apprentices and two graduates – our engineers of the future, as part of a total recruitment of 127 new colleagues. Our internal coaching programme, where 24 coaches pass on their experience, supports the future-proofing of colleagues skill-sets, while developing people to their full potential.

# GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT

**It's important that we build relationships and awareness with key political influencers. It enables us to be considered a trusted and expert voice to be called upon for advice on energy-related subjects.**

### OUR STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US TO:

- Engage more with politicians

### AS A RESULT OF ENGAGEMENT, WE HAVE ACHIEVED 13 OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS FOR AN INVESTMENT OF £68,280, INCLUDING:

- Political perceptions audit
- Attended parliamentary events

## Political influencers

Stakeholders want us to build relationships with politicians and, through our attendance at meetings such as the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group (APPCOG), we do just that. We aim to build relationships and influence policy – such as insisting that landlords install carbon monoxide alarms in all rooms that contain fixed combustion devices in England and Wales.

## Political perceptions audit

We commissioned an independent political perceptions audit of 27 political stakeholders, including MPs and AMs.

It showed a clear appetite from the stakeholders to engage more with us on a range of topics, including the future of energy and social obligations. We are building this into our future programme of engagement.

## Fuel Poverty & Energy Efficiency

The Fuel Poverty & Energy Efficiency Group is a coalition of cross-party MPs and industry stakeholders. During the year we attended an event in Parliament, and sponsored the annual dinner, which gave us an opportunity to raise awareness of our services for customers in vulnerable situations.

## OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS TABLE

### CUSTOMERS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

SOURCE	COST (£)	OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	BENEFITS
Workshop	100.00	1	More targeted approach to CO alarm distribution	Provided CO alarms to 400+ people in Rhiw, Bridgend – targeting a CO 'hot spot' area
Workshop	800.00	1	Gas safety advert in Wales Council for the Blind magazine	1,250 copies distributed annually, raising awareness of gas safety to a vulnerable stakeholder group
Workshop	2,000.00	1	Advert in Age Cymru's Ein Llais magazine	900 copies distributed, raising awareness of gas safety and support measures to older stakeholders
Workshop	150.00	1	Bi-lingual gas-safety advert in Cardiff Met University's newspaper	2,000 copies distributed, raising awareness of CO and gas safety to a vulnerable stakeholder group
Workshop	350.00	1	Bi-lingual gas safety advert in Wychwood festival programme	4,000 copies distributed, raising awareness of gas safety
Workshop	350.00	1	Bi-lingual gas safety advert in Urdd Eisteddfod programme	10,000 copies distributed, raising awareness of gas safety to various stakeholder groups
Workshop	2,000.00	1	Carbon monoxide safety message placed on caravan passes at the Royal Welsh Show (2,360 issued)	Raising awareness of CO safety to various stakeholder groups
Workshop	7,535.27	11	Hosted a Vulnerable Customers Forum, attended by 12 stakeholders	11 recommendations, including: share PSR information with other utilities and review Warm Pack contents
Vulnerable Customers (VC) Forum	N/A	1	£10 meal vouchers available for customers during emergency situations	Customers don't have to wait for their expenses to be reimbursed
VC Forum	0.00	1	Data-sharing agreements for PSR sharing with Scottish & Southern Energy, Western Power Distribution and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	Working towards a 'one-stop shop' for signing up customers to priority services
VC Forum	0.00	1	Expanded and increased Fire & Rescue Services partnerships	Improved targeting of safety messages and support measures to hard-to-reach stakeholder groups
VC Forum	2,290.00	1	Created a new 'Partners Pack'	Provided clear and consistent safety information as well as the support measures we offer to customers in the most vulnerable situations
VC Forum	14,814.00	1	Continued partnerships with LifeSkills (south west) and DangerPoint (north Wales)	Promoting CO and safety messages to schoolchildren and vulnerable adults. Last year DangerPoint had 6,589 visitors and LifeSkills 7,912
VC Forum	2,605.00	1	New CO safety leaflet designed	More engaging and easier to understand CO safety advice (and is included with every CO alarm we distribute)
Audit/workshop	9,603.76	1	First gas network to gain the British Standard 18477	Validates out commitment to putting our customers first, especially those in the most vulnerable situations
Workshop	17,955.00	1	PSR sign up available through colleague phone app	Easier for our colleagues to sign customers in the most vulnerable situations to the PSR (165% increase on 2015/2016)
Workshop	0.00	1	In-house vulnerable customer training	Over 100 sessions across 19 depots, for 1,250 customer facing colleagues has improved awareness of signs of vulnerability
Workshop	0.00	1	33 referrals to social services (27) and Cardiff-based charity, Speakeasy (6)	Helping customers receive the additional support they need
Workshop	45,000.00	1	Trialled Fuel Poor Hubs in Cardiff and Flintshire	226 people received energy and financial advice
Workshop	0.00	1	Improvements to new connection system, CRM, to identify customers for free gas connections through Warm Home Assistance scheme	Encourages customers to take advantage of free gas connections
Workshop	0.00	1	Dementia awareness courses for 108 customer service colleagues	Improving interactions for customers with dementia. PSR coding improved and updated literature
VC Forum	643.32	1	Braille, audio and large print versions of all customer communications available on request and gas safety information in sign language on our website	We want to make sure our communications are accessible to all, especially customers in the most vulnerable situations
VC Forum	68,080.00	1	Refreshed 'Keep Warm' Packs for people in vulnerable situations during gas supply interruptions	We distributed 4,600 Warm Packs last year – providing items that our customers in the most vulnerable situations need most during gas emergencies
Workshop	1,035.00	1	Attended 17 events to promote our Warm Home Assistance scheme	Improving awareness of the scheme and other support measures
Workshop	3,277.00	1	Redesigned our Warm Home Assistance booklet	More accessible and easy to understand information for our customers
VC Forum	150.00	1	Provided 150 thermometers to new mothers with gas emergency number	Raising gas safety awareness to a vulnerable group of stakeholders
Workshop	10,715.00	1	Revised CO strategy and created a new online CO-awareness campaign	The COdebreakers CO super heroes improve online CO messaging to reach a wide audience
Workshop	63,533.76	1	Distributed 5,496 CO alarms	Helping people in the most vulnerable situations to stay safe in their homes
VC Forum	5,650.85	1	Purchased 97 oil-filled radiators and 68 microwaves and pan sets	Improving support measures for customers in the most vulnerable situations, in the event of a loss of gas supply
VC Forum	68,018.50	1	123 free of charge meter alterations	Making sure customers in the most vulnerable situations can access their gas meters
Workshop	63,285.30	1	Presence at the Royal Bath & West Show and Royal Welsh Show to raise awareness of CO	More than 370,000 visitors attended these shows in total and we provided 2,456 CO alarms
Collaboration	43.18	1	Locking Cooking Valve installation promoted through partnerships	Supporting customers in the most vulnerable situations to remain independent in their homes
VC Forum	1,800.00	1	Hardship fund promotion	7 customers in the most vulnerable situations have been provided with financial support
Workshop	5,000.00	1	Initiated the first multi-utility gas, electricity and water conference – Stronger Together – with fuel poor partner Warm Wales	Investigating a multi-agency approach to supporting customers in the most vulnerable situations and further developing partnerships

### CUSTOMERS – DOMESTIC AND NON-DOMESTIC

SOURCE	COST (£)	OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	BENEFITS
Critical Friends Panel (CFP)	31,299.12	20	4 Critical Friends Panels, attended by 29 stakeholders	20 recommendations identified, including: New CO strategy, alternative gas workshop
Workshop	111,574.58	39	4 locational workshops, attended by 107 stakeholders in total	39 recommendations identified, including: New partnerships and Vulnerable Customers Forum
Workshop	5,000.00	1	Reviewed and expanded our stakeholder database (2,190)	Includes a broader and more inclusive range of stakeholders
Workshop	5,250.00	1	Independent DNO/GDN stakeholder benchmarking report	Provided insight to help improve stakeholder engagement
Research	12,442.98	1	Perception research involving domestic and business customers (1,056)	Provided insight into how we are perceived to improve engagement content and channels
Audit	5,000.00	1	Institute of Customer Service ServiceMark reaccreditation	Distinction rating of 90.4 puts us ahead of John Lewis and Amazon and shows our commitment to providing excellent customer service
Social media	0.00	1	More people trained to interact with customers through social media	Online customer service is available 24/7, so customers' queries are dealt with when it suits them
Workshop & CFP	11,700.00	1	Revised stakeholder reporting to a condensed report	Key performance updates available in easy-to-understand format, in print and interactive online
Customer contact	0.00	1	New complaints dashboard – utilising our 'Insight' tool	Faster complaints response, improving customer communications
Workshop	21,000.00	1	Alva media monitoring annual report	Perception insight, identifying opportunity to improve communications content
Customer contact	18,894.00	1	New Connections application forms and information packs	Customer feedback: forms are 'easy to fill out' (97%); Are 'easy to understand' (95%)
Customer contact	5,769	1	Revised, redesigned and simplified gas mains replacement (REPEX) communications suite	Letters, leaflets and booklets are now easier to understand and more engaging
Workshop	916.15	1	Apprentice and graduate online recruitment campaigns	The targeted, online approach led to 923 applications for 23 jobs – a 64% increase on previous year
Best practice	0.00	1	Daily customer service complaint teleconferences	17% increase in complaints resolved in 24 hours to 81% (2015/2016, 69%)



## OUTPUTS AND BENEFITS TABLE

### CUSTOMERS – DOMESTIC AND NON-DOMESTIC

SOURCE	COST (£)	OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	BENEFITS
Customer steering group	0.00	1	Customer feedback on completion of work by text	Immediate feedback from customers helps resolve problems quicker
Workshop	0.00	1	Continued focus on identifying the theft of gas	Recovered more than £630,000 to reduce the overall transportation costs for customers
Customer steering group	6,400.00	1	Customer Service team issued with laptops – and out-of-hours mailbox created	Improved service for our customers and improved resilience in times of emergencies
Customer Feedback	3,000.00	1	'Drop-in' events for high-profile gas mains replacement schemes	Customers affected by our work have opportunities to ask questions and seek reassurance on the impact on them
Workshop	33,000.00	1	Emergency Customer Support vehicle purchased	Focal point of contact for customers during emergencies
Customer Feedback	0.00	1	Created four new Customer Support Officer roles, following a successful 12 month trial	Improved communication with customers and communities during high-profile gas pipe replacement schemes
Best practice	789.50	1	Hosted a best practice showcase event with the Institute of Customer Service	Shared our customer service best practice 'secrets' with 44 organisations
Workshop	10,107.38	1	Promoted CO Schools Safety competition through multiple channels, including social media and letters direct to schools	317 entries were received, 446% more than last year. More than 147,000 people saw our post on Facebook plus direct contact with more than 2,500 schools
Workshop	62,820.00	1	New branding rollout started on 48 operational vehicles	Raising awareness of our brand and the national gas emergency number
CFP	0.00	1	Moved Stakeholder Engagement team into People & Engagement directorate	Increased communications resources to improve stakeholder engagement management
CFP	13,025.00	1	Reviewed and increased membership of Critical Friends Panel	More than 20 Critical Friends Panel members, from a broad and inclusive range of backgrounds
Audits	4,912.11	1	We successfully gained and renewed certification for the standard for Asset Management ISO 55001	Demonstrates a strategic approach to the management and operation of our assets
Audits	11,936.00	1	We were awarded the OHSAS 18001 standard	Demonstrates our continued commitment to keeping colleagues safe

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE

SOURCE	COST (£)	OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	BENEFITS
Workshop	7,000.00	1	New Emergency web page created	Providing customers easy access to all information during emergencies
Workshop	0.00	1	Increased capacity of call volumes of telephone system	Improving availability when our customers need us
Sharing best practice	0.00	1	Hosted a 'best practice' event at IGEM	Shared best practice and learnt from the experience of others about large-scale gas emergencies
Sharing best practice	0.00	1	Attended a Network Rail 'Safety Day'	Promoted CO safety awareness to 40 Network Rail colleagues

### COLLEAGUES

SOURCE	COST (£)	OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	BENEFITS
Colleague Engagement	2,776.70	1	8 CEO-led 'Colleague Roadshows' in the year, two focused on stakeholder engagement	CEO-led stakeholder-focused roadshows attended by 110 colleagues filmed for 113 managers to cascade through our business
Colleague Engagement	4,605.00	1	Investors In People Silver Level	Benchmarked against this international standard, putting us in the top 5% of companies with silver level
Colleague Engagement	13,624.45	1	Internal Stakeholder Engagement Strategy workshop for 32 managers	Sharpened focus of our business on stakeholders' priorities.
Colleague Engagement	23,604.14	1	New Behavioural Competency Framework	Aligned to our values, with specific reference to the importance of stakeholder engagement.
Awards	N/A	1	Our graduate scheme was recently accredited once again by IMechE & IGEM	Accreditation gives our graduates and customers confidence in our ability to train the engineers of the future
Workshop	14,321.00	1	Internal Smart Meter awareness campaign	Improved colleague understanding of smart meters to minimise the impact the roll out might have on the service we provide.

### SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

SOURCE	COST (£)	OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	BENEFITS
Workshop	0.00	1	Attended future of energy conferences throughout the year	Informed a wide audience about our future of energy work
Workshop	39,149.55	47	Alternative Gas Workshop	64 delegates from across the UK discussed connecting low-carbon sources to our network. More than 45 direct requests to investigate new biogas connections to our network as a result
Workshop	9,602.19	7	Held a Future Bill Payer workshop (13 attendees)	7 recommendations identified. Provided us with insight into future customers' understanding of the industry and preferred engagement channels
Workshop	4,500.00	1	Made links with academia and started a project with the Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (KESS) initiative	Sponsored a PhD student to research biomethane, a key business and stakeholder priority

### INNOVATION

SOURCE	COST (£)	OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	BENEFITS
Workshop	0.00	1	Colleague innovation survey	Raised awareness of innovation in our business and creation of 44 Innovation Champions to embed innovation across our business
Workshop	3,767.50	1	Partnership with Energy & Utilities Skills	Created first ever joint Workforce Renewal and Skills Strategy to support future workforce sustainability
Customer Feedback	143,508.00	1	Purchased a new 32-tonne tipper grab lorry	Reduces the impact of our work on customers and improves efficiency
Customer Feedback	112,380.00	1	Purchased 30 Ductile Iron Window Cutters	Improves efficiency, saving 30 minutes per window
Conference	63,000.00	1	Attended the Low Carbon Network Innovation event	Opportunity to promote our innovations and help seek to overcome certain business challenges

### GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY

SOURCE	COST (£)	OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	BENEFITS
Workshop	370.00	1	Engagement with over 140 MPs and AMs across our area at various times during the year.	Includes Performance updates and winter preparedness mailouts. Increases awareness of our operations with politicians
Workshop	9,000.00	1	Sponsored a summer event in the House of Lords	Opportunity to raise awareness of future of energy challenges to 130 all-party parliamentarians
Workshop	20,000.00	1	Quarterly All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group Meetings	MP-chaired forum identifies ways to share best practice with other GDNs and influence policy
Workshop	12,000.00	1	Sponsored the All Party Parliamentary Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency Group annual dinner	Opportunity to raise awareness of fuel poverty and the support measures we can provide to customers in the most vulnerable situations
Workshop	18,000.00	8	Perceptions Audit of key political stakeholders (27 stakeholders)	Gained a better understanding of our perception with a key stakeholder group, to help shape our future engagement programmes with government
Workshop	8,910	1	Started issuing weekly Political Monitoring insight in January 2017	Ability to respond to key government initiatives
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,281,739.29</b>	<b>212</b>		

## **Joint GDN Stakeholder Submission Appendix 2017**

As Gas Distribution Networks we continue to actively collaborate to deliver valuable outcomes for our stakeholders. Our collaborative Discretionary Reward Scheme (DRS) submission to Ofgem will be published in May 2018 and highlights the benefits of working collaboratively as four GDNs, building on the work from the [2015 DRS submission](#) and the collaborative appendix issued with our Stakeholder Engagement Incentive (SEI) submissions last year. This document provides an annual update on the collaborative working undertaken during 2016/17.

We remain committed to working together to find solutions that benefit customers and stakeholders and ensure leading performance within the industry, where exceptional outcomes are achieved and can be regarded as best practice and replicated across the industry. Much of our work is co-ordinated and supported by the Energy Networks Association (ENA). ENA provides us with a conduit for effective collaboration, information sharing and political and technical policy development between all networks and industry stakeholders.

Our collaboration and joint commitment is focussed on:

- Supporting and protecting the communities we live and work in, and minimising our wider impact on the environment;
- Going beyond what is expected of us, exceeding both our social and moral responsibilities and collaborations that extend to expert organisations and other sectors.

Our ongoing collaborative work on various topics means we are able to achieve so much more than working independently. This has contributed to:

- **Effectiveness.** Effectively communicating consistent messages to national, regional and local audiences, whether that is lobbying for policy change or becoming more accessible to our stakeholders through our partnerships.
- **Efficiency.** Sharing the costs of activities and lobbying, developing joint communications and activities, ultimately delivering outcomes efficiently for customers.
- **Best practice.** Sharing experiences to understand the best approaches. This prevents us from repeating mistakes and enables far more efficient ways of working.

We've been working collaboratively since network sales in 2005, delivering great outcomes and benefits from our work for our stakeholders, across a range of issues. The tables in this document provide some key collaborative outcomes and benefits in the following three areas:

- **Social:** alleviating fuel poverty and supporting vulnerable customers.
- **Carbon Monoxide Safety:** Promoting awareness and prevention of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning.
- **Ensuring a sustainable future:** Working together to tackle the energy trilemma; sharing environmental best practice; research and demonstration projects for the challenge of the decarbonisation of heat; delivering and sharing innovation, providing current and future benefits for customers. To comply with the requirements of the Climate Change Act, the UK must reduce its carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. In addition, the energy requirements of the country must be met at an affordable cost for energy consumers.

The requirements of ensuring security of energy supply at an affordable cost, while ensuring a low carbon energy future, the so-called energy trilemma, are being investigated on a collaborative basis by the gas networks, and also in collaboration with electricity networks, as the two energy networks continue to become ever more interdependent.



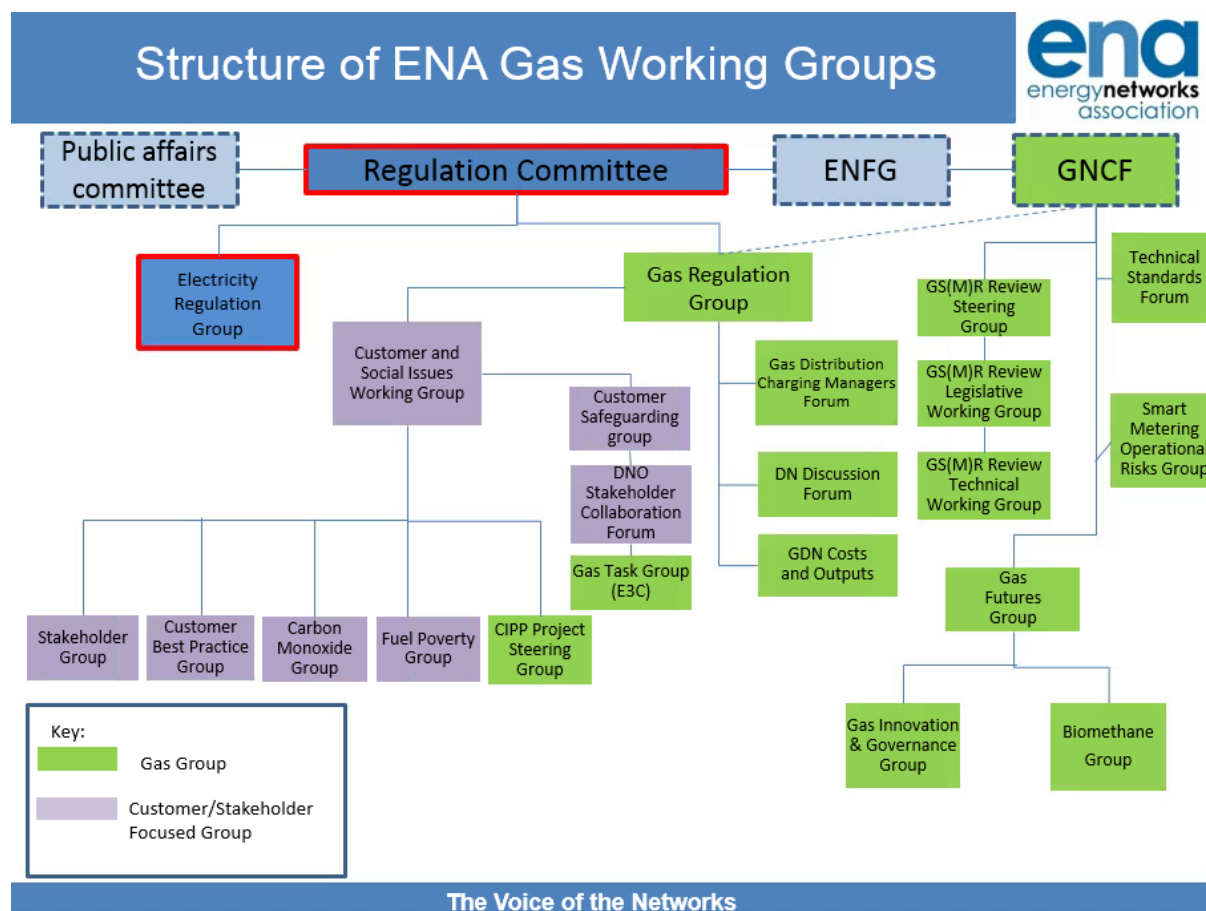


Figure 1: Diagram showing the structure of ENA gas working groups

## Our collaboration highlights

Helped secure **£25m** for Local Authorities to support house measures, resulting in **4,000** new heating installations.

Joint winners of the **Heating & Ventilation News Safety Initiative of the Year Award** for 2016 with CO-Gas Safety.

Launched the **CO Charity Fund**, offering grants of up to **£2,000**.

**535** additional customers referred to the **Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme** since May 2015.

**674** entries in 2015/16 to the CO schools poster competition.

Current connected capacity of **biomethane** has the ability to power over **277,000** homes.

## 1. Social: Alleviating Fuel Poverty and Protecting Vulnerable Customers

### GROUPS – ENA co-ordinated GDN Fuel Poverty Best Practice Working Group, Off Gas Grid Group and Fuel Poverty Action Sub-Group

The GDNs recognise that we have an important role to play in helping to alleviate fuel poverty in the UK. The Fuel Poverty Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) allows us to install first-time gas connections into the homes of those living in fuel poverty. However, our activities extend beyond this scheme to also help raise awareness and support those who are affected by this issue.

Key areas of focus	2016/17 Outcomes and Benefits
<p>To engage with BEIS to raise concerns over the lack of financial assistance to pay for central heating systems available to those living in fuel poverty; and effectively communicate that this is having a detrimental effect on meeting GDN fuel poverty targets.</p> <p>Having previously helped ensure the successful roll-out of the DECC Central Heating Fund by requesting alignment of qualification for this scheme with the Fuel Poverty Network Extension Scheme (FPNES), the GDNs continue to campaign on the issue of lack of funding for in-house heating measures available to low income households.</p>	<p>A fund of £25m made available to local authorities in England and Wales was used to fund whole-house solutions for fuel poor customers, which resulted in 4,000 new heating installations.</p> <p>In December 2016 the GDN's invested over £12,500 to commission the NEA to provide a research report into the success of the FPNES under different funding conditions for central heating systems.</p> <p>The NEA report 'In from the cold' was submitted to BEIS in February 2017, along with supporting letter from the GDNs requesting £37.5m in funding to be allocated in March 2017 spring budget. This proposal was for the GDNs to utilise this funding over the 18 month ECO transition period for central heating systems in homes qualifying under the FPNES. The application was unsuccessful, however BEIS have intimated that re-application should be submitted in advance of the autumn budget.</p>
<p>To engage with BEIS and the Energy Saving Trust to provide a referral scheme for customers who do not automatically qualify for the Warm Homes Scheme but where they may benefit from the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES), assisted by regular dialogue and monthly meetings.</p>	<p>535 additional customers referred to FPNES since the launch of the scheme in May 2015, resulting in 161 extra fuel poor gas connections, 51 of which were installed in 2016/17.</p> <p>More joined up services for fuel poor customers, coordinated by partner organisation YES Energy Solutions on behalf of all GDNs.</p>
<p>GDN main sponsor of NEA's quarterly Focus magazine, a publication aimed directly at those communities who can benefit most from schemes including the FPNES.</p>	<p>Sponsorship has given stability to the magazine and allowed for its development and expansion. The GDNs have used this publication to publish a prominent full page advert for the fuel poverty connections scheme. In addition, a full page editorial on each GDN's fuel poverty activities has featured in the magazine. Further</p>



	<p>development will entail rotating responsibility among the GDNs to create individual full page stories on this topic.</p> <p>NEA's Focus magazine has also been used by the GDNs to periodically advertise additional initiatives available to customers in vulnerable situations, such as the Locking Cooker Value.</p>
To engage with landlords to highlight the opportunities for assisted connections to reduce the energy bills of their tenants by converting to gas.	Advertising in the National Landlords Association magazine where key messages reach a circulation of more than 20,000 private landlords in the UK.
To collaboratively sponsor, support and attend events on alleviating fuel poverty and protecting vulnerable customers.	<p>Sponsoring and exhibiting at the Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency Group (FPEEG) dinner, which was attended by 81 delegates, including 11 MPs and 2 Peers. A representative from the GDNs provided the key note speech at the FPEEG dinner calling, for government to provide funding for central heating systems in fuel poor households and set timescales for eradication of fuel poverty. This event further raised awareness of our collaboration and the potential to deliver benefits to customers locally and support the national target to eradicate fuel poverty.</p> <p>Joint exhibition stand at the national NEA conference.</p>
To work with the NEA to conduct controlled trial of two energy savings devices: Tadpole and Chop Cloc. Funding costs of these trials met collaboratively by the GDNs, who are reviewing the next stage of support for energy saving devices in anticipation of a positive outcome from these trials.	<p>Trials of both devices underway. Completion and results will be available summer 2017.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tadpole device is designed to make central heating more efficient by removing air from the pressurised system.</li> <li>- Chop Cloc reduces energy usage by allowing the user to have better control of the heating thermostat.</li> </ul> <p>The next phase of this project will involve GDNs identifying potential projects for installing low cost devices in fuel poor and off gas grid households, working collaboratively with local authorities and/or housing associations directly where fuel poor customers will benefit from lower energy bills.</p>
To continue to support District Heating Schemes (DHS), where appropriate, to help lift customers out of fuel poverty.	<p>District Heating Scheme currently being installed in two tower blocks in Scotland containing a total of 172 flats. The project is due to be completed by August 2017.</p> <p>A further tower block containing 50 flats has</p>

	<p>undergone the planning stage in 2016/17, and is due to commence in May 2017. Experience of District Heating Systems has subsequently been shared between all GDNs.</p>
<p>To engage with stakeholders in the healthcare sector to raise awareness of the opportunity to use the FPNES to assist in lifting individuals and families out of fuel poverty, which potentially brings multiple health benefits.</p>	<p>Attended Faculty of Medical Health annual conference in Brighton to engage with stakeholders from the healthcare sector.</p> <p>Engagement with prominent members of NHS Scotland and England.</p> <p>Full page advert promoting FPNES in annual awards dinner schedule (the only featured advert), and provided sponsorship for listing of awards ceremony.</p>

**b. Social: Safeguarding customers in vulnerable situations**  
**GROUPS – Safeguarding Customers Working Group via the ENA**

As an industry, we can work together to plan and respond to the needs of our customers to keep them safe and warm, no matter what their circumstances. Throughout the past twelve months, there have been numerous outputs progressed through GDN collaboration supporting wider industry work.

Key areas of focus	Outcomes and Benefits for 2016/17
To create a standard set of verbal principles to ensure all GDNs and the industry is consistent in how explicit informed consent is gained from customers at the point of their registration.	<p>Connecting customers to our services in a fair and equal way is something we are all passionate about. The creation and implementation of these easy to use principles provides best practice and consistency. It was through the pulling together of the discussions and outputs of the Safeguarding Customers WG that GDN members were able to group the building blocks that have since become the verbal principles.</p> <p>The use of principles rather than scripts allows for cultural and regional differences in terminology to be incorporated, allowing for a more meaningful use across our businesses. We are working together to share examples of good practice to support individual training programmes.</p>
To create a Priority Services Register (PSR) that supports the Information Commissioner Officer's eight principles of privacy law and is based upon the idea of the direct debit guarantee which is recognised worldwide.	We have created a plain English PSR promise which allows customers to understand easily how their information will be used when they sign up to the PSR and gives them confidence and reassurance from the beginning of the process. Having a single version of the promise also allows the energy industry to have a consistent approach, so customers receive the same experience regardless of the company.
A commitment to implement the Locking Cooker Valve programme across all GDN's.	<p>All of our networks now offer this service and are working hard to promote it. The feedback from this simple device has been very positive and is without question making our customer's homes safer.</p> <p>This initiative will continue over the next year, with a view to ensuring that all appropriate organisations and charities are aware of this crucial service.</p>
To do more to support customers in vulnerable situations with a focus on ensuring our services are accessible for our deaf customers.	Working with the Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD), we have jointly commissioned the creation of three films which helps those who are deaf understand what to do if they smell gas, are without power or want to register upon the PSR. These films are now readily accessible



	though our individual websites, and we are in the process of tracking the number of views/hits so we can assess their effectiveness before discussing our next steps.
Continue to support the SMART metering roll-out across the UK.	We have worked together and shared our approaches to managing our business as usual processes during Smart Metering roll out, ensuring that there is no impact to safety or the customer experience

## 2. Carbon Monoxide (CO) Awareness

### GROUPS – GDN CO Awareness Best Practice Working Group via the ENA

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odourless, colourless and tasteless gas, which on average results in 200 people being hospitalised and 40 fatalities in the UK each year. The GDNs continue to raise awareness on the dangers of CO and do this through employing a range of initiatives.

Key areas of focus	Outcomes and Benefits 2016/17
To raise awareness on the dangers of CO to primary school children. We have launched an education campaign with our super hero, Safety Seymour. Targeted at key stage 1 school children, the daylong session takes place in schools and aims to educate on the dangers of CO whilst having fun.	<p>We have delivered the session in over 48 schools which fall into CO hot spot areas, where there is a high number of reported carbon monoxide incidents, and in 56 individual classes which has reached in the region of 1700 children. We are supporting each other with training and the implementation and will continue the roll out of Safety Seymour into 17/18.</p> <p>Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning awareness charity CO-Gas Safety together with the GDNs across the UK, have won the Heating &amp; Ventilation (H&amp;V) News Safety Initiative of the Year Award for 2016.</p>
To inspire change in CO safety behaviour. As a result we have launched our CO schools poster competition. It remains targeted at key stage 1 and 2 school children and complements our Safety Seymour campaign. Children can submit their pictures, poems, and videos to regional judging panels which then go to a national final to decide on the overall winner.	Through collaboration with ENA and ourselves we have used social and traditional media to raise awareness of the national competition and reach a higher number of entries than ever before. Last year we saw a total of 674 entries, with an award ceremony at the Palace of Westminster in June 2016, which will take place again in June 2017.
To find innovative ways in which we can raise awareness and promote further key messaging around the detection of CO across our networks. This year have launched a Carbon Monoxide (CO) Charity Fund to further support this.	<p>The Carbon Monoxide (CO) Charity Fund invites UK charities and organisations to apply for funding to support their CO related initiatives. We are currently considering the applications received for this year and will potentially award one-off grants up to the value of £2,000 from the fund of £10,000.</p> <p>We have had 4 responses from RoSPA, Angus Care and Repair, CO Gas safety and Dominic trust which are currently being considered.</p>
To create and share consistent messages. Working together helps us reach more people, trial more innovative ideas, measure them in a consistent and meaningful way to enable best practice and, through doing this, change behaviour.	<p>In 2016/17 our schemes delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 113, 256 survey responses</li> <li>• 26,346 CO alarms given to vulnerable customers;</li> <li>• 8.99 average rating of CO awareness following our Interaction (on a scale of 1-10)</li> <li>• 24.6% increase in CO awareness as a result of our interaction</li> </ul>

To continue to promote the importance of awareness of CO with political decision makers. We have continued our membership of the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group to support this.

We have liaised with Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and Assembly Members of the Welsh Government (AMs) to raise awareness and we also look to develop measures to reduce the risks of accidental harm caused by exposure to CO, totalling 13 events, meetings and panel discussions held in Westminster under the banner of either the CO All Fuels Action Forum and the All-Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group. 13 mentions in House of Lords and House of Commons debates & written questions submitted to relevant departments on the subject of CO following our interactions with them. Two new MPs recruited as APPCOG Co-chairs – Margaret Ferrier and Margaret Ritchie



### 3. Ensuring a sustainable future

**GROUPS – ENA co-ordinated Gas Futures Group (GFG); Gas Innovation and Governance Group (GIGG) and Environmental Working Group**

Sustaining our future is a strong theme for all of the networks. We focus on sharing environment best practice, decarbonisation of heat gas and meeting the challenge of the energy trilemma in line with the needs of our customers. Collaborative emphasis for sustaining our future has also focused on environmental best practice, and reducing the environmental footprint of the networks.

Key areas of focus	Outcomes and Benefits 2016/17
To commission an independent study on the role of the gas networks in Britain's energy future, alongside an analysis of potential alternative scenarios and potential energy solutions which could offer a solution to the energy trilemma.	<p>We, along with National Grid Gas Transmission (NGGT), Brookfield Utilities and Gas Networks Ireland, commissioned KPMG to carry out the study (a joint investment of almost £147,000). In July 2016, KPMG published: 2050 Energy Scenarios: <i>The UK Gas Networks role in a 2050 whole energy system</i></p> <p>The report evaluated a full range of scenarios to represent how the energy system may develop to 2050, and identified policy initiatives to realise the benefits emerging from this analysis. The report finds that evolution of the gas networks, injecting green gas such as hydrogen into the grid, offers significant cost savings against alternative low carbon heating sources. Gas is least expensive option for customers to achieve 2050 CO<sub>2</sub> carbon reduction targets.</p> <p>It also says that transport decarbonisation policy needs to be integrated with power and heat decarbonisation policy.</p>
To engage with stakeholders to share information regarding our energy futures messages.	<p>We have carried out several events this year to engage with key stakeholders to share information regarding our energy futures messages, these have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A joint event with the All Party Parliamentary Renewable and Sustainable Energy Group (PRASEG), focussing on gas delivering for customers and supporting the low carbon economy.</li> <li>• Future of Gas Awareness showcase in July. The purpose of this event was to raise awareness amongst Ofgem staff of the gas networks and their future important contribution to the UK economy.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In April 2016, ENA and Geode (a European Trade association that represents distribution system operators from most member states) held an event in the European Parliament to launch a report on green gas that all members of the GFG contributed to. The event brought together industry representatives and key policy makers from across Europe to discuss the 'energy renaissance' which gas is undergoing, and the long term role that green gas can play in meeting demand in an affordable, secure and sustainable energy future.</li> <li>• An ENA and Utility Week roundtable on the future of heat in the House of Commons on 2<sup>nd</sup> March.</li> <li>• Energy Utility Alliance National Conference – brought the gas industry and other influential stakeholders together with supply chain representatives. Issues discussed included key themes of the energy trilemma and how it is being tackled, together with expert opinion from leading think tank academics.</li> </ul> <p>Reached and influenced more than 60 MPs, advisors and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>Asked to help the Shadow Energy Team in developing a "Green Gas Book". This is a publication dealing with policy and practical aspects of the development of green gas, particularly Biomethane and Hydrogen, as a key element of the energy mix over the coming years.</p> <p>Participating in these events allow us to present our key innovation projects and the case for the gas networks to play a central role in our energy future to a select group of policy makers and influencers.</p>
<p>To engage and build relationships with key policy makers and raise awareness of the innovation and research being carried out by GDNs.</p>	<p>The GFG uses its monthly meetings to host key guest speakers, raising awareness of the innovative projects and research being carried out by the GDNs, building relationships with key policy makers to influence the UK's energy strategy. Greater understanding of other organisations' priorities, innovation and work to help us to make the links and share best practice. These have included: Hydrogen Fuel Cells Association; BEIS; Carbon Connect; Buro</p>

<p>Carbon Connect, sponsored by IGEM, is working on a research project to investigate the opportunities offered by low carbon gas to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions and the policy developments which are required to enable its deployment as a source of energy. The gas networks are all on the steering group.</p>	<p>Happold; Leeds University.</p> <p>This important project is examining the three areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues related to the gas distribution network and local storage</li> <li>- Issues related to the production and bulk storage of low carbon gas</li> <li>- Issues related to consumers and the development of compatible appliances</li> </ul> <p>The project sponsors are James Heappey MP, Callum McCaig MP and Alan Whitehead MP and the project is being formally launched in June, as part of Carbon Connect's Heat Series.</p>
<p>The GIGG group publish a quarterly newsletter which details all the activities in relation to new innovation projects, the annual LCNI Conference, ENA news and forthcoming events</p>	<p>This is an extremely beneficial forum where each GDN has a platform to share information and learning from innovation projects that are currently underway or that are in the pipeline.</p> <p>This is shared with a wide list of more than 60 stakeholders, including SMEs, DNOs and Ofgem and has been very well received.</p>
<p>To share learning from innovation project findings which look at the future use of our network. As GDNs, we have taken the lead in different areas of innovation, to build evidence on how the energy trilemma can best be resolved, sharing learning from project findings.</p> <p>Key projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hydrogen – WWU &amp; NGN</li> <li>• bioSNG – Cadent</li> <li>• Oban – SGN</li> <li>• CNG (transport) – Cadent</li> <li>• Freedom project – WWU &amp; WPD</li> <li>• Biomethane – all</li> </ul>	<p>CEO meetings and various other forums have taken place to share learning over future options for our gas networks.</p> <p>NGN and WWU are investigating how we might best face the challenges of using zero-carbon hydrogen in the gas network; Cadent is focusing attention on the use of bioSNG and also on how low-carbon gas could be used to decarbonise transport.</p> <p>SGN's Oban project is using this standalone gas network to investigate the possibilities of adding different, non-traditional composition gasses to this gas network. All the networks are investigating adding biomethane to the gas networks with current connected capacity standing at the ability to power 277,957 homes and business from this low-carbon gas across the networks.</p> <p>WWU has commissioned a model that can predict how different mixes of renewables will perform in different geographical regions, across the seasons and across demand, helping match the demand and supply possibilities. A second WWU study has researched the ability and aptitude of different energy consumers and investors to pay for changes to their energy systems.</p>



	<p>Collaboration between gas and electricity networks is also being pursued; project Freedom is a collaboration between WWU and Western Power Distribution, investigating the best way to power and heat homes using the most cost effective and low-carbon fuel available at any given time of the day or night, be that electricity or gas, at different times of day, using smart technology.</p>
<p>To facilitate green gas entry. Through the Distributed Gas Entry Group, we have looked at the impact of renewable gas on our networks and explore how we can harmonise our connection and commissioning arrangements, and to identify learning from the development of distributed renewables on the electricity network.</p>	<p>In order to support the use of biogas generally and the entry of biomethane into the network, we worked with IGEM to develop standards for biomethane network entry and biogas entry.</p> <p>We've introduced consistent Voluntary Standards of Service (VSOS) for Biomethane connections. This means wherever the connection is happening in the country, there is a consistent service and sharing of connection performance and that we, in turn, are making sure the standards are working for our customers.</p>

