

QUESTIONS

1. Please provide further clarity on the 'social legacy' described in section 7, page 10 of your Part 2 submission and section 8, pages 9-10 of Part 3. Specifically, please explain how this legacy is evidenced in the areas noted on pages 10 of both Part 2 and Part 3 of your submission.
2. Page 1 of Part 2 of your submission indicates that stakeholder engagement has been widened and that NPg's approach is comprehensive and holistically embedded within the business. Your submission also notes that senior staff continue to receive training in stakeholder engagement. Please provide responses to the following:
 - a. Please clarify why this training is required when stakeholder engagement is already well embedded in the business?
 - b. Please explain, with examples, how stakeholder engagement has influenced business priorities.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed both the ways of working and how stakeholder engagement is conducted. Please provide responses to the following:
 - a. How have stakeholders helped you put in place new ways of working for the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - b. What new methods of stakeholder engagement have you found useful and why?
 - c. What learnings from the pandemic are enabling you to deliver more for customers and stakeholders?
4. Many companies are using technologies such as Artificial Intelligence to improve stakeholder engagement.
 - a. Please explain what steps have been taken to use technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and others to improve stakeholder engagement, deliver benefits to stakeholders and improve services to vulnerable customers.
 - b. What data sets have you made available to other stakeholders?
 - c. What help, if any, are you giving these stakeholders with using the data?

Our Social Legacy programme joins together our network investment programme, active engagement with targeted community support, built upon a detailed understanding and tailored to local community needs. Focusing on social impact, a range of focused and sustainable initiatives support our physical improvement programmes. These initiatives are designed to have a positive impact on people's lives. Our efforts focus on economic, social, and environmental well-being and aim to be self-sustaining; leaving a legacy beyond our improvement work.

In the Bradford example, over 9% of people live with depression and anxiety, and women in the city experience poor health outcomes. Supporting the civic mental health strategy, we invested in the recruitment and training of volunteer mentors to deliver health and mental health support, advice and training to local women. The scale of support will grow by a factor of 20 over the next 3 years, creating a sustainable pool of volunteer community activists. Working with the training partner (WomensAid), we support the recruitment of new volunteer peer mentors and review feedback from service users to measure enduring impact of our programme.

Bradford social mapping shows, in particular, high education vulnerabilities with an almost 10% attainment gap between pupils in the city at KS2, and the national average. Working with community leaders and our education partners - Teach First, we consulted and agreed on funding for six new primary school teachers in the city, with a 3-year minimum requirement for teaching in Bradford and a particular area of interest in STEM. Anticipated benefits include dedicated and extended learning in STEM subjects for the initial 450 pupils in the cohort. Teach First provides regular updates alongside KS2 level results in STEM areas each year, for three years. These results inform our decisions about expanding this programme to other sites in the future.

Working closely with Bradford councillors with our shared goals to reduce carbon emissions, we identified potential savings of 3,200 tco₂, if we were able to off-set our work. We agreed on tree planting as the best method, in line with Bradford's Net Zero Action Plan to eliminate emissions by 2038 and increase tree cover in the city. Working with the Woodland Trust, we are planting 48,000 trees, creating over 21 ha of mixed native woodland: completely offsetting emissions from our investment work, creating an area of increased biodiversity. Certified to UN sustainability goal standards, our project partners are managing the new woodland ensuring it continues to deliver benefits.

These examples illustrate the different aspects of Social Legacy, aligned to the needs of a community. To evaluate longer-term benefits, our independent partner 'Impact Research' monitors both the qualitative and quantitative outcomes, ensuring the legacy approach delivers sustainable benefits for the communities in which we are investing.

2A – On-going training and development is vital to future-proof our engagement strategies and ensure they *remain* embedded within the business, continually aligning with the changing needs and priorities of our stakeholders. Through our culture of continuous improvement, training enables us to share learning experiences across teams and develops confidence and more mature engagement skills through peer-to-peer learning – making sure everyone across our business is familiar with new engagement methods and also the changing external context. A network of engagement leads enables us to be agile as an organisation, such as our immediate response to the changing needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A blended approach of training, coaching and one-to-one support ensures that existing and new colleagues understand their engagement responsibilities and the difference this makes to our customers.

2B – Engagement is critical to our business strategy; it helps us challenge, inform and improve our plans, driving improvements in our services based on understanding of our customers' diverse needs and priorities. We proactively seek out views on how to improve our service offer; for example, we spoke with over 100 stakeholders about their expectations of our EV services. A common theme emerging is collaboration; equipping stakeholders with the knowledge to enable EV infrastructure and we developed a project that considers using EVs as mobile batteries allowing future customers to sell energy from their vehicles. We consult widely, publishing our support guide for stakeholders, 'Maximising the value of electric vehicles', and co-creating our EV-enabling tool, AutoDesign, in collaboration with 22 Local Authorities to underpin their ambitious plans.

Stakeholders shape our strategic direction – our stakeholder panel and stakeholder summit discussions focused on creating a sustainable energy future for the North. Responding to this feedback, we have put in place a stretch target and plans to reduce our business carbon footprint by an additional 40% and increase the scale of replacement of fluid filled cables across our region by an additional 68% to 224km. **We understand the vital role our communities play in the climate change emergency.** We interviewed 20 community energy groups across the region about their future needs, developing a 22-point strategy for the business, whilst also supporting the sector with a long-term growth fund worth £75,000 helping groups create new sustainable business models. We are also giving this sector a permanent, direct voice in our decision making with a 10-member panel to ensure our joint plans are inclusive. **We challenge our understanding of stakeholder needs and adapt our plans.** Our stakeholders want us to guarantee that our future energy plans are socially inclusive - not leaving behind vulnerable customers. With them, we scrutinised our DSO proposal, working with subject matter experts, we developed our 7-point action plan that creates the route-map for an inclusive energy transition – the first of its kind.

3A – Early, systemic engagement with our stakeholders enabled us to adapt our working practices in response to the pandemic quickly. Ensuring the safety of our workforce and the public, we worked with TUs, HESAC and Local Resilience Forums to adapt our work programmes and how we completed outstanding work. Collaborating with NHS Trusts and regional infrastructure bodies, we reviewed all key connections to critical services to improve resilience of supply, work flexibility with regional partners to quickly connect our nightingale hospitals. With regular communications with customers, we paused non-essential work and brought in social distancing practices to ensure we could continue to provide our critical service for customers. We contacted all PSR customers to provide advice and used our Silent Power EVs to generate in areas of unplanned power cuts with a focus on our most vulnerable customers e.g. pharmacies. We continue to share plans with stakeholders and expert panels to seek advice, ensuring they remain responsive and fit for purpose - ready for a second wave should it arise.

3B – In constant dialogue with our stakeholders, we introduced a “digital-first” engagement strategy (with clearly signposted non-digital options) during the pandemic. Video conferencing roundtables and workshops maintain valuable face-to-face conversations, enabling an increase in scale, accessibility and effectiveness of our engagement. Taking cybersecurity seriously, we worked with digital engagement experts to provide technical and facilitation support. Feedback has been positive; this approach has eased restrictions for those with caring responsibilities or where geography is a barrier. Taking accessibility seriously; telephone interviews, postal communications, partnership working and surveys, ensure our hard to reach are not excluded. These non-digital engagements have been more effective than anticipated, securing feedback, involvement and co-creation of new services from vulnerable and future customers.

3C - The pandemic has taught us that some stakeholders feel excluded from traditional face-to-face engagement methods. Retaining aspects of digital engagement will ensure that our plans remain inclusive, lower in cost and with a positive environmental impact. We must be ready to adapt to transient, elevated levels of vulnerability, we therefore, swiftly re-focused our community fund; setting up resilience grants for third sector partners, supported by increased volunteering in areas impacted such as food banks. We know from feedback that the pandemic has triggered an urgent focus on the need for sustainable economic growth. Working with the FSB, we have set up a dedicated SME panel to feed into our business planning, and we’re working with Local Authorities and LEPs to accelerate the development of Local Area Energy Plans. We are also reviewing our social programmes to identify where we can capacity build to support customers in fuel poverty and support employability initiatives.

4A - AI capabilities and an open data approach support our improvements in engagement and deliver greater benefits. Examples include - our partnership with data experts Experian supporting our “social mapping” tool which informs the choice of locations and the focus of our social programme; tailoring support for vulnerable customers and communities. AI has a growing role; we record power cut information and machine learning will combine this with weather and traffic data, giving better insight into the factors affecting restoration times - transforming the accuracy of text updates to customers. This ‘learning’ capability will continually get better. Our IVR system ‘intelligently’ identifies priority service customers and routes them seamlessly and immediately to a PSR Coordinator. Our robotics team have developed automated, “smart” technologies like dynamic network monitoring to reduce outage times and lower costs and new drone monitoring trials are reducing our carbon footprint and improving resilience for all our customers, enabling quicker identification and issue resolution.

4B – Our “open data” approach means we share a wide range of data sets for the benefit of stakeholders and customers. For example, in partnership with ODI Leeds, we launched a Future Energy Scenarios (DFES) tool and all supporting data, to enable regional decarbonisation planning and, responding proactively to stakeholder feedback, developed a heat map of 110 MW of spare capacity on our network for the provision of rapid charging stations. We collaborate with Newcastle University and the National Innovation Centre for Data to explore the opportunities for productivity improvements from combining our data sets and developed dashboards using the latest data analytics tools to assess our performance for unplanned power cuts. Supporting our community partners, we negotiated the removal of licensing costs for our social mapping data – giving free access. We know that this data is already being used to support successful inward investment –with £4m granted to VONNE for their community work.

4C– To enable sharing, we are investigating the use of data automation technologies that use artificial intelligence to create data catalogues and a ‘data marketplace’ to make our open data readily available to all. Our partnership with the ODI Leeds means we are able to better understand stakeholders’ data requirements and tailor our data into the most useable formats. Supporting our stakeholders, we developed co-creation workshops, training webinars and train-the-trainer sessions to enable the use of heat maps, our DFES tool, AutoDesign and our social mapping tools. We have also supported community partners with peer-to-peer learning, and brought together academic experts with stakeholders to share insight from the tools and data we make available such as decarbonisation tool kits. Where possible, we create visuals or animations to aid usage and offer one to one surgeries to help stakeholders to develop solutions and plans using their own data sets.