

# Western Power Distribution Vulnerable Business Stakeholder Engagement April 2015



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## 1. Introduction

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Western Power Distribution (WPD) has been engaging with stakeholders on its draft Business Plan for a number of years before submitting it in 2013 as part of Ofgem's most recent price control, RIIO-ED1. When it was fast-tracked in 2014, WPD began a further programme of engagement on the delivery of the Business Plan.

One of the key findings of the most recent round of engagement was that WPD had not done enough to engage with small and medium businesses. In response to this, in April 2015, WPD hosted two workshops dedicated to addressing the concerns of small and medium businesses in Birmingham and Bristol and organised telephone interviews with key business stakeholders, such as Federation of Small Businesses representatives.

Westbourne (WB) was appointed, as a specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, to independently facilitate this programme of engagement on behalf of WPD and neutrally report back on the outputs. This report details the stakeholder feedback gathered at the workshops and during the telephone interviews.

At the events, each of the workshop sessions featured presentations by senior WPD representatives followed by roundtable discussions. The roundtable workshops were facilitated by trained WB facilitators and stakeholders' comments were captured by WB scribes.

During the telephone interviews, stakeholders were asked a series of multiple choice questions about their views and experience of WPD's engagement, with a WB facilitator noting down any additional comments they made.

Where possible, verbatim quotes have been noted by the WB scribes. However, comments were not attributed to individuals in order to ensure that all stakeholders could speak as candidly as possible.

A copy of the presentation given by WPD can be found [here](#).

## 2. Overview of the approach

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WB engaged with small and medium businesses in two different ways - stakeholder workshops in Birmingham and Bristol and through telephone interviews with those people who were unable to attend.

The discussions focused on three topics:

- **Topic 1: Understanding 'vulnerability' for small and medium businesses.** The first workshop examined the definition of a 'vulnerable' business and the key factors that affect it.
- **Topic 2: Developing a WPD action plan with respect to low customer awareness and reliability and resilience.** The second workshop focused on understanding how aware small and medium businesses are of WPD and what they would expect in preparing for, or reacting to, power outages or dips.
- **Topic 3: Developing a WPD action plan with respect to new connections and street-works.** The third workshop focused on understanding the experience of small and medium businesses when connecting to the grid and the impact of street-works on their business.

### Workshops

There were three discussion sessions within the overall workshop that provided an opportunity for stakeholders to feedback their experience and thoughts on how WPD engage with small and medium businesses. One 30-minute workshop was held for each topic.

A total of 16 stakeholders attended the two workshops. There were a range of stakeholders, including representatives from small and medium businesses, FSBs, LEPs, Chambers of Commerce, other business organisations and the engineering and energy/utility sectors.

All of the stakeholders who attended completed a survey of 12 questions. Ten questions were quantitative while the final two questions allowed stakeholders to give qualitative feedback. The results have been published at the end of each topic section.

### Telephone interviews

A number of stakeholders were not able to attend either of the workshops but were keen to engage with WPD. WB followed up with these stakeholders, requesting a telephone interview to gather their feedback.

A total of 22 stakeholders conducted telephone interviews, representing small and medium businesses, FSBs, Chambers of Commerce, LEPs and other business organisations.

## Organisations

Representatives from the following organisations either attended a stakeholder workshop or carried out a telephone interview:

- Bath Federation of Small Businesses
- Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
- Birmingham Federation of Small Businesses
- Black Country Consortium
- Black Country Federation of Small Businesses
- Bristol Federation of Small Businesses
- Cotswold Federation of Small Businesses
- Coventry Federation of Small Businesses
- Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce
- Eaton
- East Devon Federation of Small Businesses
- Forest of Dean Federation of Small Businesses
- Energy Savings Trust
- Goodflo
- Herefordshire Federation of Small Businesses
- Hermes Energy
- Hobbs and Palmer
- ISA Security Services Ltd
- Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce
- Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland Federation of Small Businesses
- North East Lincolnshire Federation of Small Businesses
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Federation of Small Businesses
- Pembrokeshire Federation of Small Businesses
- Rugby Federation of Small Businesses
- Somerset Chamber of Commerce
- St Andrews Healthcare
- Steve Gerry Consulting
- Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Supacat
- Sutton Coldfield Town Centre
- Taunton and District Federation of Small Businesses
- Torbay Federation of Small Businesses
- West Midlands Federation of Small Businesses
- Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership

### 3. Summary of feedback

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#### Topic 1. Understanding 'vulnerability' for small and medium businesses

- Small and medium businesses are particularly vulnerable as they don't think tend to consider their own resilience and equipment such as generators represent a significant cost for them.
- WPD's role in the wider energy industry isn't views as being clear enough.
- WPD could help businesses develop a resilience plan by sending out a list of questions or points to cover. This could include low cost, small-scale solutions for businesses. If done by email, this could even include a video.
- Businesses want a sense of confidence that WPD are 'on top of it'. This could relate to awareness of unexpected power cuts, giving sufficient notice on planned outages or simply ensuring there is a reliable supply.
- Engagement should be through existing channels like local business organisations, as small and medium businesses don't have much time to engage with WPD.
- It was clear from the quantitative findings that small and medium businesses and their representatives felt they were 'vulnerable', often because they did not have any kind of resilience plan in place. There was a strong consensus that there was a role for WPD to play in engaging with them.

#### Topic 2. Developing a WPD action plan with respect to: low customer awareness and reliability and resilience

##### Customer awareness

- WPD's role in raising awareness should be advisory, although it was noted that this requires an increased level of visibility.
- WPD should utilise existing opportunities for branding, such as staff uniforms or vehicles.
- Making letters and correspondence stand out is crucial to increasing awareness and making sure it doesn't get ignored.
- The quantitative data showed an overwhelming level of support for increasing awareness of WPD amongst small and medium businesses.



## Reliability and resilience

- The key to making sure messages regarding planned outages get through is to use a range of communication channels, including text messages, apps and traditional post.
- As with the wider public, businesses have become more complacent about the fragility of power supply and therefore don't think about resilience planning.
- The effect of unplanned power outages can be huge, impacting staff throughout a company.
- The quantitative data showed that loss of productivity was seen as the most disruptive impact of a power cut.

## **Topic 3. Developing a WPD action plan on new connections and street-works**

### New Connections

- There was a sense of unfairness that a company, particularly if it's a small one, can tip the area into a higher power supply threshold, which they then have to pay for.
- It would help small and medium businesses if the process for applying for new connections was clearer.
- Clearly early engagement is crucial. It was felt that WPD should raise awareness of the importance of connections and encourage businesses to contact them as soon as they can.

### Street-works

- What is often forgotten in discussions around street-works is that there should be a principle that you 'reinstate it as you find it'.
- WPD should engage with businesses, through their representatives, about the best time to do street-works.
- WPD should give as much advance warning of street-works as possible.
- Most respondents ranked their experience of street-works in their area as three out of five.
- When asked to choose their preferred method of engagement on upcoming street-works, the most popular option was by post.

### Written Feedback on events

- Overall, 60% of those who completed and returned feedback forms on the day thought the event was very interesting, while 40% felt it was interesting.
- 100% of respondents felt they had the opportunity to make their points and ask questions. 62% strongly agreed, while 38% agreed.
- Similarly, 100% felt the right topics were discussed on the day, with 37% strongly agreeing and 63% agreeing.

Stakeholders were given a chance to make additional comments on the feedback form, these included *'I would welcome engagement from WPD to identify initiatives which would improve resilience and generation opportunities'*.

## 4. Topic 1: Understanding ‘vulnerability’ for small and medium businesses

The first workshop involved a discussion on small and medium businesses’ approach to vulnerability and the key factors that will affect it.

Discussions were intended to be relatively unstructured, allowing attendees more freedom to cover and raise topics they felt were relevant. The questions covered the following topics:

- How to define a ‘vulnerable business’.
- The role of resilience plans for small and medium businesses and where WPD can help.
- The factors that impact small and medium businesses the most.
- How and why WPD should engage with small and medium businesses.

### Birmingham

Table 1:

- A small or medium business representative began with *‘my business just moved to this area to consolidate the working operation and gain some commercial efficiencies. We had no experience with WPD until we moved as we were in a rural area. My first experience was a power cut on a non-working day where the electronic gates wouldn’t work. While on a working day, the PCs wouldn’t work.’*
- A small or medium business representative stated that (s)he *‘operates a 24 hour control service. We do consider ourselves vulnerable. If there was a power cut that would be an issue for us. We have to get generators and that is a big cost for us. Second thing is a lot of our customers are vulnerable too. We look after banks and similar businesses. If there is a power cut and the alarm goes off then we have to dispatch security to the area. So if there are two or three banks on the same road and the alarm goes off then we must go patrol the area and we have to send people out, and we have limited resources. But the primary problem is the lack of communication, when we talk to the people on the ground about the power cut and we ask how long it is, they don’t know. So the first thing is knowing how long the power cut will last. The second thing is knowing who to contact, I think that’s a big one. There is a section in our plan about continuity, and we need to put it in our documents who to contact.’*
- An FSB representative highlighted that *‘it is slightly representative. At the FSB, we do regular polls every month and the opinion of the electricity suppliers amongst our members is frankly appalling’.*

- A LEP representative began *‘when I was invited, I thought, what contribution could I make to this conversation? So I did a bit of a survey with the businesses in the area. The list you’ve got up there on the “some of the factors you may wish to consider” slide is on the right track. I can understand the overhead cable issue. Living in a rural area, we get a lot more power outages because of the overhead power line. Your customers expect things to work, we’ve grown to expect things to work. People expect continuity of supply, so if you run a small business you don’t have the type of resources to keep that going.’*
- A small or medium business representative pointed out that *‘funding resilience can be difficult. It’s about mitigation and managing.’*
- A LEP representative wondered *‘if your customers would rather have slightly higher bills but more reliability and security. It might be worth spending X more to make sure that WPD ensure security.’*
- A business organisation representative stated *‘I agree, you would need security over anything. A lot of things are absolutely dependent on power so it might be worth considering raising the costs to ensure reliability.’*
- A LEP representative however, pointed out that *‘if it was a simple trade off, then that would be great but often times it is not the case.’*
- An FSB representative commented that (s)he *‘thinks that treating a small business like a domestic customer is quite important. FSB statistics say 99.3% employ less than 49 people. In my experience, most of our members are micro businesses.’*
- A LEP representative highlighted *‘your part of the bill is a relatively small. I think it would be worth putting the breakdown on the bill online. If you do raise the bill to increase resilience we would need proof that security is going up as well for the extra cost of the bill – which would be difficult to prove.’*
- A LEP representative argued that *‘half the problem is that no one really understands who you are, what you do and how the system works. The first thing that people do is phone the Midlands Electricity Board. There is a big communications issue, which has been illustrated today.’*
- A business organisation representative stated *‘I think knowing who is responsible for what and who will do what is what needs to be communicated.’*

## Bristol

Table 1:

- A LEP representative highlighted that *‘our vulnerability is that we’ve got quite large growth ambitions. We need to be able to service those ambitions, know how to grow and find out what the best solutions are for that.’*
- An energy/utility company representative stated that *‘any problems with supply or reliability will stop growth. How do you get a fair picture on vulnerability? We’ve got both town and a lot of countryside in our area. Is that a big issue? How do we*

*aggregate the concerns? Growth at the moment is the issue, but we also don't know at the moment how vulnerable we are.'*

- An engineering representative raised the point that *'we are concerned about our business – specifically supply. We're looking at growth as well, there are other developments taking place. Do we have connection problems in the future? We've got roof space, can we connect? Is there an ability? As our company grows, do we have the capacity to get more machines? We need to understand what is there, what connections we're able to be use, and if there is any overall plan to develop there. I've never had specific discussions about these growth plans with anyone at WPD. Ideally we would like to have a bit more information of what we can do going forward.'*
- An FSB representative added *'my concern is that this type of conversation is more anecdotal than statistical. There are a vast amount of businesses that are affected in so many different ways. Manufacturing companies are affected differently than others. To quantify anecdotal evidence statistically is very difficult. If you're looking at offices, everything is moving to the cloud. Effectively, the biggest issue that small businesses have is awareness and the resources to do anything about it. If you work in big multinationals, you have the resources to do that. To mitigate against the risk or the potential losses may not be very practical.'*
- An energy/utility company representative felt that *'maybe you need to make it visible by asking a series of questions. Ask businesses questions and give them a suggestion on how to build resilience. It's a method to highlight the easy wins, to provide small scale solutions that will be low cost and it would encourage people to think about it before it happens.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'one of the disadvantages we have is that we have the expectations that the electricity will stay on all the time.'*
- An FSB representative considered *'you can be aware of a disaster, but if you can't do anything about it, it's difficult.'*
- A LEP representative commented that *'the sentiment for us is that it's not much of an issue. People can put the costs to the customers. If the information is out there and easy to access people may be able to mitigate it more.'*
- An engineering representative stated that *'We've got designers that want big powerful machines and they work on the stand alone desktop computers. We've got about 120 employees, and about two-thirds are on computers. We've got 25 designers, and power failure to them is a big concern. What we have done is split the business up, although we're on the one site, we've got five locations, and servers. We've done that for power cuts, and for quality of supply. We've had a lot of equipment damage as well because of irregular voltages. It's been a part of our*

**“ Maybe you need to make it visible by asking a series of questions. Ask businesses questions and give them a suggestion on how to build resilience. ”**

*growing process. We do have a resilience plan in place. It's about the unknowns and the monitoring.'*

- An engineering representative added *'for us it was the events taking place, and people moaning, it kept getting pushed up the network. The more people we got on the network, it forced the finance department to think about it and sort it. If we've got 100 people on computers then a power failure would stop 100 people working.'*
- A LEP representative highlighted *'that's where you start developing a business case.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'it could be the life or death of a company if you miss a contract in a particular circumstance.'*
- An energy/utility company representative raised the point that *'this is where you could do an aggregate for your business park.'*
- An FSB representative felt that (s)he doesn't *'believe people think it's worth paying for at the moment. It may not be critical for my particular 20 customers at the moment.'*
- An energy/utility company representative commented *'you might go through this process and ask customers to assess their vulnerability and then flag to them if you think they need help. What data is there that you can analyse?'*
- A LEP representative asked *'how do you know if there will be development in that area? How do you mitigate the risks for that?'*
- An FSB representative asked *'do you use planning application information?'*
- An energy/utility company representative highlighted *'I don't think you're making use of your aggregators.'*
- A LEP representative raised the point that *'while we have intelligence on our big companies, we don't have much information on our small businesses. If there is a cluster then are people we need to get involved with.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'I have important information about the communication. I thought it was junk mail. It said 'Dear Stakeholder', then we got a phone call and we thought it was a scam.'*

Table 2:

- A chamber of commerce representative said that they have not previously been invited or involved and that it was *'valuable for the businesses in Somerset to be involved and start to cement these relationships.'*
- An engineering representative said that they had *'come to give views from both sides; as a supplier and a customer.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative felt that there are *'quite a few different ways in which businesses in Somerset are vulnerable; there are quite a few large production companies in Somerset and the cost of production grinding to a halt is enormous. From a population perspective Somerset has a large proportion of people aged over 64. There are aspects of the business community that are*

*vulnerable. I do not know of us as having had previous engagement with WPD. It would be good to do more on that. From our surveys we have developed a regional business plan based on the Chamber's Plan for Britain and we decided that infrastructure is very important for Somerset as we are quite rural. When we surveyed our members we did not have much feedback on power and electricity. You are doing a good job. It would be nice to feedback to businesses about you.'*

- An FSB representative said that *'we have a top six list of our members concerns and electricity supply does not come into it. It is not one of those things people get niggled with. Three quarters of our members are one-person businesses and operate from their homes. What kind of user would they come under? Would they be identified as domestic or business users? The one thing from a vulnerability point of view for a small business is it depends on what you're doing. If you're doing something you know is electricity-dependent, you can plan and work your way around it.'*
- An engineering representative recounted *'when we last had an outage we got the torch and the electricity bill and there was a number to ring and it was very helpful. There was a recorded message that was very useful in giving us the information we needed and the problem was fixed earlier than they said.'*
- An FSB representative stated that *'when you know that the problem is known by WPD and is being dealt with that is very helpful.'*
- An engineering representative suggested that WPD could *'just send round a laminated card with the number on it and that can be put at reception.'*
- A business organisation suggested that WPD adopt *'some form of labelling. When there's an outage, the first place you go is the fuse box. If it hasn't tripped, but the number is there, then it's very easy. It could be as simple as just having a sticker you could stick to the meter or fuse box.'*
- A business organisation representative felt that *'all businesses are vulnerable, but there are degrees of vulnerability, and the degree is dependent on the nature of the business. We have become completely reliant on computers. If power stops then it grinds to a halt. We only have three-hour protection on emergency lighting. If after three hours the power is not back on then we have to evacuate the building to comply with fire regulations.'*
- A business organisation representative stated that *'when you have that information you can plan accordingly. An approximate time of when the power is going to be up and running again is vital, then you can plan.'*



- A business organisation representative understood that it is *'very difficult to quantify how long it's going to take to get the power back on.'*
- A business organisation representative reflected that *'a lot of companies do not necessarily think about what happens when they have to send everybody home and then the power comes back on again later. There needs to be education, companies need to know that the machinery needs to be turned off, because when the power comes back on it all comes alive again.'*
- An FSB representative felt that *'reflecting on our members, the vast majority are rural, because business rates are higher in the city. There is an acceptance among them that you will suffer the odd electricity disruption. If WPD can give notice that is even better. I've noticed that quite often power cuts come in pairs. So we also now expect the second one. If you've got the business in that position, that they kind of expect it, that is good. There is a trade-off between a couple of short outages and one much longer one.'*
- A business organisation representative said *'we are looking at putting generators in anyway as the downtime is very expensive. Depending on your location power outages are not normally very long. At least when you've been advised you can completely plan around it. The biggest problem is unplanned power cuts'*.
- An FSB representative felt that most business do not have *'a good business continuity plan.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative considered that *'a lot of businesses are getting to the point where they are thinking about business continuity. WPD could support them to think about what would actually be best for that business. If you could say this is how you work and this is how a power outage will impact on you then this would help them plan and be better prepared.'*
- An engineering representative felt that *'you would like some advice about the size of generator you would need.'*
- A business organisation representative pointed out that *'you need to know what your loading is and peak loading, so you can say "you're using this and you would need a generator like this".'*
- An engineering representative suggested that *'even a list of bullet points that people should consider when devising a plan would be very helpful.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative agreed that *'a question list would allow businesses to be proactive rather than reactive in drawing up their plans.'*
- A business organisation representative pointed out that *'often, people have a back-up generator but it hasn't been started for two years, there's no fuel in it and the battery hasn't been maintained. People have to take responsibility as well. WPD could devise a question list to help people with this.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted that guidance from WPD would show people that *'you may not need a generator in all aspects of the business and can, therefore, plan to keep the manufacturing going and not the office space.'*
- A business organisation representative argued that *'you need to tell people about the rules and regulations as well.'*

- An engineering representative pointed out that was good if WPD could simply say to businesses *'have you considered X?'*
- An FSB representative asked *'how do you tell us and inform us you are turning the electricity off tomorrow afternoon? All you want as a business is pre-warning.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative commented that *'in terms of rural locations, targeted information would be helpful. Rural businesses should be told about extreme weather situations and how those are dealt with. As an area we are learning to start planning. Something around this would be helpful.'*
- A business organisation representative said *'there is very little information out there that is made easily accessible about how you can advise and register with WPD about your condition and needs.'*
- An engineering representative pointed out that WPD provides *'an excellent service, but because of this we don't know about it and what to do when there's issues.'*

## Telephone Interviews

*Do you consider your business/your members' businesses to be vulnerable? How would you define vulnerable business?*

- An FSB representative commented that vulnerability is *'susceptibility to power cuts. It's not down time, but the effect on the internet that's the concern. We are in a small village so when there was no connectivity, we were isolated.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'I run a small rural business, which is susceptible to weather issues. We had a recent power cut which WPD said was a result of trees on weather lines; WPD needs to keep on top of these power cuts.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted that *'I view vulnerability as disruption to power. For example in a hotel or rural pub, if the power is disrupted there is a risk of stock being destroyed or you cannot serve guests. Generators are an option, but they are very costly and funding is difficult to secure.'*
- An FSB representative made the point that a vulnerable business is *'one that has risky power supply.'*
- An FSB representative commented that vulnerability is *'losing customers and customer base. I rely on power, but I'm not reliant on the main grid because I have a back-up generator.'*
- An FSB representative felt it is defined as *'how dependent they are on electricity and power.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'it's how susceptible they are to a power cut. FSB membership is a broad church, some are extremely vulnerable some are not at all. I work off a laptop personally so I can usually keep power if there's a power cut.'*
- An FSB representative stated that *'Tesco will be able to afford a generator but small businesses can't.'*

- An FSB representative made the point that *'not every single member of ours is vulnerable. We have a massive, eclectic mix of businesses. Some of them are one-person businesses, sitting in front of a computer. Some are very vulnerable. Even as a small business, if you have a power outage and you're running on your computer it just drops out and you can lose work. Once there was a power spike and that pretty much knocked out my computer. Now that's just one computer, but when you run a slightly bigger business it is a vulnerability.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'local businesses are vulnerable in terms of their power supply.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'the manufacturing sector is dependent on the power supply. We don't have that many manufacturing companies, they're mostly retail or independent consultants.'*
- A LEP representative pointed out *'it's about the loss of business and if power goes down. The problem is the not knowing and how they get it back on. This can result in a loss of good will from the customer's point of view as well.'*
- A small or medium business representative commented that a vulnerable business *'is a business that could not survive for a period of time without electricity.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative pointed out that *'it's a business for whom inconsistent power supply would disrupt their business. Other issues that would affect them include interruption of supply and uncertainty around pricing.'*
- A small or medium business representative said *'I don't tend to associate it with businesses. In that sense I would define vulnerable as the impact of a loss of supply over a period of time. I'm dependent on PCs and electronic equipment.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'it's not something we're asked about that often. We automatically assume that any power outages are going to be short-lived. It's actually not an issue in the Black Country. I've not been inconvenienced during working hours.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'it wouldn't affect me. It would affect my communications but that's not a big issue. But it would mean no production for our members.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'if there's a power cut, any company that is dependent on computers and manufacturing would go. It would have a particularly difficult impact for companies in a supply chain. Businesses need a plan in place to deal with this, particularly if its things like extreme weather.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted that vulnerability relates to *'anyone who relies on energy in any way to carry out their business.'*

**“ If there's a power cut, any company that is dependent on computers and manufacturing would go. ”**

- A business organisation representative stated that *'I'd say our businesses are vulnerable because some of the high levels of power use they deal in and the sectors they represent.'*

*How resilient do you consider your business/your members' businesses?*

- An FSB representative commented that *'we had a three day week in 1974, and everyone bought a generator. Now we would need a pretty robust generator, which would cost quite a lot. The main thing is that WPD keeps on top of it.'*
- An FSB representative made the point that *'personally, my business is quite resilient as I have 'built in' disruptions to the plan, but that is not necessarily the same for all businesses.'*
- An FSB representative considered *'there are a mixture of businesses, some have had to buy extra generators so they're secure, but some of the businesses can't afford that.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'my own business is dependent on electricity, if we lose power, we lose business.'*
- An FSB representative considered *'all members are very different. My business is resilient as I work around the country so can move elsewhere if needed.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'I'm completely non-resilient as my aquarium is entirely dependent on power and I have no back-up power. On a scale of 1-5 I'd be -10! Most small businesses don't have back up power and don't think of buying it when they set up.'*
- A LEP representative raised the point that *'businesses should be reliant on themselves to have back up power systems.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'Oh my giddy aunt, we have the whole range of resilience in our membership! Resilience is something we are trying to get across to our members. I think you've got to pick out the worst-case scenario, and there is certainly a fair level of non-resilience. The word resilience does not appear in many small businesses' vocabulary. They don't take steps, they don't back up data. They don't have health and safety measures in place in the event of a power cut.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'a lot of businesses are working from small factory units or from small offices and home offices so they wouldn't have plans. I know the feedback I've had from businesses in industrial units they have great difficulty in getting enough power.'*

**“ A lot of businesses are working from small factory units or from small offices and home offices so they wouldn't have plans. ”**

- An FSB representative highlighted *'you can see what has happened with the flooding in the Somerset levels – virtually stopped anything from happening. You can see how long it takes to recover.'*
- A small or medium business representative highlighted *'it varies depending on the size of the business. The smaller it is, the more vulnerable.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative commented *'a lot of the businesses we work with are really small.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative pointed out *'the smaller the business, the less resilient. Small businesses just don't think about it as they have too much else to do.'*
- A small or medium business representative highlighted *'the only thing I have is a surge protector, to protect from fluctuation in power rather than generators.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'respectfully it's a ridiculous question. If WPD don't do what they are meant to then that's an issue. We've got more things to worry about.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'in conversation when we have mentioned the importance of having a UPS (uninterruptible power supply) unit to back up computers, most small businesses looked blankly at us and didn't know what it was.'*

*To your knowledge, does your business/your members' businesses have resilience plans in place to deal with things like power cuts? How could WPD help?*

- An FSB representative highlighted *'making sure there aren't power spikes - spikes have caused the recent issues around power cuts. WPD could also help us shift it off the mainframe onto the cloud, data needs to be protected when in the cloud.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'some industries like food would have a resilience plan; WPD could have a role in this process, like sending out a leaflet, explaining why power cuts happen, how regular they are and what can be done to mitigate any loss or damage; WPD need to keep on top of the causes of these issues.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'I don't have a specific resilience plan, but my overall strategy takes into account that WPD can be unreliable.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'I can't really see how they could. Unless they can provide a generator, which we cannot afford, we can't develop a resilience plan.'*

- An FSB representative commented that *'it's not something most small businesses pay a great deal of attention to, unless they are in an industry like manufacturing. The best WPD can do is minimise disruption, particularly in rural areas, which are more at risk than urban areas.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out that *'we have been given some information to prepare for a power cut and develop a plan, but this is expensive. WPD needs to give a lot of notice for planned outages and instead of just telling their customers, they could do a scheme that lends out generators to affected businesses. Even if you are told of a power outage sometimes there isn't much you can do.'* An FSB representative commented *'I'm amazed at how many people don't even have anti-spike connections on their computers. Again, it's the worst-case scenario. Everything I've got is backed up and I do have some plans, but might not be the case. A leaflet could help, but it has to be very short, sharp and readable. If you send out three or four pages, it'll be binned. And you have to be very careful that it sounds like WPD is not protecting itself, or it will be spurned. The wording of it has to be you have to make sure you can help yourself. I don't see any other way of doing it. Video is far more impactful than text as well. Something that could be added to a very short leaflet is a link to a YouTube video that gives some ideas on how to improve your resilience. It is easier to see things visually than read them, the message can be kinder in video than paper.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'I think making people aware of the technology available is very useful.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'very few have them - disaster recovery is mainly for larger businesses. We have a lot of farmers, lots of pubs and lots of restaurants.'*
- A LEP representative pointed out *'they probably don't have resilience plans - not in the broadest terms. The larger organisations have will have them.'*
- A small business representative suggested *'for the very small businesses, WPD could produce a little pack that offers a tick list for resilience issues and requests contact details.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative stated *'I think maybe setting up potential events in Lincolnshire and raising more awareness. Businesses are aware that energy is an issue and in the next few years we'll probably face more problems. So it's more important for businesses to have a plan in place and events could help.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative commented *'some do, but it is a minority. If it's a highly energy dependent company they will, but most don't think about it.'*



*They see it as somebody else's problem to make sure the supply is there. It's not something they feel they can manage.'*

- A small or medium business representative raised the point that *'I can't see how WPD could help really. I would start to feel more concerned that it would happen if WPD started to talk about it more - are they expecting more outages?'*
- An FSB representative pointed out that *'small businesses don't have the spare capacity to think about it. Their businesses are vulnerable because they don't do enough planning.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted that *'it's something we (FSB) make sure members are aware of. Not just about power, but the ability to respond to things like floods. We would forward all information, like guidelines, to members.'*
- An FSB representative made the point that *'businesses won't have resilience plans because most small businesses around here don't have any knowledge of things like a UPS.'*

*What do you consider to be the most important factors impacting SME resilience?*

- An FSB representative commented that *'we know suppliers, but not who to call. Voltage quality is important because of business' dependency on the internet.'*
- An FSB representative considered *'if it's across the board, then a lot of these would average out as we have a very wide membership, but the route to compensation for power cuts or disruption for small businesses is tortuous and pitiful.'*
- An FSB representative argued *'WPD needs to spend more to upgrade the system - but people don't want to pay more on the bill.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'we're not focused on connections - but we do think it's important. Voltage quality, is important for things like tagging sheep and cattle, running electronic systems to do that and online using computer systems.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'power cuts have a large impact. If you're working in a factory and your power goes down for half a day, you can be in real trouble. Any business that loses its power for a prolonged period is going to have problems. For customer awareness, I would suspect bigger businesses probably know whom to call. People who are in my position tend to call their suppliers rather than WPD. Street-works also have a large impact as it's very important to the retail trade, and we get a number of complaints that they're losing their passing trade. All these are sector-orientated, but for someone who works in retail, street-works are very important. Voltage quality is crucial for manufacturers, and in terms of Distribution*

**“ WPD needs to spend more to upgrade the system - but people don't want to pay more on the bill. ”**

*Use of System charges, very few businesses would be looking at the breakdown of their bill.'*

- An FSB representative highlighted that *'street-works can be a pain - and supply access is the biggest problem.'*
- A small or medium business representative stated that *'I was impacted by a WPD planned power outage - the notice went to the landlord instead of the business owner, who did not forward it on. This meant we found out very late and we had to close down our servers at short notice.'*
- A small or medium business representative highlighted *'none are hugely significant. It's not uncommon for things to flicker in our house or office, because we're in quite a rural part of Plymouth, although it hasn't led to power cuts recently.'*
- An FSB representative made the point that (s)he *'would be surprised if any of them were given consideration at all.'*

*Do you think small and medium businesses should engage with WPD?*

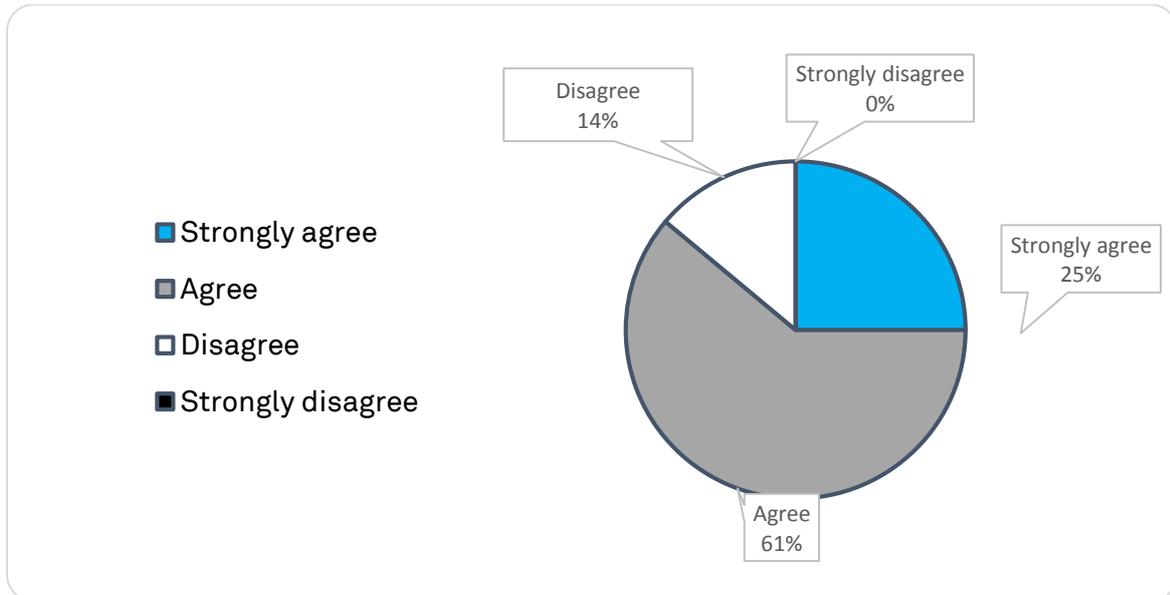
- An FSB representative highlighted it should be *'every 6 months, to know what's happening, when it's working fine it's not a problem, but when problems occur we need to know who to call.'*
- An FSB representative suggested *'WPD could send a representative who could attend an annual East Devon FSB meeting, such as the policy committee.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted that *'business people obviously have to focus on running their businesses. They don't have time to speak to WPD. The idea is to do it as a collective and do all engagement through something like the FSB. Power is a major thing for small businesses. Small businesses don't have resources for long engagement with WPD. The best way to get feedback would be a short email survey.'*
- An FSB representative made the point that *'if you're going come along and dig a road up, you need to talk to the people around you. How can we work around it?'*
- An FSB representative considered that *'contact should be done as required, like when WPD have an update or new information.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'the onus is on WPD to engage. It should be once a year at the most, unless there is a reason to contact (like street-works).'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'there is no need for a lot of communication; rather there is a need for good occasional communication. If the power isn't interrupted, we don't want to know.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'I think it's the other way around. People are not prepared to travel to engage with WPD, but we have the same problem at the FSB. We would like you to do a presentation at a meeting, or have you as a guest speaker. If you have speakers that would be available, do one - and then see what the appetite is.'*

- A small or medium business representative warned that *'it has to be beneficial to both sides and shouldn't create an 'industry'.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative stated *'definitely engage, communication should be quite frequent. That's the only way if you'll know if there are any issues.'*
- A small or medium business representative raised the point that *'it would be good for WPD to have meetings with SMEs at least annually or maybe every 6 months.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'hardly at all. It's WPD's responsibility to contact us. There should be a contractual obligation on whomever we pay the bill to. If you're not good enough, it's the supplier's obligation to sort it from somewhere else.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'I've never really had any interaction at all and not really missed it.'*
- An FSB representative made the point that *'businesses won't be so engaged due to time constraints, but getting relevant information from you to them is important.'*
- A business organisation representative commented that *'it is dependent on the business itself.'*

## Quantitative data

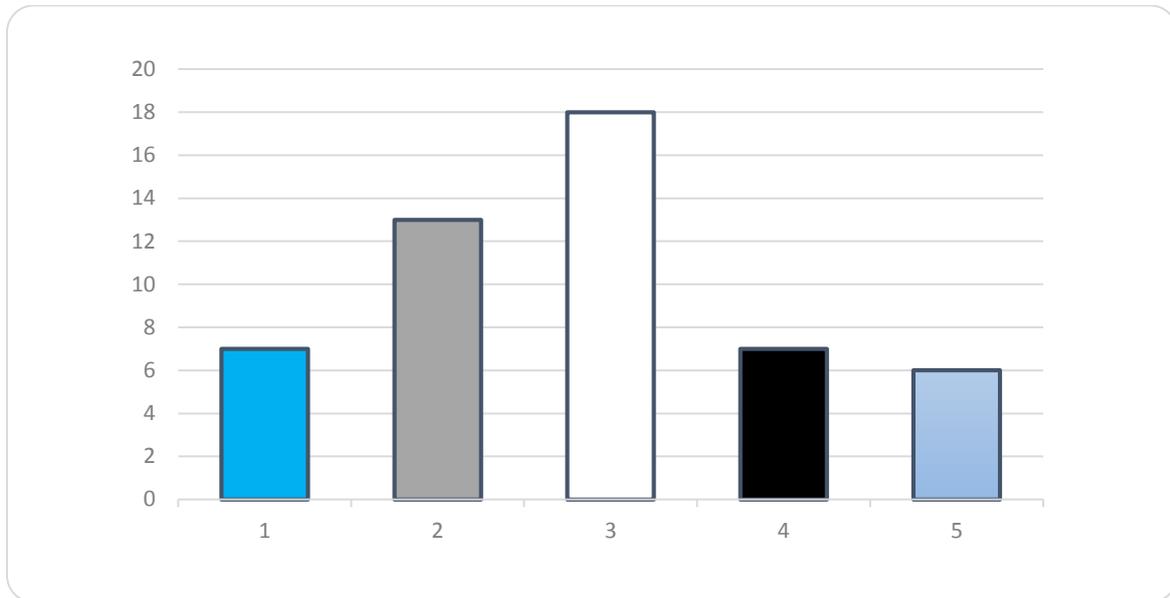
Alongside the qualitative information gathered during the workshops and telephone interviews, stakeholders were asked a series of quantitative questions on vulnerability and resilience. The findings are below:

### Do you consider your business/your members' businesses to be vulnerable?

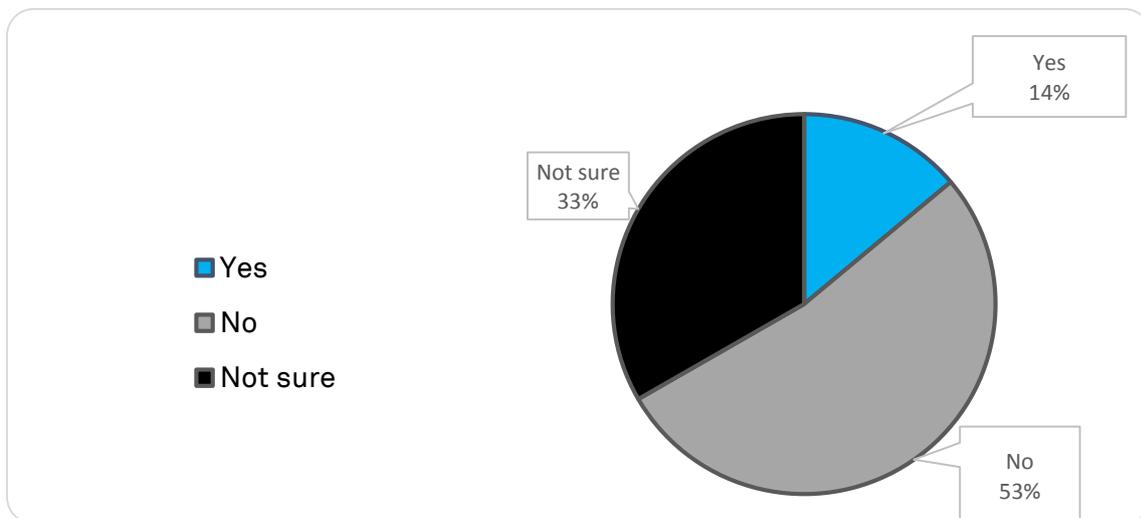


### How resilient do you consider your business/your members' businesses?

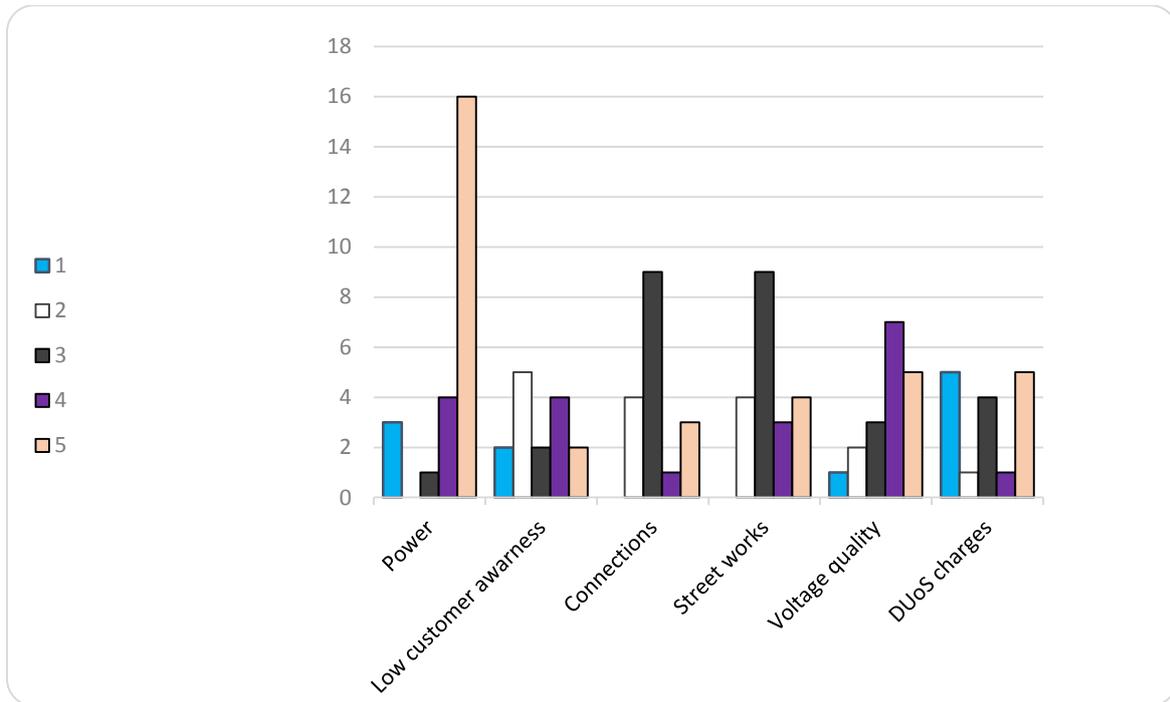
(Where 1 is not at all resilient and 5 is very resilient)



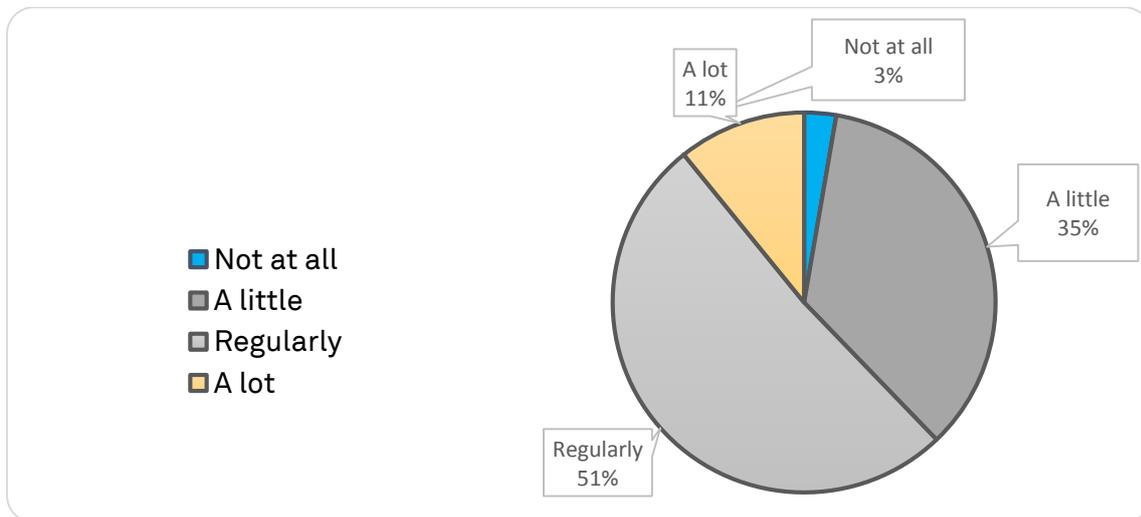
### To your knowledge, does your business/your members' businesses have resilience plans in place to deal with things like power cuts?



Please rank the importance of each of these factors in terms of their impact on the resilience/vulnerability of small and medium businesses?



Do you think small and medium businesses should engage with WPD?



## Qualitative feedback

Stakeholders were also asked what specific actions or initiatives WPD could take to support small/medium businesses. The responses are below:

- *"Put an 'information bus' in affected areas when there is a power cut."*
- *"Use existing channels of communications, like LEP's 'e-shots'."*
- *"Communicate with LEP Growth Hubs."*
- *"1. Remember holes in the road affect businesses through traffic jams  
2. Ensure the public realm is respected - put it all back as you found it!"*
- *"1. Get information out.  
2. Raise awareness of preparing for resilience."*
- *"Better communication."*
- *"Education about WPD."*
- *"A bullet point check list or a 'think about' list."*
- *"Highlight actions small businesses can take/should take and banded cost."*
- *"Working with LEPs to identify joint-working which will mitigate network stress, identify generation opportunities, improve awareness and resilience etc."*
- *"The supply of easily digestible and factual information."*

## 5. Topic 2: Developing a WPD action plan with respect to low customer awareness and reliability and resilience

The second workshop focused on how aware small and medium businesses are of WPD and what they would expect in preparing for or reacting to power outages or dips.

Discussions were intended to be relatively unstructured, allowing attendees more freedom to discuss WPD's customer awareness and small and medium businesses' reliability and resilience.

### 5.1 Addressing low customer awareness

Stakeholders were asked questions which covered the following topics:

- The importance of raising awareness of WPD amongst small and medium businesses.
- How WPD can best improve awareness.

#### Birmingham

Table 1:

- An FSB representative raised the point that (s)he *'thinks you demonstrated the answer to this question when you said that people still called MEB when there's an issue. They built a rapport.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out that *'it's about rapport and trust. If the businesses are in the middle of a dangerous situation when the power goes off that could be a health and safety issue.'*
- A LEP representative stated *'well, in all due respect it's partly the responsibility of the business. You have to build up resilience. The main thing the WPD can do is give advice on what you can do if something goes wrong. If you've got a food based business, then you're going to have a problem. You might be able to produce but you won't be able to store. It's about giving people advice about what you do. You can do something simple and transparent. We've got growth hubs. If you'd like to get information out to small businesses, you should go to the LEPs and local organisations.'*
- A small or medium business representative considered *'if we have a power outage, it's a nightmare for us. Our electric doors stop working, so we are very vulnerable in this matter.'*
- A business organisation representative commented that *'if you send a letter out, how do you get those letters out? Who do you send them to? When a letter comes*

*into the business, anything can happen to it. If you know that the power is going to go out in a small patch, then you should send someone to walk around and hand deliver the letter. It's too important to miss.'*

- A small or medium business representative highlighted *'I think you almost have these moving billboards, your vehicles. I've come across your vehicles, and I think they're a bit bland. I don't think you're using the space on your vans, and you could be utilising it. You could also have to have the team wearing uniforms, something discreet. Final thing, you could have an app. Things like what you could do during a power cut, business continuity, etc. Most companies have an app. If you turn notifications on the app, you can send messages out on it.'*
- A business organisation representative commented *'I work in a business improvement district. It would be worth knowing where all these districts are. We might be able to help get the message out if something like that is going on.'*
- A LEP representative considered that (s)he *'thinks it's having the people who might get calls who will get advised accordingly. Coming today has been quite useful for me. A large part of this is that while there is a lot of business support, there is sometimes too much and people don't know what is around. Pushing envelopes through people's doors is probably a better approach. On Sunday, I happened to be in a place where there was some work going on. There was a bloke from WPD who came and sorted it out and he was wearing plain blue overalls, there was nothing that said he was from WPD other than the van outside. I think there needs to be better branding to raise awareness.'*

## **Bristol**

Table 1:

- A LEP representative made the point that *'it's really important that customers know that it's WPD to contact rather than their electricity suppliers. Are you working with those energy suppliers to ensure that there is better communication? Communicating what you can do about power cuts is not necessarily best done directly with businesses but through the intermediaries such as the FSB or the LEP.'*
- A LEP representative commented *'we would welcome that engagement to know what we could do to help our businesses. Including things like aggregators.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'a lot of micro businesses will be closer to your domestic customers. If they're working from their own home you have a very good chance of domestic customer engagement being sufficient.'*
- An energy/utility company representative felt that *'it's very easy to criticise, but when I got my fridge magnet it was great.'*

Table 2:

- An engineering representative recounted that *'when there was a scheduled power outreach 18 months ago communication was really good. The power came on outage around the time they said. The business was able to make a decision not to send everybody home. The communication is good; we've had no issues. I don't think we have a very solid continuity plan. The points made earlier have made a few of us think about alternate forms of power generation. Some form of bullet point list from WPD to say how you develop a continuity plan would be helpful.'*
- A business organisation representative argued for *'a simple PDF from WPD you can download on what the implications of a power cut for you could be.'*
- A business organisation representative, however claimed *'I've not seen one single item of communication from WPD in two years.'*
- A business organisation representative queried that since *'you have no commercial interest in the household or the business, you just provide a cable. Would it not make sense to just put light indication on the cut out to show the phases?'*
- A business organisation representative said *'the electricity supplier should be obliged to provide the necessary data free of charge to WPD so that they have a contact.'*
- A business organisation representative argued WPD must *'personalise the letter.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative said *'we like the idea of the fridge magnets and the personalised contact. There is a need to raise awareness of who you are and why you're sending it. I need to understand in my mind why you're sending things to me. I'll be honest before I came here I did not know who you were. If I received a letter from you I thought you were trying to get me to change my supplier.'*
- An FSB representative suggested that *'we could funnel information to our members from you.'*
- A business organisation representative agreed, adding *'I genuinely think an FSB believes the content they send warrants my attention.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative said *'I'd be keen to take away and discuss on a separate occasion how we can help you in our little patch as infrastructure is important to us. We are all about business and supporting businesses so they can do well, whatever information you pass to us will have the attention of businesses.'*
- An FSB representative offered to help *'start to distribute information out.'*
- An engineering representative asked *'is there something that says when we get our community charge bill there can't be anything in it from you.'*

**“ I need to understand in my mind why you're sending things to me. I'll be honest before I came I did not know who you were. ”**

- A business organisation representative suggested that *'vehicles are a mobile billboard, you should include key messages on them.'*
- An FSB representative felt that a *'telephone number on the vehicle is not that useful.'*
- A business organisation representative disagreed, stating *'I take photographs of phone numbers on the back of vehicles, in case they are useful.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative said *'we need to know what WPD do.'*

## Telephone Interviews

*Do you agree it is important to raise awareness of WPD amongst small and medium businesses?*

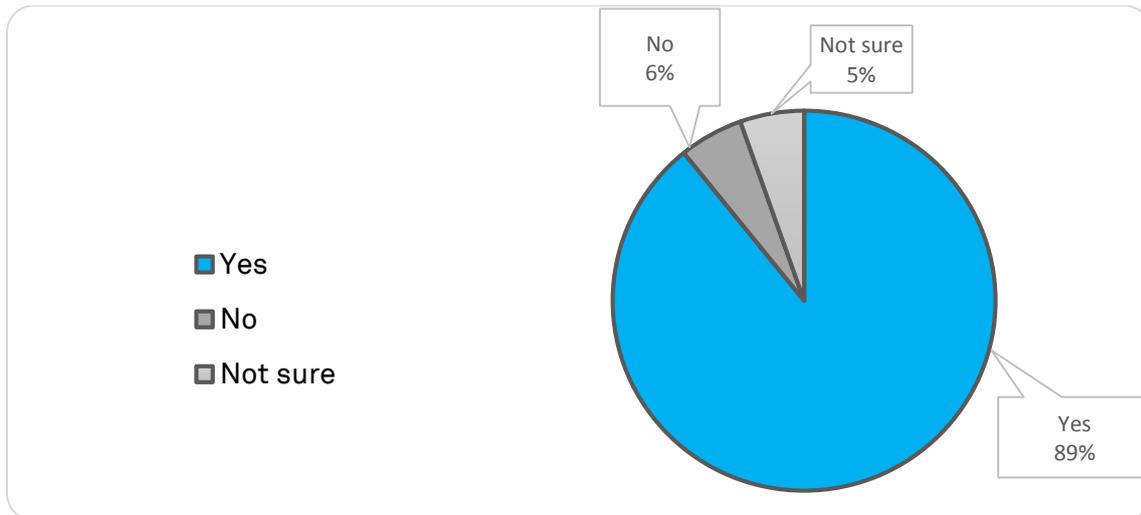
- An FSB representative highlighted that (s)he *'hadn't heard of WPD until this contact.'*
- An FSB representative considered *'businesses should be aware of what role WPD has in delivering electricity. In my mind, their role is infrastructure-based, this needs to be explained.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'businesses don't know who to ring; they have to look it up. I had to find it in the yellow pages! It would be important to raise awareness of WPD so the process would be smoother.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'it is important to know if you've got a problem with power, from a domestic point of view and from a business point of view. If you go online, the information is there and you need to know when it will be back.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'I'm not being uber-critical, it could be advantageous to WPD, but awareness of WPD and power generation is not necessarily much of a worry for businesses. One preference would be having someone answer the phone directly, as opposed to a voicemail.'*
- An FSB representative felt that *'it doesn't need to be massive programme of engagement, just communication that WPD produces electricity and someone else sells it.'*
- An FSB representative considered that *'it's probably true – customer awareness does need to be raised. Again, come to one of our meetings to raise awareness.'*
- A LEP representative stated that *'I don't know what your programme of events is or if you do business questionnaires, so therefore I don't know what you do to engage. I don't think businesses really care as long as it's a good service.'*
- A small or medium business representative raised the point *'it's essential to make sure they know who to contact if things go wrong or if they've got a concern or a question. They should know what WPD does in case WPD have to put their prices up.'*

- A chamber of commerce representative highlighted that there's *'a bit of an aversion to speak to any sort of power distributor or power energy supplier. It would be a tough nut to crack, but a better line of communication to and from WPD would certainly be important.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative considered *'it's important because of the volatility of energy supply and the fragility of the UK's energy base. Businesses have become accustomed to having a constant supply. The cost of energy is now going to be a bigger worry as well. Businesses don't consider these things as much as they should, because it doesn't come onto their high priority list.'*
- A small or medium business representative commented that *'it probably is important. It's not for my sake but it wouldn't surprise me if there were a lot of businesses that didn't know who WPD were, despite their efforts. It's not as great a problem as previously, but there is still some scope to raise awareness.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'I don't think it's very important for WPD to engage with businesses. If suppliers are shirking their obligations that's when WPD would come in to the picture. There needs to be as short a supply chain as possible.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'it's vital to ensure they understand what WPD do.'*

## Quantitative data

Alongside the qualitative information gathered during the workshops and telephone interviews, stakeholders were asked a quantitative question on customer awareness, which can be found below:

**Do you agree it is important to raise awareness of WPD amongst small and medium businesses?**



## 5.2 Ensuring reliability and resilience

Stakeholders were asked questions which covered the following topics:

- The impact of a loss of power on small and medium businesses.
- What WPD can do to improve their services and the resilience of small and medium businesses?

### Birmingham

Table 1:

- An FSB representative asked *'couldn't you do what banks do? Giving a business 5 working days' notice?'*
- A LEP representative commented that *'I think the app is a good idea.'*
- A small or medium business representative made the point that *'text messaging also works.'*

- A business organisation representative stated *'no matter how many channels you use, some people will slip through the net.'*
- An FSB representative made the comment that *'with businesses, I would be amazed if you couldn't define within a given area what type of businesses are in that area. What we're all saying is that what you've done today is excellent and it will do you a lot of good, but if you go around and physically send someone to around to speak to businesses, they would learn an awful lot.'*
- A small or medium business representative stated *'I think you need to be realistic. If it's midnight, then you can't go around knocking on doors. As a business you have to be realistic, I don't necessarily want people coming to talk to me, not everyone has the time to have these conversations. So it comes back to knowledge, and whether that's a letter, or an app, as long as businesses know what's going on, they have continuity to know what's in place.'*

## Bristol

Table 1:

- An energy/utility company representative stated *'presumably you've got statistics on the cause of interruptions? Picking up on the weather, weather patterns are changing. Do you reckon undergrounding would be better?'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'I don't think WPD proactively engaging would do you any harm. We're talking about resilience. Again, what can small businesses do? It's not just about raising awareness of the risk, but what you can do about it. If you're saying you've got a problem, no one is going to go out of their way for it if it's a small business and it's a real issue for them.'*
- An engineering representative commented that *'for us, it's two third of our people not being able to do their work. It's relevant to design impacts and things like purchasing. It's really the whole business activity that would be affected.'*
- An energy/utility company representative asked *'have you got the data?'*
- An engineering representative highlighted *'we do gather information from it and that drives us forward to see what the best solution is for us.'*
- An engineering representative stated that *'last time we had a problem, WPD sent a helicopter up to see what the problem was and it was phasing problems. They reviewed the lines and let us know the information. Clearly we're important to WPD in our area.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted that *'there are some knock-on effects as some equipment is quite sensitive, some things needs resetting. There is some costing to get engineers out as well and that's often that's not accounted for.'*

- An engineering representative commented *'interestingly we've got a letter here from WPD. Turns out that we've had some false alarms because it was delivered incorrectly. That's an associated cost.'*
- An engineering representative highlighted that *'we've got a bit of a rapport with WPD. With it being rural, we've got unplanned stuff and again the communication is great. We get updates. That side of it is working much, much better. We had to work hard to get there, but it's good now. It required two-way engagement to get to this stage – because of our constant moaning, we've got to the stage we'd like to be.'*
- A LEP representative commented that *'we wouldn't know how WPD would best engage with our businesses.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'I think letters are more visible than emails.'*
- A LEP representative commented *'there are some companies that don't have email or have an internet connection in their business. It's not a one size fits all.'*
- An engineering representative raised the point that *'our constant badgering is one of the drivers of how we justify costs. Every time someone phones up it takes someone's time. So we've accounted for it, and now we can drive the finance for it.'*
- A LEP representative commented *'I'm assuming there are regulations during a planned power outages to prevent the use of machinery.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'unplanned outages could have unforeseen consequences.'*
- An engineering representative highlighted *'that should come under your environmental risk assessment. You can't be responsible for every element of it, people should take some responsibility.'*

“ There are some companies that don't have email or have an internet connection in their business. ”

- An engineering representative commented that *'we are currently monitoring what's happening and it seems to have improved recently. We did go through a phase three or four years ago and WPD put in a line monitor for a week for us. The outcome of that during that particular time was that the spikes were of the industry standard. There were two or three spikes that were uncomfortable but they were the standard. There are some elements that may affect the spikes that week, so it is conditional. Lightning is a big cause. That's the way it goes unfortunately.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'I don't think a small business would know that that's what is causing the problem in the first place.'*
- An engineering representative highlighted *'that is a very good point. Most people now have two monitors, so we've got lots of computers so we've had the ability to build up a picture much quicker.'*
- An energy/utility company representative stated *'I can imagine in our area, some aerospace companies would like some constant monitoring.'*
- An engineering representative made the point that *'we've got some specific problems in our area. That's where we ask: is anyone else affecting the lines and is that affecting us? How many people? What's the capacity? How much is loaded on to the phase? We've got those sort of questions.'*
- An energy/utility company representative stated *'it has occurred to me at home to have a leisure battery to keep things going. That would raise the whole issue of going off grid and that's not such a silly statement.'*
- A LEP representative pointed out that *'off grid solutions are quite pertinent. They actually put huge batteries in business parks. Having a dual system is great. It powers the battery through renewable generation.'*
- An energy/utility company representative commented that *'this helps a lot with resilience. The market will be generated and stuff will happen.'*
- An FSB representative asked *'do you have a list of mitigation actions that people can take? Can you send one out?'*
- An energy/utility company representative asked *'why not? If you create a document that would work.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'having a list of solutions with costings and hiring costs etc. It's not things to consider, it is actual solutions. That could go to aggregators. A lot of businesses if they see a solution they will self-heal.'*



- An energy/utility company representative considered that *'we must bear in mind that if we compare today's rate to thirty years ago we're hugely advantaged. Power cuts used to be a regular occurrence.'*
- An energy/utility company representative commented that *'we had a power failure in the village. Interestingly a mains cable had fallen and I was told the cable had a 25 year old life span but it was 50 years old.'*

Table 2:

- An FSB representative said *'I get them more than one every 18 months, but I'm rural, I live in a village. I accept it. I tend not to ring up as enough people will and it will be fixed quickly.'*
- An engineering representative said *'knowing it was only going to be an hour and a half we decided there was no need to bring the generator on.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative claimed that *'we have not heard of any issue from our members. We lobby and prompt them and have not heard anything.'*
- An FSB representative concurred that *'it is the same with the FSB, it does not come up as an issue.'*
- An FSB representative argued *'people get comfortable and take a lot for granted. We've got used to electricity being on all the time. We don't think of these disruptions that occur anymore.'*
- A business organisation representative felt *'we've become more complacent.'*
- An FSB representative asked *'do you get many small businesses coming to you asking for help on resilience?'*
- An FSB representative pointed out that *'if you're going to lose your electricity for six days, then you might be starting to hit a business' window for the maximum period of disruption.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'you should trumpet your success in dealing with major disruptions.'*
- A business organisation representative said *'generally we just put up with dips and problems with voltage. Getting anyone out to look at it is hard work. Before I was in Bedfordshire. It was a nightmare to get somebody to deal with it.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative pointed out *'it is dependent on who is in the room. If you asked engineering companies they might have a different opinion on it.'*
- An FSB representative suggested *'we could ask our members about something like that, if you wanted the questioned asked. Though for small businesses I doubt it's a big issue.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative added *'but for medium business it may be a bigger issue.'*

## Telephone Interviews

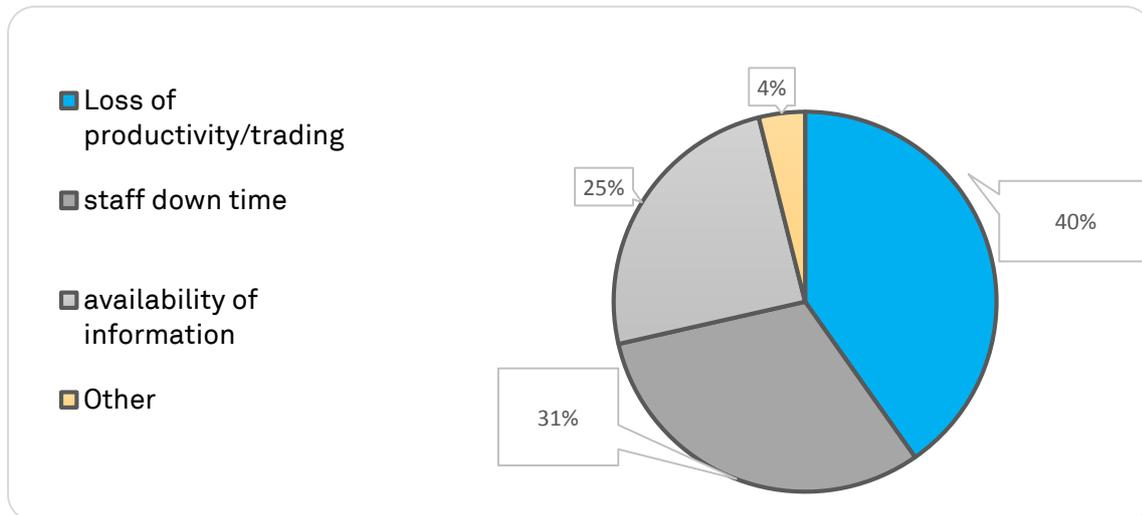
*What are the main impacts on your business/your members' businesses when you experience a loss of power?*

- An FSB representative made the point that *'loss of productivity, staff down time and availability of information affects all of us. People also get frustrated by power cuts, this can have an impact on staff morale.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'potential damage to IT equipment is an impact our business faces when there is a loss of a power. We were affected by a power cut last year and were without power for an hour, plus the time taken to reboot computers.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'stopping trading is the bottom line during a power cut.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'most businesses in my area are manufacturing-based, and power cuts lead to lost time completely. Therefore any loss of productivity/training is the main impact for us.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'loss of productivity or training, staff down time and availability of information – all of the above. You can't do anything if the power is down. IT is down, production is down, no heating so you can't work.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'there is also a loss of materials and loss of customers.'*
- An FSB representative stated that *'availability of information would be the most impactful as people would lose the internet, but I could move elsewhere if needed.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'the lack of information is most important during a power cut. We need to know when it will come back on.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'people being on the internet, if there is no power for a period of time you can be invisible, especially in a rural area like ours.'*
- An FSB representative considered *'if you're working on a time basis output, such as by the hour, power cuts could have a big effect. A lot of people are on zero-hour contracts, these people suffer with their wages during power cuts.'*
- A LEP representative highlighted *'all three (loss of productivity or training, staff down time and availability of information) are impactful. We have a proportion of big data companies, so productivity and loss of data is very important.'*
- A small or medium business representative raised the point that *'knowing about interruptions means you can plan well enough in advance.'*
- A small or medium business representative pointed out *'the other thing is the loss of communication, particularly with clients. When I lost my broadband connection it was like paralysis.'*

## Quantitative data

Alongside the qualitative information gathered during the workshops and telephone interviews, stakeholders were asked a quantitative question on reliability and resilience. The findings are below:

**What are the main impacts on your business / your members' businesses when you experience a loss of power?**



## 6. Topic 3: Developing a WPD action plan on new connections and street-works

The third topic for discussion aimed to understand small and medium businesses' experience of new connections and the impact of street-works on their business.

Discussions were intended to be relatively unstructured, allowing attendees more freedom to discuss their experience and thoughts on WPD's connections process and the street-works they are responsible for.

### 6.2 Addressing issues and concerns with new connections

Stakeholders were asked questions which covered the following topics:

- Stakeholders' experience of applying for a new connection.
- How WPD can improve their connections service.

#### Birmingham

Table 1:

- A small or medium business representative highlighted that (s)he *'has some very high security people in our mental health facilities. It is very, very key for us to not lose power; if the doors opened then there would be a high security threat.'*
- A LEP representative commented that (s)he *'was primarily interested in the time-scales?'*
- A small or medium business representative asked *'what does it cost to have a connection?'*
- A small or medium business representative asked *'how does that stack up with agencies that are encouraging rural development? It kind of seems at odds.'*
- A LEP representative made the point that *'there are a lot public enquiries going into local development plans. How engaged is WPD with these plans? To my knowledge, they aren't paired with the capacity on the network.'*
- A LEP representative asked *'is the network controlled by some type of central control room?'*
- An FSB representative asked *'if you're responsible for connection, then are you responsible for disconnection?'*

## Bristol

Table 1:

- An FSB representative commented *'when we apply for a connection, it's a very opaque process unless you've done it before. So it's not a good start. We've got through the paperwork, agreed what we're going to do. Someone from WPD came in and did the work. When it came to another re-survey, someone told us that we have to dig it up again to get the connection. When it came to the connection, our guys had to sort it out in the end. The network was owned by E.ON at the time, and I know you bought E.ON but I'm not sure the process has changed.'*
- An energy/utility company representative highlighted *'that raises the interesting point of going off grid. I think that is the other option. I would be interested in looking at your territory and seeing if it would cost you less to go off grid at that moment in time'*.
- An engineering representative commented *'it would be relatively small, private companies.'*
- An FSB representative asked *'how do you work out the costs of a new connection?'*
- An engineering representative asked *'how do I know if the capacity is there on the grid without costing me a lot of money?'*
- An FSB representative commented *'I have the same question. What is the legal limit?'*
- An energy/utility company representative stated *'the benefit of where we are we have visibility of what others are doing.'*
- A LEP representative raised the point that *'I think just working together to figure out where it is on the network for us to put in support for generation, pretty much that is what would help us most. I would be interested in learning what the intelligence is around going off grid. I want to see the points where connections just wouldn't be feasible. Not sure it's the intelligence you have, however.'*
- An energy/utility company representative pointed out *'yes, but WPD has to do fault studies to understand the network so it must be difficult to answer.'*
- A LEP representative commented *'so I'm assuming we'd have to do engagement on a specific basis. I don't know if these conversations are taking place.'*
- An engineering representative asked *'how is the ratio managed for generation and usage for lines in certain areas?'*
- An energy/utility company representative asked *'are you increasing capacity?'*
- An energy/utility company representative considered *'it would be useful to have some kind of diagram that says you're in the sweet spot to let you know that there is capacity on the line.'*



Table 2:

- A business organisation representative commented *'yes I have experience of applying for a connection - new build on housing and also on commercial premises, but not with WPD. It all went as planned. The bit that is most annoying is getting all the permits, the planning permission. The actual doing it has always been good. All the bureaucratic red tape has been the bad bit.'*
- An FSB representative felt that *'what was laid out in the presentation was very logical and thought through.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'this process is a two-way communication, I can now take this back to my members. What was very good was the information on the timescales. Knowing how much time you had to engage in dealing with each box.'*
- A business organisation representative felt that *'it all returns back to education. A lot of councils do planning packs, which allow third parties to put information in there. It would be good if WPD did the same and said what sort of time frame it would take.'*
- An engineering representative pointed out *'you're raising this issue, I take it that you come across it a lot.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'if I was to build some office space I would naively think that I'll get the building started and then WPD will come and connect it all up.'*
- A business organisation commented that *'a friend of mine had some woodlands and wanted to put some power on there for some small agricultural buildings and it cost £30,000.'*
- An FSB representative felt that *'it's the luck of the draw.'*
- An FSB representative felt it was *'a great piece of awareness, the need to engage early.'*
- A business organisation representative suggested *'an ad in council planning packs. Another option is that every planning application is made available on the internet through a planning portal. You could send people a mailshot telling them to get ahead of the game.'*
- A business organisation representative highlighted that *'you're not selling anything you're just making people aware of what they need to do.'*
- A business organisation representative complained that *'local authorities should be drawing people's attention to it.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative commented that *'I think that might be something else we need to talk about. Sedgemoor has experienced a lot of growth in terms of businesses and buildings going up. From an infrastructure viewpoint the roads are being improved. So businesses are starting to plan ahead.'*
- An FSB representative said *'bigger businesses have a longer lead in time.'*

- An FSB representative considered that *‘we’re hearing and understand the argument that there are so many things out of your remit that there is nothing WPD can do to make things faster and cheaper. That message just needs to be communicated as effectively as possible because I understand it. If I understand it then I accept that it will take two years as long as I engage at day one. That’s the information that needs to come out.’*
- An FSB representative argued that *‘another thing that needs to be communicated is that putting solar panels on the roof is causing a problem for local capacity.’*

**“ I accept that it will take two years as long as I engage at day one. That’s the information that needs to come out. ”**

## Telephone Interviews

*How would you rate your experience of applying for a new connection with WPD?*

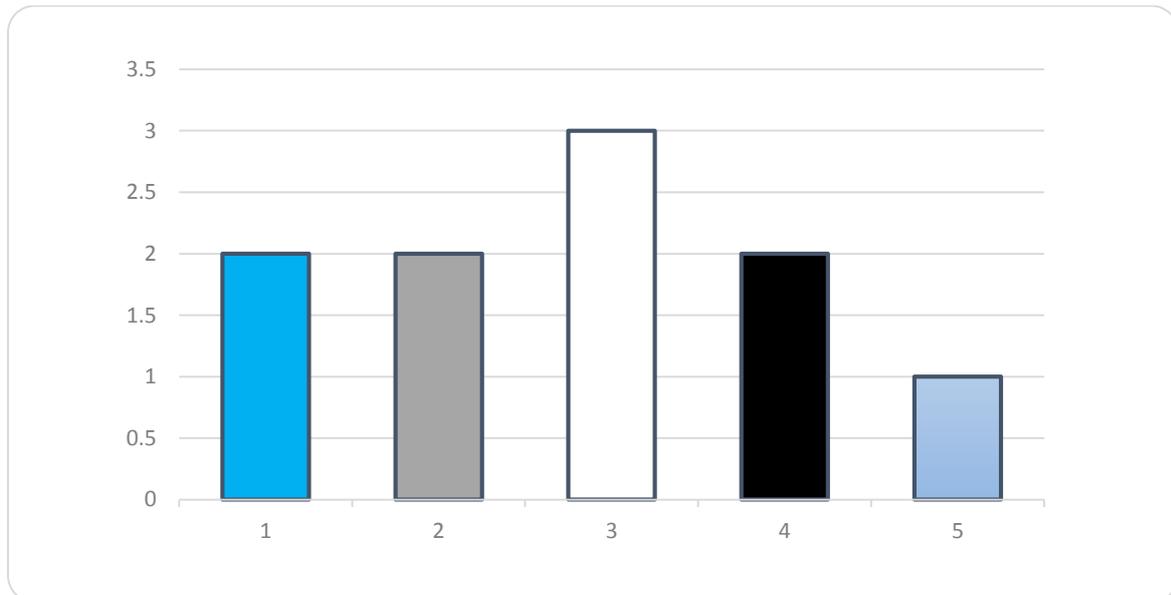
- An FSB representative commented that *‘we haven’t applied for a new connection but we have had to go through a number of measures to see if our current connection is suitable. Our experience was good.’*
- An FSB representative highlighted that *‘the only time I’ve heard about connections is when members have called me if they’re struggling - so my opinion may be skewed. I personally don’t have any direct experience.’*
- An FSB representative commented *‘I’ve tried before, but it was too confusing, everywhere and everyone I contacted gave me a different answer about applying.’*
- An FSB representative made the point that (s)he *‘hasn’t applied for a connection and not really had any complaints or discussions about it with FSB members.’*
- An FSB representative pointed out that (s)he *‘wouldn’t have known that WPD is responsible for connections. The vast assumption is all things go to the supplier.’*

## Quantitative data

Alongside the qualitative information gathered during the workshops and telephone interviews, stakeholders were asked a quantitative question on new connections, which can be found below:

### How would you rate your experience of applying for a new connection with WPD?

*(Where 1 is very negative and 5 very good)*



## 6.4 Addressing issues and concerns with street-works

Stakeholders were asked questions which covered the following topics:

- Stakeholders experience of street-works.
- How WPD can minimise the disruption of street-works to businesses.

### Birmingham

Table 1:

- A business organisation representative commented *'I'm really pleased that this is the topic and the reason why I came. I found out about this event through a colleague in Birmingham City Council. Interestingly, when I talked to a colleague of mine that was a senior highways engineer, he found the topic was really interesting. It's all about street-works. On slide 16, I think you've missed a box. What you've actually missed out is reinstatement of all the street furniture, tarmac, paving, block paving, decorative, etc. Exactly how you found it. I'd be saying the same to gas, water, and all the utilities. Business Improvement Districts pay for that, and I spend an enormous amount of time chasing up reinstatement. There are lots of areas where there are not hands-on people like me to sort these things out. Utilities companies can cause a lot of problems with their street-works. It's the whole point about reinstatement as you find it. Now disruption to customers, there are supply issues. Also sometimes you do some work that stops town centres and all businesses in the area. You have to understand that unless it's some major emergency, a lot more thought needs to be put into local liaison to find the best time.'*  
 **Sometimes you do some work that stop town centres and all businesses in the area.** 
- A small or medium business representative raised the point that *'to represent the rural view, there should be conscious awareness of any maintenance works that needs to be done.'*
- A LEP representative commented that *'I think that it's true of all street-works, and the public knows it's important and they like seeing it, but I always wonder what the motivation is to complete the work in a timely manner. It needs to be far more customer-focused, and we are here and we are trying to do it quickly. That would make you a lot more friends.'*
- A business organisation representative asked *'do you use subcontractors? If you do then you've got an issue there. That's where the damage can be. And who do we contact if it's not done right?'*

- An FSB representative commented that *'one of the problems we've faced is a road has been completely tarmacked and then the utilities companies come in six months later and dig it up all again. Perhaps you could liaise with the local council about roads being tarmacked.'*
- A small or medium business representative felt that *'the only effect we have with street-works is when we look after a lot of city-centre shops and it's difficult because we carry keys and our vans, so we don't want our guys walking the streets with valuable information. So when roads are closed then it's difficult for us to park. So take the traffic lights with you and manage your sub-contractors a little bit better.'*

## Bristol

Table 1:

- An energy/utility company representative pointed out that *'something I'm interested in is heat grids. Where might there be coincidental work on heat grids?'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'I know that FSB has communicated about that, but I think WPD has taken good steps to increase the communication. We've received some positive feedback.'*
- An engineering representative stated *'we've got more problem with the highways rather than utilities on street-works.'*

Table 2:

- A business organisation representative said *'it's nice to hear that you liaise with other services so the road doesn't get dug up three times.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative highlighted *'advanced warning is quite crucial; a lot of businesses say they understand these things need to happen. They need to be able to plan. As long as businesses know what is going on they are able to plan. They also need to be able to prepare their customers.'*
- An engineering representative argued that *'businesses need longer notification than domestic dwellers.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'the predominant industry is tourism. So if you're going to dig up the high street there's a logical time to do it. There is a good time and a bad time for a lot of things across the South West.'*
- A business organisation representative stated that *'a lack of thought and planning can destroy a business.'*
- An FSB representative said *'come and ask people who represent the businesses when is the best time to do works.'*

- An FSB representative pointed out that *'we understand street-works is a catch all term. If we're told about planned works we understand.'*
- An FSB representative made the point *'shopkeepers are always concerned about traffic flow. The quicker you can do it the better.'*
- A business organisation representative argued *'to a household it's inconvenient - to a business it's make or break.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative highlighted that *'high street shops have particular challenges already. Anything you do will affect them to a particular degree.'*
- A business organisation representative said that *'the more sensitive you can be in your approach to high streets the better. Personally I have no problem with work being done overnight. Yes it might disturb my sleep, but I put some ear plugs in and then it's done in the morning.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'high street shops and tourism are the real things affected by street-works.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative argued that *'service providers are the real ones affected.'*

## Telephone Interviews

*What is your experience of how WPD has carried out street-works in your area?*

- An FSB representative highlighted *'advance warning is what is needed. The actual speed of the works was fine.'*
- An FSB representative made the point that (s)he experiences *'so many road works, but I have never had a bad experience with WPD.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'I don't know if they're electrical or from other utilities, but my general experience has been that they're a pain in the backside. Alongside the power cuts, they cause traffic problems, which stop people coming to your business. I would rather it was at night or outside of working hours and give them plenty of warning.'*
- A small or medium business representative pointed out *'they did some work outside our office and it was fine.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'anything to do with making it more difficult to conduct our business is always a downside. We spend our lives getting to places.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'sometimes it's not so straightforward. The issue is giving plenty of time to plan.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out *'generally speaking, we don't know who's doing what, so branding is important.'*

*How would you like to be kept informed of upcoming street-works in your area?*

- An FSB representative stated *'there should be an announcement in a local paper, WPD should inform local chambers and post visible notices on lampposts so it can reach out beyond just the businesses immediately affected by it.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted that *'email is a cheap and effective way of communicating. The post is unreliable, particularly in rural areas.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'if they're going to dig up outside your shop they need to let you know. Emails can get lost, whereas addresses won't and if you move address the street-works won't affect you anyway!'*
- An FSB representative made the point that *'email tends to get ignored as can a notice through the door, just saying what the plans are'.*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'the trouble is getting people's email addresses. WPD should channel communication through secretaries - so using FSBs and then disseminating through organisation by group emails. Send it to the aggregates and it will get circulated.'*
- A LEP representative commented *'for businesses, it's email. Notes or letters don't get seen very easily.'*
- A small or medium business representative made the point that *'it's easier to keep up to date information by email. You can also provide links if it's by email, which means increased functionality.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative commented *'it's a bit of a mix, really. If you're posting things out, it might not get to the right people. Post something out and get in touch with the council and chamber of commerce.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative pointed out *'email is the best option, but with the right sort of eye-catching title. There is a danger that it could get lost otherwise.'*
- A small or medium business representative made the point that *'blanket text messaging would work as well.'*
- An FSB representative considered *'a good notice period is an important thing.'*
- An FSB representative felt that *'a direct mail out can physically be pinned up to a board that everyone can see.'*

*What specific actions/initiatives can WPD take to support small and medium businesses?*

- An FSB representative commented *'good old communication and information. Anything WPD can do that raises awareness.'*
- An FSB representative felt that *'they can provide health checks on electricity supply and energy conservation. In rural communities, there should be a scheme'*

*where people are incentivised to report anything relevant to WPD, such as farmers reporting a tree falling or a dangerous looking cable.'*

- An FSB representative stated *'stop power outages. WPD's job is to deliver power. You do it so we don't have to think or worry about it'*. (S)he added *'I'm not interested in the PR aspects. One idea would be going around rural areas and seeing where potential problems are e.g. cutting tree branches which could disrupt lines.'*
- An FSB representative considered *'WPD providing back-up generators would be the perfect solution, but that is unlikely. Most important is a reassurance of how long a fault will take to repair and warning of power cuts if they're likely. We would just appreciate a little pre-warning.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'work with small businesses. The easiest way is to work out of hours so you don't affect anyone. In commercial areas, talk to them and see when the best time is or do night works to ensure that commerce is not affected.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'WPD should ensure that the supply is consistent and there is no fluctuation in voltage quality.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'wherever possible, communicate with lots of notice, particularly on power cuts and street-works. 30 days' notice would be the ideal amount of time. WPD could also help small businesses find routes to compensation when there is a loss of power.'*
- An FSB representative commented that *'the integrity of the supply is crucial. You've got to do the infrastructure works.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'I think in the Rugby area we are seeing a very large expansion in housing and warehousing and light industrial buildings, maintaining that quality and increasing the quality of supply is essential. Usage is increasing considerably. We are one of the fastest growing towns and it would impact on the local economy if we didn't have a reliable power system.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'do more of what you're doing – WPD is being very proactive.'*
- A LEP representative made the point that *'linking with LEPs for business resilience training as part of reducing energy costs and building on risks is a good way for WPD to help. Also keeping businesses better informed if works are to be held.'*
- A small or medium business representative suggested *'a business resilience tick sheet. This can explain how businesses can be aware of continuity planning. Another idea would be having a dedicated liaison staff member or a forum/FAQ section on the website.'*
- A chamber of commerce representative stated *'events and focus groups would be a good initiative, if businesses feel like they're being heard and listened to. If the*

**“ Wherever possible, communicate with lots of notice, particularly on power cuts and street works. ”**

*information heard at a focus group would be held in mind when decisions are being made, that would be promising. Businesses are set in their ways and anti-everything and you have to get in there with them and try to win them over. Engage in discussions and foster relationships with them.'*

- A chamber of commerce representative raised the point that *'WPD could get more involved in the local business community. This could be through the chamber of commerce, running seminars, carrying out audits, doing local media pieces - generally working to personalise their agendas to the day-to-day agendas of the businesses they serve. One way to do this would be through an intermediary, particularly one with membership services, like the chamber of commerce. Other utility companies do that, like Total Gas & Power. It introduces members to their services and works for everyone.'*
- A small or medium business representative commented *'making the network resilient is important, but I'm sure WPD are doing what they can on this. Giving as much notice on planned outages as possible is beneficial. What I liked about how WPD acted the last time there was a power cut they captured where I was just by the telephone number. Very impressive.'*
- An FSB representative highlighted *'I'm not sure that smaller and micro businesses need that contact. You can be doing more by doing less.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'what you're doing is great and perhaps an awareness campaign of some sort with some advertising and information through business groups. For instance if you were to send something out to the FSB we would send that out to our 7,500 members in the region. If you sent it to me, I would ensure that the other business groups in the area would be able to distribute it as well.'*
- An FSB representative raised the point that *'WPD can help by understanding small businesses and the pressure they're under on things like time, money and staff. Listening to small businesses will give WPD a good idea about what they are about. There also needs to be good communication if anything is happening.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'WPD can make sure there's no interruption of power supply. They should use the FSB as a mouthpiece to engage with small businesses. Things like business breakfasts or regular meetings would be a good idea.'*
- A business organisation representative highlighted *'WPD needs to have an understanding around local investment plans and to where they are specific.'*

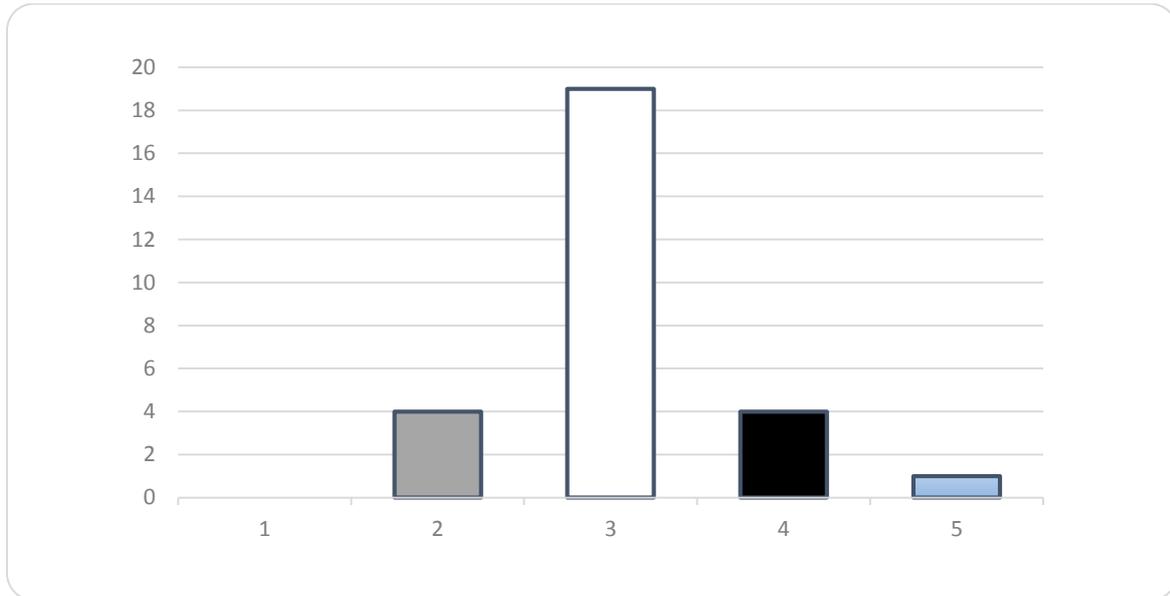
**“ What you're doing is great and perhaps an awareness campaign of some sort with some advertising and information through business groups. ”**

## Quantitative data

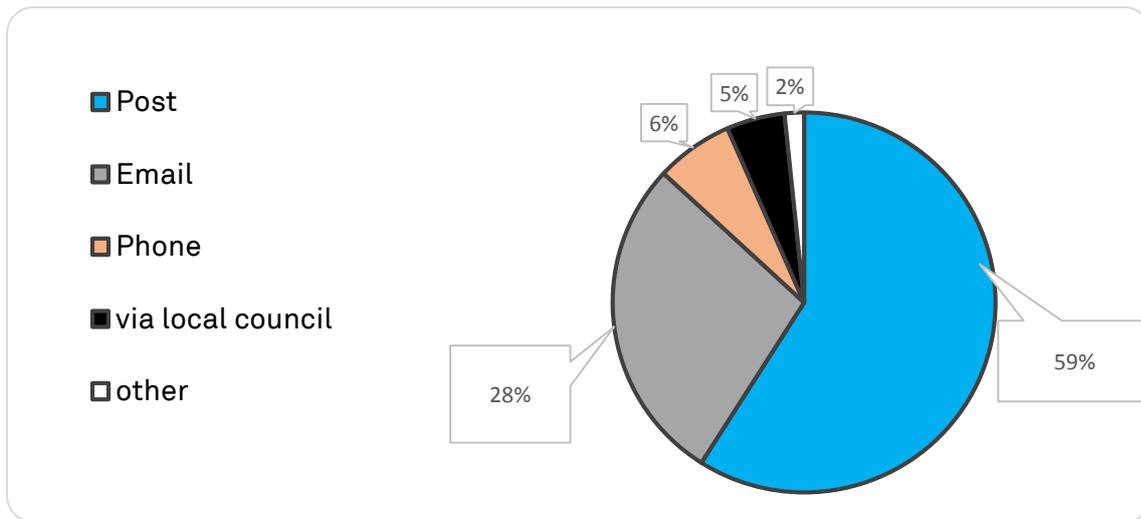
Alongside the qualitative information gathered during the workshops and telephone interviews, stakeholders were asked a series of quantitative questions on street-works. The findings are below:

### What is your experience of how WPD has carried out street-works in your area?

*(Where 1 is very negative and 5 very good)*



**How would you like to be kept informed of upcoming street-works in your area?**



## 6.5 Any other comments

### Bristol

Table 1:

- An engineering representative commented that *'as a closing statement, your communications have improved and it's been a lot better recently.'*
- An energy/utility company representative added *'if we're talking about aggregates, then it would be helpful to have a list of all the communications you've had with the different aggregates to see what different problems are and what WPD is doing to help. The different conversations with LEPs, FSBs, etc. in different regions.'*

### Telephone Interviews

#### *Any other comments?*

- An FSB representative made the point that *'businesses need electricity to function. What matters is that there is a consistent, seamless supply without interruption. We don't need our hands held, just make sure the power is on!'*
- An FSB representative commented *'communication is key, it's frustrating when the road is dug up. It's communication with utilities as well, can it all be done together rather than three vans coming in? So ultimately it's communications with businesses and other utility companies.'*
- An FSB representative stated *'one thing that would be helpful, would be giving guidance to companies putting solar panels up - this could be a mail out, a section on the website or just talking to people in general.'*
- An FSB representative pointed out that *'the only additional comment is well done to WPD for actually taking the initiative and communicating and keep it going.'*
- An FSB representative commented *'it's a genuine offer but if you've got a list of road works and power cuts in your area you'd be happy to pass them on. Particularly where there are situations where there are retail outlets.'*
- A small or medium business representative highlighted *'just one last point, information about planned outages needs to go to the business owner not just the landlord.'*
- A small or medium business representative stated (s)he *'would welcome the ability to talk about things like capacity constraints on the network and the cost of*

**“ What matters is that there is a consistent, seamless supply without interruption. We don't need our hands held, just make sure the power is on! ”**

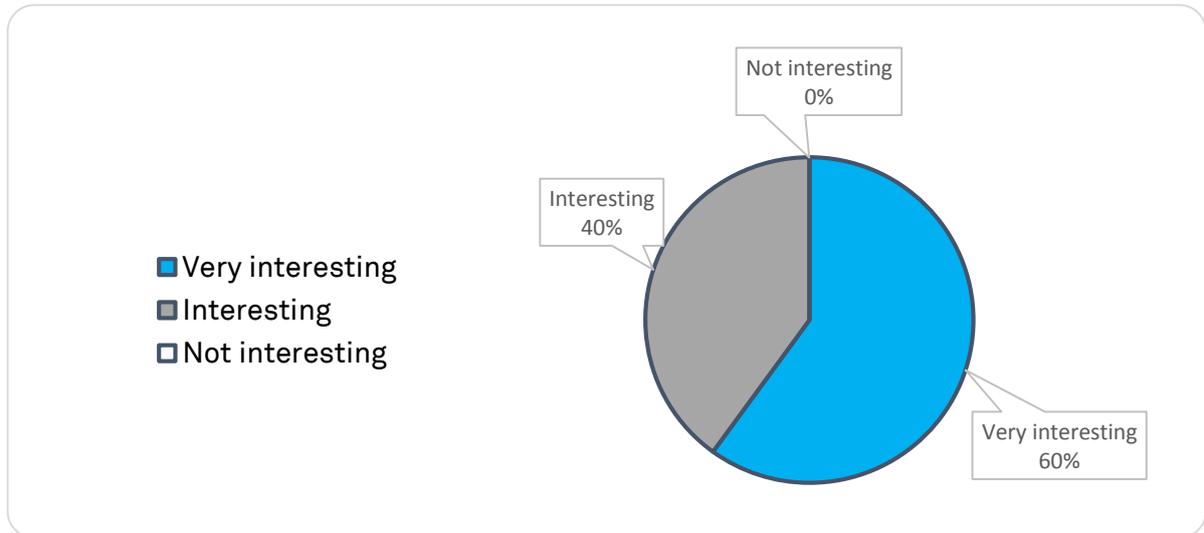
*upgrading networks. Conversations are probably needed with the local authority first, to match with services and the growth of the area and sector. WPD should look to act as a partner rather than a third party.'*

- An FSB representative commented that it's *'all about communication and timing. Give as much time as possible.'*

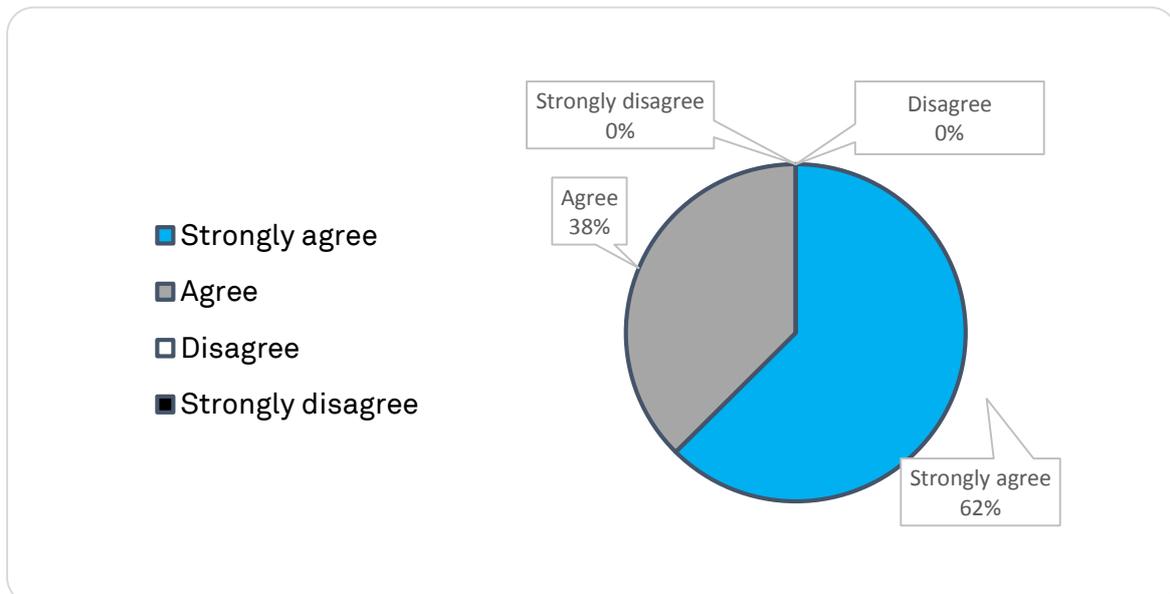
## 7. Written feedback on events

Of the 16 attendees who attended the workshops, 16 completed and returned feedback forms on the day's event. Stakeholders were asked a set of seven questions. The responses can be found below:

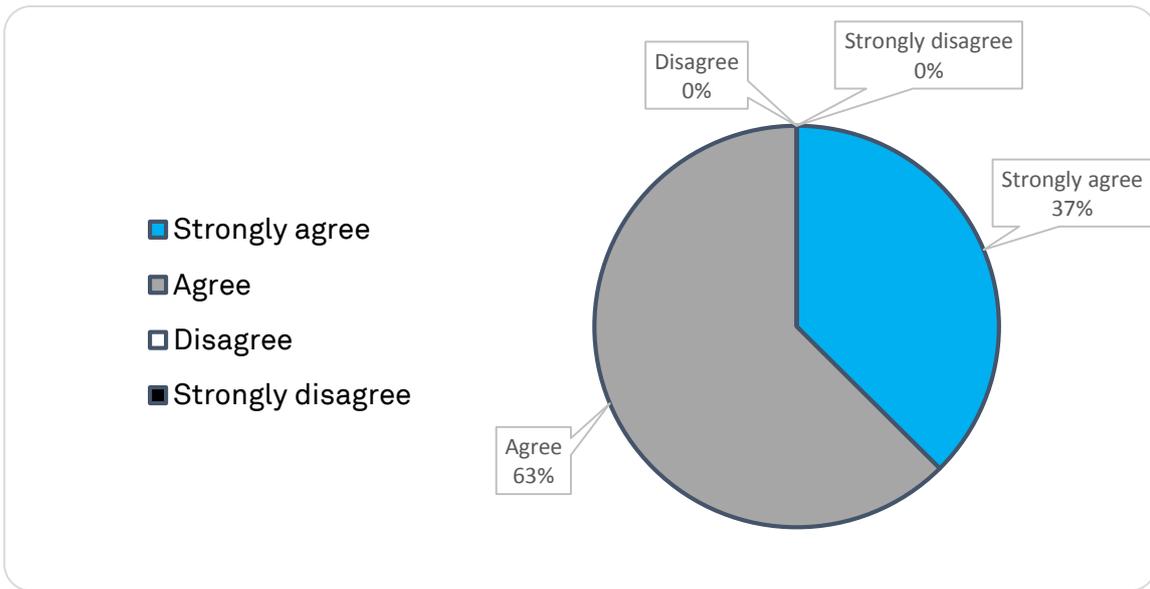
### Q1. Overall, how did you find the workshop?



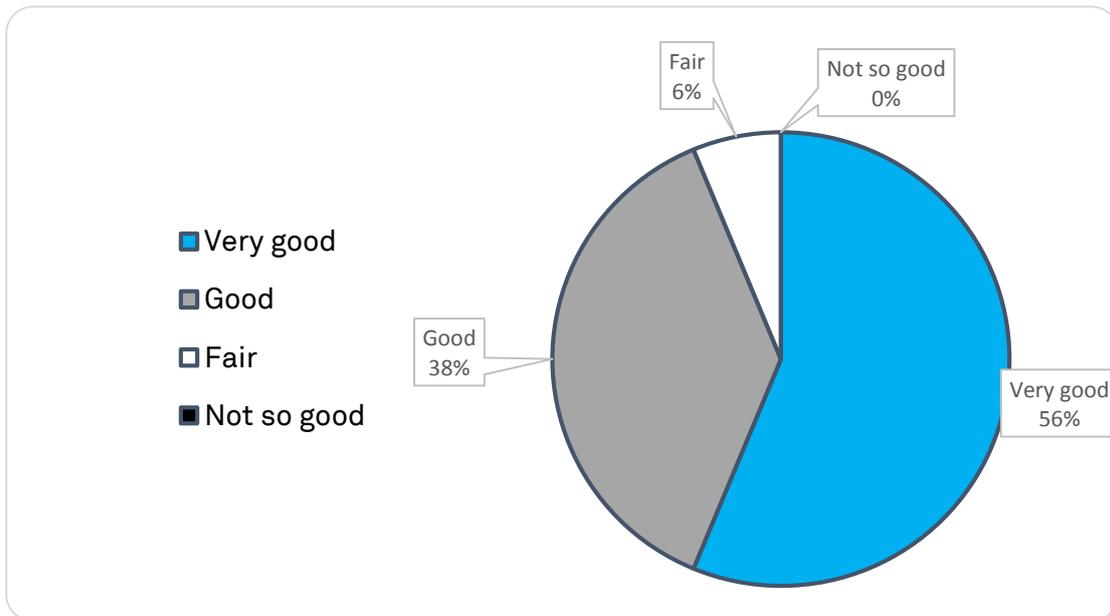
### Q2. Did you feel that you had the opportunity to make your points and ask questions?



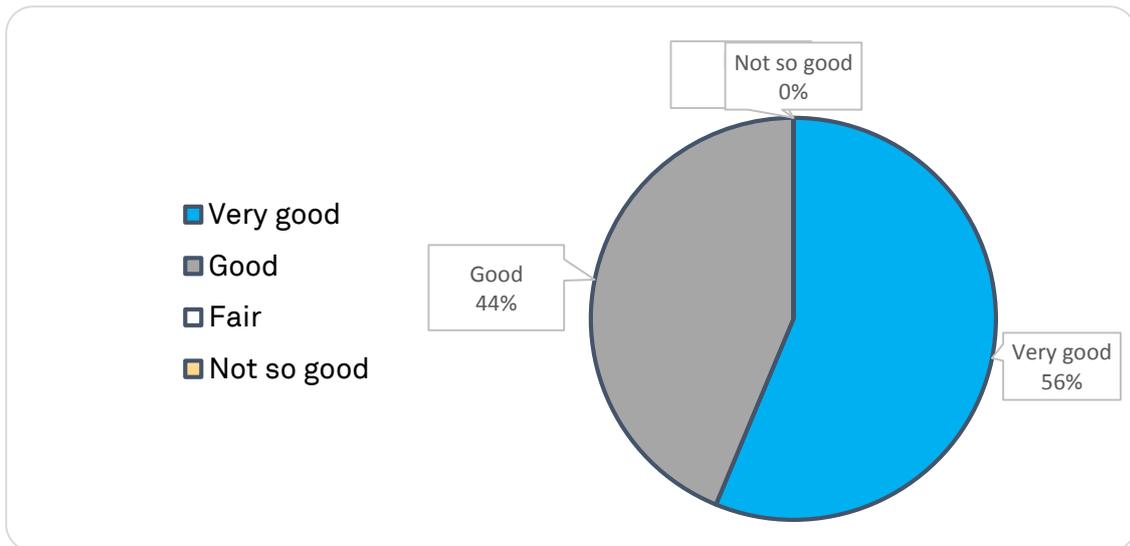
**Q3. Did we cover the right topics for you on the day?**



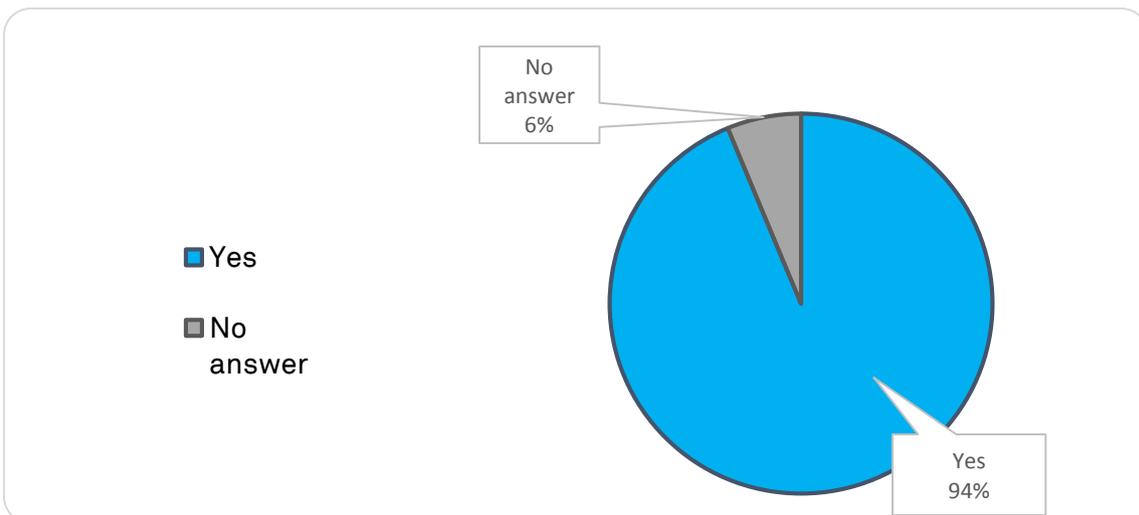
**Q4. What did you think of the way the workshop had been facilitated?**



**Q5. What did you think of the venue?**



**Q6. Would you be interested in attending future workshops on this subject?**



**Q7. Do you have any other comments?**

Stakeholder comments on this question included: *'Alex Wilkes was on my table and answered all questions very well'* and *'I would welcome engagement from WPD to identify initiatives which would improve resilience and generation opportunities'*.