

NGED CUSTOMER PANEL - Minutes

29 February 2024 (remote)

Attending (Customer Panel):

GB - Graham Biggs, Rural England Network
SD - Steven Donovan, OVO Energy
JG - Jo Giles, Cadent (part)
NG - Nye Gordon, Guidehouse
RH - Richard Hellen, The Schumacher Institute
RL - Ron Loveland, Welsh Assembly Govt (part)
GM - Gabby Mallett (Chair)
RM - Robert Miles, Immersa
GP - Gemma Parker, South West Water
JP - Jon Perry, Citizen's Advice Coventry
EPr - Eddie Proffitt, Major Energy Users Council
BR - Bob Radford, Kirklington Parish Council

CS - Claire Smith, Wessex Water
AS - Alex Spreadbury, B&Q
CT - Cathy Tibbles, Customer representative

Attending (NGED):

CH - Chris Hayton
RA - Richard Allcock
NJ - Nicki Johnson
EP - Ellie Patey
MW - Matt Watson (part)

Richard Allcock welcomed the group and mentioned the three new members present.

Chair's update

Gabby welcomed the new members and round-the-table introductions allowed them to update the group on their background/interests. GM updated the group on the recent membership review and suggestions were made on increasing membership in sectors such as renewable energy and leisure industries. Members are welcome to suggest new members (being aware of DE&I and ensuring we continue to represent the communities NGED serves) and NGED will check in with members who rarely attend.

The group considered the 12 month plan; deciding what is critical, for discussion at main panel meetings, and what should be covered at surgeries. It was agreed surgeries could be scheduled as below.

RH mentioned the National Energy Systems Operator (NESO) has been launched and it would be good to understand what this developing landscape means to NGED. Members discussed the connections backlog preventing renewables, the connection reform and the need for legislation changes.

Proposed surgeries:

1. A **'Futures'** surgery. A strategic overview, to include information on NESO, Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs), regional planners, etc.
2. **SMEAP** update surgery, to include document review and information on housing association pathways
3. **Flexibility** - re domestic and business customers, time of use tariffs, avoiding peak demand, flexibility providers, etc.
4. **Connections** (inc. renewables) surgery to consider the difficulty connecting to the grid at both residential and utility levels
5. Emerging **Customer Strategy**. NGED has a new Customer Excellence department so is developing a customer strategy and journey
6. **IT and digital**. A new focus and strategic activity. How can this help existing parts of business?

Action 1 Members with suggestions for new membership or surgery items to email GM and NJ

Action 2 NJ to contact members who rarely attend to see if they still wish to stay on the Panel

Action 3 Gabby to update the 12 month plan as above and share with the group

Director's update

Chris Hayton updated the group on the **new operating model**, covering recruitment, the IT and digital space (a strategic priority due to the scale of change and new digital solutions) and connections. He mentioned the size of the pipeline at national level has exceed 500GW (and 156GW at a distribution level) and lots of work has already commenced to free-up capacity.

The group discussed the customer panel and where it might sit in the new NGED structure and AS noted the Panel would like to hear from Jocelyn McConnachie as customer service is a critical function. In the past the Panel has seen performance league tables; AS noted they weren't shared in this pack and asked if the Panel could see recent results. CH agreed we will invite Jocelyn to a future meeting and NGED should be able to share customer performance data, noting members should flag any particular metrics of interest.

Action 4 NJ to invite Jocelyn McConnachie to the June meeting

Action 5 Members to let NJ know if there are any reporting metrics they would like to see in future

Action 6 CH agreed to share the slides from the Investor Workshops – attached here:
(<https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/151011/download>)

CH updated the panel on the **new DSO panel** and the group talked about the DNO/DSO relationship. EPr asked if the DSO was focussing on planning and future. CH confirmed the DNO is operating, reinforcing and extending and the DSO is about how we run that network as a dynamic system. GM noted Ofgem may look at DNOs and change their view on how panels should be managed in ED3. CH confirmed we have stress-tested our approach with respect to the DSO Panel and we have had positive feedback from Ofgem.

CH also updated the panel on the latest **winter campaign**. Members were thanked for their support and feedback on the winter hub and some of this year's communication material. There was a mention of the panel suggestion to include a QR code on some materials which, it was felt, significantly increased web hits.

RH asked if we learn from other DNO performance and whether NGED uses helicopters to recover the failed networks. CH confirmed we do learn from, and communicate with, other DNOs and helicopters do great work. We have a 'behind the scenes in NGED' piece of work coming which helicopters will be part of. RH noted the huge potential of helicopters doing environmental work and the group talked about lidar data.

GB asked about the increased take up of PSR and whether our campaign has reached rural areas. CH agreed NGED could do further interrogation of the data. NG asked how NGED determined the issues for campaigns and if they are aligned with strategic objectives. CH said focus has been one campaign over winter but budget changes and a new campaign coordinator will allow us to both maximise reach in winter and challenge ourselves going forward. Panel members also asked for storm updates to include customer minutes lost and other relevant performance.

Action 7 Consider ways to analyse PSR sign-up data to confirm rural areas are reached

Action 8 NJ to update slides to include last year's data to show increase of digital reach year on year

Action 9 NGED to provide data on storm performance when available

Update on future consumer insight

Ellie Patey updated the Panel on the deliberative focus group and the social contract review.

RH asked if we will look at specific models to populate, e.g. in Stroud they have a Stroud area local community networks. There could be areas where we could consider a Community Energy project that we can demonstrate and learn from local entities. GM asked if there was anything taken out of the next social contract and EP noted the engagement highlighted customers felt some social contract items were not 'over and above' – but should be delivered as BAU so these areas may be removed, but flagged, in future versions.

RM wondered if there is a mission statement for the Community Energy part of NGED and EP paraphrased the statement for the group. RH asked if the work is complimenting 'Grid for Good (skills development for disadvantaged communities) and EP confirmed we work closely with the project, and provided examples of where we have brought schemes together, e.g. the Power Network craft scheme focuses on bringing students into careers in NGED.

Action 10 The draft Social Contract will be circulated for comment later in the year and thoughts from the Panel should be sent to EP.

Flexibility overview

Matt Watson presented an overview of flexibility.

RM asked about new assets such as energy storage and MW confirmed we have more flexibility on the network and we are trying to utilise it to manage the network and not be a blocker. RM asked about the assessment criteria for identifying whether flexibility is a solution rather than reinforcement. MW explained there are a few elements, including technical viability, fault level constraints, limitation on analysis for complex schemes, for example. The latest Distribution Network Operations Assessment will be published online soon. RH asked about the input from behavioural economics such as future decisions of customers. MW confirmed we look at base cases for customers and what we might expect then do a behaviours assessment report within the DFES (Distribution Future Energy Scenarios). For example, when modelling EV charge points we blend profiles such as time of use tariff/not on a time of use tariff and the ratio for which will shift. There are links to relevant NGED web pages in the slides for those who require further, detailed information.

EPr asked about the interaction between the DNO system and the capacity market and the impact of that. MW explained there's wider policy and customer behaviours and we build our market around these other markets to create a sensible ecosystem. RM talked about Northern Power Grid's competition for the DSO community model – an open platform for anyone to engage in flexibility.

Action 11 GM will collate a list of relevant topics and questions mentioned today in advance of the Flexibility surgery so NGED can signpost any relevant material in advance of agenda setting

AOB

GM mentioned that Simon Roberts is stepping down from CSE. RA noted he was a huge force and a trusted voice in the industry. NGED and the Customer Panel members wish Simon all the best for the future. RA confirmed NGED has an excellent relationship with CSE who deliver Power Up fuel poverty and SMEAP services alongside some other work we do collaboratively with them at industry level such as Smart & Fair with SSE.

Next meetings

- 27 June 2024, in person, Pegasus Office DE72 2TU
- 24 October 2024, remote