

WPD CUSTOMER PANEL		 WESTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION <i>Serving the Midlands, South West and Wales</i>
Last revised: 01.07.21	Meeting Minutes	Notes by: Nicki Johnson

Date/time	24 June 2021 - 10.00-12.30	
Venue	Zoom meeting	
Attendees	PB - Phillip Bennett, South West Water AB - Amy Brooks, Cadent GC - Golam Choudhury, The British Red Cross RH - Richard Hellen, The Schumaker Institute GM - Gabby Mallett, (Chair) MN - Matt Neal, National Energy Foundation EP - Eddie Proffitt, Major Energy User's Council BR - Bob Radford, Kirklington Parish Council KR - Kate Robbins, Wessex Water PS - Paul Santer, South West Business Council JS - Jacob Shell, Coventry Citizens Advice ASp - Alex Spreadbury, B&Q (part)	WPD: AS - Alison Sleightholm RA - Richard Allcock NJ - Nicki Johnson EP - Ellie Patey CEG (part): DM - Duncan McCombie (Chair)

Richard Allcock (RA) introduced the morning and welcomed new members Kate and Paul.

RIIO ED2 Business Plan – an update

Discussion	<p>AS confirmed the National Grid sale went through on 14 June 2021. However, there will still be a period while National Grid await approval of the acquisition from the Competition and Markets Authority, during which restrictions apply on how much contact there can be between the two companies.</p> <p>AS gave members an update covering WPD's Business Plan and Customer Vulnerability Strategy. WPD's first draft Business Plan was submitted to Ofgem on 1 July.</p> <p>RH asked about principle 3 and how WPD is dealing with the impact of covid-19 and long covid-19. AS noted 30% of sufferers have long term impact and we can incorporate those customers on the PSR as we would any other customer. In addition, we have the 'In This Together' fund which is reaching grass roots, small, local projects supporting vulnerable customers.</p> <p>PS applauded WPD's ambitions to contact so many people and asked how WPD helps people once contacted? AS explained there are 2m customers registered due to being vulnerable to loss of power. We contact them and talk to them about how they would cope in a power cut. In addition, we know there's a link between power cut vulnerability and customers not being able to heat their homes. We therefore offer fuel poverty referrals to partners who give additional support such as benefit and grant applications, behaviour changes and tariff switching.</p> <p>JS felt that saving 113,000 customers £60m (in ED2) is stretching and a brilliant aim. They will be interested to understand how smart energy plans will work.</p>
-------------------	---

	<p>JS also noted it is important to understand different vulnerabilities, how they are changing and the best way to engage customers. AS said one of the clearest messages from stakeholders was that they pushed us to do more in this area. If you track draft plans 1 to 3 it is evident WPD was pushed to increase the amount of customers we plan to help and the savings we aim to achieve.</p> <p>MN asked about coverage and whether there is support available throughout the WPD regions. AS explained we use data to ascertain the PSR gaps and where partners were to ensure we could support customers in every area. We continue to build on our referral partners (unpaid partners who refer customers to WPD – of which there are currently 118) and fuel poverty support is already available to any customer anywhere.</p> <p>GM asked about off-setting. AS confirmed WPD has to do some off-setting and this may be as high as 40%. We are working on reducing this and this includes ‘local offsetting’ in a responsible way.</p>
Actions	<p>1. RA will send the Panel a copy of the draft Business Plan (inc. the Social Contract and Customer Vulnerability Strategy) to members when it is submitted.</p>

Customer Panel going forward

Discussion	<p>GM talked to the group about the future of the panel.</p> <p>The Panel discussed reaching out to new members. Cathy Tibbles (by email) noted that the leisure industry could be interested. RH worked with Gloucester LEP and suggested another LEP. BR suggested Rolls Royce as a major user with expert contract management and excellent training, etc. MN offered to share good contacts from energy suppliers and installers.</p> <p>The Panel discussed whether remote/hybrid meetings should take place in future and how surgeries would work best (once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted). Panel members naturally had mixed views – with some not minding, some suggesting hybrid and some preferring face-to-face events.</p> <p>Likewise, some members agreed surgeries could be split from meetings and others were happy for surgeries to continue after the meeting/lunch. There is often lower attendance at surgeries and timing could depend on if there are matters they wish to seek views upon. Also there was support for having surgeries on different topics (historically they have always been ‘vulnerability’ and ‘connections’).</p> <p>ASp noted (and BR agreed) that problems are rarely unique and if people are willing to discuss in a wider forum this can benefit others – even if their interest is in other areas. He suggested it is wise to have surgeries with wider participants and not just experts.</p> <p>A draft 12 month plan for agenda and surgery items was suggested by GM and will be circulated for review.</p> <p>GM covered the Spotlight Report which is due again in the Autumn. RH agreed feedback from WPD on the added value would be useful to include. There may be</p>
-------------------	--

	<p>other focal points of interest where small groups shadow and assist other areas in WPD – e.g. RH often liaises with Paul Jewel on electric vehicles.</p> <p>Trello – RH felt the Panel needs some gentle encouragement to become engaged.</p>
Actions	<p>2. Members were asked to complete another skills matrix. NJ to circulate</p> <p>3. NJ to follow up suggestions for new members (Leisure, LEPs, suppliers, installers, Rolls Royce).</p> <p>4. RH and GM to discuss Trello outside of the meeting and RH to act as Trello champion.</p> <p>5. GM to gather views on the 12 month plan and draft an updated version.</p>

Social Contract update

Discussion	<p>EP updated the group on WPD’s Social Contract and how it has been developed with stakeholders. It will be published on 1 July.</p> <p>PS was impressed by the STEM/school initiatives. He did feel to achieve IIP by 2028 is not ambitious enough. AS felt this was good feedback and explained that IIP sits under an overarching commitment to be an employer of choice. We consulted with stakeholders – there are standard, bronze, silver, gold and platinum – stakeholders scaled back our ambition to be platinum (top 4%), and go for gold (top 10%).</p> <p>RH said the profile of the social contract template details what WPD is doing in a framework and usefully also spots gaps. RH mentioned the ESG agenda (environmental and social governance) and felt WPD is ahead of the game. AS agreed this plays into the wider ESG picture (WPD has an ESG rating of B+).</p> <p>The group talked about timescales and the CEG recommendations. PS felt they were powerful. EP confirmed the CEG feedback is ongoing as we progress and develop.</p>
-------------------	---

CEG update

Discussion	<p>The Chair of WPD’s CEG, Duncan McCombie presented an update to the group on the CEG challenges to date and the open letters the CEG has sent to Phil Swift.</p> <p>RH asked if WPD has a structural taxonomy of the stakeholders who were consulted on the BP. AS noted that Chapter 3 and Appendix 3 of the Business Plan lay out the strategy and approach and the segments of stakeholders who were consulted.</p>
-------------------	--

2021 meeting dates

- Tuesday 21 September 2021
- Thursday 16 December 2021