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WESTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION

Customer Value
Propositions Workshop
Feedback Report

14 September 2021



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Introduction

On 14 September 2021, Western Power Distribution (WPD) hosted a virtual workshop to seek feedback from its stakeholders on the Customer Value Propositions (CVPs) it was proposing to include in its RIIO-ED2 Business Plan. CVPs represent commitments that go significantly beyond the baseline expectations of a DNO. The propositions focus on areas where WPD feels it can deliver exceptional additional value to customers.

The workshop was hosted online, using Zoom. Each session consisted of a short presentation given by WPD representatives, followed by facilitated discussions in virtual breakout rooms. In addition, stakeholders were asked to vote in an online poll using Slido on a number of topics. Due to rounding to the closest whole number, figures may not always add up to 100%.

The workshop was split into five main sessions focusing on the following topics: the overall acceptability of the Business Plan and its bill impacts; CVPs on Net Zero and Community Energy; CVPs on Partnering with Local Authorities & the National Energy Plan for Wales; CVPs on Decarbonised Communities & Local Energy Schemes; and CVPs on the Low Carbon Technology Energy Advisory Service & Priority Services Register Energy Action Plans.

WPD instructed EQ Communications, a specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, to independently facilitate the workshop and to take notes of the comments made by stakeholders. Comments have not been attributed to individuals to ensure that all stakeholders were able to speak as candidly as possible.

The full presentation can be found [here](#).



Methodology

Maximising participation

WPD's database contains the details of more than 10,000 stakeholders, all of whom were invited to take part in the workshop series. The database is refreshed annually to update existing contact details and add information on stakeholders who have registered via the website or worked with members of the WPD team over the last 12 months. In addition, politicians' contact details are updated following any local or national elections. To ensure that WPD remains on top of emerging sector-specific issues, additional research is undertaken ahead of topic-specific engagement to ensure that the database contains comprehensive, up-to-date information for certain stakeholder categories, especially as new roles or stakeholder groups emerge.

The stakeholders on the WPD database were sent several email invitations for the consultation events to ensure that they were given the opportunity to participate. The first invitation was sent on 18 August 2021 to give stakeholders at least four weeks' notice. In addition to the email invitations, pre-identified stakeholders also received telephone calls with the aim of ensuring a mix of different stakeholder groups across the workshops. As standard practice, ahead of any workshops, all stakeholders who have registered are reminded about the event via telephone and email with a view to maximising participation.

Despite these measures, compared with previous stakeholder workshops held to inform the development of the Business Plan in 2020 and 2021, registration numbers and subsequent turnout rates at the events were relatively low. Stakeholders who registered but did not attend were contacted after the workshops with a view to identifying the reasons for the low turnout. Of the 18 stakeholders who responded, almost three quarters (72%) cited diary clash, personal issue or workload as the reason for not attending on the day. Only one stakeholder cited consultation fatigue. When asked whether they felt they had been adequately consulted on WPD's Business Plan, despite not attending on the day almost three quarters (72%) confirmed they had been adequately consulted with only one stakeholder feeling they had not.

Providing accessible information

There were five short presentations, each followed by breakout sessions in smaller groups to enable stakeholders to provide verbal feedback. Relevant slides from the presentation were shared in the breakout rooms to ensure that stakeholders had sufficient information in front of them to participate. If stakeholders did not answer a question, the facilitators asked them to confirm whether their silence indicated tacit approval or whether they felt unable to respond.

Each breakout session was followed by electronic voting, with online voting software used to gather quantitative feedback on each topic. Stakeholders were given the option of 'don't know / can't say' when voting and asked not to answer if they felt that they did not have enough information or the necessary level of expertise to take a view. The number of voters who responded 'don't know / can't say' has been set out under each voting question in this report.

Stakeholders were emailed a copy of draft RIIO-ED2 Business Plan ahead of the workshop to provide them with additional background information for the event.

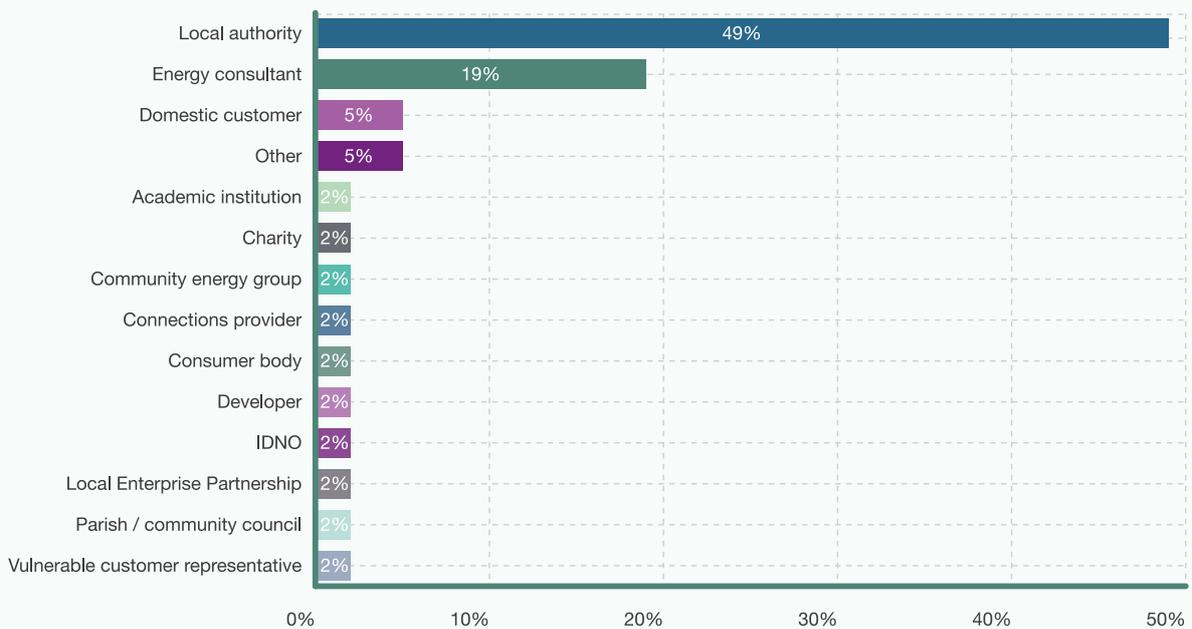


Executive summary

Participants

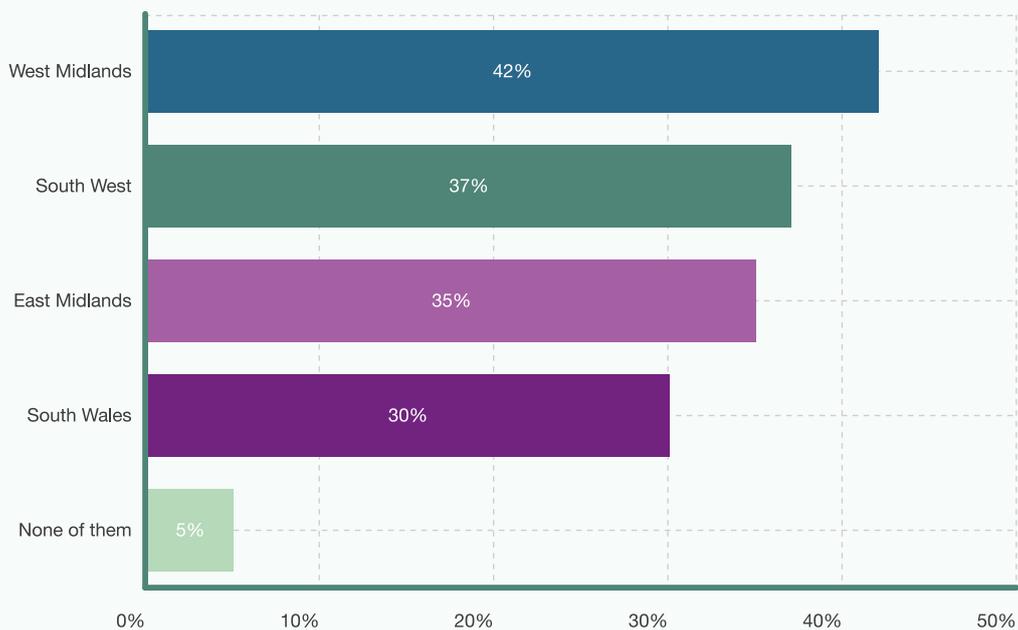
- 52 stakeholders participated in the workshop, representing 42 organisations.
- Almost half of attendees (49%) represented local authorities, while 19% described themselves as energy consultants. Other groups in attendance included domestic customers, parish or community councillors, academic institutions and developers.
- When asked which WPD region was most relevant to them, 42% of stakeholders cited the West Midlands. This was closely followed by the South West (37%), the East Midlands (35%) and South Wales (30%). Stakeholders were able to select multiple regions, so the figures add up to greater than 100%.

What type of stakeholder are you?





Which WPD region is relevant to you?



Workshop One: WPD's first Business Plan submission to Ofgem

The event began with an introduction from Mark Shaw, RIIO-ED2 Business Plan Manager. Mark summarised the key headlines in the Business Plan and explained WPD's business planning process to date. He explained the overall bill impact for customers and why bills vary regionally between different licence areas. Stakeholders were presented with a minimum bill increase/decrease (base case) and a more realistic bill increase/decrease (best view) for each WPD region.

When asked to state whether WPD's proposed Business Plan was acceptable, a significant proportion (89%) of stakeholders either agreed or strongly agreed. Moreover, when asked to rate the extent to which they understood the regional variance in customer bills on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is 'don't understand at all' and 5 is 'understand very well') the average score was 3.6, demonstrating there was a reasonable level of understanding. Stakeholders were also asked about the extent to which this regional variance was acceptable to them: just over half (57%) agreed that it was acceptable, but a notable proportion either disagreed or said they felt neutral on this respectively (43%).

Workshop Two: Net Zero & community energy

The second session was introduced by Mark Shaw, who gave a brief overview of WPD's customer value propositions (CVPs). Jill Russell, Environment Manager, then walked stakeholders through the first two of the eight CVPs.

The first CVP is to **ensure WPD is a Net Zero business by 2028, and set a stretching science-based target of 1.5 degrees**. 87% of stakeholders felt that WPD is best placed to take this action, and most felt the level of ambition is about right. This CVP was viewed as acceptable by 81% of respondents, particularly as it aligns with the ambitions of many local authorities. However, one criticism was that WPD should perhaps be thinking beyond its own business and taking a more proactive role by communicating its learning experiences and promoting cutting-edge technology to other organisations that may need advice and guidance around Net Zero and low carbon solutions.

The second CVP is to **establish community energy engineers**. This proposition enjoyed broad support, with 90% of stakeholders rating it as acceptable. It was felt that WPD has a good overall view of the network, and that having



a single point of liaison for community energy matters would be hugely beneficial. However, the main criticism was that one engineer per region was insufficient, particularly as there is likely to be an increase in interest in community energy schemes over the course of RIIO-ED2.

Workshop Three: Partnering with local authorities & the National Energy Plan for Wales

The third session was presented by Ben Godfrey, DSO Manager, who presented two further CVPs.

The third CVP is to **proactively partner with every local authority**. In the electronic voting, this proposition received an extremely high acceptability rating of 93%. Nonetheless, while this ambition was seen as commendable, some stakeholders questioned whether this is too tall an order for WPD to fulfil alone – both in terms of the resources needed and the oversight required in coordinating over 130 local authorities. One suggestion was that WPD might be better placed steering priorities and commenting on development plans – with participants perhaps alluding to the fact that the company could assume more of a consultative role rather than a leadership role.

The fourth CVP is to **create a National Energy Plan for Wales**. The majority of stakeholders agreed that WPD is well placed to take this action, particularly as it has the relevant technical know-how and existing links to relevant partners. However, over a third of respondents said that they were unsure or couldn't comment on this proposition. In the discussion, the feeling was that WPD should perhaps look to partner with other DNOs as part of a more coordinated approach, given that WPD's influence alone may not be sufficient.

Workshop Four: Decarbonised communities & local energy schemes

The fourth session was presented by Alex Wilkes, RIIO-ED2 Business Plan Communication Manager, who presented the next two CVPs.

The fifth of WPD's propositions is to **build decarbonised Communities & Local Energy Schemes funding solar PV on schools**. There was very broad support for WPD delivering STEM educational activities to 205,000 students in RIIO-ED2. The discussion largely focused on the initiative to install solar PV on schools in areas of deprivation. While 80% agreed that this CVP is acceptable, stakeholders called for greater ambition around the number of schools targeted, which was reflected in the electronic voting results. They also sought more detail, such as on the application process and how WPD will measure economic deprivation and allocate resources fairly.

Alex explained that the sixth CVP is to **deliver an annual £1m Community Matters fund**. While the overwhelming majority felt that WPD is best placed to deliver this initiative, only 25% of stakeholders felt that the level of ambition is right – with many stating that much more money is needed to make a tangible impact to communities. However, the idea itself was welcomed, particularly as bottom-up funding has the potential to generate exponential benefits for society. Having other organisations match funding for projects was also a welcome suggestion.

Workshop Five: LCT energy advisory service & PSR energy action plans

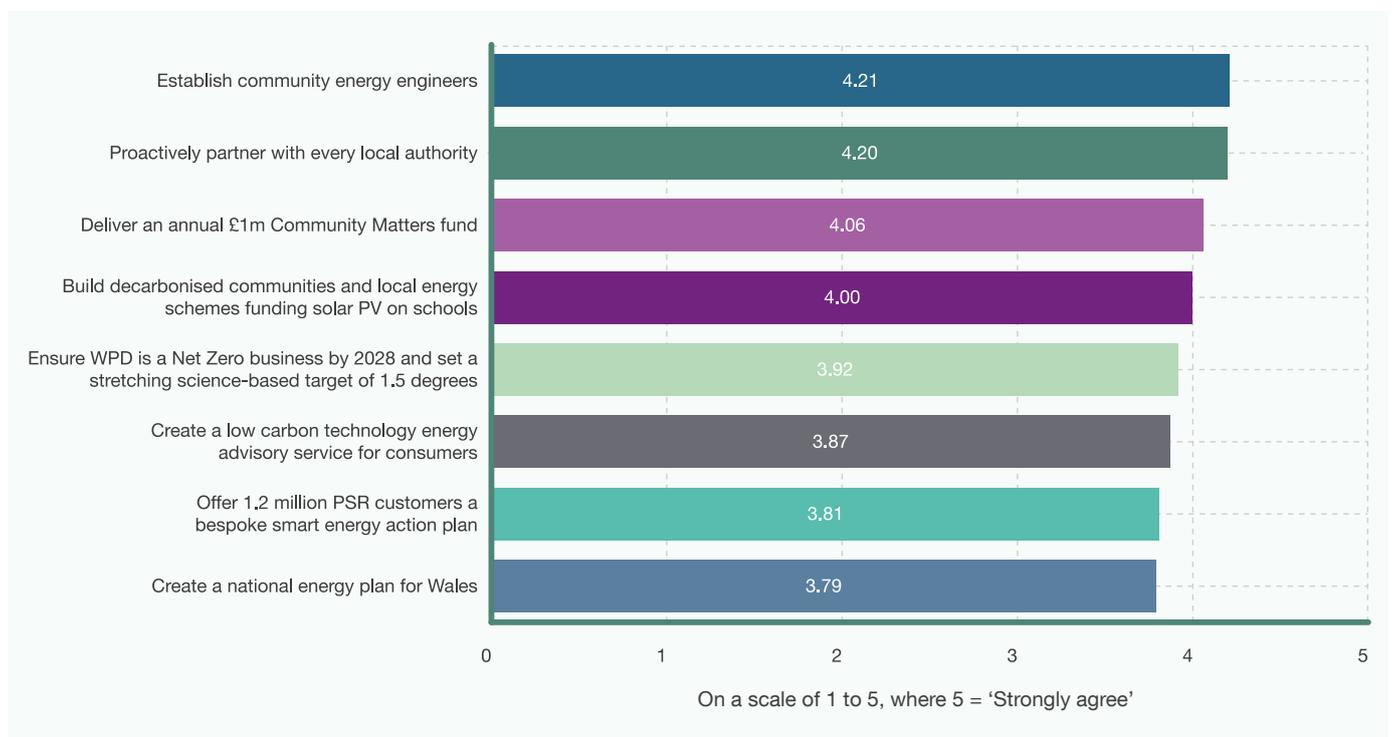
The fifth and final session was presented by Richard Allcock, Stakeholder Engagement Manager. Richard presented the final two CVPs. The seventh CVP that WPD is proposing is to **create a low carbon technology energy advisory service for consumers**. This proposition enjoyed an acceptability rating of 74%, reflecting the stakeholder view that customers do need expert advice in this area. However, stakeholders pointed out that there are existing advice lines, and in-home visits might be a more effective way of understanding the specific needs of customers and what their property can accommodate in terms of low carbon technology. A further suggestion was for WPD to partner with other organisations which are already regarded as trusted advisors in the community.



The eighth and final CVP is to **offer 1.2 million PSR customers a bespoke smart energy action plan**. 77% felt that WPD is best placed to take this action, and the same proportion felt this CVP is acceptable to them. Stakeholders stressed the importance of harnessing the referral network of trusted local bodies to engage with vulnerable people, who may be wary of third parties. Suggestions were made for honing this proposition, such as by prioritising the least technologically savvy PSR customers and devising a plan for reaching groups that do not speak English as their first language.

Customer value propositions: Overall

The following graph sets out the average score by CVP in terms of acceptability to stakeholders. It clearly demonstrates that the most acceptable CVPs to stakeholders were ‘establish community energy engineers’, followed closely by ‘proactively partner with every local authority’. This question was asked during the electronic voting for each CVP as ‘To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “WPD’s CVP in this area is acceptable to me”’.





Session One

WPDs first Business Plan submission to Ofgem

The event began with an introduction from Mark Shaw, RIIO-ED2 Business Plan Manager. Mark provided a summary of the key headlines in the Business Plan and explained WPD's business planning process to date. He explained the overall bill impact for customers, also outlining the regional variances in bill experienced in different licence areas. Stakeholders were presented with a minimum bill increase / decrease (base case) as well as a more realistic bill increase / decrease (best view) for each region.

Summary

Reason for attending

When asked to state their reason for attending, many stakeholders said that they had attended to learn more about WPD's business and understand how their organisation could partner with WPD in future. In particular, local authorities were keen to ensure that their plans for local growth align with WPD's own plans for the energy network. Many of these local authorities had declared climate emergencies and set exacting Net Zero targets; they were therefore keen to learn about WPD's plans regarding EV and heat pump infrastructure, particularly for rural areas. However, the point was made that any decarbonisation initiatives would need to be finely balanced against fuel poverty, with some stakeholders at pains to stress that any bill increases must not disproportionately affect those who can least afford it. Other interests cited included energy efficiency, community energy schemes, micro grids and digitalisation. While the issue of fuel poverty was taken very seriously, some felt that there was a compromise to be struck between facilitating the roll-out of EVs and solar panels (which would benefit the most affluent customers), and adding one or two pounds to the bill, which would clearly disproportionately impact the least affluent.

WPD's Business Plan

When asked to state whether WPD's proposed Business Plan was acceptable, the majority (89%) either agreed or strongly agreed. However, it was notable that 16 stakeholders answered, 'don't know / can't say'. This uncertainty was reflected in the discussion session, where a couple of stakeholders called for more clarity around what WPD is investing in specifically. Some had concerns that EV charge points would not be installed in time to facilitate the smart energy transition, perhaps suggesting that they wanted to see more focus on this issue in the Business Plan. Moreover, a few stakeholders highlighted the importance of addressing regional disparities, with the sentiment being that WPD needs to level up areas which have historically not had much investment.

Impact on customer bills

When asked to rate the extent to which they understood the regional variance in customer bills on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is 'don't understand at all' and 5 is 'understand very well') the average score was 3.6, indicating that stakeholders generally understood the rationale behind this proposal. As a follow-up question, stakeholders were asked about the extent to which this regional variance was acceptable to them, over half of them (57%) agreed that it was acceptable, although just under half either disagreed or said they felt neutral on this (43%). Eight stakeholders did not feel qualified to answer this.

In the discussion session, it was felt that WPD hadn't really explained the reasons for the regional variance in customer bills. One stakeholder stated that attendees were being asked to simply accept the differences rather than being consulted on the proposal. However, stakeholders generally acknowledged the need for greater investment, given the changes happening in the energy system in the move toward Net Zero. One stakeholder even commented that any costs were secondary to deliverability, feeling that customers could accept paying more but would need to see tangible results from WPD in return.



Verbatim comments and voting

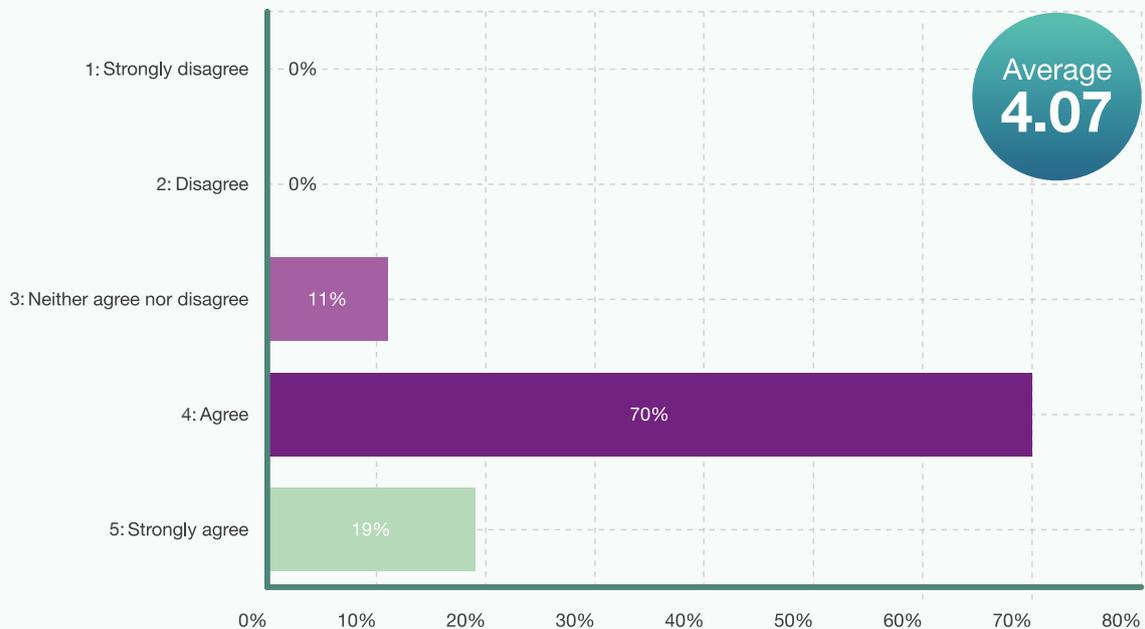
1. What is your role and reason for attending today?

- “We’re working on a local plan for our area and how that might correspond to new development. We are hoping to go to consultation on preferred options early next year.” **Local authority**
- “I’m a planning and development advisor in Warwickshire. We are involved in supplying sites with power when it’s needed, and we can have difficulties. We have engaged with WPD on this, but I want to find out about the background to ensure I am better informed.” **Business customer**
- “I am in South Wales developing social housing, and we are particularly interested in heat pumps, so we have a big stake as a social housing developer.” **Major connections customer**
- “I am working on an innovative project with the council. I joined because I’m interested in ED2 and ED3 plans. I’m interested in the future of energy systems so that the way we regulate will work better with local authorities.” **Energy consultant**
- “WPD doesn’t serve our area, but you are the only ones talking about electricity. This is why I’m here.” **Local authority**
- “I’m a chartered surveyor and want to ensure the South West doesn’t have to foot too much of the bill, especially bearing in mind the history of investment in our network.” **Local authority**
- “We are looking into EV chargers, solar power and the like.” **Business customer**
- “My job is to try and make sure that WPD listen to stakeholders and make sure they put it in their plan.” **Consumer body**
- “I work as an engineering project manager. I’ve come today to get a feel for where WPD’s going, and I can see a lot of similarities between the way WPD want to go with us in the carbon neutral outlook in comparison to other DNOs.” **Connections provider**
- “I run a charity in South East Wales. We were set up to combat climate change but also do a lot of work on fuel poverty. On the one hand, I appreciate that the growing demand for decarbonisation will force costs up, but on the other hand I wish to minimise the impact on the fuel poor.” **Community energy group**



2. What are your overall views on the acceptability of WPD's Business Plan?

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "Overall, WPD's Business Plan is acceptable to me."



Don't know / can't say: 16/43

- "It's fine and it's what I expected really." **Local authority**
- "This is purely about the finances, but I do have concerns. In our area, bills are coming down, but I worry about not getting EV charging points in place. However, on the other hand, it does seem to be a well put together plan." **Local authority**
- "Excellent, but you need to make sure about the implications for why they are higher in each region and ensure one region doesn't feel like they're paying more." **Utility**
- "My sense is that people do not distinguish between WPD and suppliers. Unless it's explained I don't think they'll know who you are." **Local authority**
- "Just as a customer and not an officer, it would be good to see bit more information about the investments which will result in the higher bill." **Local authority**
- "It's fairly obvious that investment has been elsewhere in recent years and so it is time to bring the South West up to speed." **Local authority**

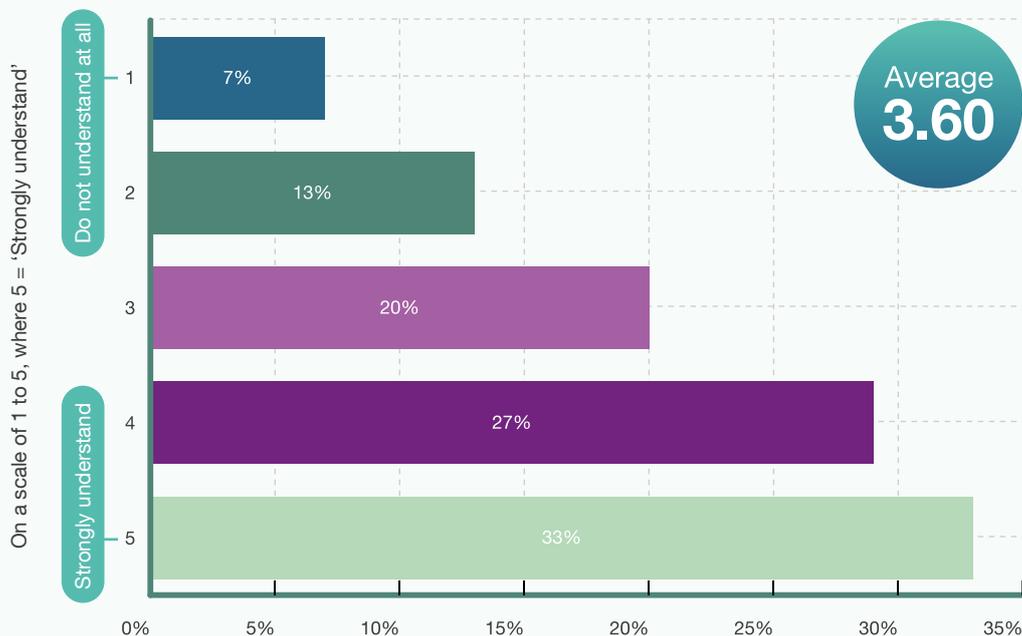


3. What are your views on the bill impacts of WPD's propositions?

- “We are facing huge changes in the energy system, so it’s no surprise to me that this is the level of investment needed to meet these changes.” **Academic institution**
- “I’m more concerned about the deliverability of the plan, rather than the costs themselves. If we are paying more on the bills, we need to see results.” **Local authority**
- “Investments so far are largely being billed to all customers. Just because the South West has generally been billed historically, this is no reason to increase bills now.” **Local authority**
- “This isn’t really my area of expertise, so I can’t comment on this.” **Local authority**

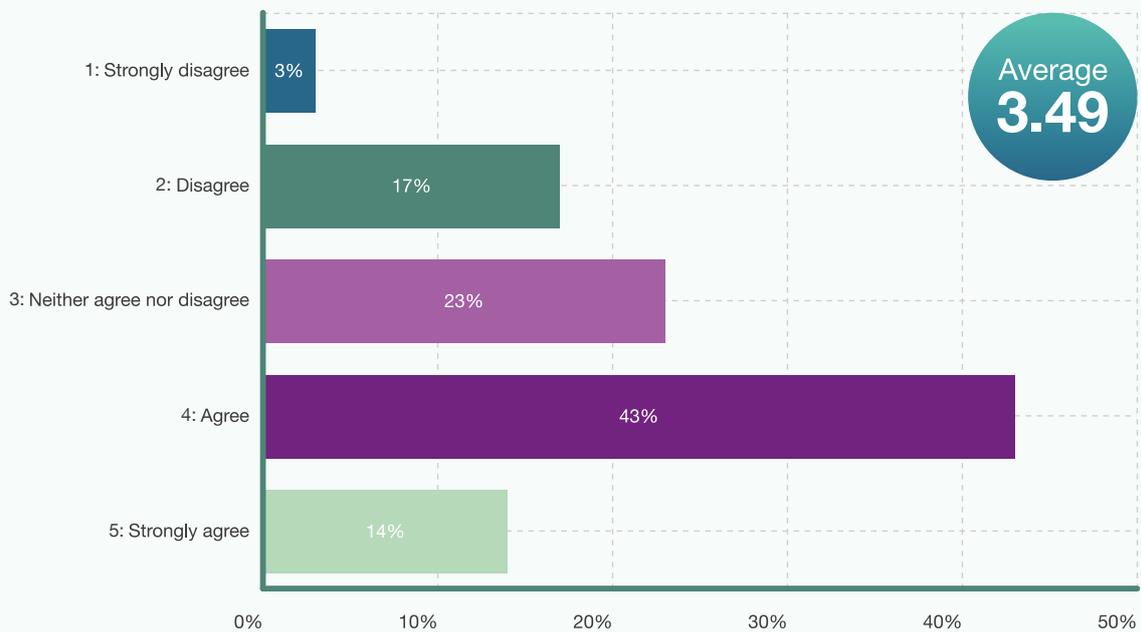
4. Do you understand the regional variances in bills? How acceptable is it to you?

To what extent do you understand the regional variance in customer bills?





To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “The regional variance in customer bills is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 8/43

- “I didn’t quite catch why our bills were going up in the South West. Is that to do with the age of the network or the dispersed nature of the region?” **Local authority**
- “It seems geography explains why Wales and the South West face higher bills, though the variation is not really explained.” **Business customer**
- “The regional variation is interesting to see, though I don’t see any real explanation to it. Effectively we’re expected just to accept it.” **Local authority**
- “I understand the need for investment, particularly with the move towards Net Zero. Whether or not there needs to be more clarification on that, I’m not quite sure.” **Energy consultant**



Session Two

Net Zero & community energy

Summary

At the start of this session, Mark Shaw provided stakeholders with a brief overview of the concept of Customer Value Propositions (CVPs). Jill Russell, Environment Manager, then presented the first two CVPs:

- Ensure WPD is a Net Zero business by 2028 and set a stretching science-based target of 1.5 Degrees
- Establish community energy engineers

Ensure WPD is a Net Zero business by 2028 and set a stretching science-based target of 1.5 Degrees

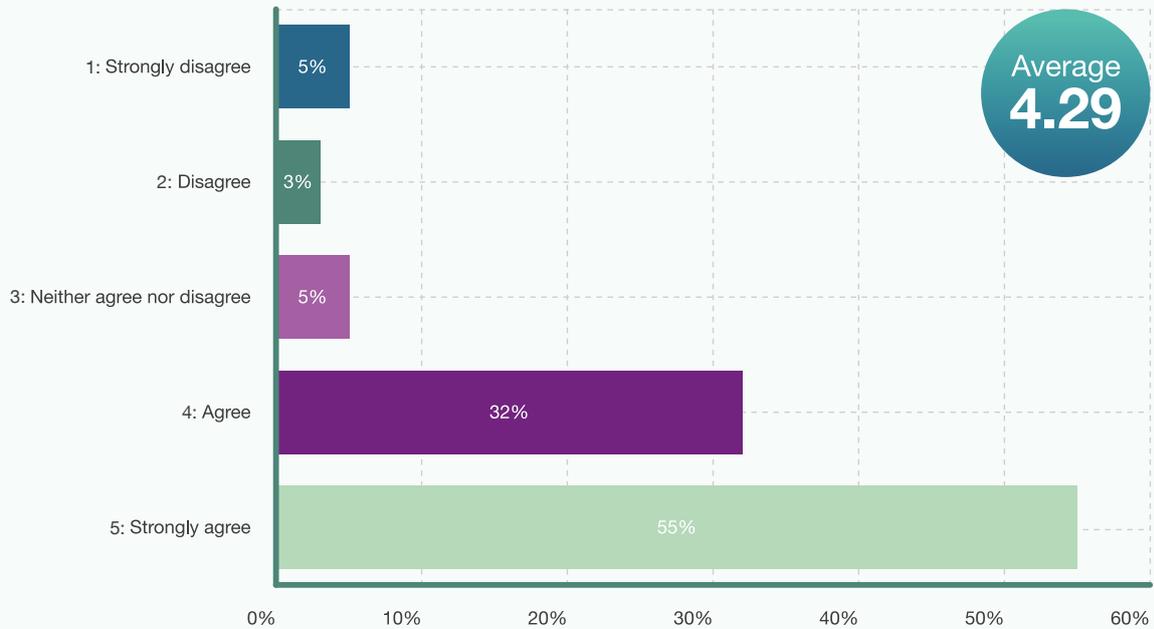
The overwhelming majority of stakeholders polled (87%) agreed or strongly agreed that WPD is best placed to take this action, and only one stakeholder responded 'don't know / can't say'. As for the level of ambition WPD is proposing through this CVP, the majority (68%) felt that the level of ambition was about right – although just under a third (32%) felt that WPD should go further or much further. In the discussion session, the point was made that this proposition is very much focused on WPD's business and, as an organisation which holds critical information about the network and wider industry, WPD should perhaps be more ambitious by communicating its learning experiences and promoting cutting edge technology. This leadership role was seen as crucial, with local authorities feeling that they needed much more guidance in this area.

When asked to rate this CVP's overall acceptability, 81% agreed or strongly agreed that it is acceptable. Five stakeholders did not feel qualified to answer. In fact, many stakeholders commented that this CVP aligns well with their organisation's Net Zero ambitions. However, support for this CVP was not unanimous, as 11% of stakeholders strongly disagreed that the proposition was acceptable. This was partly down to concerns about how WPD is going to achieve Net Zero in practice, and partly down to concerns that this customer value proposition somewhat paradoxically lacks a focus on the end customer. One stakeholder made the point that while attendees at stakeholder engagement workshops are accustomed to considering proposals holistically, end customers tend to be more preoccupied with costs. In other words, it was felt that this CVP may be a hard sell to paying customers.



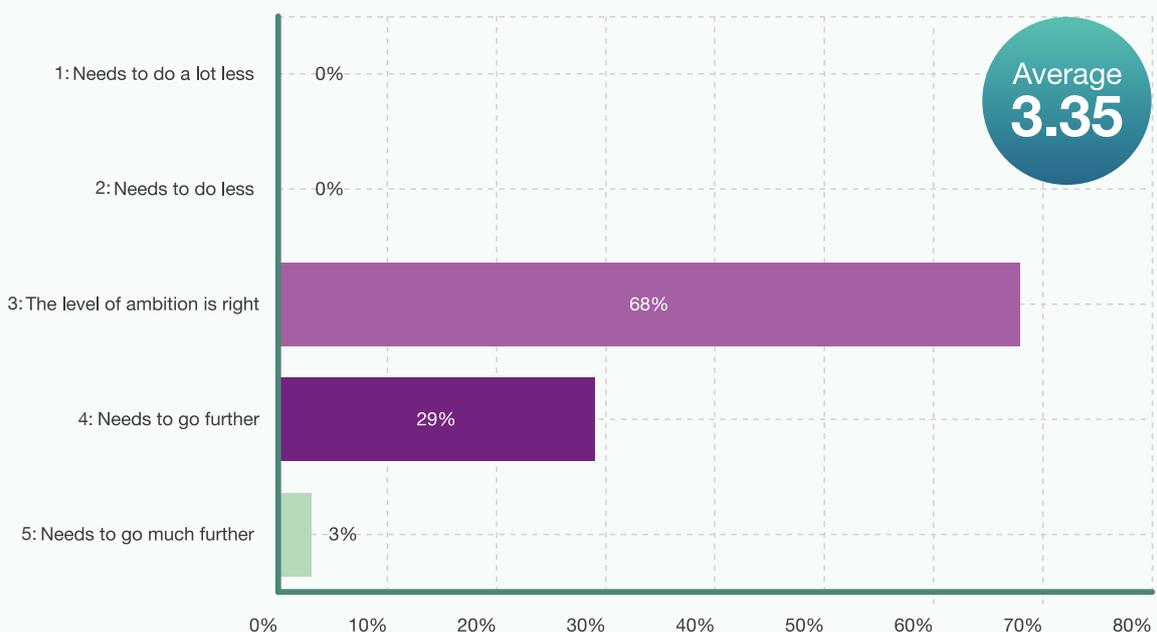
Electronic voting results

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD is best placed to take this action.”



Don't know / can't say: 1/39

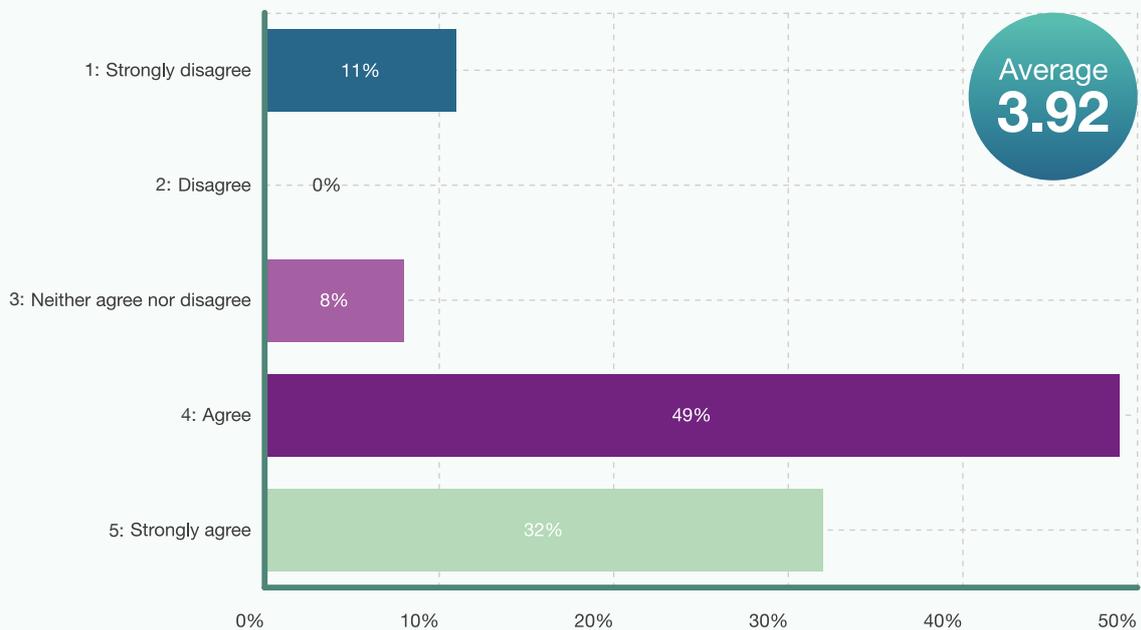
What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?



Don't know / can't say: 5/39



To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD’s proposed CVP in this area is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 3/40

Verbatim comments

1. Does this CVP meet the needs of customers in this area?

- “I think it does meet customers’ needs, and WPD is best placed to take this action. Also, it’s an opportunity for WPD to use and promote first-of-its-kind technology rather than just established technology. This could be really cutting-edge.” **Energy consultant**
- “We also have a similar Net Zero target, so WPD is also aligning with what we’re trying to do.” **Local authority**
- “I think I welcome the 2028 target because in the end, the more community-based leadership from WPD, the better. What is missing is that most targets are internally focused rather than on what your role is to help the wider community deliver Net Zero earlier. You have a huge role because you touch all that energy in helping others along that journey.” **Local authority**
- “It’s the very least big businesses should be doing and it’s great WPD are being a good role model, but it’s the baseline.” **Environmental group**
- “I’m not clear what is meant by science-based target in reality.” **Local authority**



- “This is a CVP that’s meant to go beyond the baseline, but this action is what the company should be doing anyway. It isn’t added value.” **Local authority**
- “I’m 100% supportive of it. In terms of being a net generator of carbon, WPD as an entity is probably quite small compared to all other customers. Does it talk about helping others get to Net Zero later on? WPD helping its area hit Net Zero would probably be better.” **Energy consultant**
- “This target seems a bit of a bolt-on. I don’t understand the context of it. I feel like some words are missing when looking at it. Why would you set it any different from what the government is setting it as?” **Local authority**
- “Basically, it’s just box ticking. It’s just getting your house in order to provide a yardstick. I am more interested in finding out how, and the level of education for local authorities.” **Local authority**

2. Is WPD best placed to take action?

- “If WPD can’t make a good go of this then it doesn’t bode well for the rest of us! As long as WPD is a large representative of the service industry, it’s in a good position to share this path to Net Zero and communicate its learning experiences from all of this. WPD encounters the problems, so it holds all this critical information.” **Academic institution**
- “Yes, as I think that it’s really important that companies like WPD and other councils show leadership to encourage other businesses to do so.” **Local authority**
- “WPD is well placed to take this action, but renewables groups like ours are willing to help where needed. We’re working with a lot of clients around driving the decarbonisation agenda and, in particular, are looking at their overall EV strategy. Many of them want an EV fleet but can’t get the charging infrastructure, which we’re seeing as a general trend.” **Storage and renewables provider / installer**
- “It’s important that you lead by example. If you’re not doing this, then you cannot expect others to follow.” **Local authority**
- “It’s your business so you’re the best placed to deal with this.” **Business customer**



3. What are your views on the positive outcomes and value WPD intends to deliver?

- “One omission is your grey fleet, in other words vehicle owners. You could easily add a salary sacrifice scheme, for instance for people who are casual EV users. This would not only encourage EV uptake, but it would also save the company money through reduced National Insurance payments.”
Business customer
- “What you have for your own business is fine, but I want to see EV charging points for businesses all over the East Midlands. In my council, we want EV charge points in a car park we’re trying to resurface, but WPD has been unable to help.” **Local authority**
- “Ambitious plans are all well and good, but many local authorities such as our own have a grid system that is at a red or critical stage. We can’t accommodate extra power for things like solar farms.”
Local authority
- “There should be no investment unless you have a positive return. These figures must add up.”
Local authority
- “This is good, but we need to think beyond getting charging infrastructure in place for private businesses. We need to find a way for communities and the general public to access these points, particularly when they don’t have off-street parking.” **Storage and renewables provider / installer**
- “I wonder if you should consider for 2028 to go for carbon neutral rather than Net Zero.” **Local authority**

4. What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?

- “With WPD’s plan to increase EV numbers, I agree that it’s quite ambitious. However, I still think EVs might not be the best way forward eventually. You have to purchase batteries for EVs and there’s a larger thing here in terms of our reliance on precious metals. We should think more holistically about the overall carbon footprint.” **Local authority**
- “If WPD can’t do this, what hope is there for the rest of us? With regard to the scale of the fleet transition, if these are located at depots, I’m hoping they will participate in the opportunity for vehicle to grid. The life cycle of an EV is much more beneficial to the planet than internal combustion engine cars.”
Local authority
- “It’s the right ambition. It’s no less than you should be doing. Developing charging schemes could be something you could link into helping customers achieve a similar ambition, as this is all about the company, but you could go further and help customers too.” **Utility**



- “You could be looking at societal benefits to make sure you’re not taking flexibility away from those less able to benefit from it. It’s about understanding fairness.” **Energy consultant**
- “I agree that WPD should be an exemplar in this field. With EV, they maybe ought to be thinking about where the electricity comes from and how it is generated.” **Local authority**
- “I’m struggling to see the sense in some of the ambitions. How are you going to reduce energy use if you increase the number of EVs in the operational fleet to 89%?” **Local authority**

5. If all these outcomes are achieved, how acceptable is this CVP to you?

- “I’m sorry to say it, but the majority of customers only want to see a reduced bill. If you say you’ve reduced your carbon footprint by x, they’ll say well done, where’s my money?” **Local authority**
- “I agree, and I think there’s some bias in the stakeholder engagement process as the customers who engage with this process will care more about these things, but most customers will care more about bills. Saying ‘we’ve reduced emissions and electrified our fleet’ won’t fly with most of them.” **Community energy group**
- “If you are in a position to say, ‘look what we’ve done,’ you’ll be in a better position.” **Local authority**
- “The ambition of this CVP is good, but I have questions about the activities sitting behind it.” **Local authority**

Establish community energy engineers

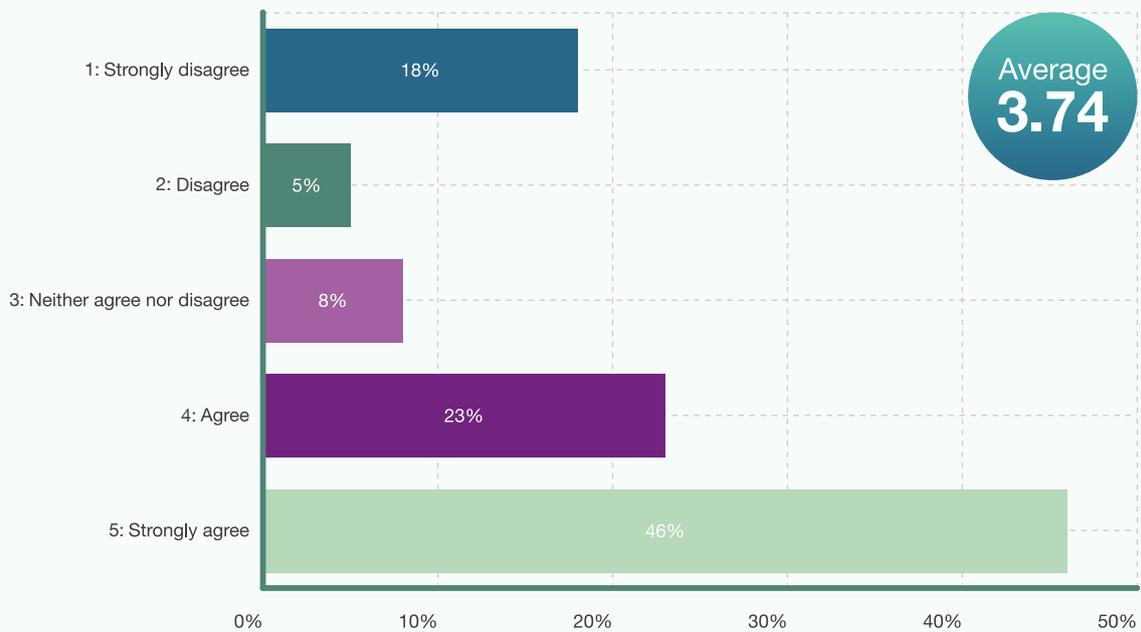
69% of stakeholders strongly agreed or agreed that WPD is best placed to take this action, although a fair proportion (18%) strongly disagreed. Two stakeholders responded ‘don’t know / can’t say’. This was borne out in the discussion, where the consensus was that WPD has a good overall view of the network, and that providing customers with a single point of liaison for community energy matters would be hugely beneficial. However, there were some questions around how this would work in practice. For example, one stakeholder asked whether only established community energy groups could benefit from this initiative, and how WPD is planning to grassroots projects. Another asked how community-led schemes would go about contacting their designated community engineer.

While 46% felt the level of ambition is right, interestingly the same proportion felt that WPD needs to go further or go much further. Only two stakeholders did not feel qualified to answer. Suggestions for how WPD could go further included the provision of education and funding for community energy groups, further promotion of WPD’s role in the energy network (in contrast to the supplier’s role), and outreach to less affluent communities to tout the benefits of community energy in collaboration with local authorities. A couple of stakeholders felt that one engineer per region was a drop in the ocean compared to the number of community energy projects that will be taking off during the next price control period and suggested that WPD needs to move away from showcasing projects to actually facilitating community energy on a large scale. Overall, though, 90% felt that this proposition was acceptable. Only three stakeholders responded ‘don’t know / can’t say’.



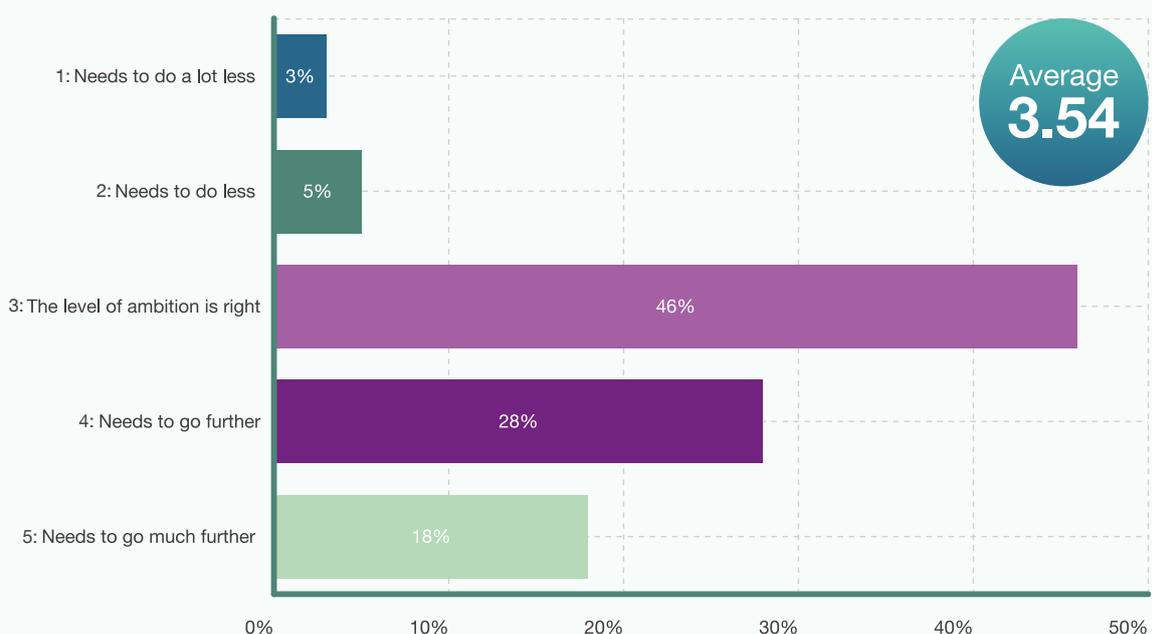
Electronic voting results

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD is best placed to take this action.”



Don't know / can't say: 2/41

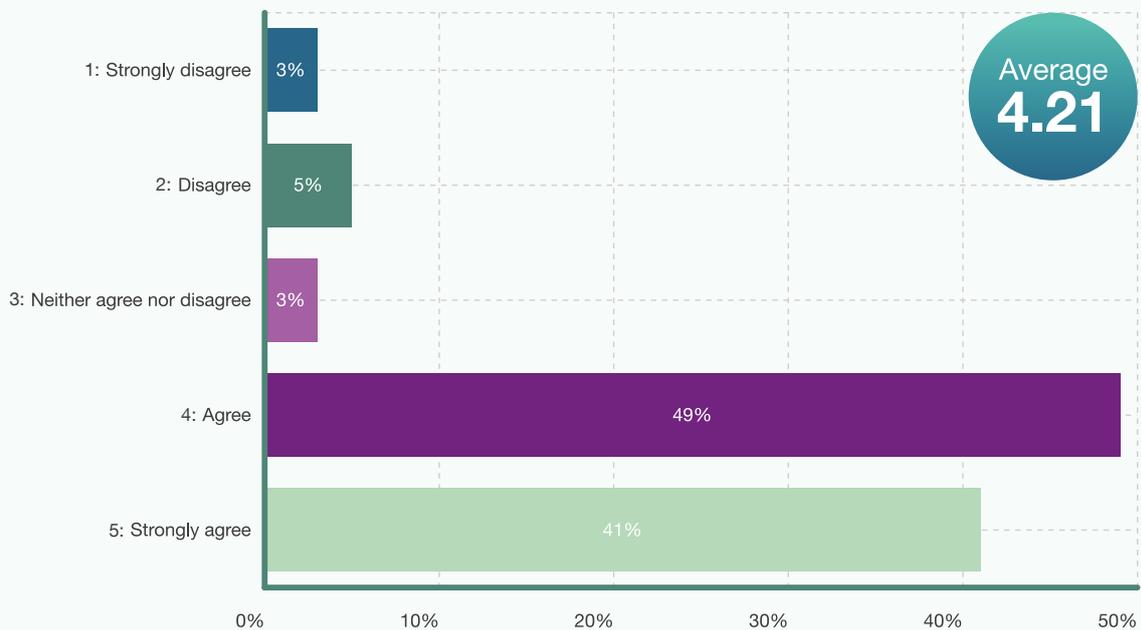
What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?



Don't know / can't say: 2/41



To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD’s proposed CVP in this area is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 3/42

Verbatim comments

1. Does this CVP meet the needs of customers in this area?

- “I think that could be really helpful. Communication and who to contact is a critical issue. At my level of trying to prepare local plans, having a single point of contact is crucial. In Cherwell we deal with SSE and do have contacts there, which makes life easier. With WPD we find it difficult to get responses.”
Local authority
- “This is vital. WPD are not out to sell solar power or microturbines; they’re there to be a trusted advisor. They’re there to provide expert help – not because they’re trying to sell to you but because they know what’s happening on the electricity distribution side. There’s a highly tailored nature to low carbon technology.” **Academic institution**
- “I think WPD is one of the few network operators who don’t already have a strong community engagement arm. It’s a good step in the right direction, but it’s how it operates in practice. Community energy faces a lot of burdens so it will be interesting to see how it translates in practice for things like opening up connections.” **Community energy group**
- “We are getting lots of requests around community energy, so a point of liaison would be good.”
Local authority



- “These community energy engineers would behave like account managers, so I like this idea.”
Local authority
- “I think it would be extremely useful. My question for you is: how do you make it more scalable? You need one-to-many sessions rather than just one-to-one. Are you tackling the right groups of people to make it scalable? If I were you, I’d go for the housebuilders, the architects, the social housing providers, etc. Build for scale because you only have 24 hours in a day; use them as wisely as possible.”
Local authority

2. Is WPD best placed to take action?

- “WPD will have quite a good perspective on the level of interest in low carbon technology, a bit like an auctioneer who can see who’s in the room and who’s interested.” **Academic institution**
- “Yes, as WPD has an overall view of the network and could work proactively to solve people’s problems.”
Local authority
- “WPD would be a great central liaison point, where relevant parties could have early conversations and iron out any potential issues in projects.” **Local authority**
- “We would welcome this, but we need funding. We’re a poor community and don’t issue shares. We do everything through grants and loans, and I feel funding is as important as advice. You’re well placed to provide both.” **Business customer**
- “At what point do these engineers stop providing help? It would be interesting to know when a community project is big enough that it constitutes a company in its own right.” **Local authority**
- “WPD have to take the initiative on this, because a lot of understanding from local authorities is absolutely zilch. The clock’s ticking, but we are flying blind, completely.” **Local authority**
- “A lot of people would barely know who their supplier is, let alone WPD! Local councils would have contacts with local community groups to get the message across.” **Local authority**



3. What are your views on the positive outcomes and value WPD intends to deliver?

- “It’s laudable. From my experience of local community groups, you need to have leadership there. Maybe WPD need to be more proactive and be an advocate rather than just responding to people coming to them. WPD need to promote the benefits and publicise them. It’s also about holding people’s hands a bit. If you look at areas with high levels of fuel poverty, you might not have that initial leadership on the ground.” **Local authority**
- “There is one community group in my area. The focus is largely on solar PV. There’s a lot still to do and WPD can play a part in building that momentum. Having local WPD contacts would be very useful.” **Local authority**
- “If WPD representatives could come forward and advise on district heating, it would be very helpful.” **Local authority**

4. What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?

- “We were told that you’re the biggest distributor in the country. For me, the level of ambition here seems a bit sparse – WPD could go further by dedicating more resource to this. How many communities a year are you going to be serving with just 60 engineers a year? At this level it would be difficult to get enough time with the engineers.” **Local authority**
- “It is an absolutely excellent idea, but is this enough, one per region, to make a big difference, given the number of projects set to happen? Their link to other areas of the regulatory landscape will be absolutely key.” **Utility**
- “We’ll be wanting more than showcases and leading-edge projects by the end of ED2.” **Energy consultant**
- “It’s really important to ensure it’s scalable. I don’t think any DNO can make this cultural change and make people aware of what needs to be done alone.” **Utility**



5. If all these outcomes are achieved, how acceptable is this CVP to you?

- “We get a lot of enquiries from companies trying to sell us stuff, and it never ends up being exactly what you want. However, you’re not trying to sell any of the technology, which is great. The idea of WPD providing advice to us and then us as a local authority allocating funding is a brilliant one.”
Local authority
- “It’s all heading in the right direction. Removing internal combustion engines from your fleet is good. Community engagement is necessary, and I agree with the comments that WPD should proactively go out and encourage communities to think about the opportunities available to them.” **Local authority**
- “It’s all really good, but it doesn’t really spell out how much better the sector will be as a result of this Business Plan and CVP, so it’s difficult to comment without some more detail”.
Community energy group
- “It’s a good start. I can’t say any more at the moment because we haven’t got the details, but it’s a good start.” **Local authority**
- “I like this idea, but it’s really important to ensure that something is done with the feedback given to the community engineers.” **Local authority**



Session Three

Partnering with local authorities & the National Energy Plan for Wales

Summary

In the third session, Ben Godfrey, Distribution System Operator Manager, presented the next two CVPs:

- Proactively partner with every local authority in our region to help them develop ambitious local area energy plans
- Create a National Energy Plan for Wales, working in collaboration with the Welsh government and other utilities

Proactively partner with every local authority

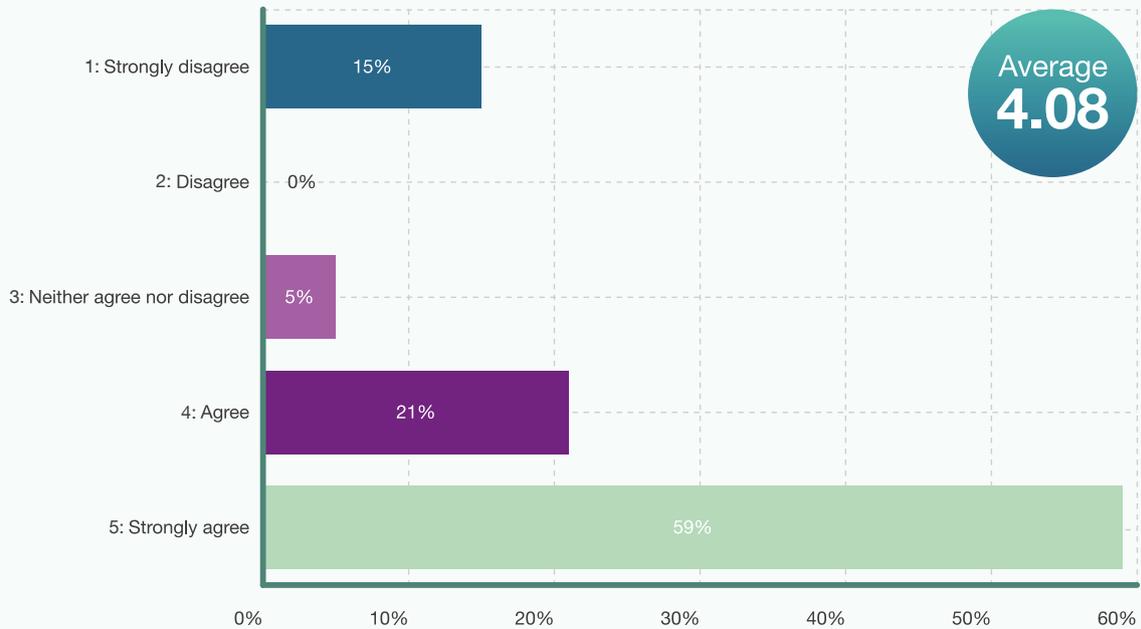
When asked to rate this proposition's overall acceptability, 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the proposed CVP was acceptable, and only one stakeholder responded 'don't know / can't say'. Moreover, the majority of stakeholders (80%) felt that WPD is best placed to take this action, although a handful of stakeholders (15%) strongly disagreed. Opinion was fairly split regarding this CVP's level of ambition. 41% of respondents felt that it was about right, 37% felt that WPD needs to go further and 20% felt that WPD needs to go much further. Only one stakeholder responded 'don't know / can't say'.

In the discussion, it was felt that WPD might be overstretched in this kind of coordinating role – particularly with only four Local Authority Engagement Engineers – and that it might be better placed steering priorities and commenting on development plans. In the words of one attendee, 'it's a complex picture and you've underestimated it', given the differences in processes, standards, targets and skillsets across different local authorities. In fact, many questioned whether this is really within WPD's remit, as there needs to be statutory oversight and adequate resource dedicated to such an ambitious task. While the ambition was seen as commendable, it was felt that the scope of this CVP ought to be broadened much further.



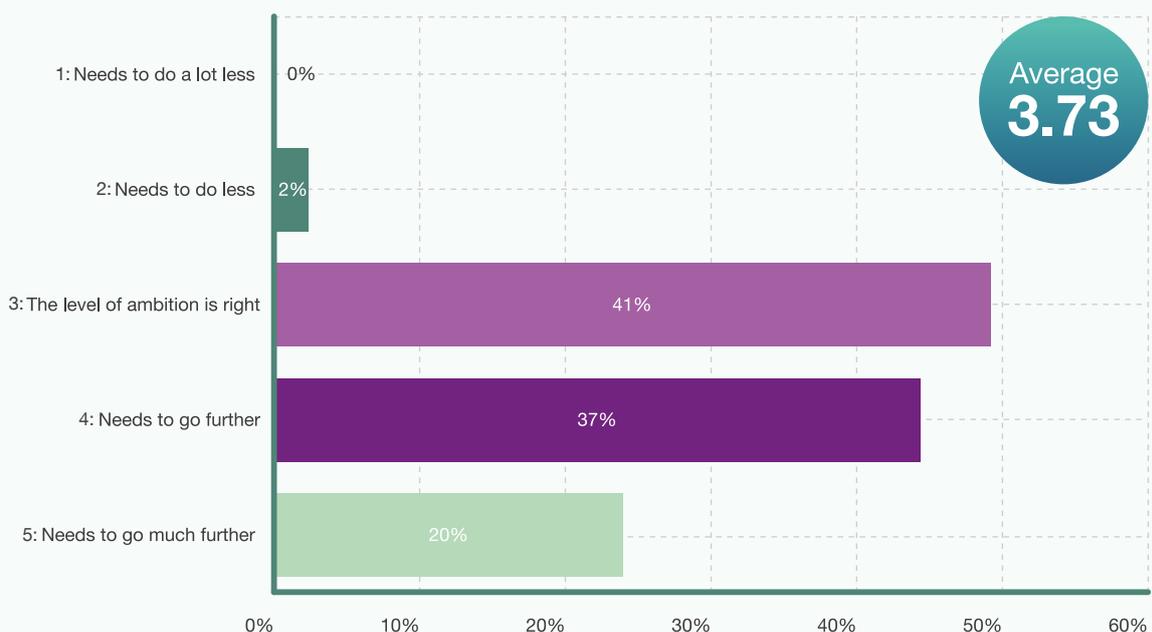
Electronic voting results

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD is best placed to take this action.”



Don't know / can't say: 2/41

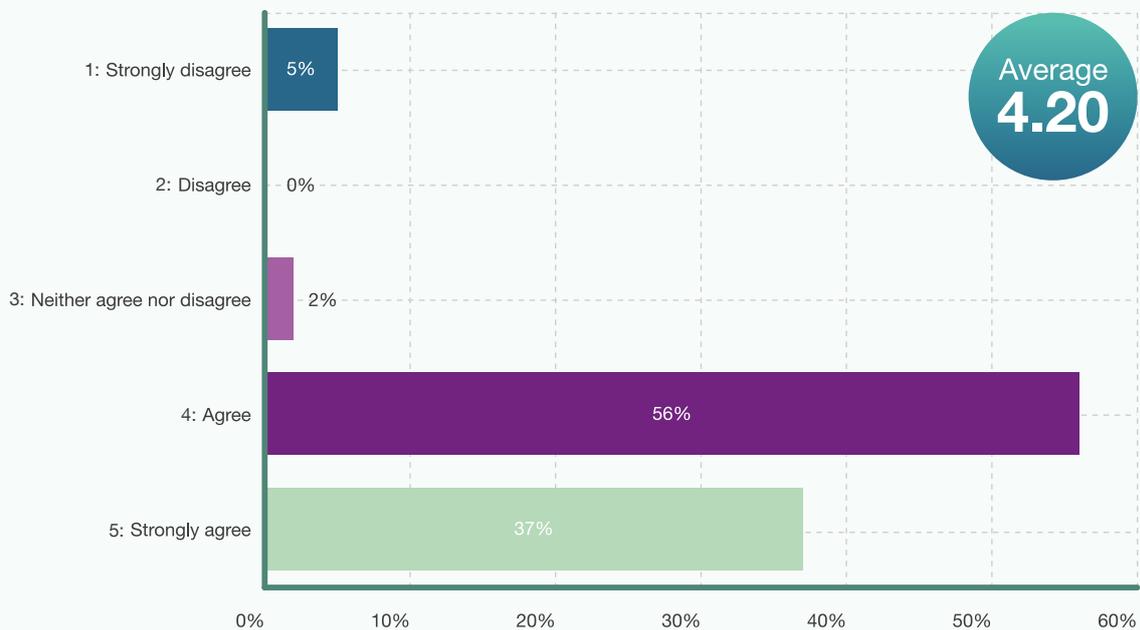
What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?



Don't know / can't say: 1/42



To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD’s proposed CVP in this area is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 1/42

Verbatim comments

1. Does this CVP meet the needs of customers in this area?

- “With local planning, you often get a particular interaction between spatial planning and energy infrastructure. There’s a lot of cross-strata interactions that need to be built in. Having WPD advise on limitations and opportunities might help with this.” **Academic institution**
- “We need help with our local energy plan now, not in 2023. The other problem is that all local authorities will be working on them at the same time. So, either your one officer per patch will only have a limited role or you will need to have more of them.” **Local authority**
- “This is a really welcome step forward. Once every 3 years was a bit concerning in terms of the original ambition but having those dedicated engagement engineers is going to be really welcome. My concern is whether four engineers would be sufficient capacity to support all of the local authorities’ LEPs and any other major groups that you are going to support across the patch.” **Local authority**
- “I think this is a really positive thing. Being able to have a point of contact for a local authority area to engage in planning is really good as sometimes it can be really difficult to get to the right person.” **Local authority**



- “WPD should have been doing more to get the infrastructure in the right places to facilitate electric vehicle charging infrastructure.” **Local authority**
- “I don’t like creating any more bureaucracy than we absolutely have to.” **Local authority**
- “You need to ensure that you’re speaking to all levels of government in a given area, as each level will be relevant to different parts of the network.” **Local authority**

2. Is WPD best placed to take action?

- “WPD is very well placed to coordinate this, but there are definitely more opportunities for us as a renewables company to assist here, as four engineers is not enough.”
Storage and renewables provider / installer
- “Having looked at various models, we don’t think WPD is the right organisation to have a direct link with local authorities. You need to have the right intermediary body with the right statutory powers to deal with all the changes, and have that local sensitivity towards the interests of citizens that can vary from area to area. Can one liaison in one region really be sensitive to all those regional and subregional variations?” **Energy consultant**
- “I don’t disagree that it needs doing, but I don’t think WPD is best placed to be running it.”
Energy consultant
- “You’d be better placed to make comments on development plans and try to steer priorities in a certain direction.” **Local authority**

3. What are your views on the positive outcomes and value WPD intends to deliver?

- “I worry about whether these roles will be able to deliver the desired value, due to issues around capacity. Take the Midlands Energy Hub, for example: they have eight people looking after projects in that region alone and they still cannot keep up. I fear that these roles could end up having too much of a light touch.” **Local authority**
- “I think some of this will come in to the detail, but if you’re going to hardwire this into the communities. You’re going to want to make sure there are going to be equal and opposite commitments within local plans.” **Energy consultant**



- “It makes a lot of sense, but I have no ideas on the volumes. There’s often a difference in standards or processes between local authorities that cause inefficiencies, so if the local authorities and WPD could get their act together and standardise, it could vastly improve things.” **Utility**
- “The variance in skillsets across regions is a very good point. For example, in Coventry they have the skills whereas other smaller areas may not, and so will need more support from you. I think it’s a complex picture and you’ve underestimated it.” **Local authority**

4. What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?

- “It’s unrealistic for WPD to do that with just four people. But I don’t believe WPD should be doing it anyway. The function needs to be set up and properly resourced and pull together the right people.” **Energy consultant**
- “There is this discussion about working with local authorities. I think you should also broaden that to big users. Create wider collaborative partnerships with bigger groups so that you can make bigger impacts and make your presence and leadership felt more.” **Local authority**
- “WPD are in a difficult place and are working hard to digitalise, but some of the systems behind it are old and not always accurate so cooperation with other organisations is vital.” **Utility**
- “I agree that four members of staff will be a drop in the ocean in terms of what’s required, to get that sensitivity to local needs, I just don’t see how that would be possible.” **Environmental group**

5. If all these outcomes are achieved, how acceptable is this CVP to you?

- “This CVP sounds like a great idea, but we need it to be rolled out more quickly and its scope needed to be bigger.” **Local authority**
- “Although I do think this is a good idea overall, I don’t fully understand what this benefit is made up of.” **Local authority**
- “I’d have to think further about whether it should be an intermediary or WPD.” **Environmental group**



Create a National Energy Plan for Wales

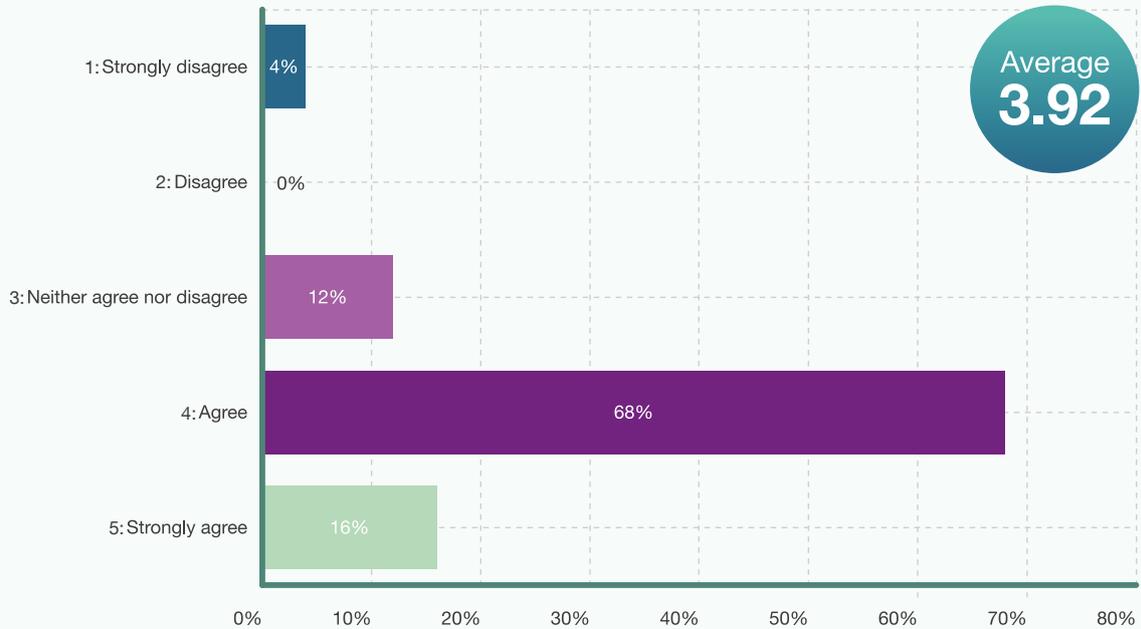
84% agreed or strongly agreed that WPD was best placed to take this action – although a substantial number, 15 stakeholders, felt they didn't know or couldn't say. It was commented that WPD has the relevant technical know-how and existing links to developers and local authorities to be able to drive this forward. Moreover, many felt that, if successful, the plan could be used as an exemplar for other regions or nations.

82% felt that the level of ambition was about right, although the same number of stakeholders (18) responded 'don't know / can't say'. One attendee felt that a more joined-up approach was needed with the other DNOs, with another echoing this sentiment that best-practice needs to be shared between as many relevant organisations as possible. Overall, three quarters agreed that this CVP was acceptable, although a significant number of stakeholders, 12, said they didn't know or couldn't say. This perhaps reflected the feeling in the discussion that while things are going too slowly in Wales, WPD cannot shoulder the burden of this problem alone. As one attendee put it, 'you just own the wires, so how much influence can you really have?'.



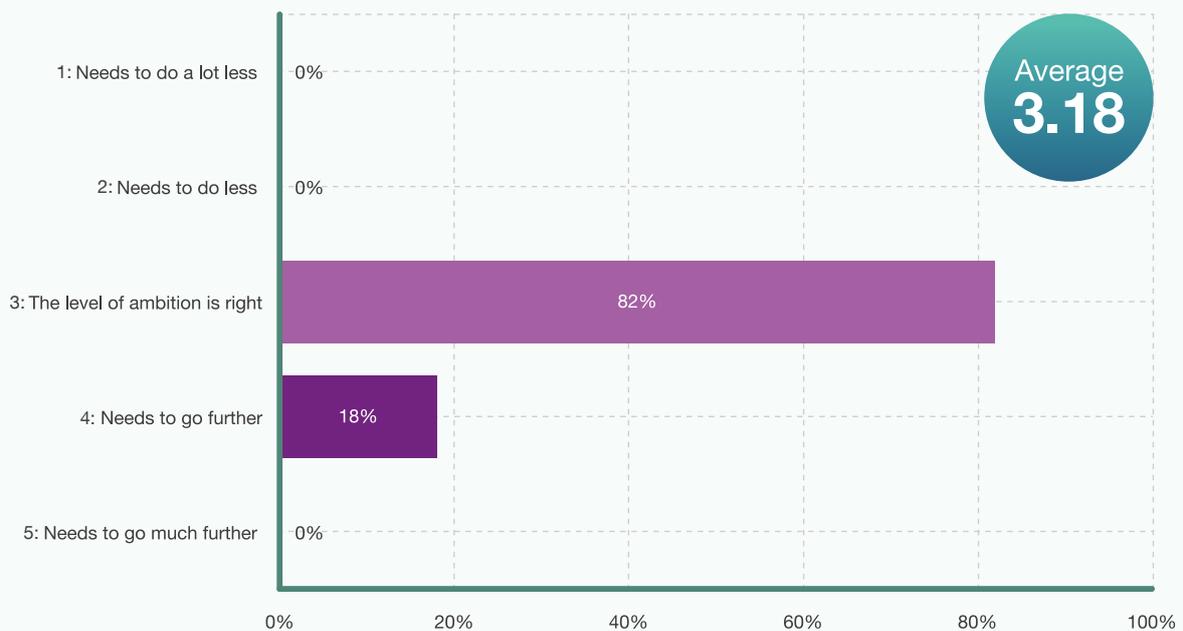
Electronic voting results

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD is best placed to take this action.”



Don't know / can't say: 15/40

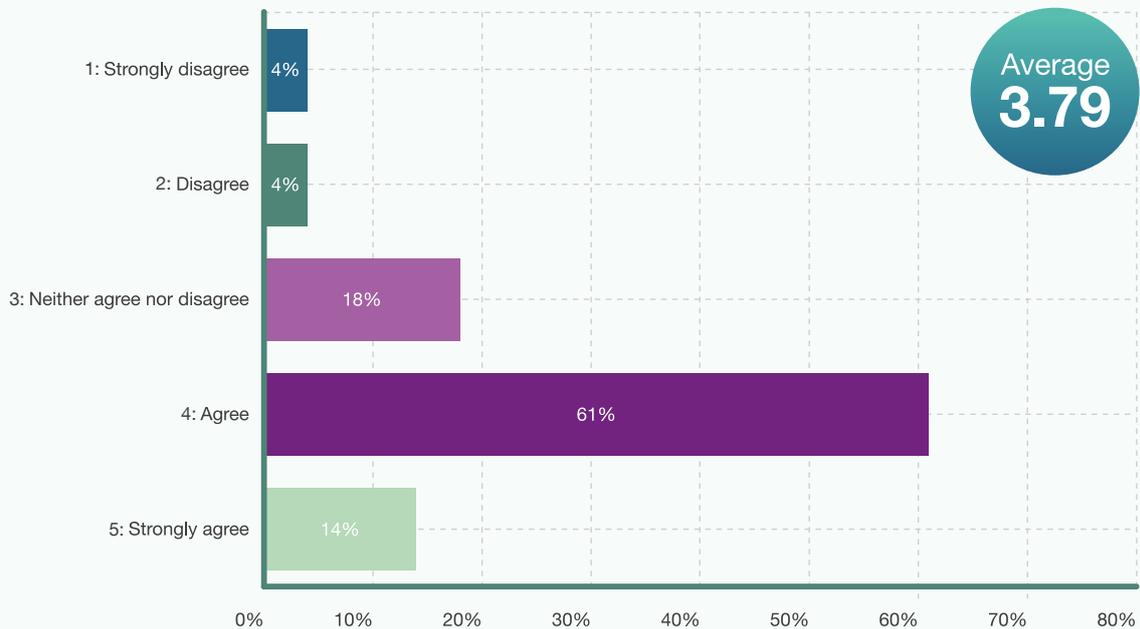
What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?



Don't know / can't say: 18/40



To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD’s proposed CVP in this area is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 12/40

Verbatim comments

1. Does this CVP meet the needs of customers in this area?

- “I think that this is good idea. You want a stable network, and this holistic approach will ensure that you get a stable connection.” **Local authority**
- “A plan is a good place to start. The fact that someone has thought it through and is actually planning around it is the important thing.” **Local authority**
- “We are looking at regional energy plans, but the country is split in half. We need a joined-up approach with the Welsh government and other DNOs.” **Local authority**
- “I’d like to see this sort of plan for England as well, given that we don’t have a national plan.” **Local authority**



2. Is WPD best placed to take action?

- “I’m not sure, but somebody needs to take leadership because I don’t see the Welsh Government stepping up.” **Community energy group**
- “It’s all about sharing best practice between local authorities. Given that WPD covers 120–130 local authorities, I feel that WPD is well placed to facilitate this.” **Consumer body**
- “I have no idea whether anyone else could step into the fold.” **Local authority**
- “It’s fundamental that WPD and all of the energy companies in Wales are involved in this. In my opinion things are going too slowly in Wales.” **Utility**
- “You guys just own the wires, so how much influence can you really have?”
Major connections customer

3. What are your views on the positive outcomes and value WPD intends to deliver?

- “Although it’s regarding Wales, I think it shows WPD’s commitment to work with local authorities, which can only be a good thing to be fair.” **Local authority**
- “In local government terms, you’ll always have some leaders and some followers. If you have a range of people doing a range of different things that you can measure, then others can see what would work best for them in their areas. If you can do it with Wales, that would be a huge cue to the rest and let’s march forwards from there.” **Local authority**
- “Communication between the DNOs and government is very important. Large-scale renewable connections are out of the question due to grid limitations, so anything that can open up these alleys would be good.” **Local authority**

4. What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?

- “You can have ambition but should think about what the biggest constraint to achieving it would be.”
Local authority



- “Are the engineers you work with up to speed with your own ambitions? Some local authorities will have long-term planning commitments of their own, and you’ll need to consider whether these could impact your own ambitions.” **Local authority**
- “I can only speak for my local authority, and my feelings are that given the speed of delivery on this, people seem so unaware of what we are approaching. The local authority is not up to speed with what is needed.” **Local authority**

5. If all these outcomes are achieved, how acceptable is this CVP to you?

- “I’d absolutely support this. WPD and other DNOs are right at the heart of where things can be implemented. They have the technical know-how and have links to local authorities and local developers.” **Academic institution**
- “It’s something that needs driving. WPD are probably the people to drive it and make things happen.” **Community energy group**
- “It’s an excellent idea to speak to local authorities. However, when you speak to several authorities to try and create an all-Wales unified approach, you may have too many voices.” **Local authority**
- “The Welsh issue is a funny one because WPD is not the only network operator in Wales. The ambition is laudable if WPD want to take on the energy strategy alone though!” **Major connections customer**



Session Four

Decarbonised communities and local energy schemes

Summary

In the fourth session, Alex Wilkes, RIIO-ED2 Business Plan Communication Manager, presented the next two CVPs, which both have a community focus:

- **Build decarbonised Communities and Local Energy Schemes funding solar PV on schools**
- **Deliver an annual £1 million “Community Matters” fund**

Build Decarbonised communities and local energy schemes funding solar PV on schools

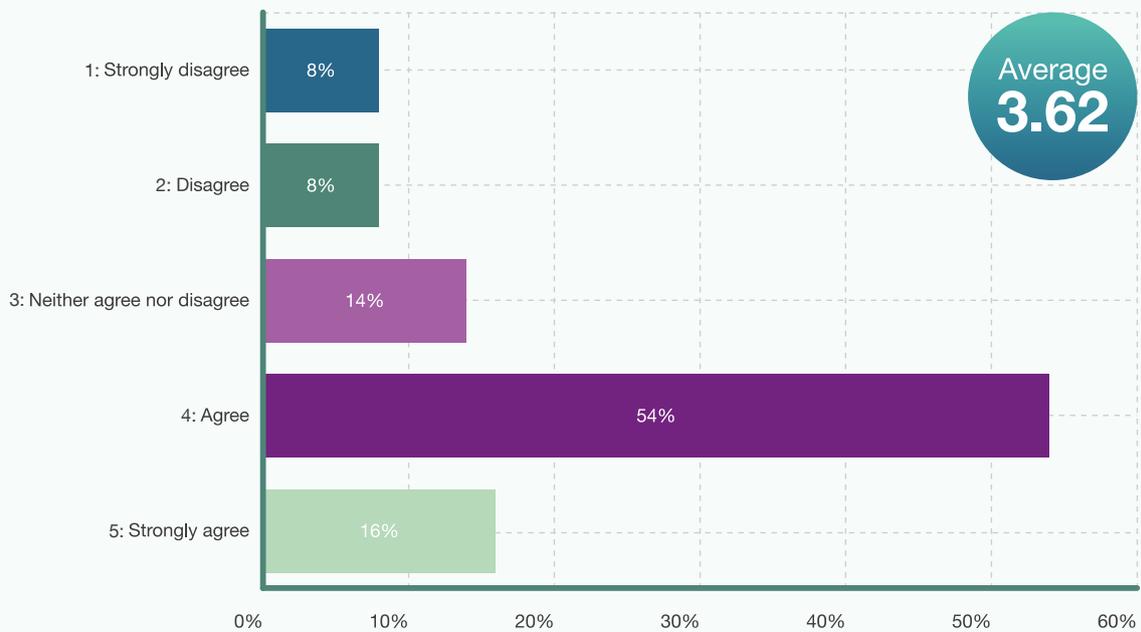
Just over two-thirds of stakeholders (70%) agreed that WPD was best placed to take this action, and only one stakeholder responded ‘don’t know / can’t say’. In the discussion, attendees were very supportive of WPD rolling out support with STEM subjects. However, there was a little more uncertainty surrounding the proposed PV initiative. One stakeholder said that WPD should be careful not to muscle in on community energy groups which are already running these kinds of projects and have the necessary local expertise. Similarly, the point was made that WPD mustn’t ‘parachute in and do things for the sake of corporate social responsibility’. Unsurprisingly, one suggestion which enjoyed broad support was for WPD to provide funding to existing projects in this area rather than creating its own initiative.

When asked to rate this CVP’s level of ambition, the majority (59%) felt WPD should go further or much further. Four stakeholders did not feel qualified to answer. This was borne out in the discussion, where it was felt that the number of schools targeted was woefully low relative to the number of schools across WPD’s patch. As for its overall acceptability, 80% of those polled agreed or strongly agreed that the proposition was acceptable to them, and only two stakeholders responded ‘don’t know / can’t say’. However, they sought greater clarification around the PV initiative, particularly around how WPD was planning to measure economic deprivation, whether schools would have to bid for the solar panels, and whether other forms of support (such as insulation or double glazing) would be offered if PV was not felt to be appropriate in certain cases.



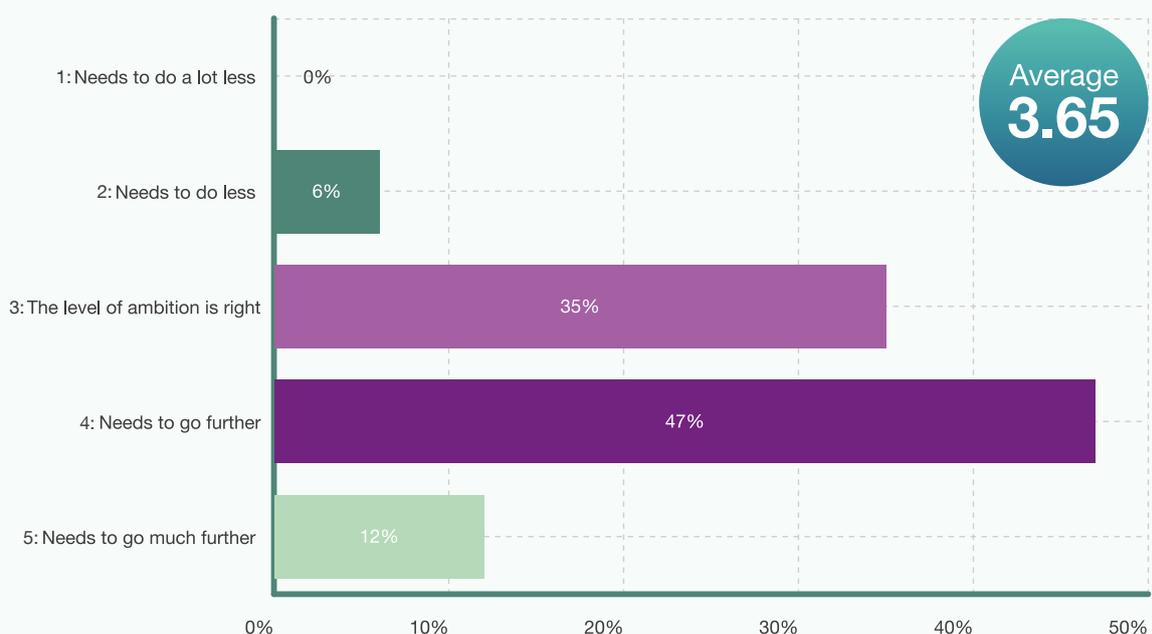
Electronic voting results

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD is best placed to take this action.”



Don't know / can't say: 1/38

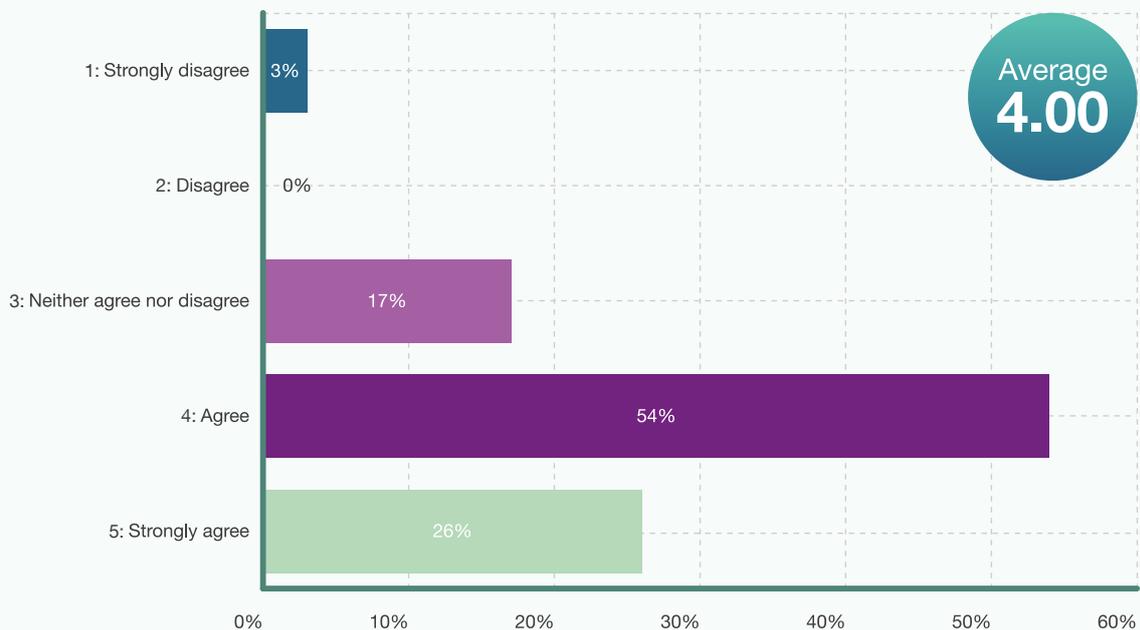
What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?



Don't know / can't say: 4/38



To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD’s proposed CVP in this area is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 2/37

Verbatim comments

1. Does this CVP meet the needs of customers in this area?

- “Combining education and deprivation is a really interesting idea. Working with local authorities will be important. There are already climate action network groups charging off down this path but I’m sure people will welcome you with open arms with this one.” **Academic institution**
- “I don’t think consumers should be paying for this. If shareholders are paying that’s fine. Who is going to decide which schools get the solar panels? Will it be competitive? As for STEM, that’s great, particularly if it’s directly and explicitly linked with future employment opportunities.” **Community energy group**
- “You have to choose the right technology for each building in order to gain maximum benefit. PV may not be right in all circumstances. You have to understand the structure of each building and how it’s insulated.” **Local authority**
- “I think it’s essential that where schools and communities can be self-sufficient, that they’re able to take advantage of some of the benefits without it necessarily being free.” **Utility**
- “I suggest matched funding: partner with other organisations, get them to do the heavy lifting and then match them, so you get more bang for your buck.” **Local authority**



- “This appears to be an excellent proposal. I’m just wondering what other forms of technology WPD might consider funding? Is it purely solar panels or ground source heat pumps?” **Local authority**
- “For me, one of the same issues pops up, which is that it’s laudable in itself, but it has to have sensitivity surrounding how these schemes kind of privilege the first movers compared to people in fuel poverty, and if they lead to network reinforcement that favours these schemes rather than the needs of the locality then they are not modelling fairness in the energy system.” **Energy consultant**
- “Which criteria is going to define economic deprivation?” **Local authority**

2. Is WPD best placed to take action?

- “In terms of the funding, what’s to stop WPD partnering with others to grow this? WPD could bring its technical insight and other organisations might be able to offer specific funding for education or low carbon energy projects.” **Academic institution**
- “A lot of community energy groups are already doing such projects. They already have a good understanding of what the community needs, so WPD is well placed to support these projects rather than undertaking them itself. It would be the wrong approach to push out organisations who have been trying to do this for years and years without support, just so WPD can show themselves to look good.” **Community energy group**
- “WPD is well placed with rolling out support with STEM subjects.” **Local authority**
- “This is where WPD shouldn’t be at the front, but local authorities should be.” **Utility**
- “I agree with making sure WPD are working with people who are already doing stuff and not just parachuting in and doing stuff for the sake of CSR. Also, be careful how you define it and use social indicators.” **Environmental group**

3. What are your views on the positive outcomes and value WPD intends to deliver?

- “Obviously the schools won’t use the energy all the time, for example at weekends, in the evenings and during school holidays. Who is going to benefit from this the rest of the time?” **Local authority**
- “The idea of having a local community energy network – that in itself is revolutionary and if this is an entry point into that realm, WPD will have really cracked it.” **Academic institution**



- “My concern is that people living in deprived urban areas may show up in the statistics, whereas people in rural areas may not. This means they will not get the support they need.” **Local authority**
- “I think that a more holistic approach may be better for school buildings, as putting PV cells on the roof of a draughty school won't do much. I would instead suggest something like better insulation or double glazing.” **Local authority**

4. What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?

- “For me, 45 schools a year seems like tokensim. Is 30 panels going to cover the entire usage of the school? It seems a bit like a drop in the ocean and a ‘what can we get away with?’ sort of thing. It sounds good on paper but it's not enough.” **Local authority**
- “Placing the PV panels on the school roofs is great, but I was wondering whether you could expand your vision somewhat. Have you considered targeting community halls where PV starter packs would not be suitable school roofs? This can help with ensuring that deprived communities can enjoy solar connectivity.” **Local authority**
- “Schools are a great place to start, no doubt. But if you think about a lot of the financially challenged households, there's a high correlation with non-attendance at school. Wouldn't it be great if the local authorities took care of schools, and you took care of those places where youth go to when they've been excluded from schools?” **Utility**
- “I wonder if it's better to invest in the network to support a broader uptake of renewables rather than investing in renewables for schools.” **Local authority**



5. If all these outcomes are achieved, how acceptable is this CVP to you?

- “You need to be wary of unintended consequences. It needs to be more joined up. But if it led to solar panels being a trend across a fuel poverty area, then what happens is the LCT quality in that area is dominated by solar, and this could impact people because it leads to developments in the system that aren’t necessarily best for the area.” **Energy consultant**
- “I really support the STEM support aspect, but I would look again at the PV cells on school roofs aspect.” **Local authority**
- “I support targeting economically deprived areas, as these are the ones suffering environmentally and in health terms. If you could go in heat pumps too, for example, you could make a real difference.” **Local authority**

Deliver an annual £1m Community Matters fund

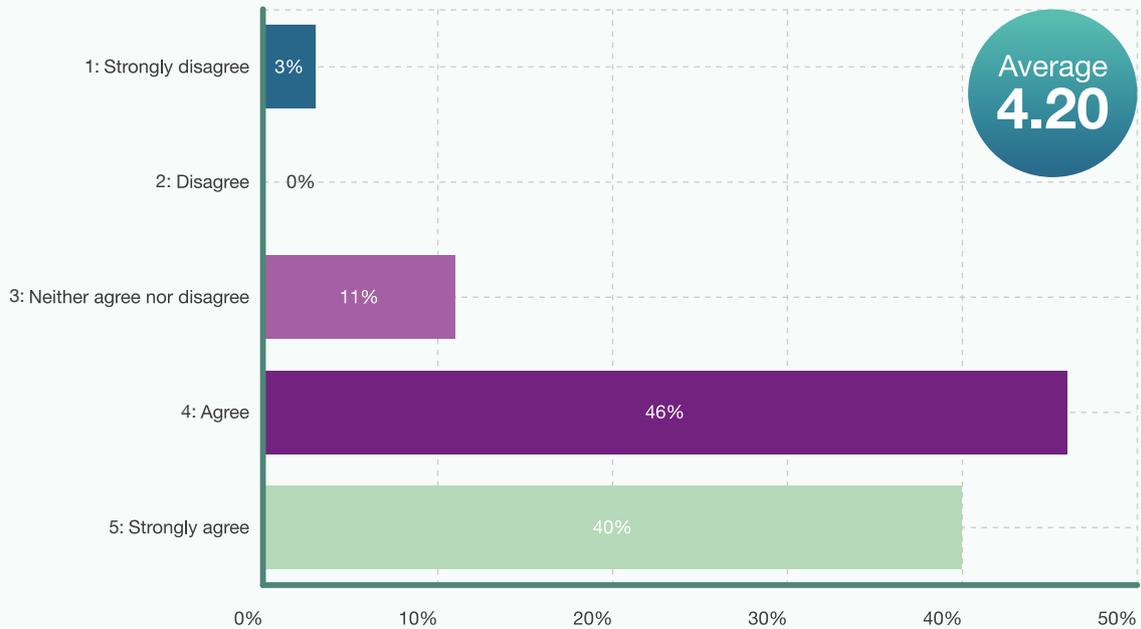
86% agreed that WPD is best placed to take this action, and three stakeholders responded ‘don’t know / can’t say’. However, only a quarter felt that the level of ambition was right with 75% wanting to see the level of ambition go further or much further. Five stakeholders did not feel qualified to answer. This was reflected in the discussion, where it was felt that more money would be needed for this fund to make a real impact. Stakeholders sought clarification around eligibility for the fund and whether the money was aimed at supporting small-scale or larger projects. One questioned whether communities should actually have more say in what they want the money to be spent on.

When asked to rate this CVP’s acceptability, 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it is acceptable, while the remainder felt neutral or couldn’t say. Two stakeholders responded ‘don’t know / can’t say’. The proposition’s scope to bring together different organisations was welcomed, and one attendee commented that such initiatives demonstrated the clear benefits of bottom-up funding, which creates exponential benefits for wider society and brings different organisations together.



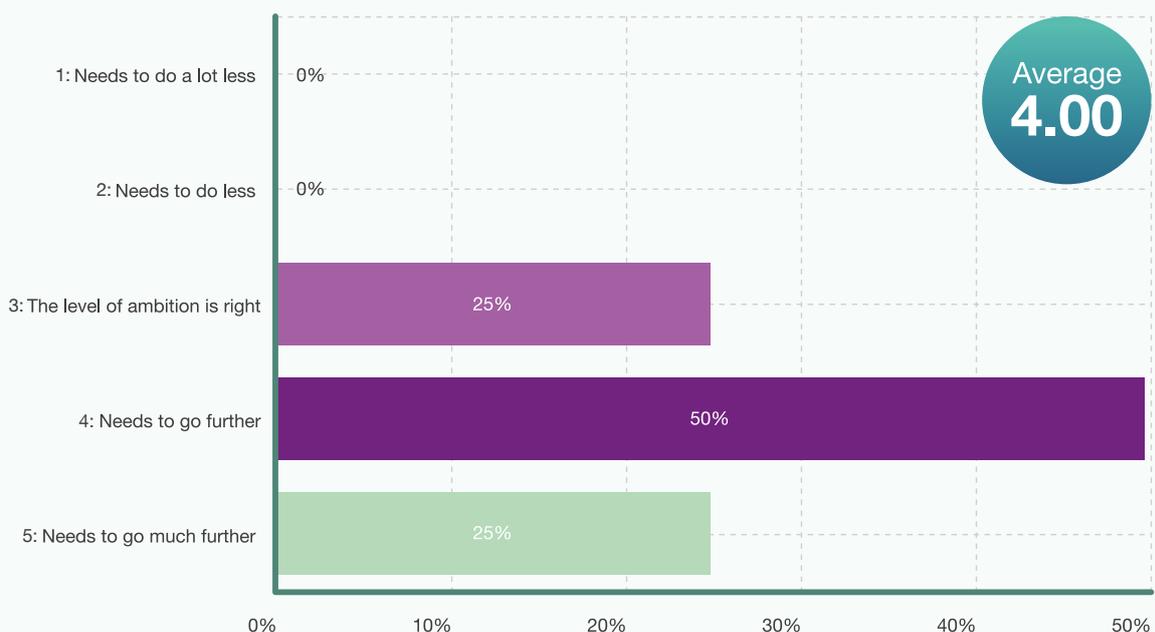
Electronic voting results

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD is best placed to take this action.”



Don't know / can't say: 3/38

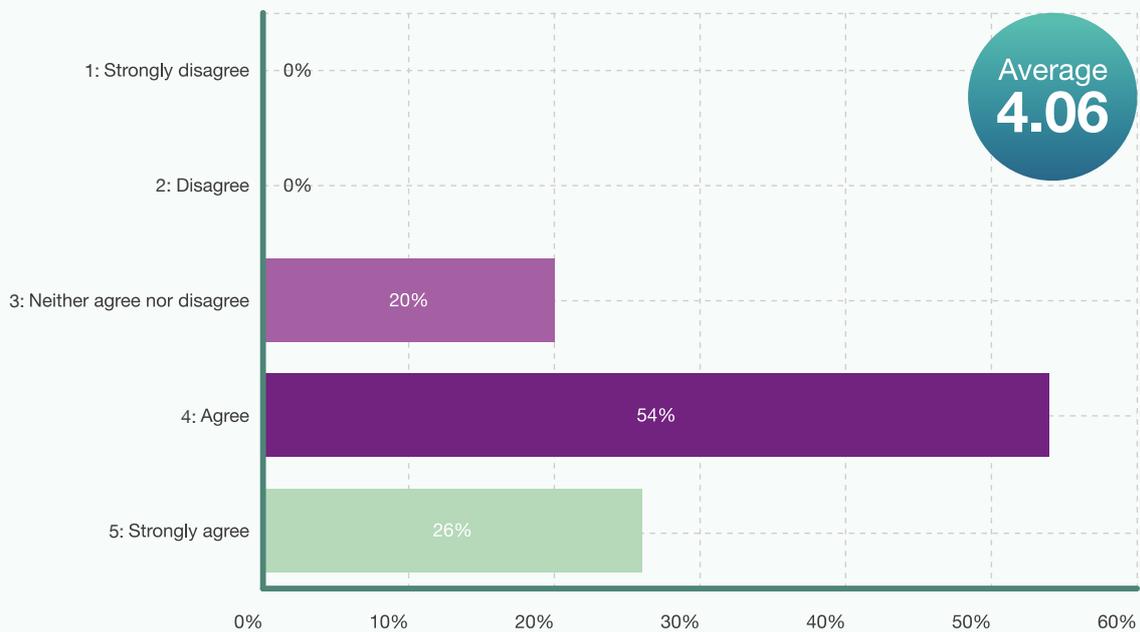
What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?



Don't know / can't say: 5/37



To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD’s proposed CVP in this area is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 2/37

Verbatim comments

1. Does this CVP meet the needs of customers in this area?

- “The idea is good, but I don’t think that the amount of money provided is enough.” **Local authority**
- “I think this is absolutely brilliant, and the key point about getting other organisations to participate in matched funding to increase the funds could really work well.” **Utility**
- “This demonstrates how putting money in at the base generates so much more benefits than top-down funding.” **Local authority**
- “It’s great. It would be interesting to know who will be able to apply. Also, make sure the application process and reporting process isn’t too onerous, especially if targeted at smaller community groups and charities. There is a diverse range of key strategic areas there.” **Environmental group**
- “How can WPD encourage people to stay safe?” **Local authority**
- “The fact that it’s funded by shareholders is music to my ears.” **Local authority**
- “As climate change worsens, we need to help improve the resilience of people. This fund should include assistance to do just that.” **Business customer**



2. Is WPD best placed to take action?

- “WPD should be better placed to do some of the things the energy suppliers are doing. Fuel poverty alleviation is so fragmented, with different organisations delivering different schemes. The one constant that is always there are the DSOs. I’d be inclined to take more funding from the energy suppliers and give it to the distribution companies.” **Community energy group**
- “I’m encouraged by this and think that it should be supported. Because of resource cuts, local authorities are having to make do at the moment. We can’t do as much as we used to so if WPD can come in and help that’s great.” **Local authority**
- “I’m not sure it’s reasonable for a private company to finance social objectives, so I think you should look for support from central government seeing as it’s a general benefit.” **Local authority**
- “This must be done in collaboration with other stakeholders.” **Business customer**

3. What are your views on the positive outcomes and value WPD intends to deliver?

- “The amount of money available will not fund your targeted projects to the required standard. If you want to make a real impact, more money will be needed.” **Local authority**
- “I think understanding how to access it is really important.” **Local authority**

4. What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?

- “It might sound like a lot of money, but it isn’t much when you take it across the four regions. I think that it would be better to target a small number of projects and focus on specific projects. If you are trying to support small-scale projects, you need to make that clear.” **Local authority**
- “Where does the £1m come from, and why? If your turnover is £10m then it’s massive but if your turnover is in the billions, then maybe not. I would say it’s all positive as it’s helping everyone out but I’m not sure how much it’s actually helping.” **Local authority**



5. If all these outcomes are achieved, how acceptable is this CVP to you?

- “If you divide £1 million by 500 it only works out at £2,000 per organisation, so it will be interesting to see how much people can apply for and what they are expected to achieve with that money.”
Community energy group
- “There needs to be an overall, holistic strategy to make sure individual project objectives don’t conflict with each other – for example, that initiatives to help vulnerable customers don’t conflict with Net Zero objectives.” **Community energy group**
- “You’ve got to start somewhere, and I think it’s a brilliant start.” **Local authority**
- “I particularly like how it has potential to bring different organisations with different cultures together.”
Energy consultant



Session Five

LCT energy advisory service & PSR energy action plans

Summary

In the fifth and final session, Richard Allcock, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, presented the final two CVPs:

- **Create a low carbon technology energy advisory service for consumers**
- **Offer 1.2 Million Priority Services Register (PSR) customers a bespoke smart energy action plan**

Create a low carbon technology energy advisory service for consumers

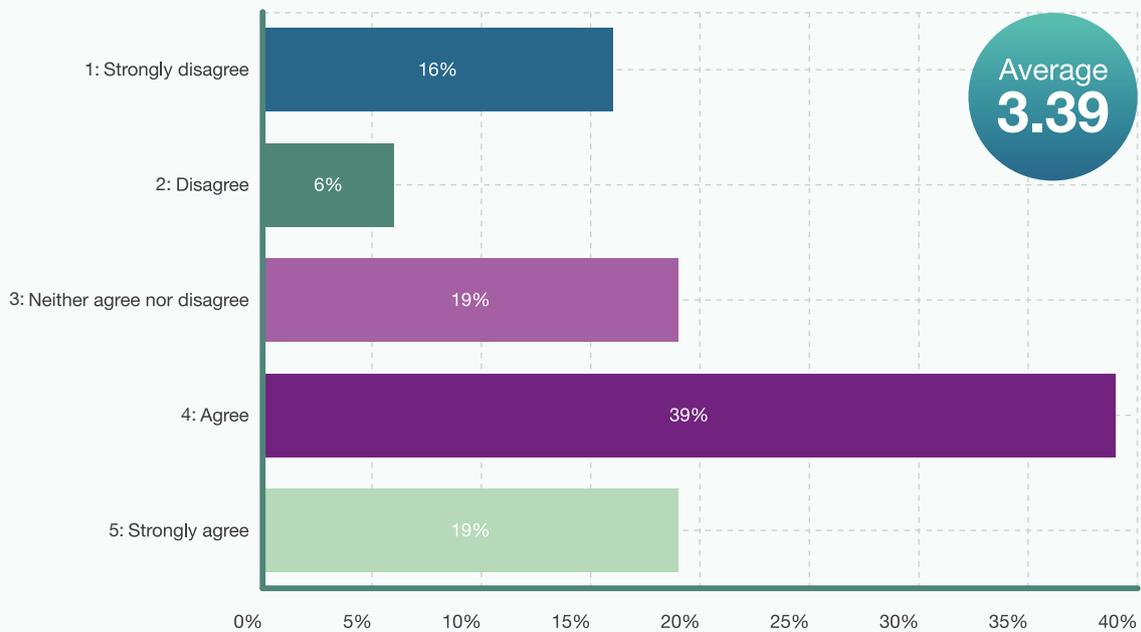
The majority of stakeholders (58%) said that they agreed or strongly agreed that WPD was best placed to take action in this area, and only one stakeholder responded 'don't know / can't say'. However, 19% felt neutral about this, and 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed, reflecting a lack of consensus on this proposition. In the discussion, the issue of impartiality was raised, with a couple of stakeholders feeling that consumers are not always clear about WPD's role and therefore may not immediately view the company as a trusted advisor. It was commented that, as a private business, WPD may also run into conflicts of interest should it take this role of energy advisor.

In terms of this proposition's level of ambition, 64% felt it was about right, yet 25% were supportive of WPD going further or much further. Five stakeholders responded 'don't know / can't say'. When asked to rate its acceptability, 74% agreed or strongly agreed that the proposed CVP is acceptable, with 13% feeling neutral and 12% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Only one stakeholder responded 'don't know / can't say'. Many commented that there are existing advice lines already, and that what customers really need is for someone to visit their home and advise them on the kinds of technology or energy efficiency measures they would benefit from. Suggestions for how WPD could hone this proposition included collaboration with local authorities and government, partnership working with local organisations, and a focus on supporting communities as a whole rather than individual consumers.



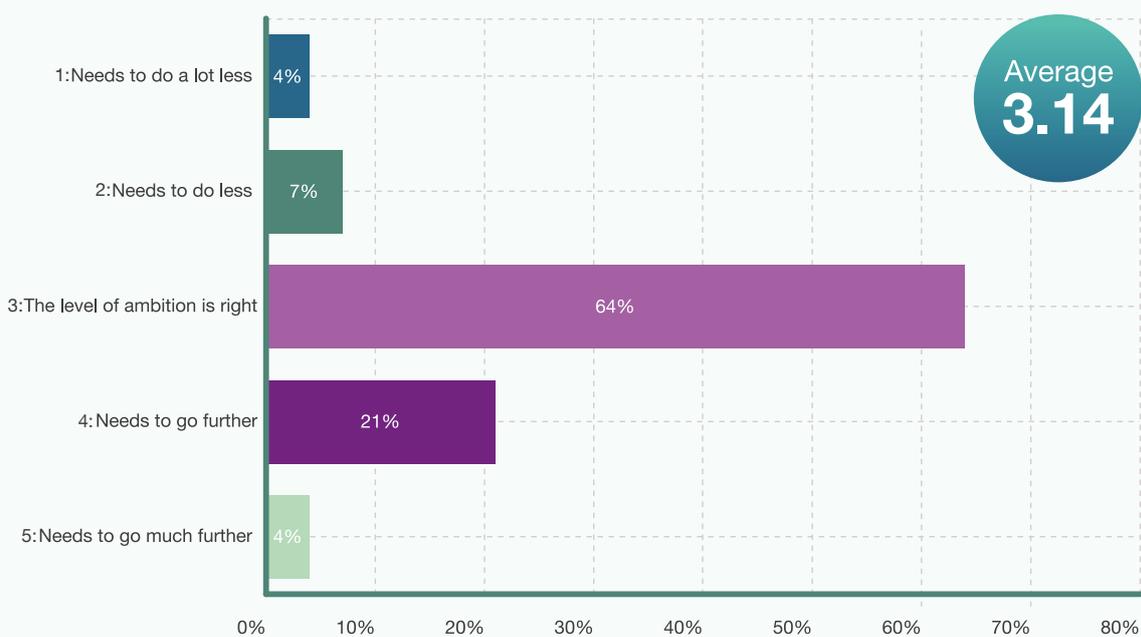
Electronic voting results

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD is best placed to take this action.”



Don't know / can't say: 1/32

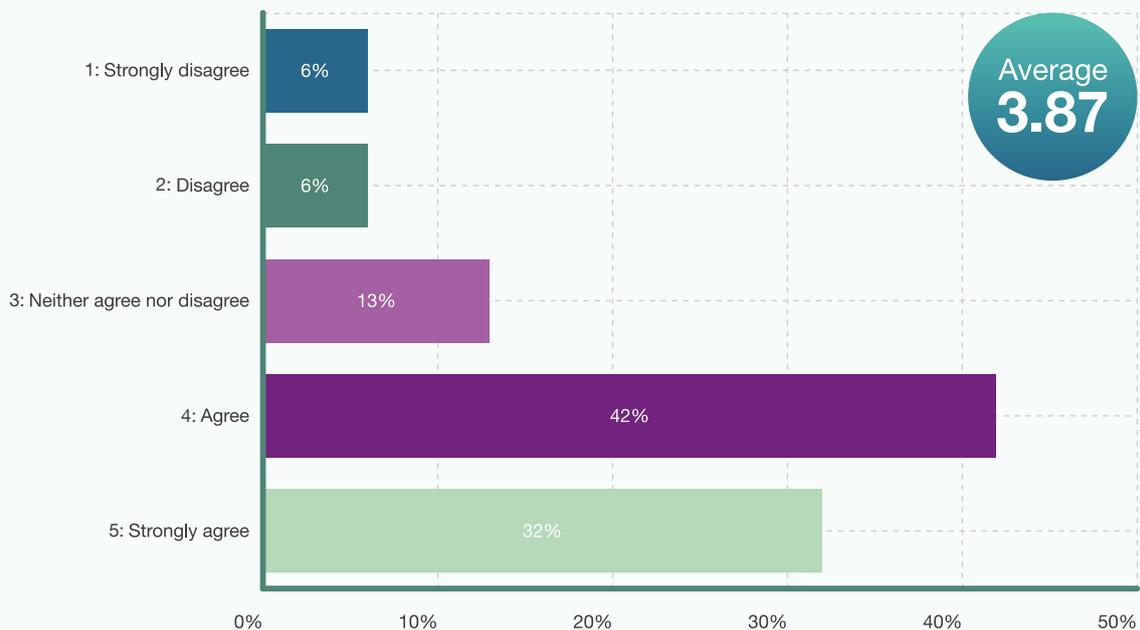
What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?



Don't know / can't say: 5/33



To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD’s proposed CVP in this area is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 1/32

Verbatim comments

1. Does this CVP meet the needs of customers in this area?

- “During this huge drive to change behaviours, it would be very comforting to have someone actively available to support you with your questions.” **Storage and renewables provider / installer**
- “This is a good idea, as there is a job to do around educating people to get works around low carbon technology done and even around planting the seed that this technology is needed in the first place.” **Local authority**
- “I wonder about the visibility of WPD to customers, because customers have a relationship with their supplier.” **Major connections customer**
- “Every house is different, but the industry does need advice on energy hierarchy and how to improve household use of energy. A critical path analysis may be needed.” **Local authority**
- “For a lot of people, adopting low carbon technology is going to be a Bullseye-type scenario: ‘here’s what you could have won (if you had the money)’. We’re going to need the government to help reduce these costs. Advice would reduce the uncertainty and doubt but there is that cost barrier. You might be ringing up people who can’t afford these changes.” **Local authority**



- “My first thought was: do we need another call centre? What I’m finding on the ground is that there is interest from people around renewable energy but what they want is for someone to come to their home, advise them, introduce them to a contractor they can trust and follow it through with them in terms of how to use the technology and how to fix it when it goes wrong. For me, this advisory service proposition is a bit like reinventing the wheel. We already have a national call centre. Unless WPD are going to establish lots of local centres where they have local knowledge, I don’t think it’s going to be of any benefit.” **Community energy group**

2. Is WPD best placed to take action?

- “I don’t think this is a DNO’s place to lead. This sits with government initiative. The hardest thing in the world is getting into those communities. They aren’t going to trust the information that comes from you, because they see you as people trying to make money from them. They don’t know what a DNO is or a DNO’s part in the energy landscape.” **Utility**
- “Yes, you are trusted because you are fantastic as an engineering company operating safe and reliable networks. But I have a real concern that if this became a mainstream advice channel you would have a conflict of interest. You are interested in developing LCTs in a way that means your company can transition the network into a smart energy system, and that’s going to involve more than just WPD to decide, so it’s whether there are any unintended consequences for fairness and access that could arise in the long term.” **Energy consultant**
- “The public needs to trust that WPD is impartial in order to get on board with this. I would prefer an independent service to be delivered by a body like the Energy Savings Trust.” **Local authority**
- “There has to be collaboration; you could end up targeting the same household with the same five leaflets and they will switch off.” **Local authority**
- “There needs to be a coherent approach around giving the advice, as people want to feel confident in the solution offered. WPD needs to be more proactive in finding out what people require and have more knowledge about how the models work. Collective support packages involving the third sector and local authorities, with the LAD scheme as the funding mechanism, could be hugely effective here.” **Local authority**



3. What are your views on the positive outcomes and value WPD intends to deliver?

- “The growth of the data management aspect is going to create great opportunities in both directions. WPD will be able to advise customers on what their options are but also have a finger on the pulse and see where opportunities are, too. This implies much closer mapping between supply and demand, which is great.” **Academic institution**
- “Good idea but needs to be accessible for the public and well-advertised.” **Local authority**
- “Try to create local ambassadors, perhaps by training local advisors who could advise on suitability of roofing and the like. This is a gap in the trade market.” **Local authority**
- “You don’t tend to change your energy source or central heating system very regularly. How do we hit installers, architects, and those sorts of people?” **Local authority**
- “I’ve got two comments that struck me. First, with the customer helpline, it all depends on how easy it is to get through. If people have to wait 20 minutes to half an hour, they won’t use it. Second, you need a web page as well as a helpline where people can do background reading before calling you. I appreciate not everyone has access to IT, but if they can research things themselves by referring to an FAQs section, it might improve the efficiency of the service and reduce the number of calls.” **Local authority**

4. What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?

- “In terms of the level of ambition, the numbers certainly check out in terms of cost/benefit. I would be interested to look at archetypal case studies for these. The whole issue of merging the right mix of low carbon technology at the consumer end is interesting. This will provide a huge data set that will evolve and help us to tune opportunities going forward.” **Academic institution**
- “Generally, you’ve got elements of supporting communities, so it needs to be a more holistic offering rather than an individual one.” **Local authority**
- “I think it is a good goal, but I think it’s a bit premature to say there will be an increased take up. If things like heat pumps are too expensive then it won’t happen.” **Local authority**



5. If all these outcomes are achieved, how acceptable is this CVP to you?

- “There are also opportunities for things like aggregated procurement here. It creates the interaction that can drive down costs. I think that with a bit of imagination this can go quite a long way.”

Academic institution

- “There are already existing advice lines out there. Will this supplement them or will it be providing something different? My feeling is that you need to dovetail with them.” **Local authority**
- “Another issue is impartiality, as this is critical. If you are suggesting a specific supplier as part of this service, you need to make it clear what your relationship is with that supplier. This proposed service is valuable and much-needed, but there needs to be more transparency.” **Local authority**

Offer 1.2 Million PSR customers a bespoke smart energy action plan

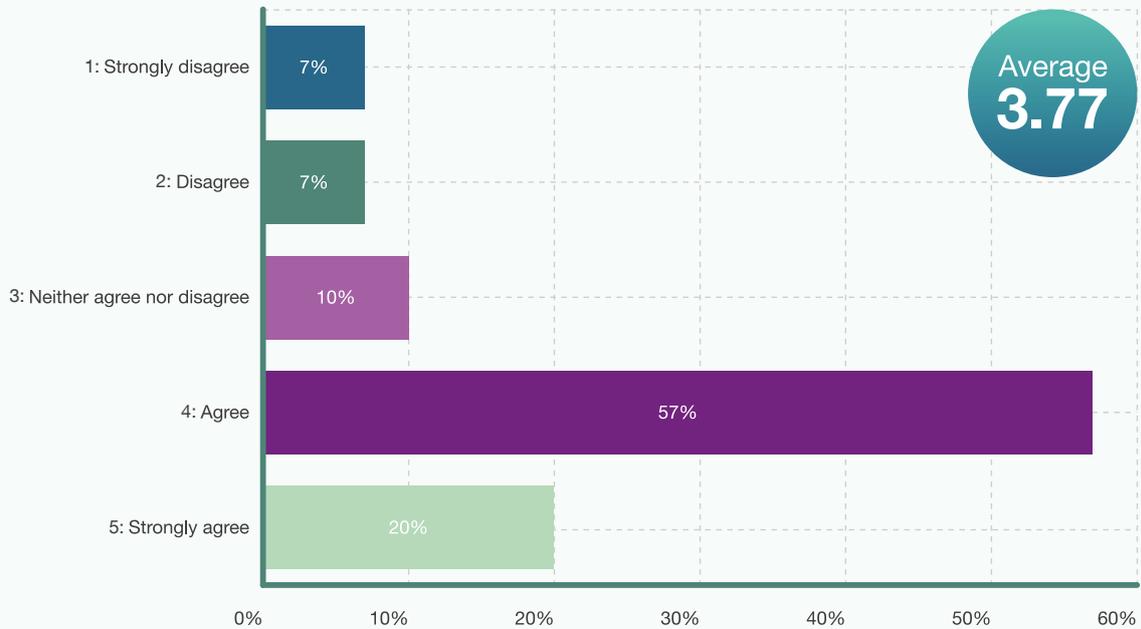
77% agreed or strongly agreed that WPD is best placed to take this action, and just two stakeholders responded ‘don’t know / can’t say’. Nonetheless, in the discussion, stakeholders stressed that WPD needs to harness the referral network of trusted local bodies – including community groups and parish councils – to engage with vulnerable customers, particularly as many vulnerable people have fallen prey to scams and may be wary of engaging with third parties. As for the acceptability of this proposition, 74% agreed or strongly agreed that it was acceptable, although almost a fifth (19%) felt neutral on this. Generally, the proactive nature of this CVP was seen as positive, and it was felt that the initiative could go a long way with the right partnership working.

Almost two thirds (63%) felt the level of ambition for this CVP is about right, although a third were supportive of WPD going further or much further. A significant number, seven stakeholders, felt they didn’t know or couldn’t comment on the level of ambition. In particular, it was felt that WPD would need to consider obstacles to engagement, such as language barriers. It was also felt that WPD should prioritise those vulnerable customers who are less technologically savvy, as they are less capable of finding out this information themselves. In this respect, WPD would need to educate consumers rather than just inform them.



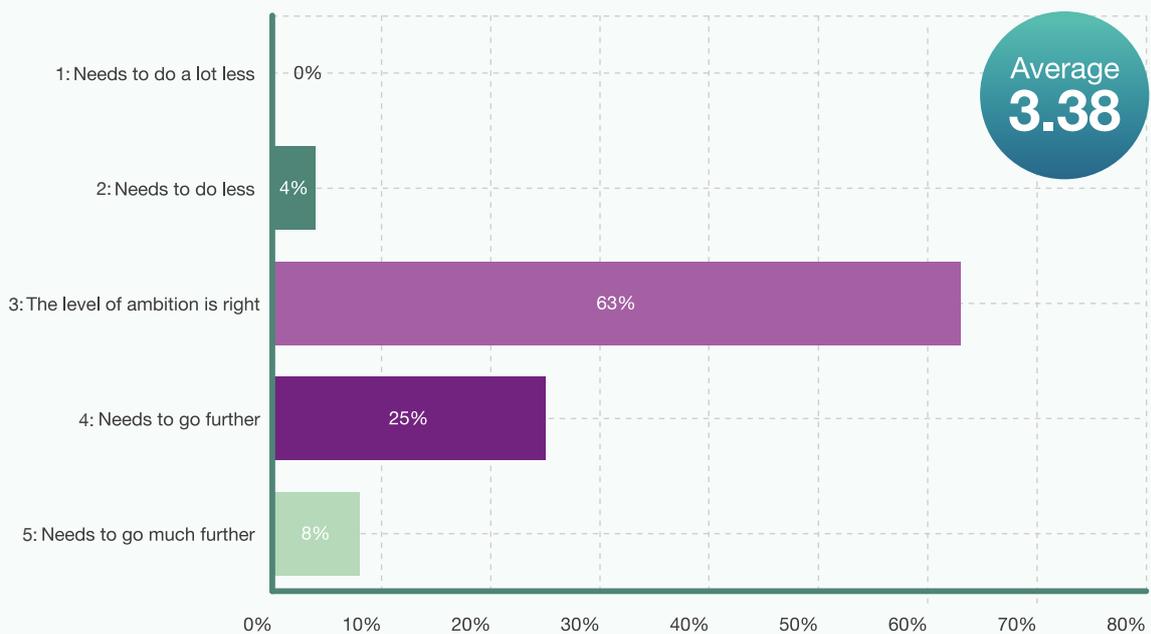
Electronic voting results

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD is best placed to take this action.”



Don't know / can't say: 2/32

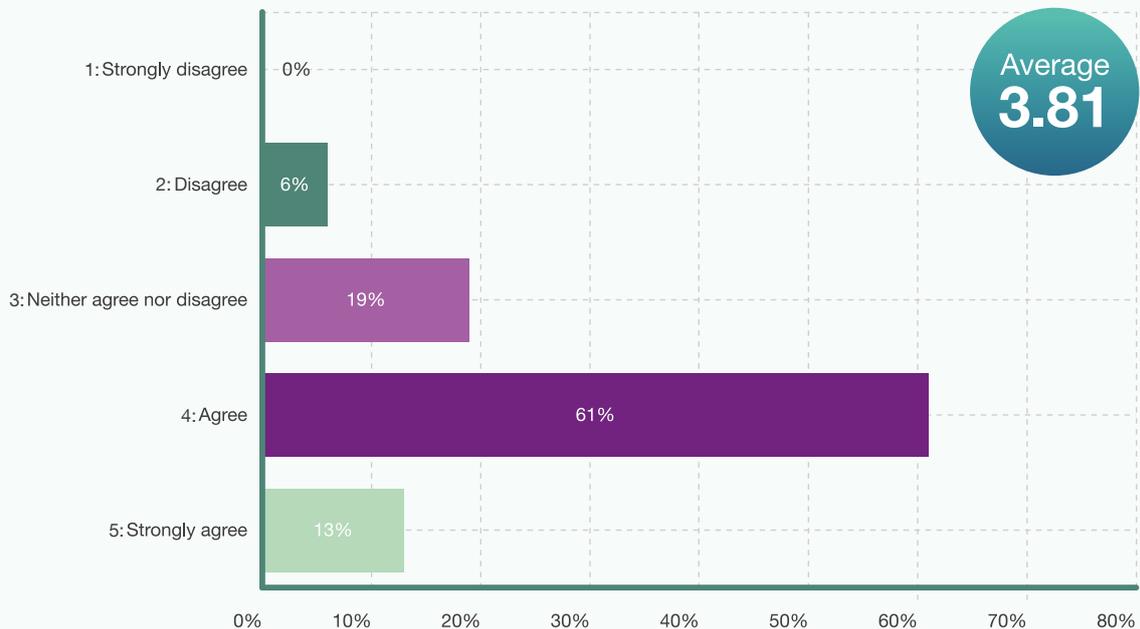
What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?



Don't know / can't say: 7/31



To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “WPD’s proposed CVP in this area is acceptable to me.”



Don't know / can't say: 1/32

Verbatim comments

1. Does this CVP meet the needs of customers in this area?

- “It’s a necessary thing. If you were to analyse the PSR demographics, you’d see that a lot of people do need a lot of guidance around their energy use. It’s got to happen but it’s going to have to be quite personalised. It’s a question of educating as well as simply informing.” **Academic institution**
- “We’re in the social housing sector. The people in the areas with the highest levels of fuel poverty tend to be those with a lower level of education. Often, English is not their first language. With a call centre, would there be any scope to explain this information to residents who are non-native English speakers? The most vulnerable might be the ones that miss out on this advice.” **Local authority**
- “I don’t see how you can come up with a bespoke smart energy action plan without visiting the customer in their home and seeing what you’re working with. People don’t know if their cavities are filled or whether they have loft insulation. A phone call isn’t going to cut it.” **Community energy group**
- “Community groups and parish councils – can you get a representative through them who can go into the community and sell the benefits to people? For example, the benefits of smart appliances within the home that are going to regulate their energy usage.” **Local authority**



- “The proactive element is important as the people seeking advice likely already have more knowledge. Older residents may not need an EV charging point but may require advice on insulation. Perhaps you can signpost to regional and national schemes.” **Local authority**

2. Is WPD best placed to take action?

- “You need to be seen as a trusted organisation contacting these people, so working with trusted local bodies could be far more effective in contacting these people. Just contacting them out of the blue would not achieve a great deal. Harness the referral network of trusted agencies if you can.” **Local authority**
- “We’re going to have to look at how to look after our vulnerable tenants, so it would be good to work with you. If you make people aware of several organisations they can contact, it makes it more likely that they’re going to be aware of at least one of them.” **Major connections customer**
- “You need to work with suppliers and other organisations in order to ensure proper PSR coverage.” **Local authority**

3. What are your views on the positive outcomes and value WPD intends to deliver?

- “This already goes on in local authorities. We claim grants from the Welsh government where we implement energy efficiency measures in dwellings. Work in this area would benefit from collaboration.” **Local authority**
- “People are already doing this in communities, so collaboration is required.” **Business customer**

4. What are your views on the level of ambition WPD is proposing?

- “Frankly, it doesn’t matter if you call 600,000 or a million. If the output is zero, it’s pointless. I would encourage you to change the target to an output measure rather than an input measure. Be braver and go with an ambitious output measure.” **Local authority**



- “It’s really ambitious in terms of resources and the action itself. But they’re not going to hear the good advice you’re trying to give them; it’s a trust issue.” **Utility**
- “Sharing data and taking a holistic approach would be helpful, as it would make it possible to contact a wider range of people.” **Local authority**
- “Some people aren’t internet savvy, whereas presumably some on the PSR do know how to use the internet and can be a bit more proactive about contacting you, so it’s about identifying people who are less able to contact you themselves.” **Local authority**

5. If all these outcomes are achieved, how acceptable is this CVP to you?

- “Just on the EV question this is really valuable. You can provide insights in terms of grid capacity. We deal with a lot of resident enquiries regarding charging points.” **Local authority**
- “This appears to be similar to the Community Matters Fund approach.” **Local authority**
- “It absolutely needs to be tackled; it’s a priority area.” **Local authority**
- “The more of us who are doing these things, the less likely that vulnerable customers will get left behind.” **Local authority**



Appendix 1 Participants

A total of 52 stakeholders representing 42 organisations attended the event. The list of organisations can be found below.

Ashfield District Council	Morrison Energy Services
Birmingham City Council	Mozes
C&W LEP	North Kesteven District Council
Cannock Chase Council	North Northamptonshire Council
Capgemini	North Northamptonshire Council
Centre for Sustainable Energy	Richard Hosking
Ceredigion County Council	Sedgemoor District Council
Cherwell District Council	SIA Partners
Coastal Housing Group	SMS plc
Coventry City Council	Somerset County Council
Customer Engagement Group	South East Wales Energy Agency
Derbyshire County Council	South Kesteven District Council
Electricity North West	Stafford Borough Council
Forest of Dean District Council	Stratford District Council
Gedling Borough Council	SW Energy Hub
Herefordshire Council	The Schumacher institute
Independent consultant	Torrige District Council
Kier Utilities	TUSC Ltd.
KPMG	Wattify Limited
Mendip District Council	Wera Hobhouse MP (BaNES) Council
Milton Keynes Council	Worcester City Council



Appendix 2

Workshop feedback

After the event, stakeholders were asked to fill out a feedback form.

One stakeholder responded, rating the event 10 / 10 in terms of satisfaction, and indicating they found the workshop 'interesting'. They strongly agreed that they had the opportunity to make their points and ask questions and agreed that the right topics were covered for them on the day. They thought the workshop facilitation was 'very good' and that the online format worked 'very well'.

They commented:

- “The workshop was good overall and the online format was great for doing multiple, focused break-out sessions. It would be good to be kept abreast of how WPD are going to implement the findings of these workshops.”



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Western Power Distribution (West Midlands) plc, No3600574
Western Power Distribution (South West) plc, No2366894
Western Power Distribution (South Wales) plc, No2366985

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