

WPD CUSTOMER PANEL - Minutes

6 July 2022

Attending (Customer Panel):

RH - Richard Hellen, The Schumacher Institute
GM - Gabby Mallett (Chair)
EP - Eddie Proffitt, Major Energy User's Council
KR - Kate Robbins, Wessex Water
AS - Alex Spreadbury, B&Q
CT - Cathy Tibbles, Whitwick Parish Council
BT - Beatrice Tooke, British Red Cross
EW - Ellen Wardle, Cadent

Attending (WPD):

RA - Richard Allcock
AM - Andrzej Michalowski
NJ - Nicki Johnson
AW - Alex Wilkes

GM welcomed the group

Richard Allcock – Introduction

RA told the group about WPD's recent workshops and gave an update on the ED2 Business Planning process.

Discussion: RH asked for summaries of the workshops and RA confirmed reports and voting results will be published and confirmed we can cover it at the next meeting. GM noted that workshop facilitation was good. RA also told the group about WPD's deliberative focus groups. EW felt such focus groups are excellent – getting feedback from those on the ground who don't have history with us, etc. EP noted that Northern Gas has a young person's panel.

The group talked about the draft determinations and Ofgem's challenges on our business plan proposals as Ofgem try and recognise the cost of living challenge.

Actions:

1. Workshop feedback and outputs to be covered at the next panel meeting in September.
2. RA to pull together a flowchart to be assembled detailing our engagement. E.g. enduring groups/bespoke engagement

Andrzej Michalowski talked to the group about Network Resilience.

Discussion: The group talked about LCTs, demand on the network, asset replacement, increasing load on the network and fault detection technology. AM mentioned the Value of Loss Load – looking at the impact of power going off to reward or penalise us against those targets.

RH asked if there was statistical analysis available that reveals how possible it might be to achieve CI targets. AM explained about the different levels of analysis for different voltage levels. GM asked what constitutes an interruption and AM explained short interruptions (SI) are under three minutes and measured separately. The industry is working on more comparable data for SIs.

EP explained that SIs can be worse for some industries when whole processes go down with a SI. AM said naturally we are also working to reduce/stop them in the first place.

EW asked if data includes all outages, e.g. the ones customers don't tell us about. AM explained we know about HV faults but LV are reliant on customers notifying us. AM also covered the smart metering SMETS 2 last gasp

function which notifies us when the meter has lost power. We are still working on this last gasp information and the technology around it and correlating that to actual loss of supply data.

RH wondered whether work was needed to engage with businesses and talk about what they might need and GM asked about generator needs in case we run out of fuel. AM explained WPD has sufficient for reasonable restoration and can use third party providers. We work with Local Resilience Forums and have arrangements and contingencies in place for black start/rota disconnections etc. AM explained the government would provide us warning and we'd give customers warning and allow us to prioritise generator deployment and rotation.

National Grid are talking about the potential of interruptions in the winter due to gas shortage. The Panel considered whether they should raise the profile of this with Ofgem.

EW talked about Cadent's Business Plan annex which might help WPD to work with Ofgem on areas where they have said they won't allow us to invest in the draft determinations.

Actions

3. NJ to approach Carl Henshaw, WPD's Emergency Planning Officer and ask for an update to share (by email) with the panel minutes

Alex Wilkes joined the group to discuss the recent Ofgem investigation.

The group discussed Ofgem's decision to enforce DNOs to contact customers 24/7 in the event of a power cut and strongly disagreed with Ofgem's decision. It was felt contacting all PSR customers over-night was not good customer service and could even be very dangerous. During previous engagement (a Panel sub-group held specifically to discuss out-of-hours contact), the Panel felt customers should be able to opt out of 24 hour contact. This was discussed further again and members still felt emphatically that, given most PSR customers would be back on supply following an over-night outage and they could be injured answering a late-night call, customers should be able to opt out of 24 hour contact.

AW confirmed WPD is fully compliant with Ofgem's position on the licence and has contacted customers to inform them of the changes.

Gabby Mallett talked to the group about the 12 month plan.

Actions:

4. Smart energy action plans to be covered at a workshop after lunch following the September meeting
5. Carl Henshaw to be invited to the September meeting to discuss winter readiness and rota disconnections