

# NGED CUSTOMER PANEL - Minutes

16 March 2023

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## Attending (Customer Panel):

GM - Gabby Mallett (Chair)  
RH - Richard Hellen,  
ASp - Alex Spreadbury  
GB - Graham Biggs  
WB - William Baker  
JG - Jo Giles, Cadent  
BR - Bob Radford  
KS – Karn Shah (Guest - CSE)  
EH – Elly Hodges (Guest - CSE)

## Attending (NGED):

AS - Alison Sleightholm  
CH - Chris Hayton  
RA - Richard Allcock  
EV - Emma Vincent  
NJ - Nicki Johnson  
TC - Tracy Cullen  
EP - Ellie Patey  
EA – Emma Alexander

GM welcomed the group.

**Alison Sleightholm did a Director's update** on our new President, the conclusion of the Business Plan determination with Ofgem and the staff survey 'Grid:voice'. AS noted that the Net Zero commitment had now been moved back to 2043, but no longer included any offsetting.

## Discussion:

RH asked if NGED know we are identifying the right stakeholders at local authorities and then if those stakeholders were aware of each other – and if not should we be closing this gap. AS noted Ofgem are consulting on the future of DSO and flexibility - who are the actors and who is responsible for regional planning and what role do networks play. RA shared the link with the group: Ofgem consultation "Consultation on frameworks for future systems and network regulation: enabling an energy system for the future"

RH asked about the two corporate cultures and how they mesh. AS explained they did a culture survey in the group and they plan to leverage the best bits of both. NGED is focussed on customers and a can-do attitude and NGED want to benefit from some of the Group culture and opportunities.

ASp asked about the 55 questions on Grid:voice (which goes to 30,000 employees), noting that's a daunting prospect and wondering if this is a barrier to some people. It has got to be easy and people must be given time to complete it. AS agreed and explained the multiple choice survey, with two open questions was ran electronically and takes 12-15 minutes. ASp noted that B&Q does something internally and now is part of Kingfisher plc and started with 12 questions and now its 18-20 but the value started when they included a comments box – the quality and context shone through with open questions to really show what people are thinking. AS agreed and added the word clouds are a very useful tool to identify common themes. B&Q found colleagues felt time on the clock to access systems and devices was provided and AS agreed we did the same and noted we worked hard to ensure people knew it was anonymous and we also demonstrated actions after last time. GM asked AS to expand on this replacing IIP and AS detailed we had to deliver commitments with some of the Business Plan reductions and IIP surveys were an overlap with this group survey. GM asked if there will be targets of improving some of the results (e.g. customer focus) and AS confirmed we definitely would.

## Questions following the panel pre-meet

**Q: What is happening with the CEG now the plan is being delivered?**

A: AS explained the CEG will remain and focus on monitoring NGED's delivery. She noted NGED are very grateful for the Customer Panel which will remain.

**Gabby Mallett updated the group** on actions the Panel have shaped and endorsed after various sub-groups and surgeries.

**Surgery actions:**

- **NGED to create a visual showing the relationship between local authorities/partners and DNOs and the link to social contract**
- **NJ to pull together list of potential referral partner types and share with panel**
- **Some members to undertake short survey on ThePSR.co.uk to feed in to the DNO group**

**(For info: actions from the Social obligations workshop endorsed at the surgery):**

- Increase EAF for 2023 to a 12 month project to provide innovation opportunities and stability for partners as well as increased customer support (group agreeing this makes a huge difference to partners to keep staff/skills and be winter ready).
- Develop and roll out resilience training to front line teams
- NG to consider industry collaboration project with charity such as Scope (potential link in with training action above)
- Consider liaison with internal Community Energy Engineers to share the PSR message and sign up new referral partners (workload permitting and along with their supporting colleagues and industry partners – NB the crucial role of schools as a potential route for community engagement.)
- Discuss collaboration opportunities for rolling out NGED pilot NHS scheme (consider a link to the Gloucester warmth on prescription work and NEF project)
- Smart Energy Action Plans to be delivered by CSE. Feedback will shape the enduring programme

**(For info: actions from the investment events endorsed at the surgery):**

- Produce some simple guides (video or flow chart for example) for the website for those who might benefit
- Work with NG Community Energy engineer on information and support for CE groups
- Improve online mapping tool to allow stakeholders to see more accurately where capacity is available
- Provide virtual site visits to save time and allow clearer quotes to be achieved
- Online applications for all LCTs could be available as self-serve
- Continue to inform NG's Best View on required investment with input from stakeholders around their own ambitions and growth – e.g. surgeries and investment workshops
- Provide a template or guide for Local Authorities to support them in their production of LAEPs
- Consider publishing further data in relation to capacity, renewable generation and battery storage

**Q: Have NGED continued with the plan to have a Community Engineer for every licence area?**

A: AS confirmed this is still being considered. We are working through the expenditure and will update the panel when it has been decided.

**Discussion:**

BR asked if community engineers can provide advice about modern LCT such as heat pumps. RA explained NGED provides information to help customers with LCTs and our Smart Energy Action Plans include support and advice on this for customers on the PSR. Community Energy Engineers are aimed at providing support for local community schemes for solar parks or wind farms, for example, but the smart energy action plans will be available for customers in the future.

RH asked how actions the panel endorsed are tracked. RA discussed the DSO incentive and the BP commitments report. NJ also logs actions and can track the actions so we can keep the panel informed.

**Actions: NJ to develop an action tracker for the panel.**

**Karn Shah and Elly Hodges joined the group from CSE** to talk about Smart Energy Action Plans, explaining the pilot project, the progress to date and the findings so far from delivering support to customers.

**Question for panel: what are the key benefits of the two approaches? How can we maximise engagement of customers on these two approaches?**

**Question for panel: How can we overcome these challenges? Are there any other challenges or opportunities we should consider?**

GB said the key issues for rural customers are not being on the gas grid and being in old properties. Customers are replacing boilers and going for heat pumps without considering the remedial action needed for the house. In developing SEAP (which they support) we need to consider these things. JG confirmed we need to understand and consider the impact of change, lifestyle and capabilities.

WB felt that the cost of living is key concern. People don't have headspace and there are many barriers but he has been looking at how to engage them. He asked what barriers we had faced and what initiatives are used to engage people. EH noted CSE are well placed to help to offer the right level of advice on transition, alongside fuel poverty - the two are not necessarily apart from each other. RA noted we have commissioned CSE to deliver a horizon scan which will hopefully help with this by identifying new support available and organisations working in this space.

GM noted that the PSR includes many who are vulnerable but not fuel poor and asked if there is a connection between the needs code and whether they go on to have the introductory or the full plan? KS – that's a valid point. Most referrals are for fuel poverty needs but the contact centre training can pick this up.

RH has many observations and thoughts and GM suggests a SEAP surgery ASAP.

**Actions: NJ to schedule a SEAP surgery for the panel and provide case study examples of the introductory plan and detailed plans in preparation.**

**Emma Vincent** updated the group on the recent Winter Preparedness campaign – our biggest engagement campaign to date. EV also gave a note of thanks to the panel whose input to campaign materials had been very useful and had generated changes to some of the materials.

GM asked about analysis of spend and the cost vs the cost of something different? EV noted the increased brand awareness as well as increasing registrations. CH noted that in parallel we also contacted every customer on the register with letter/text/email and confirmed we are analysing the info and the cost benefit ratio. GM said winter campaigns were planned in summer at NEF (her previous employer) so agreed starting earlier is good.

Numbers were still being checked but it was thought the number of PSR sign-ups in January was significantly higher than the previous January, in comparison.

RH suggested the use of video as a media and CH confirmed we did consider this and will continue to do that for items we can host, share and broadcast. And EV confirmed we did some short videos for internal staff on emergency power cuts.

## **AOB**

NJ covered the new PSR.co.uk landing page with the group and thanked those panel members who had taken part in User Acceptance Testing.

Ellie Patey told the group about social value modelling that is being compared across DNOs and asked for help from the customer panel.

**Action: NJ to send out some information on the social value modelling and Panel members are asked to send feedback to EP.**

## **Next meetings**

- 15 June 2023 tbc
- 14 September 2023 – tbc
- 7 December 2023 zoom – tbc (NB note earlier date given low numbers 15/12/22)