

Power for life



A Western Power Distribution publication

SPRING 2013



Welcome to the fourth edition of Power for Life, a publication designed to give the 7.7 million people across the Midlands, South West England and Wales who depend upon Western Power Distribution for electricity an opportunity to learn more about our business.

Put simply, our role is to ensure the power network of poles and pylons, cables, wires and substations – the infrastructure that we all rely upon to live our lives to the full – delivers electricity to our homes and businesses around-the-clock.

This publication highlights the scope and scale of our operational responsibilities, looks at some of our achievements during the last year, and explains our spending plans for the future. It illustrates our investment in people and equipment and shows how world-class standards of customer service coupled with technical

excellence and innovation have shaped our business – making it one of the most efficient service providers of all the UK's electricity distribution companies.

But equally importantly, this publication is designed to encourage your input and feedback, and I'm delighted to say that many of you have communicated with us in the last year – helping us to understand the issues that are important to you and to shape our future investment plans for electricity distribution.

You'll find much more information on our website at www.westernpower.co.uk and if you would like to get in touch directly you can call us on 0800 028 6229 if you live in the South West or Wales, 0800 121 4909 if you live in the Midlands, email us at info@westernpower.co.uk or write to us c/o Corporate Communications, Avonbank, Feeder Road, Bristol. BS2 0TB. We look forward to hearing from you.

Robert Symons

Chief Executive, Western Power Distribution





Who we are, what we do

For many people the distinction between electricity supply and electricity distribution businesses is often blurred, which creates a degree of confusion.

Supply companies sell electricity, read meters and send out bills. Distribution companies own and look after the infrastructure like the wires, poles, transformers and substations. They do not sell electricity but charge supply companies for delivering it.

Distribution companies' prices are set periodically by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem). When Ofgem does this it takes into account our need to replace old infrastructure and

our efficiency, and will only allow prices to rise to the extent that they believe the money we get will be spent efficiently.

There are many challenges. We have to provide value for money as well as having as small an impact as possible on the environment. We must also provide a safe and secure power supply to the homes and businesses we serve, and Ofgem sets demanding targets to ensure that this is done.

Operationally, our area of responsibility is vast – comprising of 220,000 km of overhead lines and underground cables, and 269,000 substations. We have over 6,000 employees, who range from highly trained network operators to the professional, clerical and administrative staff needed to support them.

WORLD-CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE

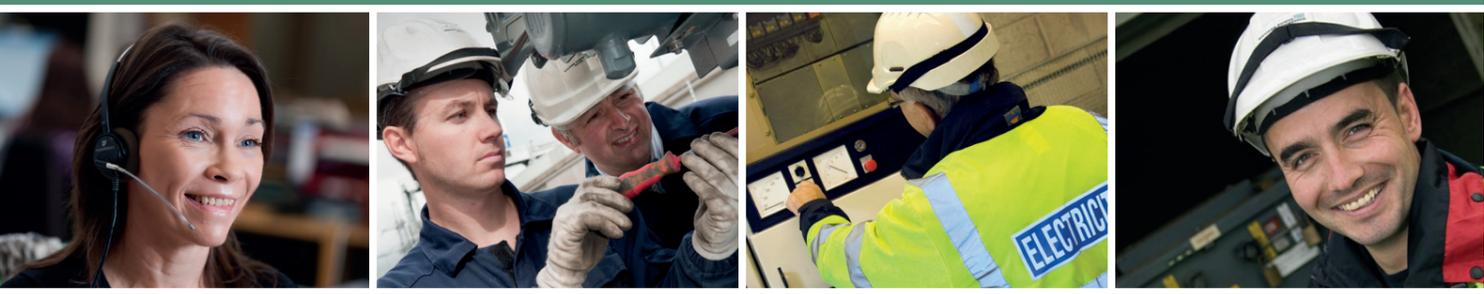
Our customers are at the heart of everything we do, as distributing power to homes and businesses impacts on all our lives. We are guided by the simple philosophy of treating people the way we would wish to be treated – ensuring, as far as possible, that they receive a consistently high level of service.

Around the clock, our own state-of-the-art customer contact centres provide a focal point where well-trained and motivated staff can depend upon the latest communications technology.

Our industry is highly regulated and it demands that rigorous performance targets be met – and not least in customer service. But, like all other areas of activity, we seek to exceed those

standards by establishing additional skills and measures that are innovative, enhancing the way we serve people. For instance:

- We keep a Priority Service Register containing the details of our most vulnerable customers who rely on electricity for medical reasons. We inform them in advance of any planned interruption either by telephone or letter from the office responsible for the work. We also write to anyone that registers to confirm their inclusion on the register and provide a direct telephone number to use during a power cut;
- We work with the British Red Cross and the WRVS to provide assistance during longer power cuts, including providing hot meals or drinks for customers in need. For more information about how to register please call us on: 0845 724 0240.



A year of achievement

We promised in our Power for Life customer communications last year that we would provide an update of our performance and achievements. Here's a brief glimpse of how we've done during the last twelve months.

7.7 million
the number of customers

Over **6,000**
the people who work for us

102
the apprentices taken on in the last year

£6.8 billion
what we'll spend on our network between 2015 and 2023

Almost **81%**
the percentage on average of power supply losses restored within the first hour

Over **99%**
the customer calls answered within 20 seconds. Under two seconds is the average speed of answer

In customer service:

- Answered over 99% of inbound calls within 20 seconds – with an average speed of answer of under two seconds. This is quite an achievement given that it involved answering over 1.1 million calls;
- Restored power to 80.74% of customers, on average, within the first hour of supplies being disrupted;
- Achieved average customer satisfaction rating of 8.5 out of 10 for the service provided during power cuts (planned and unplanned) – the top performance of all UK distribution companies;
- Resolved 55.85% of complaints within a day of being received and 92.85% within 31 days;
- Recognised as the industry leader for engaging with our stakeholders – as part of Ofgem's regulatory reward initiative – by an independent panel of experts.
- Retained the Government's new Customer Service Excellence Standard – which replaced Charter Mark (an accolade we have held continuously since 1992). The new standard is much tougher to meet, examining over 100 aspects of our customer service.

In customer communication:

- Talked in detail to over 18,000 customers – the majority of whom had previous contact with us – to improve awareness, assess satisfaction levels across a range of different services and to establish any areas needing improvement;
- Held quarterly customer panels attended by our Chief Executive as well as 17 separate stakeholder workshops with those interested in a range of industry-specific issues – from pricing methods for using the network to helping assess the impact of increases in renewable generation;
- Set up connection surgeries to provide customers with face-to-face advice and guidance about new generation connections to our network;
- Established additional training for staff to equip them to deal with the growing number of specialist enquiries – especially in relation to green power technology – and we redesigned our website to provide more detailed information and guidance.

In environmental care and innovation:

- We consulted with environmental groups and bodies to help us identify and prioritise iconic sites where overhead power cables could be placed underground. Schemes have been completed in South Wales, the South West and the Midlands, and others are set to take place across our region in the coming months;
- We secured the go-ahead for more projects as part of Ofgem's Low Carbon Networks Fund than any other UK electricity distribution business. Through these projects we are trialling new technologies and approaches to running the networks of the future, so that we can continue to provide a secure and value for money power supply as the country moves to a low carbon economy;
- A number of our operational sites have won an internationally-recognised environmental award, while all of our new and refurbished buildings continue to be constructed to the highest environmental standards;
- We're also helping to reduce our own carbon footprint by installing low energy-use lighting and biomass heating systems, solar photovoltaic (PV) technology and wind turbines at our depots and offices.



Investing in the future



Every few years Ofgem carries out a price control review to establish how much money distribution companies like ours are entitled to, and what we have to deliver for that money. Some 20% of a typical household bill – around £100 a year – currently comes to us to distribute your power.

We're now working on our future investment plans for 2015 – 2023. During this period we intend to invest around £6.8 billion on the electricity network. This is needed to maintain and upgrade it to meet increased demands from customers and new generation, and to protect it against the impact of climate change and security risks. We also have a responsibility to minimise our impact on the environment in relation to greenhouse gases.

Of course, investment in equipment means nothing without a highly skilled and motivated workforce to help make it work reliably and safely for our customers long term – which is why our commitment to recruiting and training the right calibre of people also continues at pace.

With 102 apprentices having joined our training scheme in the last year, and a similar number set to join in the year ahead, we are well placed to meet customer expectation and the regulatory demands placed upon us.

HAVING YOUR SAY

Customer workshops

Regular communication with stakeholders is vital, especially as we build our business plans for the future. In the last year, we've consulted with people from a wide range of organisations and representative bodies, including local authorities, parish councils, vulnerable customer groups, other utility companies and major energy users. We want you to get involved too, and there are still plenty of opportunities for you to give us your views.

Over the last year a series of workshops has given people the opportunity to tell us what is most important to them and where they would like us to improve our service. We've also carried out 1,600 in-depth research interviews with domestic and business customers.

Guaranteed standards

We work hard to provide customers with the very best service possible but if we fall short the guaranteed standards set by Ofgem provide a level of compensation to customers who have not received these minimum service levels.

For example, during normal weather, if we fail to restore a customer's power within 18 hours of first becoming aware of the problem, we will arrange a payment of £54 for a domestic customer and £108 for a business customer.

What our stakeholders have told us are their priorities for long term investment:

Reducing the average frequency and duration of power cuts;
Improving the resilience of the network to severe weather;
Protecting substations from the risk of flooding;
Reinforcing the network to cope with low carbon technologies;
Reducing oil and gas leaks from equipment;
Improving service for remote customers;
Undergrounding overhead lines in areas of outstanding natural beauty;
Innovating the methods customers can use to communicate with us;
Improving service for new connections.

To find out more please visit:

www.westernpower.co.uk/serving-our-customers/guaranteed-and-overall-standards

If you would like to register an interest in taking part in our stakeholder consultation or if you have any questions regarding the work we do, please

call us on **0800 028 6229** if you live in the South West or Wales, **0800 121 4909** if you live in the Midlands, email us at info@westernpower.co.uk or write to us c/o **Corporate Communications, Avonbank, Feeder Road, Bristol. BS2 0TB.**

You'll also find more information on our website at www.westernpower.co.uk under Our Stakeholders

