



Western Power Distribution Stakeholder Workshop: Distributed Generation November 2017

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1 | INTRODUCTION

On 2nd November 2017, Western Power Distribution (WPD) hosted its fourth stakeholder workshop specifically aimed at distributed generation stakeholders (DG). The event was held at Villa Park, Birmingham.

Specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, EQ Communications (EQC) was appointed to facilitate the stakeholder workshop on WPD’s behalf. EQC scribes have endeavoured to identify key themes that arose throughout the discussions along with particular topics where there was consensus. In order to ensure that all stakeholders could speak as candidly and openly as possible, verbatim comments were not attributed to individuals.

The format of the day consisted of four presentations, each followed by round table discussions, on the topics of: Connections – key areas of focus; Key area of focus 1: Outage Management; Key area of focus 2: Distribution System Operator (DSO); and Key area of focus 3: Information Provision. After lunch, stakeholders could attend one of four ‘surgery’ sessions on the topics of: Consents and Legals; Competition in Connection; Storage; and Strategic Network Investment. The agenda for the day is shown below:

Welcome, WPD overview and purpose of the day	10:00 — 10:15
Progress and connections key area of focus	10:15 — 10:30
Workshop 1: Connections key areas of focus	10:30 — 11:00
Key area of focus 1 — Outage management	11:00 — 11:20
Workshop 2: Outage Management	11:20 — 11:40
Coffee break	11:40 — 11:55
Key area of focus 2 — Distribution System Operator (DSO)	11:55 — 12:15
Workshop 3: DSO	12:15 — 12:25
Key area of focus 3 — Information Provision	12:25 — 12:45
Workshop 4: Information Provision	12:45 — 13:05
Summary and lunch	13:05 — 14:00
Afternoon surgeries — choice of:	
1. Consents and Legals (Bruce Pollard)	
2. Competition in Connection (Paul Jewell)	14:00 — 15:00
3. Storage (Tim Hughes / Faithful Chanda)	
4. Strategic Network Investment (Ben Godfrey)	
Close	

Attendees:

A total of 43 DG stakeholders attended the workshop from sectors including: connections companies; direct customers; community interest companies; developers/installers; government bodies; industry consultancies; major users; law firms; membership organisations; technology/innovation companies; universities; and utilities companies.

The organisations represented at the event are shown below:

- Acrastyle
- Amberside Energy
- Arenko Group
- Base Power
- BSR Energy
- Carbon Legacy
- Cenin Renewables
- EA Technology
- Ecodec Group
- ECS
- Edge Power
- Electric Corby
- Green Energy Networks
- Green Frog
- GS-Yuasa Battery Europe
- Haven Power
- HPJ Energy
- Infinis
- Kelvatek
- Lightsource Renewable Energy
- Mongoose
- Morrison Utility Connections
- National Energy Action (NEA)
- Pennant Walters
- PS Renewables
- Regen
- Siemens
- Smarter Grid Solutions
- SmartestEnergy
- SMS Plc
- SSEN
- UK Power Reserve
- UK Power Solutions
- University of Exeter



2 | SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

- All 43 stakeholders completed feedback forms after the workshops
- 70% told us they found the workshop to be 'very interesting' and 30% replied 'interesting' when asked
- 74% strongly agreed when asked if they felt they had had sufficient opportunity to make their points and ask questions. 26% agreed with this statement
- 42 of the 43 people who submitted a feedback form felt that we had covered the right topics on the day
- Every stakeholder who attended said they would be interested in attending future workshops on this subject
- Full details of the outcomes of our feedback survey can be found in the appendix to this document

WORKSHOP 1: CONNECTIONS KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

- The majority of stakeholders who had applied for a new connection had had a positive experience. WPD's good customer service was widely cited. It was, however, noted that sometimes the necessary technical information was difficult to access.
- Stakeholders were very much of the view that WPD had identified the correct priorities in its ICE plan. A Distributed Electricity Resources Plan (DER) was, however, suggested as an area for inclusion.
- When stakeholders were asked to prioritise WPD's areas of focus in its ICE plan, it was clear that availability of information and online services was the most important to them. A number of suggestions were made as to how available information could be improved, including, through the use of flow charts to provide a step-by step guide and through the provision of links to relevant policy documents.
- Connection offers and agreements, storage and the transition to DSO were also seen by many as being of particular importance. A number of stakeholders commented that DSO was one area that directly affected many of the others.

WORKSHOP 2: OUTAGE MANAGEMENT

- WPD was praised widely for how it communicates outages and the portal was seen as a good resource. It was noted, however, that many stakeholders were not aware of this.
- The general sentiment from stakeholders was that longer notice periods for outages would be welcomed.
- Stakeholders, especially those working in the solar sector, repeatedly asked for planned outages to happen in the winter months or when their sites were undergoing maintenance.
- It was commented that more information on why an outage occurs would be helpful, as well as more data on historic outages. It was suggested that an automated email to communicate outages and constraints would be helpful.
- Those stakeholders who had attended were of the view that the Operational Forum [on outages] worked well. However, it was commented that the membership of the forum should be increased and that the outcomes of the meetings should be shared more widely.

WORKSHOP 3: DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM OPERATOR

- Most stakeholders were in favour of WPD's transition to DSO and actually wanted this to happen as soon as possible. More information on the timings for this transition was requested by a number of attendees.
- It was commented that there should be more engagement on this subject particularly at a local level.
- It was also commented that targeted engagement, through charities and local authorities, would be important in order to ensure that customers on low incomes were not disadvantaged.

WORKSHOP 4: INFORMATION PROVISION

- The need for more and better information was a common theme that ran through the discussions. Stakeholders clearly value up-to-date and accurate information, particularly on constraints.
- Whilst stakeholders were of the view that the information WPD provides is good there were a number of suggestions for how it could be improved. These included better maps, that could be overlaid with relevant information such as where an innovation project is likely to take place. Information on network capacity presented in the form of an Excel spreadsheet was also suggested.
- Most stakeholders also told us that they valued being able to talk to someone when trying to access information. It was suggested that a web chat function should be included on the website.

SURGERY 1: CONSENTS AND LEGALS

- The plans to make the process more transparent in the coming year were widely welcomed.
- Stakeholders generally wanted more information on where they were in the process. They also requested that anything that could be done to speed up the process, particularly with regard to engagement with third-party landowners would be helpful.

SURGERY 2: COMPETITION IN CONNECTION

- Stakeholders requested more notification of when an offer is to be withdrawn.
- It was also noted that, whilst WPD deals very well with jobs that are 11kv and below, levels of service decrease at higher voltages.

SURGERY 3: STORAGE

- The need for quicker processing of applications for storage was widely cited.
- It was also commented that earlier engagement in the connection process would be helpful, particularly when communicating offers.

SURGERY 4: STRATEGIC NETWORK INVESTMENT

- It was noted that scenario planning in this area was a hugely difficult task, as factors such political and economic issues, as well as growth and development would need to be modelled.
- It was felt that WPD should seek to work closely with other energy providers in order to plan strategic network investment.

3 | CONNECTIONS KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

The first session was introduced by Alison Sleightholm, Regulation and Government Affairs Manager. Alison explained the Connections programme of engagement and the actions that had been delivered for DG customers further to feedback received. The presentation also included details on WPDs connections priorities and proposed ICE priorities for the future.

The presentation can be viewed [here](#), slides 8-16.

3.1: WHAT HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF APPLYING FOR A CONNECTION WITH WPD BEEN LIKE?

Summary:

Those stakeholders who had experience of applying for a connection with WPD were overwhelmingly positive. WPD was seen as being the best of all the DNOs according to those stakeholders who had applied for a connection and its customer service, especially, received a good deal of praise. It was, however, commented that there are some stakeholders still had difficulty accessing the necessary technical information to assist them. It was also noted that there are issues with regard to consistency across the four license areas and with the accuracy of initial quotes for work.

Verbatim comments:

“WPD are very good, we deal with all six DNOs, and you’re the best. Easy to communicate with. You call us if there is an issue, and are quite willing to work back and forth” **Generation stakeholder**

“Good customer service and very proactive at answering questions” **Generation representative**

“It’s good that you can always talk to someone directly dealing with your project when dealing with WPD, I don’t know how you could improve on that, it separates you from others”
Generation representative

“I deal with connections with WPD. I’m a little bit concerned about some of the budget quotes we get though – they are way out. But apart from that I think WPD do a difficult job very well”
Generation representative

“You’re good with timescales, but the issue is with information and being visible. For example, the PDFs are such a low resolution that I can’t see the numbers”
Storage representative

“The good thing with WPD is that you can pick up the phone and call someone. They have good communication” **Generation representative**





3.2: DO YOU THINK THAT WPD HAVE CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED THE KEY PRIORITIES – ARE THERE ANY MISSING?

Stakeholders reviewed the list of 10 key areas of focus detailed on slides 14 and 15. They were then asked to choose the three areas most important to them in their role and to make suggestions of other areas that should be included.

Summary:

There was broad consensus across all stakeholders that WPD had identified the right areas of focus. Suggestions of other areas that should be included: A DER Plan; Impact of Government Policy; Demand Side Management; Statement of Works; Outages; Design Approval; Adoption and Trialling of New Technology. The point was made a number of times that the transition to DSO was a vitally important priority and one that impacts on many of the others.

Verbatim comments:

“I went to the previous workshop and I think everything that was identified at that workshop is reflected here. What I see there [on the board] is all there. It’s all in the plan” **Generation representative**

“Better constraint information would be useful. If I know there’s two million quid’s worth of intertripping I’m not even going to bother. Let someone else do that. Just some basic information early days would be useful” **Consultant**

“To be honest I think they’ve listed everything they do. I can’t think of anything WPD do that’s not on that list. For me the most important is connection agreements, competition in connection as well as strategic reinforcements” **Generation representative**

“I wanted to say that in the long term, the DSO strategy is definitely an overarching big priority because all the rest are key objectives of a DNO. Definitely on top of the key objectives in terms of priority is the DSO strategy” **Storage representative**

“In terms of demand management, is there potential for that to be a bit more explicit? In some projects that we’re doing, we’re looking at the impact of smart storage units, for example, and there’s also potential to do that with other technologies in terms of heating and battery storage” **Engineering representative**

“The only thing I have an interest in is the problems we have with outages. We make most money in the summer, as a solar farm, so it’s difficult to insure against. I know WPD have massively improved their notifications and tried to minimise planned outages. From our perspective we need to know how can we mitigate a process that is bound to happen” **Generation representative**

“As an ICP we have two big issues: design approval and adoption. When you go into larger schemes you need a design based on recognised standards that needs to be approved by WPD before you can build, which can take a really long time. It would be good to get partial agreement – which links into CiC – for bigger projects” **Demand representative**

3.3: PLEASE TELL US YOUR MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES AND PLEASE LET US HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS RELATING TO ACTIONS WE ARE PROPOSING FOR EACH ONE. PLEASE ALSO TELL US IF THERE ARE ANY EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE FROM OTHER DNOs WE SHOULD SEEK TO REPLICATE

Summary:

There was strong feeling throughout the discussions that greater availability of [more accurate] information was of paramount importance. Stakeholders also stated that it would be helpful to provide more policy information and include with this details of how DNOs had responded. Ideas for simplifying information with a step by step guide, ideally in the form of a flow chart were noted.

Of the ten tables of stakeholders, six had Storage and five had Availability of information and online services as one of their top three priorities. Connection offers and agreements and Distribution System Operator were the next most prevalent priorities. The table below applies a weighting to each of the tables' scores in order to rank them in priority order.

	1s	2s	3s	Weighted Score	Rank
Availability of information and online services	3	2	0	4.00	1=
Connection offers and agreements	2	1	1	2.75	2
Storage	1	1	4	2.50	3 =
Distribution System Operator	1	3	0	2.50	3 =
Customer service	1	2	1	2.25	5
Queues and capacity management	0	2	1	1.25	6 =
Strategic reinforcement and forecasting	1	0	1	1.25	6 =
DER Plan (new)	1	0	0	1.00	8
Legals and contents	0	0	3	0.75	9
Community energy	0	0	2	0.50	10
Competition in Connection	0	0	1	0.25	11

Verbatim comments:

"More information and policy documents would be great. A hub online where you can actually access more policy documents would be helpful" **Connection Provider**

"Just a flow chart to say, 'this is the design, this is what we need in place', would be really helpful. It's getting better, but for larger schemes with finances and design, it needs to be even better" **Demand representative**

"Is there a way you can say before or when you send the offer that we've still got quite a way, or we've reached the headroom. Is there a way we could know about the statement of works issue quicker, easier, cheaper?" **Storage representative**

"DSO kind of encompasses all of the others" **Generation representative**

"A step-through guide to capacity would be really helpful" **Generation representative**

"It would be useful to see what the DNOs are thinking as well maybe minutes of meetings, and see evidence of government policy and how the DNOs are responding" **Generation representative**

"Availability of information – there is a lot out there. If WPD said 'this is where we need a storage asset in the long run, or where you can connect a solar farm' this would make it clearer for people" **Storage representative**

"For the transition to DSO, a timeline would be appreciated. It would be good to publish the results of the consultations, and how and when you are going to achieve these things" **Storage representative**

“It would be good to have either commentary or key facts such as key demand, how much wind, how much gas, etc. This comes under strategic reinforcement and forecasting, I think”

Storage representative

“When I read the connection information it was a bit light. I think we need to move into the future. Provide capability for getting supplementary information”

Storage representative

“A DER plan is what’s needed with signposting of future constraints — not just what is happening now”

Academic

“I make dozens of connection applications. SSE encourage us to put in multiple applications for the same site, and they come back quite quickly to say which one is the most viable. You should do the same”

Generation representative.

“Storage is only the most important in the sense that it’s a massive opportunity. There should therefore be an incentive to use the existing infrastructure rather creating new”

Generation representative

“I think that storage is going to be the new area where everyone is going to focus in the next six months”

Generation representative

“Customer service should be number one every time for me, the customer is king”

Generation representative

“SSE have a list of names and numbers for all of the relevant people in each area. It’s a little thing but it helps you get hold of the person and makes our lives easier”

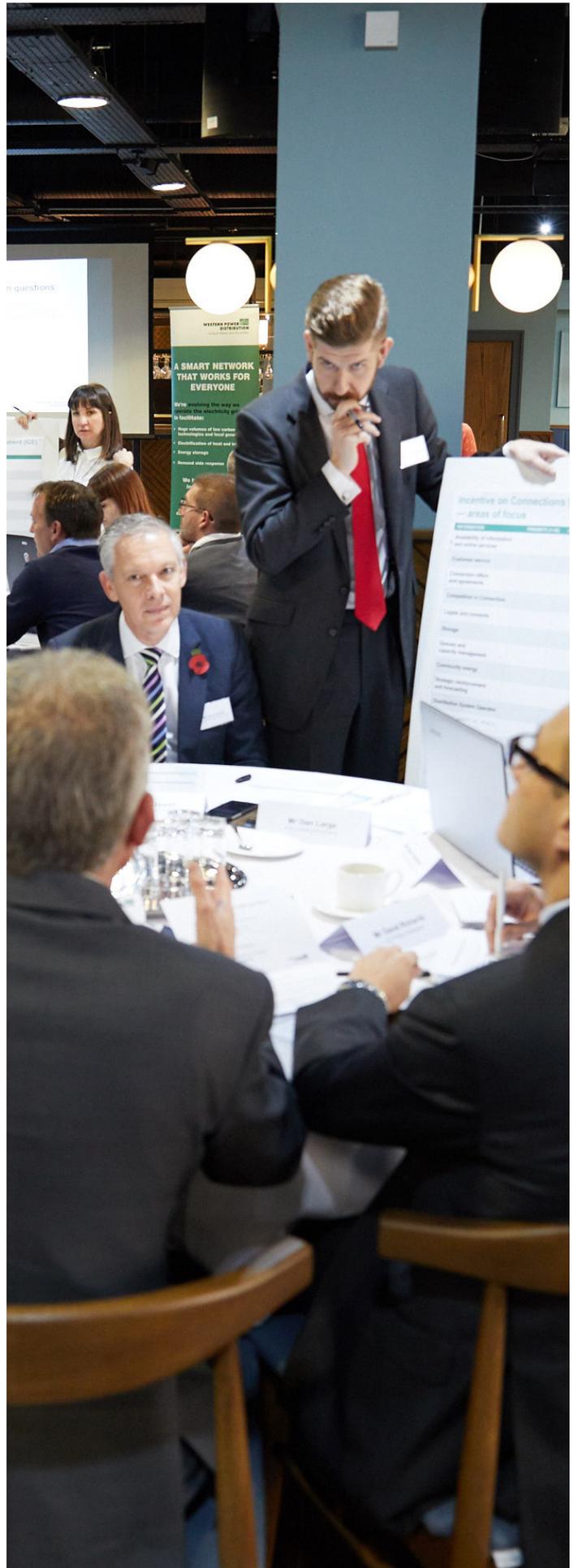
Generation representative

“Storage is probably one of the fastest moving areas. The history in other parts of the world is that once you start to get 20% of your energy through renewables, you need to work on your storage. Otherwise you can’t balance the network”

Storage representative

“A DER plan needs to incorporate future constraints and an understanding of what can be used in those areas. This could include community energy projects, microgrids etc... just understanding ANY given resources and information about an area...”

Academic



4 | KEY AREA OF FOCUS 1: OUTAGE MANAGEMENT

This session was introduced by Sean Sullivan, Control Room Manager. Sean explained the progress that had been made to date in this area. He also talked stakeholders through the work being done at the DG operational forum. The presentation included a focus on how WPD communicates outages and constraints outages and how the company plans to improve communication, including through the dedicated web portal.

The presentation can be viewed [here](#), slides 18-28.

4.1: WHAT HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE BEEN OF WORKING WITH WPD IN THIS AREA AND ARE THERE MORE ACTIONS WE SHOULD BE LOOKING AT AS PART OF OUR FUTURE ICE PLANS?

Summary:

It was widely felt that WPD is an easy company to work with in this area, certainly in comparison with the other DNOs. Stakeholders generally valued having a point of contact rather than only being pointed towards information online. In terms of future actions, it was widely felt that more information on the reasons for an outage would be useful as would any historical data.

One issue that was raised a number of times by stakeholder related to how those stakeholders in the solar industry would prefer planned outages to happen in the winter months or when a site is undergoing maintenance.

Verbatim comments:

“WPD are in a far superior to other DNOs we work with. WPD seem right ahead of the pack” **Consultant**

“Why doesn’t WPD have a duty to arrange outages that affect PV in the winter where there’s less impact?” **Storage representative**

“Would WPD be open to an outage when a plant is doing maintenance? It would be great if they could be flexible in that way” **Storage representative**

“The good thing about WPD is that they are willing to have a conversation. Normally if you get a three week outage they will usually turn it back on after two weeks” **Generation representative**

“I’m part of a working group for the solar community and there have been a lot more outages than anyone ever modelled. We have had bad experiences but not with WPD. About a year ago we had an issue on the Isle of Wight. We weren’t given much notice. It was a matter of weeks for an outage of months. Not acceptable” **Consultant**

“WPD give good information but it doesn’t really allow you to change anything. The big issue is no maintenance between October and March. We want to allow outages to be in the winter months instead of in the summer months. We would want policy change on that” **Generation representative**

“For us it’s important to have a point of contact rather than just a technical computer screen. We don’t want to have to hunt for information” **Demand representative**





4.2: HOW DO WE DEVELOP AND IMPROVE THE OPERATIONAL FORUM AND WHAT FACTORS SHOULD WE CONSIDER AS WE TRIAL OUTAGE MANAGEMENT CONSORTIUMS?

Summary:

The Operational Forum was widely praised by those stakeholders who had attended, although it was noted that there was a large contingent were not aware of it. The suggestion was made that WPD should look to include more stakeholders on the forum and that the outcomes of each forum should be shared more widely to keep all DG stakeholders updated.

In terms of factors to consider for trialling outage management consortiums, most felt that they should aim to include a board range of participants. The model of those consortiums currently run by the Solar Trade Association and Regen South West was cited.

Verbatim comments:

“Our business doesn’t go to the Operational Forum but it’s good that it happens. Good things come from it, such as the outage report. It would be good to get updates though” **Generation representative**

“You should have a newsletter sent out about the results of the forum” **Consultant**

“I was impressed with the information provided before the forum and afterwards. It was innovative. It was also easy to find out about the forum and enrolling. The people I contacted were helpful” **Storage representative**

“I’ve been to that last two, they are structured really well. We always have the opportunity to express ourselves and discuss” **Generation representative**

“I’ve been to the forums on behalf of my CEO. It’s a good forum, and seems to be working. We’ve been there from the beginning. However, I just come back and give the information to a different department. In the beginning the portal wasn’t working very well, it wasn’t updating. But now I think it’s starting to come together, and the portal’s a lot better than it used to be” **Storage representative**

“The forum is good, there’s not that many big companies on it. I think it needs to have more stakeholders, as you get a wider view. I think it was smaller-scale originally when it was launched to get the larger companies’ perspective” **Storage representative**

“WPD could send out a newsletter about the results of the forum” **Generation representative**



4.3: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE COMMUNICATION OF OUTAGES AND CONSTRAINTS AND WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE TO ON OUR DEDICATED WEBSITE PORTAL?

Summary:

In terms of how outages are communicated. It was felt that an automated email would be helpful. A key theme in all discussions was that the more notice that can be given by WPD regarding and outage, the better.

Many stakeholders stated that the information available on the portal had improved significantly. However, it was telling that some stakeholders were not aware of it and it was felt that more should be done to direct stakeholders to the portal. It was suggested that more information on historic outages would be helpful. The point was also made that being able to have two-way communications, for example through a manned online helpdesk, would be helpful.

Verbatim comments:

“We operate in 65 sites, so we need to have visibility. I think the online portal is good because it gives you further visibility. I am very pleased. It would be better if outages happened in winter months, though — we lost millions as some of our sites were out for three weeks in summer” **Generation representative**

“The guys out in the field are brilliant — one thing that’s a challenge is that they don’t have an office, or spend time in their office. Mobile numbers has to be the way forward. Better way to contact people out in the field all the time” **Generation representative**

“WPD have been cautious They don’t want to make mistakes but our response is, ‘just tell us when you’ve got the idea but tell us it’s provisional,’ so we’ve got a vague idea of the date. Tell us early but give us caveats. At the beginning of the year they’d say what we expect, then four weeks before it would change from pending to approved” **Community energy representative**

“It’s got a lot better; we get a letter rather than a last-minute phone call. But the portal is so much better — you get an email” **Storage representative**

“Getting as much notice of outages as possible about changes would be fantastic” **Generation representative**

“Increased visibility in this area allowed us to reduce a potential 60% loss on a particular site to 20%, so the more communication the better” **Generation representative**

“The portal great, but it is one-way. Perhaps it should be two-way? That way, customers can contact them to receive information” **Network operator**

“A two-way portal would indeed be very useful” **Generation representative**

“Is there an automated email for an outage? Normally there are letters but a letter is not the greatest way to find out. An email would be great” **Consultant**



4.4: IS OUR POST OUTAGE INFORMATION ADEQUATE OR ARE THERE ANY DETAILS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE INCLUDED?

Summary:

Whilst it was widely felt that WPD's post outage information was very good, it was noted that it could be improved with more information about the areas affected and the causes or reasons for planned and unplanned outages, with a detailed fault description. The point was also made that any information on projected outages would be incredibly valuable.

Verbatim comments:

"We had an outage that was down to a faulty connection cable. We received communication through email and I think it would be useful to have a report or more detailed description of the fault and what was needed to rectify it. Sometimes we just know there's fault in the network and the info doesn't go much further than that. It doesn't have to be very long, just the action that you took"

Generation representative

"There must be an internal report on something. It should be quite straightforward; it would be able to link to a summary of what happened. Maybe it can be attached to the outage and you can download the report"

Generation representative

"When our guys do the analysis, there's often not enough information about what the cause was. Sometimes it's just down as 'unknown'"

Generation representative

"The post outage information is fine, but future projections would be useful, and we would be willing to contribute to it as it would save money in the long run"

Generation representative



5 | KEY AREA OF FOCUS 2: DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM OPERATOR

The session on WPD's transition to DSO was introduced by Nigel Turvey, Network Strategy & Innovation Manager. Nigel talked stakeholder through the timeframe for the transition and the outcomes of the recent consultation. He also explained how market models would inform the transition and the trails the company is currently undertaking, including Project Entire.

The presentation can be viewed [here](#), slides 31-44.

5.1: DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FINDINGS OF OUR CONSULTATION? WOULD YOU ADD ANYTHING?

Summary:

Stakeholders were broadly in agreement with the findings of the consultation. The need for more and better communication with customer groups, other DNOs and local authorities was stated by many.

The transition to DSO was widely supported by those in attendance. Many were in favour of this because it would provide them with greater clarity and it was commented that the transition should happen as quickly as possible. The timetable for transition was welcomed and it was felt that this should be spread more widely to provide investors with greater certainty.

Verbatim comments:

"We are very supportive of the DSO transition. We want to see it ASAP because there's uncertainty at the moment for investment. We want clarity"

Storage representative

"An interesting point from the ICE consultation is that the authorities say there's a lack of engagement. We need to be more aware of their plans. Understanding the local space, inform us in terms of looking at particular areas, eg. The East Midlands is a particular area" **Generation representative**

The point was made that certain new technologies may drive change at a faster pace than is helpful and that WPD needed to be aware of this.

"We've been involved in these discussions. One point about a DSO is you have to be much more engaged in the local area. You're running a system, not just wires, so you need to understand how people will behave. You need to have a knowledge of: forecasting; long term and short term trends; geography; the political makeup; and housing plans, so it forces DNOs to be much more engaged with the local authorities"

Generation representative

"The market is moving much faster than DNOs are moving. For example, electric vehicles and the transition to electric heating. There isn't too much time to actually talk about it" **Generation representative**

"I agree with the finding that there's little consensus on priorities or market models which illustrates there's still a lot more work to do. I would support the whole system approach. It's not just generation its demand as well, things happening in the market" **Generation representative**

"The car manufacturers are years ahead of the energy sector, and they are going to proceed with their business model. They'll push ahead, and energy providers are just going to have to keep up" **Manufacturer**

"There's no stability in the market because of its quick progression, it's hard to commit to one service because everything changes so quickly" **Manufacturer**



5.2: WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO ENGAGE WITH DIFFERENT CUSTOMER GROUPS AND HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT VULNERABLE AND LOW-INCOME CUSTOMERS ARE NOT DISADVANTAGED?

Summary:

There was consensus that workshops such as this were a valuable way of getting knowledgeable people to share their ideas and seek feedback. In terms of customers more broadly, the point was made that more ought to be done to explain the benefits of the transition. Ideas for future engagement activities included the use of social media, reaching out to young people in schools and using documentaries / public information films to present this complex information in a way that is accessible.

It was commented that customers, including those on low incomes and the vulnerable would inevitably be disadvantaged and would be less likely to benefit from the transition unless they were engaged with in a meaningful way – ideally through partnerships with trusted organisations. The vital role of Ofgem in this was also noted.

Verbatim comments:

"I guess it's got to be events. Workshops like this are really good. Perhaps, you could look to host some more with other DNOs who are going through the same process" **Connection Provider**

"Over 50% of consumers are just not interested. In the case of people in fuel poverty it's even higher, hence the need for Ofgem to protect consumers" **Generation representative**

"You should work with sustainable energy charities, local authorities and housing associations [to reach people in fuel poverty] to streamline communications" **Community energy representative**

"You can't make this subject sexy, unfortunately so you have to engage at a higher level, through education, documentaries etc" **Generation representative**

"You have to get into schools" **Generation representative**

"In terms of low-income customers, it comes down to Ofgem" **Storage representative**

"More education for the customers - the consequences of the extremes of what could happen, let people make an informed decision. Let people know what they need to" **Generation representative**

"Create a Twitter feed and have a local communication base, because that creates a forum. People don't know what's happening!" **Community energy representative**

"If the DSO transition isn't actually coming for two years, it's difficult to engage with people who are thinking about where their money is coming from now, not in eight months or whatever" **Storage representative**

"Most of our customers are vulnerable and most innovations are looking at not just about improving the cost of heating but also reducing the effects of somebody living in a cold home, or being afraid to turn on their heater. Most housing associations should be doing that already" **Generation stakeholder**

"You have to make sure you show how this sort of technology benefits vulnerable customers and people in fuel poverty rather than leaving them behind" **Voluntary representative**

6 | KEY AREA OF FOCUS 3: INFORMATION PROVISION

The final session of the morning, Spotlight on Information Provision, was presented by Graham Halladay - Network Services Manager South West. Graham explained the information currently available including: the WPD data portal; the constraint map; the network capacity map and statement of works updates.

The presentation can be viewed [here](#), slides 45-54.

6.1: WERE YOU AWARE OF THE INFORMATION WPD ALREADY PUBLISHES AND HAVE YOU USED IT? IF SO, IN WHICH AREAS SHOULD WE PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION? AND ARE THERE ANY EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE FROM OTHER DNOS WE SHOULD LOOK TO REPLICATE?

Summary:

Most stakeholders in attendance were aware of the information WPD publishes and were generally complimentary. It was widely agreed that more and more up-to-date information on constraints would be helpful. It was also commented that information from the network capacity map, presented as an Excel spreadsheet would be valuable.

The suggestion was made that, even though the information is presented in a way that is intuitive easy to navigate, stakeholders still valued being able to talk to someone who could help with any issues. A web chat function was widely supported. It was also stated that a webinar to explain how to access all the data would be useful.

In terms of improvement to the way much of the information is presented, it was widely felt that maps that could be overlaid with other relevant data such as constraint information or details of where an innovation project is being trialled would be helpful.



Verbatim comments:

"It's incredibly useful to be honest. The only things I can improve on is the provision of the details of a network provider and a network planner - an immediate point of contact. I think SSE have this"

Generation representative

"The level of information available to us now is really starting to ramp up"

Consultant

"As a recent user I find it easy to get around. It seems pretty intuitive. It could be a little easier to view on a mobile phone though. I could bounce some queries that people call us up more quickly and it would save a lot of time for us"

Supplier

"I have used the network capacity map it and it is pretty easy. It gives me all the information I need to give when someone wants an upgrade or downgrade. There could be more cable information though. For me personally, more detailed information online would be great. I have to get someone to go through WPD's data and it takes ages. If it was online and easy to access it would save so much time"

Consultant

"It's pretty useful in general. It gives you a good high level view of the network. Before you only had PDF maps which were not very user friendly. The new maps are very functional. I don't really have any complaints"

Storage representative

"This map is so helpful compared to the old lines, the heat map. It's moved on"

Generation representative

"It's pretty useful. My only comment is that it would be good if there was a medium to ask questions to someone when you're initially looking to develop, rather than having to start making a connection application"

Generation representative

"It would be good to have more information on statement of works"

Generation representative

"What I'd like in hyperlinks through to more information on your maps"

Generation representative

"For me anything to do with the assets, age would be helpful. It would influence our planning for the future"

Manufacturer

"An API for a GIS system like google earth would be great. If you could then plug in areas, overlapping the filters you could locate areas where there are no constraints. Job done"

Generation stakeholder

"Potentially you could, within the map, say where an innovation project is taking place. You wouldn't be aware if you were looking in just the East Midlands. Some kind of tool to know if there's an innovation project you could find information about"

Storage representative

"I definitely think it would be a good idea to have a web chat function"

Manufacturer.

"I'd like more information about offers that are out there but aren't yet accepted"

Consultant

"What I think would be useful would be when there is a constraint, what is the predominant flow direction"

Storage representative

"What might be useful would be an online guide showing people how to use the website and where to get the information. It might save a lot of money. Something you can just download with links"

Storage representative

"The only thing that's not helpful is that you don't have an Excel spreadsheet, so we have to do it ourselves. Other DNOs do that for us. The Excel spreadsheet takes us a few days to compare the reds, greens and yellows etc"

Generation representative

"The information is easy to access, but it can be improved - I would like an Excel spreadsheet or a way of importing it into Excel"

Storage representative

"It would be great to have all the information on connection costs all ready. At the moment, we gather a list of all the substations we want to connect into, then go to the DNO and sit down with their designer and they'll go through each one"

Storage representative

"There's a section talking about planned reinforcement but it's unclear what that actually means. The information isn't specific enough. You talk about cabling but we don't know how much cabling or whether it is above or below ground cabling?"

Generation representative

6.2. WHAT ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONALITY WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE ON THE NETWORK CAPACITY MAP AND ARE THERE ANY EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE FROM OTHER DNOs WE SHOULD LOOK TO EMULATE?

Summary:

There were a number of suggestions as to how the network capacity map could be improved. Stakeholders told us that they would value information on: the age of the asset; capacity; connection timetables; demand; and reinforcement costs.

Stakeholders would also value any further information relating to future availability as well as information on the status of previous applications. The idea of alerts sent out to notify connections customers of new capacity was widely supported.

Verbatim comments:

"I would like to see the network capacity map with the corresponding GPS policies"

Generation representative

"Real time information would be great, in an ideal world, but obviously that isn't possible, so it would be good to know how old the data is. Without that, you can't see whether things are broadly getting better or worse – is the fault level improving? We don't know"

Consultant

"On the Connection Map, if you could click on each Substation and see demand, that would be great"

Storage representative

"UKPN, with their heat maps or network capacity maps - they detail where their flexible distribution zones are (where their constraints are). Should do something similar"

Storage representative

"Generally speaking, it's miles better than it has been in the last few years. It's come on leaps and bounds. Big thumbs-up"

Consultant

"For me, I think that it's the more [information] the better. It might be overloaded but you can only really assess it once it's up and running. You could potentially use filters to switch off information you don't need"

Storage representative

"With DNOs themselves, they don't have common sets of data and common ways of presenting it. It's a shame. For example, why can't capacity maps be done in a certain way? For customers who are doing projects all over the country. Through the industry groups you should try and communalise things when you've got a good idea"

Storage representative

"To learn things, you normally need lots of tabs. One map with many layers might be better"

Community energy representative

"It doesn't say whether future PPAs are on there, you can't see where other people have applied, so in applying you have no idea of the competition of an area"

Academic

"It would be interesting to know when all the information was last updated. If that was the day before. That would demonstrate that it has changed in that time that I've been using it"

Generation representative

"What about – can you set up an alert on a map, if you're looking for a particular trigger, e.g. if capacity came up?"

Generation representative



7 | AFTERNOON SURGERIES

Consents and Legals

The surgery session on Legals and Consents was introduced by Bruce Pollard, Wayleaves Manager.

The key themes and questions asked during the surgery are shown below.

- It was widely welcomed that there is a move to become more transparent with legal and consents by Q2 next year.
- Stakeholders liked the fact that customers will be able to log-in to track their cases and see where they are in the process
- There was a good deal of discussion about the relationships between each parties lawyers and how more could be done to reduce connections times. It was noted that WPD has a target of 50-days to competition/connection, but this is only feasible if both parties cooperate
- It was asked whether it was possible to include anything in heads of terms to reduce the time taken to sign and complete by third-party landowners.
- It was explained that guidance documents have been created which can be shared with third parties.
- It was also noted that heads of terms can indeed include a time limit.
- There was overall sentiment that more should be done to persuade landowners to act more quickly to persuade their lawyers to finalise the 'deal'.
- It was explained that there is a 20-day update report, which is colour-coded to match the existing 50-day target. It was asked whether a further update at 40 days would be feasible.



Competition in Connection

The Competition in Connection surgery was introduced by Paul Jewell, Policy Manager. The key themes and questions asked during the surgery are shown below.

- There was an explanation of how competition in connection works. It was noted that all equipment used should adhere to the same standards as that supplied by WPD.
- Stakeholders felt that the boundaries were moving as ICPs can design the point of connection and undertake other operational work.
- Stakeholders stated that they wished to work more closely with WPD in this area in order to save time and money.
- The point was made that it is frustrating when one company has a number of sites in one licence area but does not have a single key account manager.
- It was commented that WPD often deals very well with jobs that are 11kV and below. The point was made that once developers start going up to 33kV it's a lot harder work to get that interaction with WPD.
- It was noted that the large volumes of solar had gone. Aside from the removal of subsidies, it was commented that the land take-up of solar farms was a reason for this.
- The point was made that a lot of WPD's capacity is in town centres.
- There was some frustration that ICPs often prepare a number of designs which, after a 20-day wait, are then rejected. It was commented that this process is actually easier at higher voltages.
- It was questioned whether, when getting meters fitted, both VTs and CTs needed to be provided. Stakeholders were unclear on this issue.
- One stakeholder commented that there was an issue with the accuracy of the plans they had received. They had raised this with their point of contact but were still awaiting a reply. It was commented that in instances like this, it was better to telephone WPD than rely on email.
- The point was made that some connections stakeholders are now receiving offers with phased capacity, which is difficult to understand.
- One stakeholder had had an offer removed due to lack of activity, which resulted in the need for a significant amount of money to be spent on reinforcement work, making the site unviable. There was frustration that this had not been flagged up beforehand.
- Some stakeholders were of the view that having to enter a password to log on to the website was unnecessary, as other DNOs didn't require this. The point was made that this function actually allows WPD to share updates, as the details of everyone who visits the website have been stored.



Storage

The storage surgery was presented by **Tim Hughes, Connections Policy Manager;** and **Faithful Chanda, Innovation and Low Carbon Networks Engineer.**

The key themes and questions asked during the surgery are shown below.

- The need for quicker processing of applications for storage was a key theme that arose in the surgery.
- It was felt that disconnection times at present are not adequate.
- The point was made that, currently, there is nothing to stop companies putting in an application and jumping the queue while a competitor is waiting for permission to connect.
- Questions asked of WPD included: 'If I install Tesla power outputs do these need to go through G59?' and 'If I put a reverser power blackout in, does this cancel the need for a G59?'
- It was also asked whether reporting back in to the grid wires provides protection and whether a notification process triggers a fault notice?
- It was also asked: 'When you make a connection, do WPD work it if they are towards the top end, and if the demand goes over the capability do you force an upgrade?'
- It was felt that, generally, planning is a bit too high level at the moment.
- It was asked whether WPD informs the electricity supplier that PV (for example) and a battery installation has been made in a customer's home. The WPD representative answered that this was the case, although this is a high-level notification).
- Stakeholders stated that they would value earlier engagement in the connection process? It was commented that other networks tell stakeholders earlier how much the offer is likely to be.



Strategic Network Investment

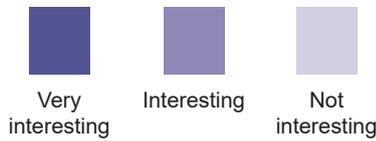
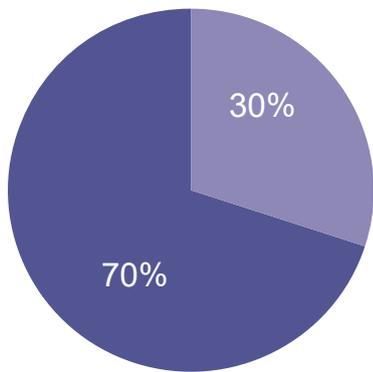
The surgery session on Strategic Network Investment was introduced by Ben Godfrey, Network Strategy Manager. The key themes and questions asked during the surgery are shown below.

- The five-year development plans were shared with stakeholders, along with details of scenario planning exercises and methodologies. There was also an explanation of the factors that input into decision-making, including political and economic scenarios.
- It was asked whether these different scenarios could lead to directly quantifying how many megawatt hours will be generated in the future.
- It was commented that flexibility is imperative when planning network investment as it is impossible to tell what will happen in the future, even with detailed modelling.
- It was explained that we are moving away from passive energy and that some areas will become self-sufficient 'islands' as generation becomes cheaper.
- It was noted that, at present, going off-grid is not a viable solution.
- It was commented that with disaggregation of the bill, connection and volume could be combined, which was much more transparent.
- It was noted that there has been a lack of engagement with the Big Six energy companies and there is now far more switching between suppliers than was previously the case. Therefore, there will be a greater need from them to be flexible
- There was some discussion relating to whole system issues.
- It is acknowledged that the South West cannot handle the amount of energy generated on a sunny day, so a solution must be found that is cost-effective. Active network management is seen as the key to this.
- It was commented that in order to be truly effective there will have to be five times the renewables generation than is currently the case. Not only would this need significant reinforcement, it would also require a huge amount of space.
- It was noted that gas backup would also be required in the interim.
- It was explained that by March there will be a three, four and five gigawatt scenario, which will allow WPD to plan for the additional generation required until 2025.
- Some stakeholders were concerned about the impact of electric vehicles on existing infrastructure. It was commented that battery storage can provide a solution but the technology needs to improve.
- The outcomes of the Electric Boulevard trail were explained. This had involved up to five cars charging at a single point, simultaneously.
- It was noted that the planning process has been an impediment to rapid charging points but it was acknowledged that this is beyond WPD's control.
- WPD cited the joint studies it had been working on to see if joint reinforcement was viable.
- It was commented that WPD's reinforcement budget is lower than its asset replacement budget, which implies the network is 'creaking along'



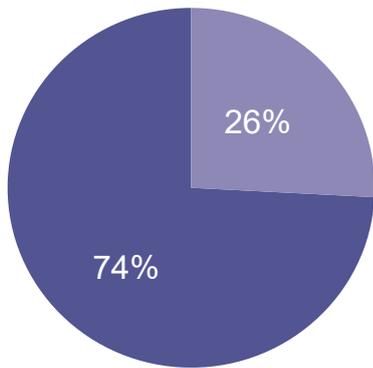
APPENDIX 1: STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Overall, did you find the workshop to be:



No comments given

Did you feel that you had the opportunity to make your points and ask questions?



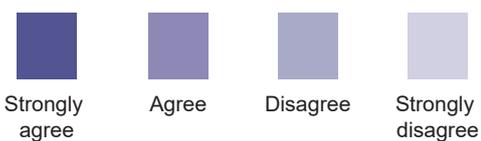
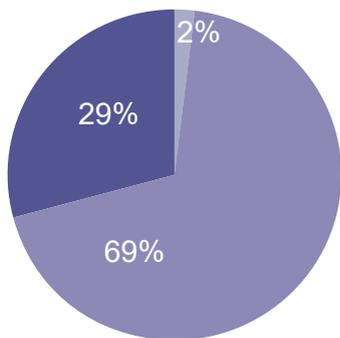
Well run by EQ Communications, opportunity to speak and express opinion

Format of small groups enabled questions to be asked and covered easily.

Perhaps include general questions from the floor rather than all in workshop formal.

Well managed and good venue, well attended – which helped the diversity of discussions.

Did we cover the right topics for you on the day?

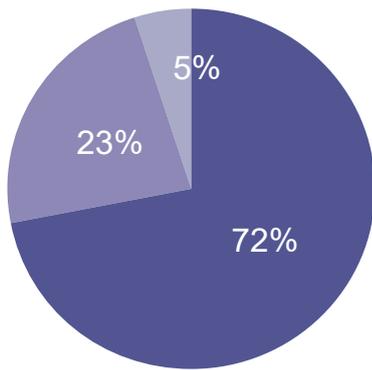


Mostly but I accept that the broad spectrum of stakeholders dictates a unique agenda.

Not enough time dedicated to the most important topic: DSO.

Very good content - something additional on technology roadmap and needs would have been interesting (of overview of WPD projects in LCN).

What did you think of the way the workshop had been facilitated?



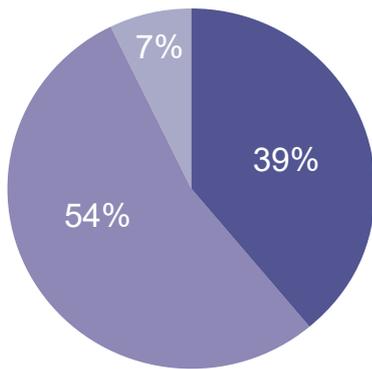
Very good. My facilitator kept things moving well and covered all topics.

EQ did a fantastic job of facilitating on the day.

Able to raise issues and praise good practice. Facilitator made sure everyone was able to speak.

EQ were excellent at ensuring everyone had an opportunity to speak and work through the questions and topics.

What did you think of the venue?

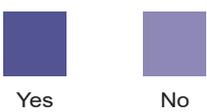
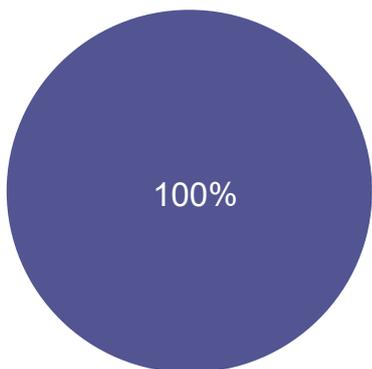


Easy to access by train, nice space. Chairs uncomfortable.

Cold venue until after break.

Accessible and very good acoustics.

Would you be interested in attending future workshops on this subject?



Excellent conversation in the workshops, although this did make it difficult for the facilitator at times.

Overall a useful and informative day.

As DNOs it's vital we work together to provide same service to stakeholders.

Great talking with WPD representatives. Very approachable and available for discussion and challenging questions.



