Western Power Distribution Stakeholder Workshop:

Distributed Generation

26th November 2014

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1 Introduction

On 26th November 2014, Western Power Distribution (WPD) hosted a stakeholder workshop specifically for its distributed generation stakeholders. The event was held at The Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

Having had its Business Plan 2015-2023 fast-tracked by Ofgem in February 2014, WPD's priority is now on delivery of the Plan, including the ten connections outputs. These connections outputs have been developed into a detailed connections improvements plan – the Incentive on Connection Engagement Plan (ICE Plan) – which can be read in full **here**. This workshop was WPD's first dedicated DG workshop, held in response to feedback from stakeholders around the ICE plan. The ICE incentive comes into force on 1st April 2015 and WPd have prepared aplan in advance of this date.

WPD appointed specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, Westbourne Communications (WBC), to facilitate the stakeholder workshop on its behalf. WBC began by carrying out a thorough audit of all WPD's DG stakeholders, producing a database of over 650 contacts, each of whom were invited to the event.

It was decided that the best method of engagement, given the relative complexity of the subject, would be a series of presentations by senior WPD representatives followed by

round table workshops. Each of the workshops was faqcilitated by trained WBC facilitators and comments were noted by scribes.

Where possible, verbatim quotes have been noted by the WBC scribes. However, in order to ensure that all stakeholders could speak as candidly and openly as possible,

comments were not attributed to individuals. On each of the tables, a member of WPD staff was on hand to answer technical questions. A copy of the presentation given by WPD can be found <u>here</u>.

2   Overview of the workshop

There were two discussion sessions within the overall workshop that provided an opportunity for stakeholders to review the ICE plan and provide WPD with feedback. Each discussion session covered two topics.

- **Workshop 1a. Connections Performance Plan.** This discussion focused on the overall Connections Improvement Plan, including feedback from the Connection Customers Steering Group (CCSG) and the DG customer survey.
- **Workshop 1b. Information and Application.** This discussion was the first of the detailed reviews of each of the phases of the Connections Improvement Plan. This focused on the first phase, application and information.
- **Workshop 2a. Quotation and Agreements.** This discussion focused on the quotation and agreements phase of the Connections Improvement Plan.
- **Workshop 2b. Construction and Connections.** This discussion focused on the construction and connections phase of the Connections Improvement Plan.

Attendees

A total of 57 DG stakeholders attended the workshop from sectors including: utilities companies; connections companies; industry consultancies; developers; technology companies; membership organisations; and universities. . The organisations represented were as follows:-

- ADAS UK
- AEE Renewables Uk Ltd
- British Solar Renewables Limited
- Caplor Energy
- CLA
- Eco 2 Solar
- Electricity Solutions Ltd
- EME Power Connections
- Enercon Gmbh
- GEW2 Ltd
- GF Energy
- Green Cat Renewables Ltd
- Haven Power Ltd
- JSM Construction
- LIG Consultants
- Lightsource Renewable Energy
- Linbrooke
- Low Carbon Solar UK
- Mark Group Ltd
- Martifer Solar UK
- Major Energy Users Council
- Norvento Wind Energy Uk
- O'Connor Utilities

- Peak Gen Power Limited
- PN Daly
- Powersystems UK Ltd
- RD Network Design
- Regen SW
- Renewable Energy Connections
- RES
- Rolton Group
- Severn Trent Water
- Siemens
- Sun4Net Ltd
- Suncredit
- TGC Renewables Ltd
- TNEI Services Ltd
- TUSC Ltd
- University of Birmingham
- University of Manchester
- University of Warwick
- Utilities Connections Management Limited
- Utility Resource Services Ltd
- Wessex Solar Energy
- Wessex Water

3   Summary of feedback

- Out of 699 people who were invited, 57 attended on the day and 42 provided written feedback.

- 100% of the stakeholders who provided written feedback told us they found the workshop to be either 'very interesting' or 'interesting'.

- 95% of stakeholders who provided written feedback 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that we covered the right topics on the day.

Workshop 1a. Connections Improvement Plan.

- Stakeholders were first asked for their views on the overall plan. The vast majority felt that **the areas of focus in the plan were appropriate**.
- A number of stakeholders expressed a need for **greater emphasis to be given to the later stages in the connections process**, with one saying that WPD is '*biased towards the pre-construction stage'*. The handover from planner to construction phase was identified as particularly difficult.
- The suggestion was made that a '***heat map***' may be useful detailing known load, load coming and load which may arrive in 3 months' time.
- It was noted that **regular and ongoing engagement throughout the process is key** and that this engagement should remain consistent.
- A number of stakeholders, particularly developer representatives, said that there was a need for a **further stage to be included, specifically focused on design.** It was noted that this was currently missing from the overall plan. It was felt that there was a need for greater focus on set design specifications and standards.
- During discussions on the overall plan, comments largely centred on the **application and information phase**. There was a desire to have better access to information and a more consistent level of communication throughout the process, although it was noted that most stakeholders said they were already happy with the service they received from WPD.
- There was consensus that the **Connection Customers Steering Group (CCSG) was a good initiative** and broad agreement that the regularity with which it meets (at present) is appropriate.
- There was a sense that the membership and outputs from the **CCSG were not transparent enough** and it was noted that there should be mechanisms for other stakeholders to input into the work of the group and further ways of contacting the members.
- A number of stakeholders said that they had not heard of the CCSG which suggests that it should be publicised more widely. A number of attendees stated

their interest in becoming members and it was suggested that the CCSG could perhaps be available online.

- There was **broad consensus that WPD's high customer satisfaction rating tallied with stakeholders' experiences. There was a considerable amount of praise for WPD, with a number of stakeholders comenting that the company is by far the best DNO** on all levels. However, it was commented that there was a lack of consistency between geographic regions and between different departments.

- Some stakeholders said that there was **a need for more transparency around progress** at key stages in the connections process and more information on whether WPD was hitting targets. There were questions around **how WPD measures success** and its key performance indicators (KPIs).

- A key theme was the need for greater assistance to be provided in order to help connections representatives with their long-term planning and it was felt that allocating dedicated Account Managers would be of benefit.

- It was commented that there is no reference to design documents in the plan, particularly on design specifications and standards. It was felt that more information regarding design specifications would be beneficial.

Workshop 1b. Information and Application

- Whilst many stakeholders **broadly agreed that the issues identified in the plan with regard to information and the application process were correct and that the initiatives proposed were appropopriate**, there were still a number of suggestions of what could be improved.

- It was noted that more could be done to improve on the availability of network information as most stakeholders in attendance relied on this for their future projects.

- Some stakeholders felt that there needed to be more **proactive and for more consistent communication** from WPD at the very early stage.

- It was commented that WPD **does not progress with applications unless there is a project number generated** and that it would be useful to have greater engagement before that project number is on the system.

- Stakeholders generally expressed a desire for **earlier notice regarding capacity** and felt that more face to face discussions with engineers would be helpful. It

was also noted that open sessions where a microphone is pased round the group might be helpful as a way of raising issues with WPD representatives.

- Stakeholders generally felt that it would save time and hassle if there was **greater information available** to ensure that they are not needlessly applying for connections in areas where there is no capacity. However, it was noted that certain security issues prevented information being shared.
- **Any initiatives to give more information on where there is capacity** in the network would be welcomed by stakeholders.
- It was noted that **90 days is a long time for many businesses to wait for a quotation** and there was a desire for this to be reduced. The comment was made that stakeholders do not wish to receive a quote after 90 days that isn't viable. They would prefer to be given options before the commencement of the 90 day period.

That first engagement after setting up a project is fantastic, but the time running up to that engagement was quite frustrating.

- A number of stakeholders said that they had experienced **differences in levels and quality of communication** between different departments at WPD and said that there needed to be **better interactivity** between departments throughout the process.
- A common theme was frustration around the lack of transparency regarding the **amount of capacity on the network.** There was a desire from stakeholders to have access to that information early on in the application process.
- Aside from available capacity, there were other specific concerns raised about **access to information**. One stakeholder said that the amount of technical information was hard to navigate and other stakeholders were frustrated that the long-term development statement was not openly available.
- A number of stakeholders stated that they would benefit from being able to have an **initial conversation with a WPD representative** before beginning the application process.
- It was suggested that an **email update should be sent** when new information is published on the website**..**
- It was suggested that **email alerts telling connections customers of any changes** that may be relevant to them would be really helpful.
- Stakeholders felt that **more engagement with WPD engineers** could only be a good thing. It was also noted that the appointment of a nominated Account Manager would be helpful.

Workshop 2a. Quotations and Agreements

- There was consensus among many of the stakeholders that the **issues identified for the quotations and agreements stage were appropriate** and that the initiatives proposed to address these were acceptable.

- It was commented that **WPD's connection offers tends to be better than other DNOs** as there is better clarity and transparency than that provided by other DNOs.
- Some stakeholders were happy with the **level of information** provided in the quotation, although others wanted a more detailed breakdown. However, it was noted that there is a balance between the amount of information that stakeholders should expect and speed of the process.
- **Online acceptances and payments** were seen as helpful as sending hard copies can be problematic.
- The issue of **queue management** was raised. Stakeholders said that they want to know, at the quotation stage, whether there is already interest in the area. This would avoid quotations being retracted at a later date and ensure that connections customers would know where they are in the queue.
- While most stakeholders were happy with the **level of information and transparency provided in the offer**, others wanted the offer to include more detail on the circumstances on which the offer is based.
- A number of stakeholders said they would benefit from **greater clarity on the timetable for actions** to be implemented and for processes to be completed as it was felt that dates are currently too variable.
- It was felt by some that WPD should do **more to identify potential delays** at an early stage so that connections customers and consultants could plan for this accordingly.
- It was noted that it would be useful to have **more clarity around the definition of a 'site'** so that it is clear how much a scheme can be changed if necessary.
- Stakeholders raised the **speed of processing quotes** and it was stated that this took longer in the South West than in the Midlands.
- On the issue of information on existing capacity on the network, it was suggested that there should be **updates if and when other bidders drop out**. It was also suggested that customers should be required to provide justifications for applications in order to make sure sites are not being held speculatively.
- It was suggested that a **diagram explaining ownership** would be helpful, indicating where WPD's role starts and finishes.
- WPD's **quotations process** was praised as there are clearly numbered clauses which are simple to follow. It was also noted that the company responds to quotations within days rather than weeks.
- It was commented that there should be more done to **streamline the way legal information is processed** when it is requested by the client.
- Although most stakeholders would like to see the process accelerated, it was generally felt that the **main issue was actually communication**. Greater transparency would provide certainty for connections customers and assist them in their planning. It was also commented that improvements to the process post acceptance would help developers plan better and progress with their projects

faster. An agreed timeline shared between WPD and connections representatives would be welcomes by stakeholders.

- With regards to the **design approval process (pre-construction)** a number of stakeholders raised the need for a specified set of design standards.
- It was commented that WPD needs to continue to give **planning updates throughout the process** and should exert pressure on developers who don't progress with planning.

ff Alternative Connections are the future, but it is difficult to roll out overnight.ff

- It was commented that **some quotations have been retracted at a later date due to interactivity issues**, which causes problems for developers.
- It was felt by some that certain developers should be **removed from the queue if their applications are too speculative**.
- WPD was **praised for its local knowledge**. Other DNOs were criticised for being bureaucratic in comparison.
- The comment was made that there is sometimes a **lapse in time between when an invoice is sent** to an independent connections provider (ICP) and when the ICP sends it to the developer. It was noted that this can lead to missed deadlines.

Workshop 2b. Construction and Connections

- Stakeholders were **split over what the areas of focus** should be during the construction and connections phase.
- Whilst some felt that **WPD already offers a good service,** others felt that **the process required better management** in order to minimise the amount of variation across the network area.
- A **lack of consistency** (from engineer to engineer) was raised by stakeholders, but also between different departments. There was concern that there were no consistent standards across the industry and also within WPD.
- The **importance of speed** at the construction stage was raised by some stakeholders. They said that WPD's connecting speed was good but there was always room for improvement as it was so important for customers.
- **Consistent and proactive communication** through the construction phase was identified as vitally important by stakeholders. Some felt it was already very good, but some said they would like to see a higher quality of contact, post-acceptance.
- A common theme was the need for **clarity of process and a clear timetable**, with a standardised policy. Stakeholders did not want surprises and wanted long-lead times, with high-risk barriers identified at the outset.
- Some stakeholders felt that they needed more clarity on who was their **direct point of contact at WPD**. It was noted that Account Managers at WPD would helpful but other felt they added another layer of bureaucracy.

- The issue of **self-design approval for ICPs** was raised by a number of stakeholders, who had mixed views as to whether or not it this would be a successful initiative.
- It was suggested that a **standard list of items** would be useful as it would remove the need to go through the design approval.
- It was suggested that **DG workshops should be quarterly**. It was also commented that feedback after the event would be useful.
- Most stakeholders would benefit from **more frequent interaction with WPD**.
- It was commented that **advance notice of long lead-in items** would be helpful and that proactive communications were important.
- It was suggested that it would be helpful if the **approval process was broken into several phases** so that the necessary equipment can be ordered in advance.
- A number of stakeholders felt that **post-acceptance communication was vital.**
- It was noted that the **number of stakeholders involved in the construction process can be problematic** as this leads to too many changes.
- Although WPD's processes at the connections phase were praised, it was stated that the **company's engineers should interact better**.
- A recurring theme was the need for **greater standardisation**. It was commented that common standards would reduce costs.

Keeping involved and updated

- Stakeholders said that they wanted to **receive feedback on the progression of the plan** against the deliverables and that this should be done via email. It was noted that it would be appropriate to receive an update every three or six months.
- One stakeholder suggested that attendees at this workshop should then be **pre-registered in order to receive email updates**. Another stakeholder suggested that WPD hyperlink sections of the plan to relevant WPD policy documents to make it easy to access information.
- Those stakeholders who responded broadly felt that the stakeholder workshops, the quarterly surgeries and the CCSG were **enough events for DG stakeholders**, but stressed the importance of face-to-face contact.
- There was **broad consensus that this workshop was very useful** and that it was a worthwhile format for raises issues.

4 Summary of suggested initiatives

- There should be greater emphasis on communications throughout the connections process, especially post-acceptance.
- A heat map may be appropriate to detail known load, load coming and load which may arrive in the future.
- WPD should consider offering customers with a number of applications the opportunity of an Account Manager to act as a single point of contact.
- A further stage should be added to the plan, focussed solely on design.
- Design specifications and standards should be widely publicised.
- WPD should do more to standardise information and advice throughout the company.
- All process should be standardised and there should be a greater emphasis on consistency across WPD's network area.
- The CCSG should be more widely publicised and the membership broadened.
- More information on how WPD performed in relation to its targets should be published.
- Greater transparency througout the process would help developers ensure that deadlines are not missed.
- WPD should continue to engage on a regular basis with DG customers.
- There should be more emphasis on engagement with potential customers before the commencement of the application process.
- More information on capacity should be published.
- Quotes should be sent as early as possible and always be prior to the 90 day backstop.
- Stakeholders should have the option of signing up to an email update to keep them informed of any relevant changes.
- Regular email updates should be sent to keep DG customers informed of WPD's progress.
- A detailed timetable of actions should be given to connections customers on acceptance of a quote.
- A simple diagram detailing roles and responsibilities should be published.
- More frequent updates should be given throughout the process.
- There should be greater emphasis on removing speculative bidders from the queue for new connections.
- There should be regular workshops hosted in various locations within the WPD network area.
- Workshops should be hosted in support of community energy schemes.

5   Workshop 1a: Connections Improvement Plan

This discussion focused on the overall Connections Improvement Plan, including the stakeholder engagement strategy for reviewing and finalising the plan.

5.1   WPD has identified a number of areas of focus to address the key DG issues: Do you think the areas are appropriate?

This question referred to the key areas of focus for the DG elements of the ICE plan, as set out in the following table:-

Information and application
1. Improve online application functionality.
2. Improve awareness of website services including updates and changes.
3. Improve availability of network information.
4. Improve assistance for customers wishing to apply for connections.
Quotation and Acceptance
5. Improve information provided in formal offers and consistency.
6. Consult on processes regarding interactivity, acceptance validity, payments and reservation of capacity.
7. Acceptance of e-signatures.
8. Improve the process of gaining legals and consents.
9. Extension of contestability – connection reinforcement.
Construction and Connections
10. Improve consistency of process.
11. Improve and consolidate inspection and monitoring (I&M) processes.

Table 1:

- An industry consultancy representative said his/her '*biggest issue is communication - actually engaging with Western Power. It's the case that first engagement after setting up a project is fantastic, but the time running up to that engagement was quite frustrating, it's worth having a conversation with someone to speak about the issues.*'
- A connections company representative added '*WPD doesn't expend time or effort unless there is a project number being generated – but sometimes we need to get a hold of somebody before that project number is on the system.*'
- An industry consultancy representative agreed, saying '*we can't talk to you until we get a project number – if we can have that conversation first then that can save WPD a lot of time.*'

- A connections company representative had a different point of view, s/he commented that *'the agent chatted through loads of options with us before we submitted an application – that was really helpful having that communication up front.'*
- A representative of an industry consultancy said '*we had an issue of communication. We outlined what we want to export and we got a response back in three days which was absolutely brilliant. There are some real positives there.*'
- Another industry consultancy representative added '*the exported information onto google earth is really helpful.*' A connections company representative agreed, s/he stated '*it saves a lot of time, and we do it by hand right now and this really helps.*'
- A developer representative added '*if we had greater access to google maps on the website then that would make it a lot quicker to source it, it's difficult to find where it's hidden. You guys are providing a lot of information.*'
- A university representative asked '*are the plans on your website? Because we need to find a better way to access it.*'
- A Connections company representative highlighted that in his/her opinion '*Item 8 ["improve the process of gaining legals and consents"] is an issue, because that process does not start until quite long down the process. With overhead lines and rural networks, there is almost certainly going to be a landowner issues. There is a demand for connections, and it takes an age to get a quote. We got a quote, the customer paid in June.*'
- A developer representative made the point that '*in order to complete the upgrade work we had to get the consent for planning 6 months down the line. Some of the surveys can only be done because they're seasonable. We could be losing our grid application and it took a lot of to-and fro-ing to get it to 12 months. We had accepted the quote and it takes a lot longer than 6 months. It could be a lot more than that if there are environmental constraints stopping it.*'
- An industry consultancy representative agreed, saying '*people were concerned that they weren't given access to the grid because it was being tied up in other applications*'
- A connections company representative added*, 'all the problems occur before the guy gets on the site.*'
- A developer representative stated 'we *have some problems with the policy changes for WPD, they misread our DNO authorisation. We submitted all these budget estimates and they were misinterpreted without getting a signature from the landowner and there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing.*'
- An industry consultancy representative said '*you don't want to put an offer on the table and find out it's £17 million to export*'
- A university representative asked '*with the quotations, do you have to pay upfront? Is that subject to variations?*'
- A developer representative commented that '*the budget applications are done really well, not sure if it's like that through all the regions. If we keep it to lower*

ranges then we don't have too many applications and there is a lot of good feedback.'

Table 2:

- A developer representative said that WPD is '*biased toward the pre-construction stage. They need to improve the construction process. Point number 10 ["improve consistency of process"] covers quite a lot of things. It is normally during the construction stage that problems happens so there should be more focus on this stage.*'

- A developer representative stated that '*one of biggest issues is getting early notice about capacity. We want to have lots of face to face discussions with engineers. There also needs to be more focus on point 3 ["improve availability of network information"] and around applications.*'

- A connections company representative made the point that '*for each area we could do with three heat maps: known load, load coming and load which may arrive in 3 months' time.*'

- An industry consultancy representative added '*the maps are really good but they must be kept up to date.*'

- One of the developer representatives pointed out that '*all areas are key, we can have the best offer in the world but connection is key.*'

- A connections company representative complained '*the issue is engineers within WPD don't talk to each other about different high voltage (HV) connections – 11 and 33. We need the two parties to communicate internally to improve the consistency of experience. This interface needs to be better.*'

> **❝ For each area we could do with three heat maps: known load, load coming and load which may arrive in 3 months' time. ❞**

- A connections company representative concurred saying '*we want consistency of interfaces internally within WPD, particularly when talking to engineers about HV.*'

- A connections company representative felt that it would '*be good to have something on the WPD website on G59 forms to give developers an unbiased view of how to fill in a G59.*' They went on to say that perhaps the template could be '*from the Energy Networks Association*' and that '*information needs to be more accessible and consistent.*'

- A connections company representative agreed saying the '*process must be consistent across WPD*'

Table 3:

- A developer representative considered that '*the application process is pretty good, the crunch comes after we've accepted the connection. The engagement*

process we have to go through is complicated once we have the go ahead from WPD. Once we get engineers on the ground it's good but the bit before that is difficult. Getting hold of the right people at WPD is difficult. Design, approval and building is incredibly difficult and you're missing that from your list. This is the key stage. There needs to be better clarity around the survey process. Communicating with planners and WPD. Working with the design team is incredibly difficult.'

- A developer company representative stated that *'your online processes are pretty good and it's come a long way during my time. Online processes helps with first interaction immensely.'*
- A membership organisation representative agreed.
- A developer company representative commentated that *'the handover from the planner to the construction phase is particularly difficult. The design process is difficult. We get a design recommended for approval but it has comments. This is confusing, it doesn't provide the exact clarity needed and leaves room for a potential "fail" later on.'*

Table 4:

- A developer representative expressed that s/he thought the plan focussed on the appropriate areas, but his/her biggest problem as a designer was, *'not doing the design, but being able to acquire the information needed to be able to do the design. This takes far longer than actually doing the design itself. Therefore, any initiative that makes this easier is welcomed and is critical.'*
- A membership organisation representative followed by explaining to the WPD representative that *'it strikes me that the more we go on with DG, the more there are likely to be bigger issues with constraints. I would guess that developers will want to actually have a dialogue with someone and establish a thinking process.'*
- A developer representative added, *'yes, the start of this is that someone always has a particular site in mind - I think the starting point in the future should be 'where is it possible to connect, because I think as the constraints grow. I am staggered by how much generation there was compared with the demand on the network.'*
- A connections representative continued, *'yes, we do a lot of work with flat generation schemes, and we almost can't get any connections in there, unless it is on a conditional connection route.'* This is a problem which is spreading - so *'what is more important to me is what is going to happen about it - what is the*

long term plan and when will those long-term plans be executed? Because this will be a future issue.'

- A developer representative expressed that his/her priority was standardisation in design. S/he said *'whilst I understand the need and concept of competition in connections, from a designer's point of view, it would be simple if there was a standard substation, or standard housing proposals. It would be great to have a standard design - though it might inhibit innovation and competition. It would be easier if there were a standard set of drawings to pick up, knowing they would get approved.'*
- A connections representative commented, *'I don't have any problems with this- buildings are a challenge but the materials are okay.'*
- A developer representative agreed that they *'were okay'*, however often found, *'a lot of offers are coming in. We have a project we have accepted and we want to get design done quickly- therefore I would like approval to be quicker.'*

Table 5:

- An industry consultancy representative felt that WPD *'needs to improve awareness of what's on the website.'*
- Another representative of an industry consultancy went further suggesting WPD *'needs to provide customers with as much available information on capacity as possible'*
- A connections company representative made the point that s/he *'gets questions about what's available by landowners and doesn't really know the answer.'*
- A representative of a developer asserted that the *'information point is really important. How do I get information about WPD's activities? I didn't know about these surgeries.'*
- A developer representative complained that *'there is no reference to design documents in the plan. I can't find information on particular design specifications and standards.'* A WPD representative agreed that the design phase is missing from the 10 priorities.

> **❝ How do I get information about WPD's activities? I didn't know about these surgeries. ❞**

- Another developer representative asserted that *'engineers have their own design preferences as well, so there's an issue with consistency.'* The table agreed with the facilitator's summary that WPD needs to improve consistency of application, as well as response.
- A developer representative stated that *'some offices are proactive in providing you with a solution. Others aren't.'* The facilitator suggested this is another issue around consistency of response and the table agreed.

Table 6:

- A connections company representative said that *'availability for ICPs is relatively good. But there's an issue where a developer has to do an application, and doesn't correctly fill it in, which causes hold-ups.'*
- A connections company representative said that *'because of a lack of centralised structure, there are now problems with designers with divergent views. There's a lack of consistency. Too many people think they understand the specifications, but understand it the wrong way, which causes a problem for us sometimes.'*
- A utilities company representative said that *'under the feed-in tariff they're pre-accrediting when they can, but they weren't allowed to get a connection agreement until 4 weeks in advance, and there's a tight timescale because of Ofgem deadlines.'*
- A utilities company representative added that *'it would be good if connection agreements were available to view online.'*
- A developer representative added that *'example agreements would be a good addition.'*
- A developer representative said: *'we need WPD to be more proactive following acceptance, and post-acceptance in advance, flagging up problems and milestones well in advance, with regular communication.'*
- A developer representative welcomed *'the availability of open-source mapping tools.'*

Table 7:

- A utilities company representative stated that WPD has identified the correct areas of focus in its plan, adding *'it's hard to say much more.'*
- An industry consultancy representative commented that s/he thought *'they [WPD] are going in the right direction.'*
- An industry consultancy representative, however, queried *'how quickly is the mapping updated?'*
- Another industry consultancy representative raised the point that it *'depends how initiatives are implemented, they can be woolly at times.'*
- A developer representative argued that *'they [WPD] give a title, but how useful is that? In terms of Google Earth is that available now? Something like that would be very useful, if that sort of information was available it would be so useful to have now. The level of information is useful, but as sometimes the information is not available right now, you end up at a site unable to act.'*

Table 8:

- A connections company representative raised issues regarding technology and innovation, saying that *'it is process driven, not looking at engineering solutions. The future network departments said that the system loading is the highest in January, not in the middle of summer. The need for minimum loading in January*

means that we can't accept 10 megawatts in the middle of summer, to offset system reinforcement. We need two engineering solutions.'

- WPD stated that *'the afternoon breakout session will come up with new solutions. We are looking at that.'*
- A connections company representative added *'let's not forget the engineering.'*
- There was consensus that the issues identified were appropriate.
- A connections company representative commented that *'ease of communicating is important. In terms of engaging, the points are covered well.'*
- A developer representative raised the point that *'transmission constraints could be a higher priority. Higher awareness is needed. It's an unknown. Sometimes the distributors could have more awareness of the dates'*
- WPD suggested *'it's about getting the information a bit earlier.'*
- A developer representative agreed, adding '*that's what it was about.'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative said *'yes, the issues you have identified seem about right.'*
- A connections company representative added *'I think so, the information side is fine. You put the application in and the amount of information you get up front about things like feasibility is great.'* S/he made the point that *'I think information provided about formal services and legal services is always a nightmare. We deal predominantly with connections and the legal process is always a nightmare. I know that is one thing you guys can't control. You guys are the better of the guys we deal with but it is still a complicated process.'*

> **❝ You put the application in and the amount of information you get up front about things like feasibility is great. ❞**

- A developer representative stated *'we think 4, 5 and 6 are the important ones ["improve assistance for customers wishing to apply for connections"; "improve information provided in formal offers and consistency"; and "consult on processes regarding interactivity, acceptance validity, payments and reservation of capacity"]. Our problem is the figures and the connection costs and quotes are too high and we cannot go any further. You just get the feeling that it's done on a desktop in two minutes and thrown at you. We don't have any particular problem with you, in fact one of the connections we got with you was quite cheap but with all other connections we always have to deal with costs – things like £1 million, £1.2 and £1.4 million and we just feel like those figures have been pulled out of nowhere.'*
- A developer representative said *'I was talking to [a WPD representative] regards to budget and he had 90 estimatory requests from one company in a day. It sounds like you get an awful lot of work.'*

- A developer representative felt that *'the grid cost quote and the transparency behind it is more important for us. There shouldn't be such a variation between quotes.'*
- S/he pointed out that *'I am quite happy with a ballpark figure as long as it is not far off. We would like information as quick as possible.'*
- A developer representative said *'I think WPD is probably the best in terms of speed and we have not had the chaos we have had with others about whether the quote is accurate. The other ones I won't name are utterly hopeless. WPD quotes are often high but I have had no reason to think that they are inaccurate.'*
- A developer representative summed up *'so the comment is: "you are not doing a bad job. You are doing a good job under great pressure."'*

Table 10:

- A developer representative stated '*at the moment I can get a budget estimate. Even if I go for a proper quote which can take up to 90 days. I then go for the offer but the figure could be completely different. I need the most accurate information and as soon as possible. I appreciate this is difficult since there are network changes daily but at the moment it's not worth the time and effort for me.'*

- An industry consultancy representative agreed *'I have had exactly the same experience. I get a budget estimate then I get a notice saying these estimates of £50,000 - £60,000 are now £2 million because of reinforcements. There is no uniform process. I cover all of WPD's patches, sometimes we've had an estimate then we pay money to hold that estimate but sometimes I don't have to. We need notification, some sort of waiting period that says these are the quotes that are happening. So more of a two-way relationship.'*
- A developer representative complained '*different areas are called different things. WPD will call something "Big Week" but I won't know what that is.'*

Westbourne
Engage Opinion

5.2   WPD set up a Connection Customers Steering Group in 2013. What do you think of this initiative?

Table 1:

- A connections company representative stated *'I think it's a good cross-section, I wouldn't mind getting on it if it's a possibility.'*
- Another connections company representative commented *'It looks absolutely spot on.'*
- An industry consultancy representative felt that it *'just lists types of organisations. Until you actually know who is on it, it doesn't mean anything to me.'*
- A university representative asked *'if the slides of the topics discussed and actions are on the website?'*
- An industry consultancy representative agreed and said *'the list of actions would be helpful to see.'*

Table 2:

- There was broad consensus that the CCSG was an appropriate mechanism for reviewing the plan.
- A developer representative commented that they were not aware of it and asked if it published minutes.
- A connections company representative said *'I want it to be flexible.'*
- A developer representative asked about there being opportunities to be part of it.

Table 3:

- A developer representative pointed out that *'it's the first time I've heard of this, it would be interesting to see who's represented on it. I can't actually see any developers, or IDNO people - these are the people who usually speak up about problems.'*
- Another developer representative stated that *'how do you become a member? I've had no details. We need direct requests to join sent to us.'*
- A developer representative commented that *'there's so many challenges with the wider network that need to be discussed.'*
- A membership organisation representative considered that *'a way of feeding into the group would be very useful'*
- A developer representative argued that *'we need more open workshops. I like the CCSG and the motive behind it.'*

Table 4:

- A developer representative was first to share his/her view, stating '*I think it is very good.'* S/he did, however, express a concern as to *'whether the members of the CCSG are properly able to represent the interests of their constituents. Are there*

bodies and mechanisms by which they can feed back? Is there a trade body? I am not sure.' This reservation aside s/he did comment that *'otherwise, it is a very good initiative'*

- A connections company representative commented, '*I sit on it and I think it is very representative of the DG community. There is a fair mix of people'*
- A membership organisation representative posed several questions to the group: '*what does it achieve? How much? Does it actually produce results?'*
- A connections company representative replied '*yes, that would be evident today'*
- Another connections company representative expanded '*I don't know what the criteria against which you would evaluate success is, but things have improved massively for UKPN.'*
- A membership organisation representative asked '*do the people that attend this group go away with a list of actions? That's great if that happens.*'
- A membership organisation representative highlighted that there are problems - '*do we really know who all the customers are? DNOs have this problem of not being directly engaged with customers, which is Ofgem's fault.'*
- A connections company representative disagreed, stating '*things have changed massively. Before there was no competition. It was really difficult. You were reliant on dealing with connection arms of DNOs who didn't want to engage and saw you as a threat.*'

> **" The CCSG needs to be reflective of energy providers – big and small. "**

- A developer representative added '*there is a DG / DNO forum already that the Energy Networks Association runs on behalf of Ofgem. What that group is trying to achieve is standardisation across DNOs.'*
- There was consensus among the group that a dedicated DG sub-group of the CCSG was not necessary, as DG issues could be addressed within the general business of the CCSG.

Table 5:

- A connections company representative argued that *'the CCSG is beneficial.'*
- A developer representative asked *'How are members chosen? The CCSG needs to be reflective of energy providers – big and small.'*
- A developer representative stated that *'you haven't got anybody from regulation or government. There's a problem around expanding the network and these figures possibly need to be represented, but I'm not sure whether this is the right kind of forum for that.'*
- There was group agreement that small developers should be on the CCSG.
- An industry consultancy representative commented that *'there needs to be people from a legal background on there.'*
- With regards to the frequency of the CCSG meetings, a developer representative asserted that *'if people from the group feel like its adequate, then I'm happy with*

it' and another developer representative pointed out that the *'question should be asked by members in each meeting.'*

Table 6:

- A connections company representative suggested that *'a frequency of every quarter would be good. There is a need to ensure that there's good rotation.'*
- A developer representative, however, felt that *'3 times a year frequency was best because of the in-depth research required.'*
- Another representative of a developer added that *'these steering groups are useful for each member adding their own area of expertise.'*
- A connections company representative suggested that *'it would be good to have rotation. We also wonder how representatives are chosen.'*
- A developer representative said that *'actually continuity is good.'*
- A connections company representative agreed with this point.

Table 7:

- A utilities company representative said that *'I think it's wonderful and I would sit on it. Seriously, it's a good idea because it brings one representative from each part of the industry in the same room at the same time. WPD set itself up ahead of the game on ICE. The fact there are people from so many different companies means things get done and WPD does understand what the issues are of the various interested parties.'*
- A connections company representative stated s/he thought *'it's good to advertise those representatives from small ICPs - such as my company - and get them involved, and let them know our concerns.'*
- A connections company representative felt that *'CCSG and minutes should be published online – are they?'*

> **If the CCSG is not available online, could we at least have all the CCSG representatives' contact details and email addresses?**

- A utilities company representative commented that *'I think it might be a good idea to have a special DG subgroup. The main advantage being another way of engaging. There are a lot of newcomers in the industry that don't seem to have a clue, and it would be good for them to engage with at least one DNO. Some of them today still treat the customer as an opponent rather than someone they are working with.'*
- An industry consultancy representative raised the issue that *'The CCSG should be available online - although I am not sure if it actually is. If the CCSG is not*

available online, could we at least have all the representatives contact details and email addresses?'

- A connections company representative felt there should be *'at least a general CCSG email address that people can use to contact representatives.'*

Table 8:

- A utilities company representative felt positive about it saying *'you have the right people – a mixture of regulatory and engineering sectors. I must admit I wasn't aware of it which was a pity. Nevertheless, it's a good idea and some of the consultation was very effective for RIIO-ED1. We are not just a utility provider, we have an increasingly important regulatory arm.*
- A WPD representative commented that s/he *'was not sure if utilities were involved.'*
- A utilities company representative pointed out that *'sometimes in our industry we aren't the best ambassadors. Often there are things we do that people aren't aware of.'*
- A developer representative highlighted that *'a newsletter may be useful. Are there newsletters in regards to the RIIO-ED1?'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative commented that it *'sounds fine but we are too small to deal with that.'*
- A connections company representative said *'we would like to be part of it if we could be but we don't have the contacts to get ourselves onto it. We are utility consultants, we deal with a wide range of customers from house builders to just home owners so it would be great for us to sit on something like this.'*
- A developer representative stated *'it sounds like a good idea.'*
- A connections company representative felt *'it's difficult to say without knowing how much generation is taken into account regarding the issue.'*

Table 10:

- A connections company representative felt *'this is the ideal initiative. The only thing is that if you're not in that steering group, then how can you feed into it? There should be connection surgeries and workshops for instance.'*

- A developer representative agreed '*I go along with that; most of what's on here is what most people are doing. The whole point of ICE is to get customers feedback so you can prove you're meeting expectations. So it's not really a unique initiative.*'
- An industry consultancy representative argued that *'speed is of the essence. Tariffs are increasing so we really need all of our DNOs to keep up. Therefore, what's fed into the group needs to be reacted to quickly.*'
- A developer representative complained that *'quotations come out in the post, I don't understand that. Why not send an email? I would want an electronic version so I can disseminate it as necessary. All other DNOs send an electronic version.*'

5.3 WPD consistently scores highly in terms of customer satisfaction. Does that tally with your experience of dealing with WPD?

Table 1:

- A connections company representative said *'I get a lot of satisfaction survey phone calls, they don't know which job they're referring to. I have a lot of projects on the go and they don't know which specific one they're ringing up about.*'

Table 2:

- A developer representative felt that WPD *were 'by far the best provider on all levels. The visibility is great. Very open in getting information out. My experience over the last five years is close to perfection.'* However s/he went on to say *'over the last 6 months it has not been as good though and there seems to have been more pressure, so the experience has deteriorated slightly. The capacity situation seems very tight which has had a knock on effect of availability due to the current climate, but over all that experience is about right.*'
- A connections company representative felt that WPD *'overall were very good. As an DNO they are the most improved. Just for DG there are some others that are stronger'*
- A developer representative raised the point that *'for business as usual connections, WPD is great, my frustration is for the out of the ordinary situations there are not quick enough connections. There are some tricky questions around this and I would mark WPD down compared to the other ones around these more challenging situations.*'
- A university representative wanted *'more proactive feedback of where we are in process and a proactive phone call from WPD about this'*
- A connections company representative added *'the policy and standards department is not as good, but the standard (construction) part of the business is very good. The policy section is very slow and construction has to wait on them.*'

Table 3:

- A developer representative argued that *'I'm staggered it [the satisfaction level] is that high. I would rate East Midlands as the highest, South Wales is the lowest. I would say that regionally there is a big disparity.'*
- Another developer representative commented that *'time-scale is important. There's a view in WPD's mind that 36 months lead time is acceptable, which it isn't. You should be going for 12 months lead time. I just think you can do better.'*
- A representative of a developer argued that *'at an engineering level you're great, but there are other stages which suffer from significant delays.'*
- A connections company representative felt that that *'the many different studies required can delay the process, particularly with unforeseen essentials'*
- A developer representative asked *'is everyone asked the same questions? If so it should be a genuine and fair reflection. I think it focuses on the small connections more. The big connections are where the problems are, and that's where it gets complicated.'*

Table 4:

- A development representative who works with all DNOs in most areas stated *'I agree with this, in my experience WPD are the best.'*
- A connections representative added *'I agree- UKPN are nightmare. WPD have improved everything.'*
- A membership organisation representative made the point that *'WPD should be careful; telling everyone that they are the best. Doing so runs the risk of [WPD] resting on its laurels. I have seen this graph so often and it is something to be aware of. They are there to be knocked off.'*

> **At an engineering level you're great, but there are other stages which suffer from significant delays.**

- A connections representative said *'I used to work for them and, in their defence, when you ring the switchboard you will receive an answer. The person you speak to knows who you should be put through to and if they say they will ring you back they will.'*
- A connections representative agreed.

Table 5:

- There was general agreement around the table that improvement was required in WPD's communication, particularly in terms of consistency.
- An industry consultancy representative said that *'there is more work that WPD is doing that most people don't realise. I receive queries about stuff that WPD is already doing.'*

- A developer representative argued that WPD *'should email everybody with a current application, or who has previously made an application, about the workshops.'*

Table 6:

- A developer representative said: *'I am not as happy because of negative load, which is unfair.'*
- A developer representative responded that *'the three flexible selection options don't make use of generators' ability to control VARS to make better use of existing assets.'*
- A utilities company representative said that *'we have had a positive experience, and that it has been an easier experience. The bulk of these have been with Central Networks, but in the last 18 months, we have found it a relatively smooth process.'*

> **❝ If we have any issue we know we can ring someone up and arrange a meeting. You get a fair deal. ❞**

- A utilities company representative added that *'feedback over email is swift.'*
- A developer representative said that *'it is different in different areas, but they are pleased with the dispute resolution and openness to find solutions to problems that have been hit.'*

Table 7:

- An industry consultancy representative felt that *'yes it [the survey results] does [tally with my own experience] for me.'*
- An industry consultancy representative commented that *'I personally don't deal with them often, but WPD are my favourite company to deal with. They are so up to speed and able to help.'*
- A developer representative stated that *'I would agree they are very easy to work with.'*
- A developer representative highlighted that *'we have a very good relationship with you, and out of all the other companies you are the best. The other companies don't seem concerned when something goes wrong so you have to push so much harder, but WPD are great to deal with.'*
- A utilities company representative remarked *'I am surprised Scottish Power are so high up! They are dreadful. We have ended up having to pay £58,000 to them to keep our place in the queue just to get it refunded later, WPD would never do that.'*

Table 8:

- A utilities company representative considered *'yes, I think it does, [tally with my experience]. We only deal with two DNOs: WPD and a company in Scotland.*

Technical expertise from WPD is good, dealing with old fashioned engineers. Newer companies have less expertise. Need a high level of technical expertise with a high level of customer service.'

- A connections company representative said that *'as a connection provider, WPD are best to work with in terms of authorisation.'*
- A developer representative pointed out that s/he *'agrees. We work with all the DNOs and WPD are the best.'*
- A utilities company representative made the point that *'there is a single point of accountability with area managers, and that personal contact shows. I can go straight to a planning engineer instead of a bureaucratic system. I go straight to the person I know.'*
- A connections company representative agreed.

Table 9:

- A developer representative said *'Yes.'*
- A connections company representative said *'we deal with Scottish Power and Northern Power and, from a connections application point of view, WPD is really good – in terms of being allocated an engineer as well. The other companies are just nowhere near as good.'*
- S/he also stated '*the other ones are set up differently as well, and the issue with that is that the diversion and disconnection sides are not regulated but we do not have the same problem with WPD.'*

Table 10:

- A connections company representative felt that *'from our point of view they are the best DNO we deal with. They're the most approachable; if we have any issue we know we can ring someone up and arrange a meeting. You get a fair deal. So all in all it's a fair reflection of WPD's service.'*
- An industry consultancy representative agreed '*they're certainly been the best we deal with.'*
- A developer representative disagreed '*I'm on the different end of the process. As I'm at the front end of getting quotations, I find them more steam driven than other DNOs. UKPN carry out monthly surgeries rather than quarterly. WPD have lovely people but they're slightly behind the curve, bit slower and steam driven*.'
- An industry consultancy representative highlighted that '*I deal with Scottish power; they're much more difficult to deal with.'*
- A connections company representative felt '*to us there was an overnight change in philosophy.'*
- An industry consultancy representative pointed out '*my main experience at the moment is at the quotation stage, the experience is better than others but a lot of improvement can be made. There should be a uniform response, but right now responses vary depending on the office you're speaking to. Even down to a letter*

of authority; originally you don't need it then later you suddenly have to. So there is a lack of consistency and uniformity across the board.'

- A developer representative felt that there were *"different attitudes from different people.'*

5.4 Are there any other points you would like to make regarding the overall plan?

Table 1:

- An industry consultancy representative pointed out that *'there was a mention of the contact sector team. I would like some more information about that, or easier access to that'*
- A university representative asked '*are there different teams to talk to in regards to different projects?'*
- A connections company representative made the point that '*all this DG that is now going on, someone is missing out aren't they? If someone has 500kw of generation, then someone else is missing out that 500kw of generation.'*
- A university representative asked '*but that would go into a PPA [power purchase agreement]? Isn't there a danger that your system has a deliverable capacity and you have too much import?'*

Table 3:

- A connections company representative said *'it's work in progress. You've obviously tried very hard, but there are many outstanding issues. We're quite happy with WPD East Midlands though, and that's where our experience lies.'*
- A developer representative commented that *'it's really positive we can now access the maps. The website alerts are also great.'*
- A developer representative made the point that *'I would suggest you publish heat maps, which is what other people in the industry use. I would say overall your maps are pretty good and very useful.'*
- A developer representative highlighted that *'are these maps available right now? I'm looking forward to seeing them on the website.'*
- A developer representative said that *'there needs to be better interaction with internal WPD staff, I really think that's an area which can be improved upon.'*

- A developer representative felt that *'something that I find very useful is forward focus - mapping that incorporates future plans so we can get an early sight of it.'*
- A connections company representative asked *'is the online payments system up and running?'*
- A developer representative commented that *'I'm sure what's missing is information on the dispute resolution process. I'm sure we need more information on this. On timescale and what's expected. And contacts for when something goes wrong.'*
- A membership organisation representative said that *'we need to know who the line managers are.'*

Table 4:

- A membership organisation representative asked '*how good are the maps, and what are the other DNOs doing?'*
- A connections representative stated that the '*UKPN have online mapping, but not to the standard of WPD. Some others are rolling things out, but they are behind. SSE have no mapping.'*
- A membership organisation representative questioned '*is it useful?*
- A connections representative and a developer representative commented *'yes, it is very useful and it is easy to get into it via the main web page.'*
- A developer representative continued, *'the constraints map is also useful.'*
- A development representative highlighted that '*one DNO doesn't provide any technical information online.*'
- A connections representative felt that the '*information was well worth looking at. UKPN has too much information, and it is difficult to find.*'
- A membership organisation representative said *'what worries me is implementation [of reinforcing the network] and what this is going to do to DNO charges? Where do we go with the peak charge, and is that going to be an issue in the future?'*
- A connections representative asked WPD *'how do you decide when the investment is going to take place, is it lagging behind enquiries or ahead?'*
- A connections representative commented that *'trying to get a connection onto the network, if there is no capacity, is a constant issue. People are sitting on capacity with no intention to build out. WPD needs to be able to get customers to relinquish capacity.'*

Table 5:

- A developer representative commented that *'process is key. There should also be better interactivity with the customer between time of approval and connection date.'*
- A developer representative argued that *'there could possibly be a flexible commitment to a connection date.'*

- A developer representative felt that *'there should be a dedicated technical contact, as part of the design process.'*
- A connections company representative made the point that *'what we do when there's a bit more of a difficult connection is provide a technical contact and arrange a meeting to discuss the process.'*

Table 6:

- A developer representative stated that there were *'not enough specific performance indicators, and not enough KPIs. These documents would really benefit from an issue date. And it would be useful if they were numbered.'*

Table 7:

- A developer representative queried *'will you be keeping us informed generally with what's happening on the improvements and your plan?'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative raised the point that *'when the budget costs seem to come from a ballpark, they seem to be really high and we just can't afford it with our business model. That really should be looked into.'*

Table 10:

- A developer representative felt that '*it just really needs to go quicker.'*
- An industry consultancy representative pointed out that '*we're facing cuts in April. The biggest thing is capacity and information. We need to see where capacity is now, where it'll be next: that's the information we need to know. Because at the moment we're stuck in a big net. There is a whole planning process behind this to get a budget estimate of £20,000. You spend money on all of these other costs but then you get the formal offer of £2million and you've just wasted all this extra money and valuable time.'*

> **❝ The biggest thing is capacity and information. We need to see where capacity is now, where it'll be next. ❞**

- A developer representative felt that '*my objective is to save as much money and time as possible. If I can speak to someone who will tell me this is 7km away then I'll know what I need to know. I need connections that are less than a certain amount. Tell me honestly, this is the cost; these are the other variables and the chances of its connection availability etc.'*
- An industry consultancy representative stated that "*it would help WPD because then you wouldn't have a load of applications to deal with. If there's somewhere we can access this information it would be ideal.'*

- A developer representative pointed out that *'it just needs to say 15 offers, total 25-30 megawatts, only 5 megawatts available. You can see then quite quickly there's not enough capacity and that there are 20 people in front of me. There's no point applying.'*
- A developer representative made the point that '*your design engineers should have that list when an application for a budget estimate comes in. So, instead of a process which takes 20 days, somebody should be able to look at it and it should be a quick email which says I can tell you now there are 16 offers you will not be able to do this and your site is 5k from the nearest primary. It's just a 5 minute phone call.'*

6 Workshop 1b: Information and Application

This discussion was the first of the detailed reviews of each of the phases of the Connections Improvement Plan. Stakeholders were provided with a table that outlined the work plan for the information and application phase. This table is available online [here](#).

6.1 Do you think that WPD has fairly captured the issues and do their proposed initiatives adequately address them?

Table 1:

- A connections company representative commented that '*email alerts for changes is a really good idea. It would be really helpful.*'
- A developer representative agreed and stated '*online acceptances and payments are really helpful. Sending an electronic version is better. Hard copy makes it really difficult.*'
- A connections company representative stated '*it would be better if there was a method of finding out that you can get email alerts as it's not evident.*'
- A developer representative stated '*we have very little knowledge of when other people's applications are to occur. People are securing capacity for future sections. How much is generating in excess, and when it is going to be completed, and whether we can contribute to that.*'

Table 2:

- There was consensus that WPD had fairly captured the issues with regards to information and application.
- A connections company representative stated '*you should make more records available. I like to have records available on CDs on a monthly basis. Are previous records available? The usability of what is available in terms of network records is not brilliant.*'
- A developer representative added '*Scottish Power are the best at this with their online data and records.*'
- A developer representative said '*I want to be able to put in an application of what my maximum is in terms of capacity and then be presented with viable options. What are the break points? There is no visibility on this. Constraints are moving beyond traditional ways of applying around capacity. Not transparent enough currently.*'

> ❝ Email alerts for changes is a really good idea, it would be really helpful. ❞

- A developer representative made the point that *'I can't see where other accepted offers are so I can't find other opportunities. I want more transparency about where break points are when applying.'*
- A connections company representative made the point that *'with the pricing mechanism there needs to be something sorted out between DNOs and the regulator. The regulator almost needs to provide advice around DG connections. This could be better.'*
- A developer representative said *'I need information quickly to be able to take advantage of it.'*
- A connections company representative agreed, adding *'I need the knowledge quickly so I can then do something with it. Solar, there is a big rush of people trying to get things through before April, it's like the last days of Jesus Christ.'* S/he wanted *'free consultancy'* on this.
- A connections company representative said s/he wanted independent technical advice.
- An industry consultancy representative felt that they '*need more contact with engineers during the consultation process.'*
- A university representative disagreed saying *'we've had good contact with the engineers and they have provided info on the capacity available.'*
- A connections company representative *said 'it depends on the individuals.'*
- 7A developer representative highlighted that *'I want an option to be able to say what the maximum is and what the step changes are around the points we've applied for. Tell me whether I can have 2.4 even if I've asked for 2.5. We need to know where these magic break points are and want options presented.'*
- A connections company representative commented *'when I put in application, I want the opportunity to discuss with the engineers if there are more viable opportunities. Engineers should have the opportunity to give advice.'*
- A developer representative said that *'I am a customer and I just want a connection – I don't actually care what my voltage is so it doesn't have to be exactly what I applied for.'*
- A developer representative said *'I have been told to go away and we'll send it to you – I want it quicker.'*
- A connections company representative had a questions regarding engineering teams - *'could we combine the teams, combine the engineers all in one team not 11kV and 33kV. It worked better when they were in the same office.'* S/he added *'I*

don't want a quote after 90 days that isn't viable. I want options now then given the 90 days.'

- Another connections company representative pointed out *'Northern Power Grid don't let us look at their records.'*
- A connections company representative said *'hot desks to look at records would be great. See what engineers are doing and have access to the same information as them.'*
- A developer representative asked *'do you have the viability to quote us options? We want it to be clearly established what the options are early on.'*
- A developer representative said *'Scottish Power is good because they give you options early, then your 90 days starts.'*
- A developer representative stated that *'WPD should not use the license as a framework to deviate. License is a backstop.'*

Table 3:

- A developer company representative said that *'you've left out design again, we've gone straight from acceptance to building. The chunk of contestable work seems to be left. This is where there is hassle. Between quotation and acceptance. There's also no mention of independent connection advisors.'*
- A developer company representative said that *'quotations acceptance is missing. Design approval is missing. Construction approval is missing.'*
- A connections company representative said that *'yes, clearly defined timescales need to be better communicated. We should all have a target in mind. A 20% reduction in time is great but what's the actual reduction.'*
- A developer company representative said that *'nominating an Account Manager in one month just doesn't happen. A lot of emails go unanswered and I'd like a general shift to proactivity. Sometimes you lose months.'*
- A developer representative said that *'there needs to be a lot more interaction at these early stages which has a certain standard. More responsiveness and engagement is needed.'*
- A developer company representative said that *'I think a benchmark should be 12 months. I'd like to see clear targets which brings down the months.'*
- A developer company representative said that *'I think it's good you're extending dual offers. That's really positive. I think it's good you have a broad outline of costs'*
- A developer company representative said that *'I'm unclear on what the letter of authority from landowners actually means. We had a response from WPD that said we must have a letter from the landowner within 3 months after getting approval. There needs to clarity in this area to avoid mistakes.'*
- A developer company representative said that *'clarity on how to get to design approval more quickly would be helpful'*

- A developer company representative said that *'there must be an initiative on time to respond. This is a very important area and where delays can occur. Time to connect needs to be looked at but also design approval.'*
- A developer company representative said that *'clearly some DNOs stick to target dates, while others get it out as soon as possible. Why does it still take 90 days?'*
- A developer company representative said *'issue offers as soon as you can, rather than sticking to 90 days.'*
- A developer company representative said that *'it looks like there's been some work done on legal. There needs to be some improvements in the area. Clarity around overlaying the cables. Running cables along existing routes shouldn't be as hard as putting in new cables. WPD need to be more cooperative in this area.'*
- A membership organisation representative said that *'it does cause problems - landowners limit their exposure as much as possible. The time and irritation factors are key.'*

Table 4:

- A developer representative asked whether it might be *'possible to show how much capacity there is left on the network and, if so, where would it be published?'*
- A developer representative also questioned *'whether you would make the model available?'*
- A membership organisation representative commented that *'the fact there even are listed actions and a proposal for getting them done has to be positive. So I think the answer is yes- get on with it.'*
- A developer representative followed that s/he agreed, but added that *'this plan should be published along with how WPD is progressing and the extent to which they have achieved targets.'*

Table 5:

- A developer representative made the point that *'it would be useful to have an initial informal conversation before putting in an application, to get advice.'*
- A developer representative stated that the *'usefulness of pre-application advice can vary between offices.'*
- An industry consultancy representative said that *'there needs to be details about what people can actually register for on the website.'*
- A developer representative commented that *'offers from WPD should always be signed and on headed paper. Otherwise, it's not binding and can lead to further legal complications.'*

> **❝ I don't want a quote after 90 days that isn't viable. I want options now then given the 90 days. ❞**

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- A developer representative complained that s/he found it *'difficult to trawl through technical information on the website and find bits that you want.'*

Table 6:

- A connections company representative said that *'the main thing is the availability of network information.'*
- A connections company representative added that *'there is good availability of information, with updates.'*
- A developer representative welcomed the information, saying *'the actions are still quite wooly. For example KPIs are required that we can report back on, but this is a huge improvement.'*
- A utilities company representative was pleased with *'the network information available online, especially the capacity indicator which helps with keeping track of the capacity of small, local facilities.'*
- There was general agreement that the initiatives addressed the issues.
- A developer representative asked: *'how frequently is the information being refreshed?'* and commented that *'6-monthly is not frequent enough to keep track of solar power.'*

Table 7:

- A connections company representative stated *'the only way to address that objectively is to know how WPD will measure success. Some things are external factors, but is it possible for internal factors to be shown, such as performance metrics?'*
- A utilities company representative highlighted that *'one thing you have done which is good is WPD is now paying above what's regarded as the industry standard rates which should have some positive effect. It is constrained but at least WPD are doing something rather than saying its 'local rates' and washing their hands of the problem.'*
- A developer representative asked *'what are you doing to demonstrate capacity and where it's limited – do you have maps of areas that are electrically constrained? That would be very useful; to save a lot of hassle and work and to save people pointlessly applying for areas they can't get capacity for. Perhaps*

quantify it in bands? I'm not sure of the best way to do it, but something that indicates an overview of different capacity bands would be useful.'

Table 8:

- There was general agreement that the information and application section covers everything it needs to.
- A developer representative said '*yes, engineering-based issues and space for innovation. You have covered all the other bits and pieces, information, visibility, processes.*
- A utilities company representative asked '*the long-term development statement - why is it password protected? Why bother, why not put it online instead of charging £50?'*
- A utilities company representative highlighted that s/he '*used to work for UK Power Networks (UKPN), and they couldn't release some information due to security. I don't see why it needs to be restricted in any way. Once it comes out, we need to understand the implications.'*
- A utilities company representative probed '*why does it need to be, other than the obvious reason of security? Why do I need to give £50? Just seems a bit odd.'*
- A developer representative commented that '*the system is very useful. We've used it to connect DG successfully, where in other cases we wouldn't be able to do that.'*
- A technology/innovation company representative said that '*in your presentation it suggests information on competition will be provided. To be honest, I don't know what information is provided. It isn't uncommon for customers to contact us at the last minute to ask about the metering system. If metering is factored in at early stages that can make the overall project more comfortable and help project and business pace.'*
- A utilities company representative said that '*I have an offer for a network connection. I have to refer to SSE. Have you looked at the level of transparency? With SSE the costs have been bundled up and when I ask for a breakdown, they say that will expose confidential procurement. I haven't looked at it in detail.'*
- A utilities company representative highlighted how '*normally at WPD, water comes straight from design and will refer anything abnormal, very few are referred from WPD which is good.'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative said '*that is the impression we get – when there are so many quotes coming in, it doesn't seem like there is much time spent on each one. Whereas for us, it is that one number which is very important to us which we need to know to go ahead with the developing.'*

- A developer representative added *'I know you guys are under pressure. I understand that.'*
- A developer representative stated *'I am just giving examples. It is not you guys. I am sure you will never be as incompetent as this but in the past we have had examples where we asked for a grid cost quote and at first they said maybe it will be half a million, and then later they said maybe it's one and a half million. And this is a key number for us.'*
- A developer representative highlighted that *'when it comes to financing these things, investors will then say that there is no guarantee. It is getting very difficult to finance, especially with the political situation. You are getting there, I know you are getting there. There is just the time element. Investors want to know sooner than later.'*
- A developer representative said *'Yes, the initiatives look good to me.'*

> **"There is a lack of clear dates. Timetables have moved around a lot. This can mean delays of up to a year."**

Table 10:

- A connections company representative complained that *'in terms of information, the network infrastructure plans are pretty dismal at present. There will be a mapping system but that doesn't take low voltage (LV) into consideration.'*
- A developer representative felt that *'I don't know how up to date information is. I need to see a map overlay on a proper map of the UK.'*
- An industry consultancy representative highlighted *'what we need to know is where we can download it and its date.'*
- A developer representative felt it was *'interesting that the programme of surgeries you're planning is three dates throughout the year. UKPN do it monthly. I will hopefully be having projects monthly so to only be able to speak 3 times is more of a constraint.'*
- An industry consultancy representative stated *'maybe not monthly for us but it would be useful for us to have surgeries across areas on a more regular or more specific areas.'*
- A developer representative felt *'I would have thought this should be more customer driven rather than WPD imposing that. I thought it'd be more 'how many do you want.' How well advertised is it that you want to know our views? I get emails the next DG surgery is on so and so date. I'm based in London so I can't get to various offices so an engineer speaks to me on the phone for 15 minutes and we cover the areas that are necessary.'*

6.2   Are there any initiatives you would like to see which have not been included?

Table 2:

- A connections company representative pointed out *'UKPN do open workshops every 6 months for anyone. They listen to whatever people have to say, I think this is a very good way to do this. Don't have a closed workshop. I would like to see an open workshop where anyone can come and say whatever they want.'*
- In agreement, a developer representative added *'I like the open sessions where a microphone is passed round the group. More open sessions where you can ask about anything.'*

Table 3:

- A membership organisation representative said that *'our feedback has been that there is a lack of clear dates. Timetables have moved around a lot. This can mean delays of up to a year.'*

Table 4:

- A development representative said that '*WPD needs to improve on the availability of network information. Future projects rely on capacity and this information.*'

" WPD needs to improve on the availability of network information. "

- A connections representative agreed, *'the designers are helpful, but it is an ever-changing game and the information is needed publically and up-to-date.'*
- A development representative said '*we need to know where we should be concentrating our applications. We need to look for ways to overcome this problem. We don't want to waste time developing a scheme that won't get accepted.*'

Table 5:

- An industry consultancy representative raised the point that the *'acceptance of e-signatures makes me feel uncomfortable, because signatures can be easily forged. There needs to be some security around this.'*

Table 6:

- A developer representative said s/he *'would like there to be an indication of the capacity and strength of the network. In addition to capacity information, we need more fault level information.'*
- A developer representative said that *'voltage harmonics indicators are needed in a timely manner because it can become a key barrier, and make a major addition to capital cost if we have to put in mitigation. This is going to become more and more of an issue. We are connecting more and more devices that have full power*

conversion.'

- A developer representative asked *'whether contracted capacity information was included.'*

Table 7:

- A utilities company representative raised the point that *'there is another element to this idea of mapping; capacity availability and time - when would it be available? Across the area there are places where there is capacity now but may not be in the future or there is no capacity now but will be soon. A map you can go on that shows there is 0 available now, but next year 50 or by 2018; 100 megawatts is available would be better.'*
- A utilities company representative pointed out *'but it would be very difficult for you to do that, providing information with all flexible plans may result in an inaccurate survey. A current day plan would be good, but one showing future developments would be very difficult to achieve.'*

Table 8:

- A connections company representative argued that the *'problem is the quote is free but you have to pay for the feasibility.'*
- A developer representative said that *'you could offer discussion with LV networks, a phone discussion which would cover everything.'*
- A utilities company representative commented how *'often we can tailor what we do to what is available. You tell us what you want and we tell you the costs. We need to know the ultimate level then we can tailor accordingly. '*

Table 9:

- A connections company representative said *'we have situations when you put in a quote for a point of connection and they come back and say that this is the reinforcement required. However, if they could include this in the initial quotation, that would helpful.'*

Table 10:

- An industry consultancy representative stated *'the process doesn't appear to be highlighted. Specifically at the quotations stage.'*
- A developer representative said *'some people may have had an offer for a year but they're just sitting on it. Is there a process to go to them*

and ask them if capacity can be given back? How much policing is going on? There needs to be more information on the table to know whether to go with it or not.'

- An industry consultancy representative made the point that '*it should be more of a two-way process. The developers need more time for the quotation whereas on a lot of my jobs I'll know within 16 weeks. So there needs to be a lot of more contact back and forth. Maybe that will free up capacity on the bottom end of the pond.'*

- A developer representative commented that '*if I have a site that I'm looking at in August, I can't even start that until April. It can take me 12 months or more.'*

- An industry consultancy representative complained that '*the problem is that we're busy so our feedback might not be as quick back up the chain. So if there's some kind of check that would be helpful. You can't do this within 90 days because that might be ok for me but not for the developer.'*

- A developer representative highlighted that "*what I want to know is if there is a process and I need to understand what that process is exactly.'*

6.3 Are there any other points you would like to make with regard to the information and applications process?

Table 6:

- A connections company representative was pleased with '*the fact that there will be workshops for the community energy schemes.'*

- A utilities company representative wondered '*whether there can be anything that can help with the pre-accreditation process with Ofgem.'*

- A developer representative said that *s/he tried to get guidance from Ofgem, but s/he agreed that the process could have been smoother.'*

- A developer representative said that '*there needs to be more collaboration with DNOs, which would be nationally, as a system operation.'*

- A connections company representative welcomed '*the expansion of surgeries to include ICPs.'*

7   Workshop 2a : Quotations and Agreements

This discussion was the second of the detailed reviews of the Connections Improvement Plan. The stakeholders were provided with a table that outlined the work plan for the quotations and agreements phase. This table is available online here.

7.1   Do you think that WPD has fairly captured the issues and do the proposed initiatives address them?

Table 1:

- An industry consultancy representative felt that '*the presentation covered most of the issues. The interesting point is around the contracted capacity register – there are good bits about that and bad bits about it. Good bits, you can understand where it's connected, but if you're not careful it could create a black market or a market place for these types of things.*'
- An industry consultancy representative raised the point that '*innovative connections offers will be interesting. We are investigating flexible pay, understanding how that works and how that will impact our funding.*'
- An industry consultancy representative felt that '*the positives outweigh the negatives, and you can get a better feel for it rather than looking at emails.*'

> **❝It's a definite plus to have someone with local knowledge and a local team.❞**

- A connections company representative highlighted that s/he had '*no issues with the application process. It works as far as I'm concerned. It's not necessary to have a forum for complaints or improvements.*'
- A connections company representative stated '*it's a definite plus to have someone with local knowledge and a local team. UKPN are bureaucratic and mechanised.*'
- A developer representative argued '*we've taken a completely different approach. We've had so much negative feedback from the heat maps since they're quite out of date. We're literally going for random spot checks and throwing them in. And surprisingly we're getting good feedback where we check and they're not overloaded like the map*'
- A connections company representative stated '*I agree, we have had the same experience. It's better to get someone out to check*'
- A developer representative said '*at the moment it's not keeping up with the real time applications that are going on.*'
- A connections company representative said that s/he '*finds the area maps very useful.*'

- A connections company representative pointed out that '*the individuals get bombarded with applications with repeated schemes, which probably has an impact with the response you get.*'
- A developer representative said that s/he '*agreed, when you look at the heat maps, you look at the area that isn't constrained and everyone will be throwing applications for that area. In reality, we are putting in applications for areas that look like they're constrained, but they aren't so they don't have any budget applications.*'
- A developer representative stated '*for the acceptances and payments, there sometimes seems to be a lapse in time between when the invoice is sent to the ICP and when the ICP sends it to us. Sometimes the budget is quite large and we have to get it all through. When they've sent us the invoice, we don't know what the real date of the invoice is or what the timeline of the invoice is. If we missed an opportunity or missed the window, who takes the blame for it? It's a bit of a dilemma. There should be a bit more slack on sharing information or talking about the offer itself with the developer instead of going through the ICP the whole time.*'
- A connections company representative said '*you [the developer] don't exist on the ICP list. You're not recognised at all.*'

Table 2:

- A connections company representative stated '*I think that the main issues have been covered.*'
- A developer representative complained that '*I have had issues with quotations that have been retracted later due to interactivity issues.*'
- Another developer representative said WPD are '*slow to advise us around interactivity issues.*'
- Continuing the discussion, a developer representative added '*I've had innovative connections issues, a bit of finessing of the constraints reports is needed as I don't understand it. I would need a meeting to understand. I want to be able to understand more. I feel it's a bit light at the moment.*'
- A developer representative pointed out '*when we get alternative options, they are vague around how much various options will cost but I want this as soon as possible so we can make a decision. I want to be able to flag if there are likely to be any disruptions as early as possible – things like maintenance in the summer – what are the likely frequency of disruptions. What are the likely constraints if you don't take up a conventional offer?*'
- An industry consultancy representative commented that it would '*be good to know what sites are becoming available and what the viable options are. I would like good details on this. It's good that it's on the website*.'

- A developer representative said *'there is an issue about the relationship between conventional and smart offers and whether you can go back to the conventional offer if others drop out.'*
- A developer representative mentioned *'it's about what capacity is on the market as others drop out. I want more information around this and to have options. How do you keep your hat in the ring to apply for this capacity as others pull out?'*
- An industry consultancy representative highlighted *'some DNOs will give you preference if you already have planning on the site.'*
- A developer representative took the view that *'I would like people to be kicked out of the queue if their applications are too speculative, though I appreciate this can't happen. I think they should have to provide evidence and then WPD have the teeth to handle it.'*
- A connections company representative believed that *'justification for applications should be provided. No one else does this. It would help with getting the best companies in the queue.'*
- A connections company representative added *'ICPs [should be] out of it if they can't pay. There should be a simple trial.'*
- A developer representative stated *'I want to know how much you have in your budget of how much this will cost to actually connect to the network, engineers won't tell me. I want more reasons for accepted offers.'*
- A developer representative wanted to know *'if we have to start again i.e. you are in negotiations with a farmer but he pulls out but his neighbour is interested, when is a site a site? It would be good to be able to switch the offer. '*

Table 3:

- A developer representative said that *'it's good the improved consistency of process is included as well as agreement of timetables.'*
- A developer representative said that *'I'm regularly asked to give my construction timetable over to WPD but I don't get any information in return. Then I get problems later down the line. There's no commitment from WPD to show the same level of commitment. An agreed timetable of actions between both parties is needed.'*
- A membership organisation representative asked that *'is there anything that can be done on payments. We need different ways of financing over a long-term. The issue of delaying payments pending on different stages of construction has come up.'*
- A developer representative said that *'I don't think anything gets done unless I've chased. I prefer the minimum payment option. My experience with WPD is they don't want to take on more work and that slows the process down*.'

Table 4:

- A membership organisation representative suggested that WPD *'actually tries to create a points system rather than a tick box. That way, the progress to achieving the action can be recorded. At the moment some of the actions in your plan have already missed the deadline.'*
- A developer representative mentioned that s/he *'gets quotations from WPD often, and is happy with the information that they currently provide. It is great if this is going to improve further.'* However, with sites needing to be connected before March 2015, they said- *'improving the design pack approval stage, as well as post-acceptance communication, will help us to develop projects faster.'*
- A connections representative commented that *'time wise, the service is a million times better, they respond with quotations two to three days later rather than weeks. By and large they get things done on time and I have no complaints.'*
- A developer representative expressed that there was *'enough information available to accept a quote and the designers are very helpful. I wouldn't want [WPD] to add more information if it takes a few days longer for the designers to get a quote out of the door. It is all a balance.'*

> **❝ WPD needs to continue to give planning updates, which they have done very well recently.❞**

- A connections representative agreed with this point.
- A developer representative was of the view that s/he was *'happy with the information I get at the moment.'* S/he continued that *'it is the planning phase that takes time.'*
- A connections representative added that *'the times that get quoted we know are general. Perhaps this is something [WPD] could improve upon, but there are so many variables - until it becomes a job it is the least of my concerns.'*
- A developer representative commented that *'WPD needs to continue to give planning updates, which they have done very well recently. Also WPD need to continue to exert pressure on people who don't progress with planning. I think WPD can be tougher with pulling the connection and break the agreement on people who are not progressing planning.'*
- A connections representative agreed saying *'DNOs should be tougher.'*
- A connections representative referred to the innovative connections proposals, saying *'it is a really good thing, unfortunately active network management (ANM) connections are only available in certain parts of the network area.'*

Table 5:

- A developer representative pointed out that *'it's WPD doing all the work - how WPD deals with the end user. It jumps from acceptance to construction. There's*

no reference to ICPs and their role as an alternative to WPD in the construction phase.'

- An industry consultancy representative commented that *'it's on the money, in terms of advancing WPD's role.'*

- A connections company representative felt that *'it needs to recognise standards for pushing design through. Improving overall timescales should be included, and the interface with ICPs.'*

- A membership organisation representative asserted that *'this is the right place to be talking about it, but there are sometimes questions about how much you might change a scheme or split schemes with the same connection before capacity is lost. At what point have you made so many changes to a scheme that it can no longer be considered the same scheme. There needs to be a better understanding of what WPD can and can't do. It's a critical issue for the generation sector and there are various specific issues with DECC's plans to change legislation to accommodate the splitting of schemes.'*

Table 6:

- A developer representative said that *'you've picked up some of the general feedback.'*

- A developer representative added that the information was *'quite comprehensive, but I would replace "innovative" with "non-standard". These options aren't so innovative - you're trying to curtail power output. You're trying to mitigate the older drives.'*

- A developer representative said that *'there's nothing on dynamic thermal ratings in the information pack.'*

- A developer representative said that *'ANM is limited to two specific locations, but I'm surprised to see it is not just being rolled out as standard more quickly, but I understand that these things take time.'*

- A developer representative asked *'is there any feedback or checking procedure that you have after a developer goes onsite and installs a generator?'*

- A developer representative added that *'WPD has changed the offer to restrict reserving capacity in excess of installation. I note that this is ongoing but it is of great interest.'*

Table 7:

- A connections company representative stated *'yes all the issues have been identified.'*
- A utilities company representative felt that *'a single point of contact is great but what we don't want, which is what some other companies do, is to have an Account Manager – which just ends up as an extra layer of bureaucracy that bogs down the system.'*
- A connections company representative commented that *'design improvements are something I would like to see. Not just greater consistency in geographical areas, but between actual engineers too, because say you have two sites that are 6 miles apart with similar sites and designs, but then each engineer comes back to us with totally different comments on the design. One will be perfectly happy with what the other engineer is not happy with. There seems to be some inconsistency in the ways in which these are applied. It would be very valuable for us to see a greater uniformity of approach.'*

> **" I think the key thing for me is communication and process. "**

- A utilities company representative complained that *'sometimes you apply for exactly the same design as before and it gets rejected, which you end up wasting a lot of time trying to fix.'*
- A connections company representative highlighted *'WPD is very good in general. But if there are delays it can push back the project by weeks. Certainly with our primary client we operate with a lot of risk, and want to get ahead and be done before our client is, so for us time is very important.'*
- A connections company representative asked *'self-assessing ICPs, what sort of level are we talking to there? When it says: "trial and implement processes to allow self-assessment of POC for ICPs".'*
- A connections company representative said s/he thought *'yes the initiatives do stretch WPD far enough.'*
- A utilities company representative remarked that silence in the workshop should be *'taken as a positive! There are a lot of initiatives there!'*

Table 8:

- A connections company representative said that *'without repeating the earlier feedback, I think the key thing for me is communication and process. What does each DNO require? I think people applying for the first time might get a bit confused. What about first time customers who don't know what they are doing. Again, back to communication at time of application. Some DNOs do the thing*

where if you don't click every box, it returns you back saying there is no application.'

- A utilities company representative highlighted *'I do know the culture of SSE has changed. In the past they were stopping the clock and defeating the regulatory times. I don't think you've ever done that. The planners have always been helpful.'*
- A connections company representative asked *'can I ask what the trigger is at the wayleaves stage? It was mentioned earlier about this CROWN system, where you get a trigger. Is that implemented for wayleaves too?'*
- A utilities company representative said *'I agree with that. It is dependent on the landowner. It is an easy trap, a land owner or third party not an employee of WPD or Network Rail to provide a wayleave.'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative said *'Yes. I think WPD's approach seems right.'*
- A connections company representative agreed.
- A developer representative felt that *'there is plenty of information on there. I agree with them, definitely.'*

Table 10:

- An industry consultancy representative stated *'I would say the initiatives seem appropriate - so yes.'*
- A developer representative raised the point that *'the only thing that isn't raised is that they talk about speed of quotation, but we also need the accuracy of them.'*
- An industry consultancy representative agreed.
- A connections company representative commented that *'there's nothing mentioned about the legal issues with easements associated with connections. I need to identify the possible delays at an early stage.'*
- A developer representative said *'there is a consistency issue. It all depends on which office you're dealing with.'*
- A connections company representative stated that *'some of the proposals we've had don't contain that information because it does affect time spend.'*
- An industry consultancy representative highlighted that s/he *'needs to be able to see whether there's an alternative or information on where there is more space because at this point 50k has already been spent.'*
- A developer representative felt *'our specific business issue is letters of authority.'*
- An industry consultancy representative complained that *'the timescale needs to be minimised from consultation to implementation.'*
- A developer representative commented that *'in terms of delivering on the ICE plan the target date strikes me as to how realistic the timescale is.'*
- An industry consultancy representative pointed out *'there's one here, which says the target day was October 14th and the policy was published on time but I haven't seen that policy regarding letters of authority. There's been one accepted*

by email, another I've had to send out snail mail. So there's no uniformity and the policy isn't clear.'

- A connections company representative felt that '*it would be best if WPD were to provide a template for the letter of authority.'*
- A developer representative pointed out that '*UKPN have a template.'*
- An industry consultancy representative added that '*I have different offices which require different ways of delivery. The timescale must be considered - by the time I've posted, scanned etc. someone else could have come in and taken the capacity.'*
- A developer representative felt that '*they should tell you in the beginning of the offer what the circumstances are, it should be clearly stated.'*
- A developer representative complained that '*a lot of this is consultation stuff. Yet the measure is saying there is guidance in place and it's been published on time but it's still in consultation so it hasn't been published. The plan is generally addressing the right issues. But there need to be timescales for consultation, implementing, communication and actual adoption.'*

7.2 Are there any initiatives you would like to see which have not been included?

Table 1:

- An industry consultancy representative commented '*if you can have this initial conversation of buying that land first then that stops all the problems.'*

Table 5:

- A connections company representative stated that '*interactivity is important - how WPD liaises with those competing for the same capacity. There needs to be a balance between data protection and providing people with information. I want to know where I am in the queue so I can make further decisions.'*

66 *There is a consistency issue. It all depends on which office you're dealing with.* **99**

Table 6:

- A developer representative asked '*can you switch all works to non-deflectable after they've been applied?'*
- A developer representative said '*we would often sign a non-contestable, then pick the DNO to do the non-contestable bit. There's a dual offer as standard.'*

Table 7:

- An industry consultancy representative stated that '*WPD has done an excellent job all over the country!'*

- A utilities company representative expressed his/her opinion that *'everything I got was rather vague; EDF did it totally wrong and treated the customer as an enemy. The culture in WPD has been more customer-focused for as long as the late 1980s. However, the culture still needs to be continued to be rolled out. The ongoing rollout of the culture that is customer-based has to continue and these targets of minimums - not maximums - is a must. Such as assuming a time limit of up to 20 days is an entitlement of 20 days; that is totally wrong. WPD is ahead of the game but it should not rest and should stay ahead and keep improving standards with no letting up.'*

Table 8:

- A technology/innovation company representative queried *'do I gather there may be hot spots where you are oversubscribed?'*
- A connections company representative added that *'managing the queue, from my experience, is difficult.'*
- A technology/innovation company representative enquired *'how is it prioritised, is it first come first served?'*
- A utilities company representative asked *'how does it happen with many people putting out a tender?'*
- A connections company representative commented that *'they tend to use the same connection and it's up to the developer to choose which one they want. Best way to do it would be to use a quote from the DNO with a true benchmark. That would be true competition in my view. That would be the easiest way. It would be a change in mindset for the developer, not the DNO.'*
- A utilities company representative raised that *'one big issue is a lack of single point of contact. Lack of ownership, continuity and "can-do". I am being cautious about how you organise, really.'*
- A utilities company representative responded that *'we have milestones with infrastructure planning. We are under pressure to deliver what we say we will in terms of sewage treatment works, or whatever.'*
- A representative from a connections company pointed out that *'it gets stuck in wayleaves, sometimes stuck with a third party such as a land agency.'*
- A connections company representative said that *'one of our clients is Network Rail, with similar constraints. But we can move the exit point further down the track - there are a lot of opportunities'*
- A utilities company representative said *'we have this with water connections, sometimes the waver issue can be around the customer. The issue can be that the*

customer doesn't always understand. Same with water treatment works, people don't want waste in their back garden. It's how you handle it really. Another thing to bear in mind, is with SSE why can we not have an over ground line, why does it have to be underground? You need to provide us with lowest cost.'

- A developer representative asked '*I was wondering why SSE were telling us over ground is cheapest? It doesn't make sense.'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative pointed out that *'there could be a way of streamlining the way legal information is processed when it is requested by the client, maybe through improving your internal interface.'*
- A connections company representative raised the point that *'updates can take time as well. Sometimes you will have an update from your solicitor and we will have something contradictory from the client's solicitor's side and sometimes that is because of the time it takes for the information to come through.'*

Table 10:

- A developer representative complained *'there's no clear timeline for the process to be completed and the actions implemented.'*

7.3   Are there any other points you would like to make with regard to the quotations and agreements process?

Table 1:

- A connections company representative highlighted '*quotes have come to be within a week in the Midlands areas. In the South West, it would be rare to see it that quickly. I liaised with a man from WPD and we had an email five days later.'*
- A connections company representative stated '*the longest we've seen is 90 days start to finish.'*
- A connections company representative added '*Most of the time, it's really good, but in the South West, where there are loads of applications, they can't do it quicker.'*
- A connections company representative raised the point that '*time is not always an issue, it's not the main issue for getting a quotation. Sometimes we can't connect until 2017, but that's not a problem.'*
- A developer representative added '*communication there is key. If they call up and tell us that there is no way in hell it'll be done in time, then get back to early negotiations. It's expectation management. The website is not interactive as well, so please just give me a call back as soon as you can.'*

> **" Alternative connections are the future, but it is difficult to roll out overnight. "**

Table 4:

- A connections representative asked, *'do you find people accept alternative connections offers?'*
- A connections representative highlighted, *'it is something other DNOs are doing slowly.'*
- A developer representative added, *'alternative connections are the future, but it is difficult to roll out overnight.'*

Table 5:

- A membership organisation representative asked *'how much detail would be provided on the level of committed generation and whether it will be site specific?'*

Table 6:

- A connections company representative said *'there's double outlet at the moment that's not connected and we're looking at potential reinforcements which are required. How many times do you review? Does planning have to be already applied for?'*
- A developer representative said that *'we're looking for clarity on interactive queue management and the whole issue of how it's managed.'*
- A developer representative said that '*WPD's connection offers tend to be better - there's good clarity and transparency.'*
- A developer representative agreed that '*there is an excellent breakdown, with clearly numbered clauses.'*
- A connections company representative disagreed because *'you don't always get the information because it goes out to different people and their interpretation differs.'*
- A developer representative raised the point that *'there's a bit in the detailed terms and conditions about specific conditions before WPD will do any work, but it's a little wooly and off-putting. We need to get second written assurances before they do any work, but it's broadly good.'*
- A connections company representative said that '*WPD are better than some. One issue with timing is that a letter of authority is now required, specific to each site. We got a letter of authority from a farmer, and it was rejected because the postcode for the site didn't match the postcode for the farmer, even though they were half a mile away. This is petty and ludicrous.'*

> **"WPD's connection offers tend to be better—there's good clarity and transparency."**

Table 8:

- A developer representative said that *'what would be useful is something explaining ownership, like a small diagram, from the point of connection to the final connection of generator. Like a single venn diagram showing different works, where WPD's role starts and finishes. Then where the customer's responsibilities come in.'*
- A representative from a developer felt that *'often customers can't understand why they need a consultant. They don't get the full idea of ICPs or contractors. It often includes things that don't need to be there. You could put a simple import-export meter there.'*
- A connections company representative agreed *'it wouldn't be difficult to produce a simple diagram.'*
- A developer representative concluded *'it could just be colour coded for customer, company etc. It could even be standard and not site specific.'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative complained that *'the need for a letter of authority is a problem. When we are buying the land from the landlord, we want to get a decent budget estimate for the land because if they know it is for a solar farm they tend to put the prices up.'*

8 Workshop 2b: Construction and Connections

The discussion was focussed on the construction and connection phase of the Connections Improvement Plan. The stakeholders were provided with a table that outlined the work plan for the construction and connections phase. This table is available online here.

8.1 Do you think that WPD has fairly captured the issues and do the initiatives address them?

Table 1:

- Stakeholders all stated that they had no experience in the construction process.
- A connections company representative stated s/he had '*no problems, it's all great.*'
- A university representative asked '*do you have a tracking system sorted out? Is that on the website?*'
- An industry consultancy representative asked '*are you receptive to providing progress reports and progress meetings?*'

Table 2:

- A connections company representative complained that it is a '*problem that WPD contacts the client of the developer sometimes, not them directly. I have issues when I have to put the developer's name down on the G59 form as they are not the end user.*' S/he added '*there needs to be a process of who we should contact around applications with the developers.*'
- A developer representative said '*there was an issue around what happens when capacity comes back on the market and how the queuing system works.*'

Table 3:

- A developer representative made the point that '*we do feel that, on the connections side, there needs to be speed. I feel like on the connections side when it goes wrong, I don't know who to go to. People are very guarded about giving their contact details.*'
- A developer representative complained that '*I suppose holding workshops is easy. But what really matters is how long you are taking to connect. UKPN are very good at showing how they're handling connections and how many staff they have working on it. Get more staff on board and show that. These are things that will actually help us on the ground. I suspect people are happy with WPD's connecting speed, but improvements must be made.*'
- A developer representative highlighted that '*the landowners need to be better informed.*'

- A developer representative argued that *'by making community energy projects exclusive you restrict communication to the wider community.'*
- A connections company representative commented that *'we've been involved with [an] ICP for a few months. One of the issues that is painful is drawing out all the information needed. We need more clarity. WPD engineers need to interact better. What happens when we've been awarded the job and where do we go from there.'*
- A membership organisation representative considered that *'how do you differentiate between people who are operating throughout the region and one-off projects? It would be useful if we had clarity here to assist with design.'*

- A developer representative made the point that *'this is a room for improved customer service. Stuff seems to be getting lost at the design phase. Time to connect shouldn't be limited by the application process. You don't mention the 90 days turnaround time, although others do. Response to query, turning around and design approval - it all needs to be much clearer.'*
- A connections company representative argued that *'there seems to be no continuity nationally, no common standards. Different engineers tell you different things for little changes and sometimes major changes. We should be able to take one application across the country. Common standards are important to save costs.'*
- A developer company representative felt that that *'WPD people have different views on cabling and other applications. Every one of them needs to be personally tailored.'*
- A connections company representative complained that *'each engineer has his own way to do a job. Which is confusing and expensive.'*
- A connections company representative highlighted that *'they're (the initiatives) not on DG connections but on customer connections. Happy to provide some specific examples. I know you're going through some changes. No one can give me a specific example, and the feedback has been so far missing from WPD. The cert thing for us has made it easier.'*
- A developer company representative considered that *'we've recently been assigned Account Managers, which has been very useful as a point of contact.'*

- A membership organisation representative argued that *'there's a lot of focus on community overall. You should also focus on people doing one-off projects and their communications to the community.'*

Table 4:

- A developer representative commented *'self-approval- that's great, a very good idea, sounds very interesting.'*
- A developer representative continued *'in my experience, it is a nightmare doing construction. There are just too many stakeholders, making the inevitable small changes. That whole process gets very complicated and extremely hard to manage - people have different views and opinions, even in the same organisation. The site DNO representative and DNO head office can have different opinions. I really think that how this entire process is managed is key. I don't think it is a process that is right yet.'*
- A connections representative agreed.
- A developer representative felt that *'these embrace the problem - consult and develop, expand - if these are all done to a level of detail they will address the issues, however the proof is in the pudding.'*
- A developer representative added, *'this is a very good initiative. I think we should let it happen first, see what happens, what it throws up before you think about KPIs.'*
- A connections representative commented that s/he was *'pretty happy with'* actions aimed at delivery and the timescales.
- A developer representative agreed, but warned *'don't get complacent.'*
- A connections representative said *'I only speak from an ICP perspective. If we have issued a work programme with WPD and we have an agreed connection date - it is largely met, and I am sure that for their direct customers it is the same.'*

Table 5:

- An industry consultancy representative said that *'proactive engagement by WPD post-acceptance is an important issue.'*
- A membership organisation representative commented that '*ANM is a new area and one which people aren't sure about, in terms of where you are in the queue and how you get to a particular position in the queue. There needs to be visibility about how to get in the queue. There needs to be clarity in the process so that people can make own their commercial judgments about their next steps.'*
- An industry consultancy representative complained that *'there needs to be more detail and earlier communication about WPD policy.'*
- A connections company representative asked *'how are we going to achieve self-inspection by ICPs?'*
- A developer representative argued that *'it's a good thing that ICPs are something that's being looked at, but details need to be fleshed out.'*

- A developer representative asked *'how is procurement undertaken in WPD? Last year, for example, I was told that you were running out of poles. There needs to be more coordination within WPD to make sure this doesn't happen. There also needs to be more coordination with projects to make sure we have enough time to buy a piece of kit.'*

Table 6:

- A developer representative said that *'there's an initiative in your plan which says "investigate service provided post-acceptance" -which is welcome but extremely vague.'*
- A developer representative said that '*identifying long-lead time high-risk barriers to connection is important.'*

Table 7:

- An industry consultancy representative commented *'I have a point on the consistency of service. There are lots of connections, they are very strict, and they have a very good set of guidelines within WPD. But in a different department they are not that strict and have a different set of guidelines, saying this is instead what we expect of you. They may even be stricter than the industrial guidelines. Some other companies I don't even bother to contact as they are bad, but WPD are very good. It will be good if this knowledge of guidelines is spread throughout all the departments in the company, if there was some more consistency within the company departments.'*
- A connections company representative made the point that *'it sounds like people on that side of the fence are looking for no surprises. There are some companies that wait for the day before the deadline and then point out an error in the application and then reject it and say they cannot accept an amendment being written in last minute and so the client ends up with a big surprise.'*

> **❝ Proactive engagement by WPD post-acceptance is an important issue.❞**

- An industry consultancy representative felt that *'if they are going to connect to WPD they are a lot happier with the connection, and it would be especially good if there were a set of guidelines people could follow.'*
- A connections company representative commented that *'at the point of getting an offer it's not specific enough to say "right we need exactly these documents" but certainly the guidance on these documents and submission of design does change, and certainly for me I've recently come into the business and it's a bit like "what do I need to give them?" It would be very valuable to receive advice on the nature of documents required as these are things that vary between different DNOs.'*

- An industry consultancy representative pointed out that *'to be honest WPD are very good on that, but it would be slightly better if they just highlighted exactly what you need.'*
- An industry consultancy representative raised the point that *'WPD should ensure all information is disseminated between all departments. Only one person will be sitting on the working group, so is that information going to be communicated to the rest of the group and company? Is that information communicated to the rest of WPD?'*
- A connections company representative warned that s/he thought *'as a working group will you not just end up agreeing on the lowest common denominator?'*

Table 8:

- A connections company representative felt that s/he *'thinks it's consistent. I've dealt with Gloucester and East Lincolnshire, the process and policy is consistent. Management needs to make sure consistency is in place, then you will get the same service wherever you apply.'*
- A utilities company representative said that *'for gas networks, you have an obligation to provide an emergency service. But the big problem is you lose revenue, you are cutting your own throats.'*
- A utilities company representative said that *'I think that you are lifting yourself above short term commercial interest. I know that other DNOs won't be offering that service.'*
- A connections company representative commented that *'at the end of the day, they are embedded anyway. It is what it is. If you're talking about another DNO they need to wake up and smell the coffee as they are already in there anyway.'*
- A utilities company representative said that they felt *'very positive. Are you still capturing 5% of turnover?'*
- A utilities company representative said that *'it might be a challenge to Ofgem for why they really want to do that.'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative said *'consistency is raised as an issue here. I haven't seen any inconsistency myself.'*
- A connections company representative felt that '*other than experiences dealing with individuals, I have not dealt with any inconsistencies from the process point of view.'*
- S/he stated that '*there was one point when we had to make many concurrent applications because I think your planner was swamped with a lot of quotations, and he actually invited us in to sort that all out and that wouldn't have happened with other companies.*'
- A developer representative said *'nothing comes to mind with regards to problems about construction either.'*

- A developer representative stated *'nothing actually comes to mind with regards to problems about construction or other issues so yes, it seems good.'*
- A developer representative mentioned that s/he had not *'been caught up in any of WPD's interactive queues before. I'm caught up in one with another company right now though.'*

Table 10:

- An industry consultancy representative stated that *'there are no complaints from engineers.'*
- A connections company representative highlighted that *'in terms of collaborating on the industry's issues - other DNOs are charging for proposals/offers and generation connection. Northern and Scottish power grids are looking at that. Are WPD considering charging for proposals for load and generation connections?'*
- A developer representative stated that *'my big question on all of this is how WPD are going to communicate about the process? Where they are, timescale to implement, will we be consulted? As customers how engaged are we going to be in this process?'*
- A developer representative raised the point that *'the trouble is that most people are up to here trying to complete projects before changes so people haven't been putting in the time to respond to all DNOs.'*
- A developer representative made the point that *'personally I think people that attend workshops should be put on a mailing list. You should broaden the engagement and keep people informed.'*
- A connections company representative felt that *'Ofgem is excellent at that. I get an email every day. You have to register but that was through attending workshops where you can select which areas you want the updates. It's a good system.'*

> **❝ Personally I think people that attend workshops should be put on a mailing list. You should broaden the engagement and keep people informed. ❞**

- A developer representative highlighted that *'we're still very much in the front end of the process. Where we can we will give feedback. Bottom line is that we're very invested in this because this will dictate how we can run our business. The more that we know the more we can respond.'*
- An industry consultancy representative complained that *'we've talked about emails but I've not seen any. It would be good if emails were focused or if there's a mechanism where I can tick a few boxes and then the engineering department can tick a few boxes.'*

8.2   Are there any initiatives you would like to see which have not been included?

Table 2:

- A developer representative stated *'I want the simplified ENA form that some DNOs are bringing in. I also want a simplified G59. Northern Power have one.'*
- Another developer representative wanted a follow up call after acceptances. The group agreed with this saying the quality of contact after acceptance could be better. They also wanted next steps that were more specific.
- One developer representative said *'WPD is good at end plans.'*
- An industry consultancy representative mentioned *'it would be good to see design standards. You need to make people aware WPD publish that. I wasn't aware.'*
- A developer representative complained *'design is not covered. Design approval needs to be included. The sheets WPD use to give feedback on design approval are dreadful. This document goes to our key funders so it needs to be improved.'*
- A connections company representative felt that the design staff at WPD were very helpful but added *'the documents need to be absolutely clear on the plan that has been approved.'*
- An industry consultancy representative raised the point that *'I would like to see Account Managers in the team.'* Other stakeholders agreed with this and one said *'if I have a number of issues I would like to just go to one person.'*
- A university representative disagreed, saying *'we have a very good experience and have all these things. I don't actually want extra people and bureaucracy and we are now at the final stages.'*
- One developer representative said *'my main issue is volume, so with a lot of applications an Account Manager would be good. Although it is actually not that bad at WPD, as we have good individuals we talk to.'*

- A developer representative said *'I want to know how your plan's objective to reduce construction times is being measured'* and added that *'I want to know early when the outage date is booked.'*
- One developer representative said *'WPD are the most flexible when it comes to getting outages compared to the others.'*
- A connections company representative said *'I want to have details of when developers need to provide things by'* and added that *'this was difficult to get*

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hold of. I think it's reasonable to give the customer notice of their responsibilities of the i.e. five things they need to do to reach the switch on date.'

- There was general agreement that stakeholders would benefit from seeing a timetable at the connections stage.
- A developer representative asked *'what does WPD publish to say what we are doing to maximise connections?'*

Table 6:

- A connections company representative was pleased that '*for design approval, the process is sometimes really good, with some information coming through after 10 days. 20 days is pushing the timescale because small amendments mount up with each taking 20 days. Some engineers come back before 20 days and some go totally by the book. There needs to be some flexibility. There's that competitive aspect… it's easier with your own design team than with an external one. WPD have their own kit so they don't have to approve it. Even if you put in one that's identical to one that's already been done and approved [it still requires the same timeframe].'*
- A connections company representative welcomed '*the consultation trial for self-design approval in some areas. And also being able to start works before the timescale in some areas.'*
- A connections company representative added that '*you can't order switch-gear until you've got approval. It can take 18 months to get approval. You've got 4 weeks to get your design in. It would be nice to get some sort of advanced acceptance of the long-lead items you put in.'*
- A developer representative added that '*it would be good to have a standard list of items you can order without having to go through design approval.'*
- A connections company representative suggested that it would be useful to '*break the approval process into several stages so that you can have confidence to order kit, even before you have the overall design approval.'*

Table 7:

- A connections company representative called for '*a willingness to improve parts of the design process. So, for example, we submit a design but haven't done the earthing report, but some engineers will say "no we are not happy until you've done all components of the application." For my company, time is important. We can't say we will wait for the earthing design to be done, and it would be very helpful if that can be looked at and is a standard, as that is very helpful for. It's the first thing we do so it's good to get that approved, then you don't have to go back to a CAD group. If we can get that approved before the earthing report comes back, it is more constructive. There is not so much interdependence. It would be helpful if there was a standard for approving areas of the design, which can be*

considered independent from other areas, but obviously they are still all interconnected.'

Table 9:

- A developer representative mentioned that *'the offer always comes to us in the form of a physical letter and it doesn't seem like you can get it by email.'*
- A developer representative argued *'how long does it take the letter to pass to the regulators? Because there should be some flexibility with that and a bit more leeway maybe.'*
- A connections company representative said that s/he would appreciate it if *'there were avenues for developers to proactively contact planners about their quotes in an easier and faster way.'*

Table 10:

- A developer representative highlighted that *'from a logical point of view the post acceptance communication is very important. For a solar farm, depending on what type of year, it might be 12 months before you go through the planning process. So, as a DNO with capacity that's been allocated, you want to know that the process is ongoing, people are doing something about it. I can tell you I want this connected in June next year but I might not get my planning done until July.'*

> **Will the plan be regularly updated?**

- An industry consultancy representative made the point that *'we're in a situation where if we get planning in January and we need that connection, will there be flexibility to move it around?'*

8.3 Are there any other points you would like to make with regard to the construction and connections process?

Table 5:

- A membership organisation representative asserted that s/he *'congratulates WPD on the detail of their engagement.'*
- A developer representative asked *'will the plan be regularly updated?'*

Table 6:

- A connections company representative said that *'self-inspection for ICPs, if done badly, could be a problem.'*
- "A connections company representative added that '*there was talk about where an ICP becomes quite well-known, are proven and can be integrated into the network...'*
- A connections company representative said that *'[the self-inspection] is still*

being looked at and developed.'

- A developer representative said that *'where you can self-inspect, the alternatives might be better than they were in the first place.'*
- A connections company representative noted that *'this might mean that non-contestable might reduce. It would be a good idea to have spot-checks, which I understand will take place under the new system.'*

Table 7:

- A developer representative questioned *'where is the element of the performance? Connection is great, but if you have a connection and it doesn't work it's quite pointless, where is that element from covered?'*
- A developer representative argued *'the connection agreement says we can disconnect you anytime we want! Say you make a connection to a new park so that has an impact on another generator. A new grid connection is done that is accepted by WPD but to do that connection, you will take out a bunch of other customers from that network. There's an element of "you've connected me, but taken out 3 other people". There needs to be communication for other customers.'*
- A developer representative said *'the interface and connection, how do you keep track of that? A general standard of communication would be very effective. Has the program been coordinated appropriately?'*
- A utilities company representative raised the point that *'all these standards came about before we had DG, now you've got DG, maybe it needs more thought? We always think of demand customers.'*
- A developer representative felt that *'the whole distribution network has changed a lot, and I just want to highlight the post-connection element of the process.'*

Table 9:

- A developer representative said *'what I get from the bigger guys is that they are dropping their quotes now if they know it's going to drop out later. We are in the sub 5 megawatts and that could free up the capacity for us. The problem in the UK as well, is that it has to be connected to the grid instead of just feeding it.'*
- A developer representative said *'I think a lot of offshore companies are saying the UK is not a good place to spend this money. Britain just has too much of a complicated system. It is much easier in Germany.'*

Table 10:

- An industry consultancy representative felt that *'It's fair enough to reserve a spot but if you have to pay for every quote it's a bit out of the question.'*

9 How would you like to be kept involved and updated in the work that WPD do?

Table 1:

- All stakeholders agreed that the workshop was very helpful and informative.
- A developer representative stated that s/he '*love it, really great, face-to-face is great interaction.*'
- A connections company representative stated s/he agreed '*it's really helped us.*'

Table 2:

- The group agreed that they wanted a section on the website that detail the findings of the workshops.
- One stakeholder suggested that '*it would be a good idea to be pre-registered when you come to a workshop and then get updates on the findings. We don't have time to scroll through websites to find these updates ourselves.*'

> **" I find the email updates useful and relevant. "**

- A developer representative complained '*I have issues when ringing WPD and people saying they can't access the internet while on the phone.*'

Table 3:

- A developer representative asked '*is this going to be a quarterly session? It's going to be good to receive feedback on all of this. We would like further interaction. More succinct information that answers our queries.*'
- A membership organisation representative said that '*your emails are useful but we need more clarity.*'
- A membership organisation representative asked '*is there any way to get more feedback on the CCSG group?*'
- A utilities company representative said that '*we get a lot of information from all the parties, which is confusing. Better to do it face to face, but we also need a contact at WPD who's our guy and someone we can talk to.*'
- A developer company representative said that '*I find the email updates useful and relevant.*'

Table 4:

- A membership organisation representative said that '*if you have stakeholder workshops already and the CCSG, I would have thought that that was the way forward. You don't want to be bombarding people.*'
- A connections representative added that '*you should publish progress against the plan, including a percentage.*'

- A developer representative agreed and further suggested that *'a target date should be included and how close you are to meeting it.'*
- A membership organisation representative expressed that there are *'too many tasks perhaps, especially on the second plan [Quotations and Agreements]. It might be a good internal document, but there are too many to publish, it isn't digestible and needs priorities.'*
- A developer representative said *'it is all very good, get on with it.'*
- A membership organisation representative said, *'it was definitely worth coming to [the workshop].'*

Table 6:

- A developer representative suggested that *'where there is a WPD policy, it would be great for it to be hyperlinked to tell you where to go to find out more.'*
- A developer representative suggested that '*It would be good to have updates on the internet with an issue date.'*

Table 8:

- A connections company representative asked *'are ICP surgeries continuing?'*
- A connections company representative asked *'can you make sure I am informed?'*
- A connections company representative said *'I think my preferred method would be email, or an email with a link, saying we've now updated our plan. You don't need to send the whole spreadsheet.'*
- The facilitator prompted *'should WPD summarise and say please click here?'*
- A utilities company representative said that *'I would like to receive updates every 3 or 6 months. 6 months would be sensible.'*
- Everyone agreed.

10 Written feedback

Of the 57 attendees at the workshops, 42 stakeholders completed feedback forms. Stakeholders were asked seven questions and the responses were as follows:-

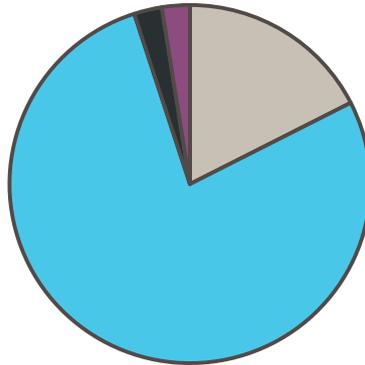**Did you find this workshop to be very interesting, interesting or not interesting**
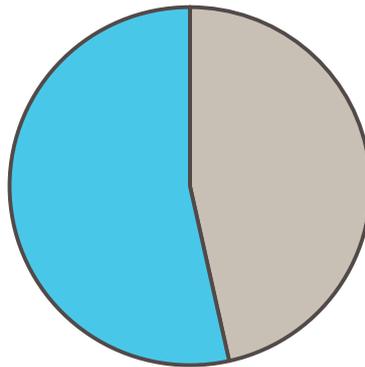
◻ Very Interesting   ◼ Interesting   ◼ Not Interesting

Did you feel that you had the opportunity to make your points and ask questions?
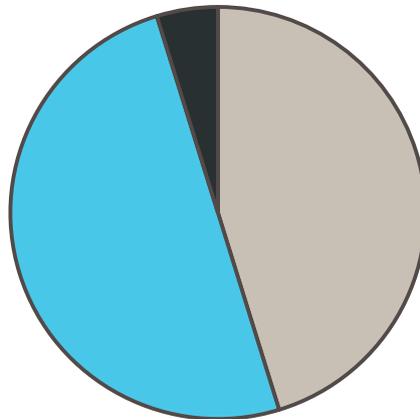
◻ Strongly Agree   ◼ Agree   ◼ Disagree   ◼ Strongly Disagree

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

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Stakeholder comments on this question included *'very good platform to get your points across'*, *'discussion slots in between were very useful'* and *'good structure of event'*. However, the two stakeholders that disagreed said *'rigid agenda – felt like a bit of a box-ticking exercise'* and *'better in open forum somewhat lost in feedback'*.

Did we cover the right topics for you on the day?
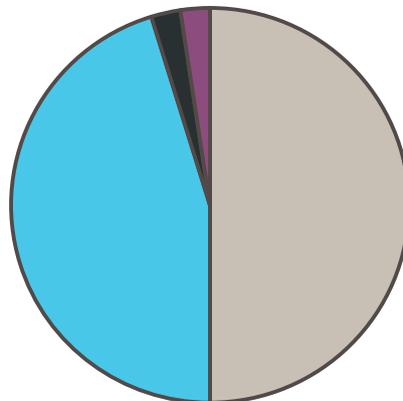
☐ Very Good ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Not So Good

Stakeholder comments on this question included *'all the right topics'* , *'learnt lots of new stuff'*, *'could have done with more focus on design approval and construction issues'* and *'not as relevant for smaller scale PV installers, but useful to understand the wider picture'*.

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

□ Very Good □ Good ■ Fair ■ Not So Good
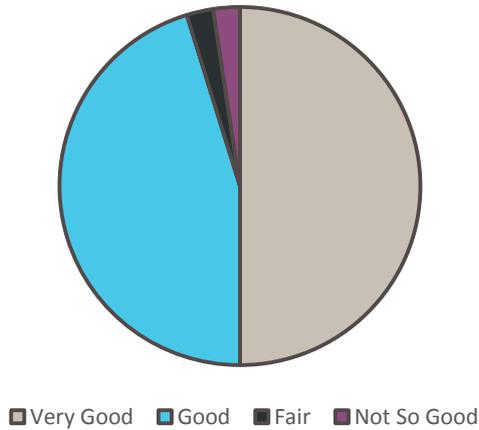
Stakeholder comments on this question included *'useful having independent moderators'*, *'covered a lot in a short time – well organised'*, *'excellent, good at providing prompts and allowing stakeholders the chance to respond'* and *'structured well'*. However, one stakeholder said *'would have preferred the information prior to the event'* and another stakeholder said *'insufficient time for many groups'*.

What did the you think of the venue?

□ Very Good □ Good ■ Fair ■ Not So Good
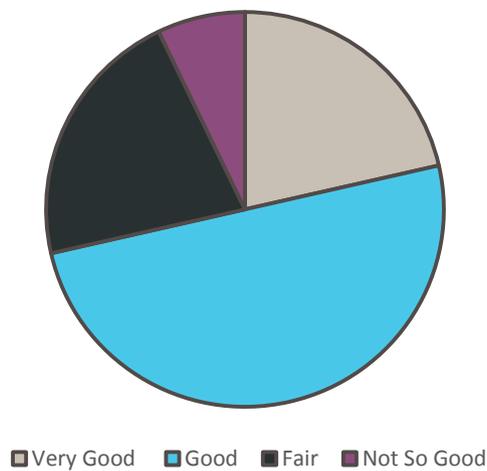
Stakeholder comments on this question ranged from *'great venue, nice gardens'* and *'food was very good'* to *'sound a bit problematic'*, *'prefer location outside a city centre'*, *'lighting a bit dim'* and *'quite dingy'*.

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

☐ Yes ☐ No
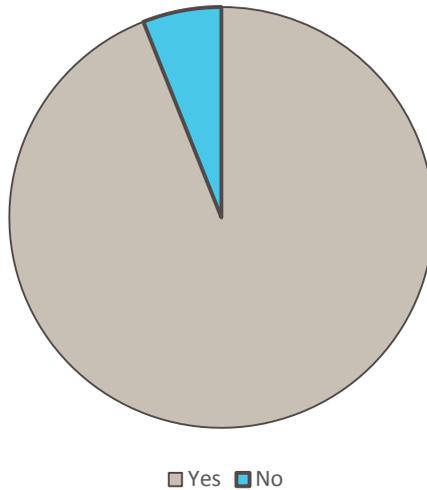
Any other comments?

General comments from stakeholders included *'aim for 3-4 a year'*, *'interested to hear comments and observations around table'*, *'liked format of workshop to gain views from DG community'* and *'forwarding some information prior to event to allow enough time to prepare comments and discuss with colleagues'*.

Those stakeholders who did not want to attend future workshops said '*excellent workshop, but as my interests are more research-related, unfortunately not a lot was applicable'* and '*rather work through existing workshops'*.

11 Surgeries on specific topics

In the afternoon, WPD held four surgeries on specific topics relevant to distributed generation. Stakeholders were able to choose which session to attend. The surgeries including a presentation from a WPD technical expert followed by an open Q&A session. They lasted roughly one hour.

11.1 Alternative Connections

WPD's presentation covered the following areas:

- The challenges faced by a Distribution Network Operator (DNO):

    - Getting information and finding out alternatives.

    - As DG increases, the quality of a DNO's mapping decreases.

    - The movement of DG is too quick to be updated on a regular basis.

- An overview of the application process.

Key themes of the discussions that followed were:

- The generator that can manage the most threshold is the best type of interface for the development of Alternative Connections.

- Where and how alternative connections will be implemented, their capacity and the underuse of WPD's www.westernpowerinnovation.co.uk site which can offer this information.

- The threat of local opposition to development renewables.

- The current progress and risks of alternative connections.

- Consideration of the time-banded area for network demand.

11.2 Consents and Legals

Key points in the presentation were:

- Advice on specific projects and ensuring nothing is being missed.

- More detail on improvements to consents and legals in ICE plan.

- Increasing involvement in legals from ICP perspective.

During the discussion, the key topics were:

- There is a need for clarity on who needs to be consulted and how.

  - Landowner & long term occupiers' consent.

  - Archaeological and ecological surveys.

  - Section 37 exemptions and permissions for different kinds of infrastructure.

- The difference between wayleaves and consents and customers' desire for wayleave agreements in advance of the adoption of assets.

- The issues around ICPs achieving consents.

- Having legal consultants who shadow an in-house team is a good idea.

- What to do when landowners change their minds or cannot find agreement.

11.3 Design Approval and Standard Designs

The presentation addressed the following areas:

- ICP and developers move onto another job once the current one is complete, while DNOs have to look after it for the rest of its life. This is to ensure future generation equipment can be plugged into it.

- A DNO therefore needs durable designs that will last.

The discussion that followed focused on:

- The need for more clarity for ICPs and developers. This covered a lot of topics, including:
  - Customers being told which designs are approved for which areas of the country.
  - Why DNOs have different design requirements.
  - Confusion in the design stage, particularly on earthing requirements and whether design approval covers all legal requirements.
  - Whether planning permission is required for the length or route of a new cable.

- ICPs want a two-stage design process, where the basics are agreed up front.

- Every new cable joint is a potential fault, which is why DNOs don't want more than is required.

- A DNO should alert customers to any changes to previously approved works.

- WPD should create a set of standard designs and rules for ICPs to work from.

11.4 Statement of Works

The presentation focused on the following areas:

- The volumes of DG connections in the WPD network area.

- Defining a Statement of Works (SoW) as the formal process to assess a project's impact on the National Electricity Transmission System and identify any works that are required.

- The process of a SoW.

- The impact on customers.

Key themes of the discussion that followed were:

- Responsibility and decision-making throughout the process, particularly focusing on:
  - DNOs, who make the decision to flag a project as qualifying for a SoW.
  - National Grid, who decide that no works are required following the release of the SoW.
  - The Government, who pick up the cost on reinforcements required when the kVA is pushed over 50MW.

- The risk that a SoW could scare away an ICP, resulting in the more difficult and problematic projects being left to DNOs. It was explained that the framework is flexible and working collaboratively to reduce the impact of additional energy into the grid was the best approach.

- The timeframes in the SoW process are a maximum, as there are financial incentives for National Grid as well as customers to ensure requirements and responses are met and dealt with quickly.