

# Annual Stakeholder Workshops

## Llandudno May 2017





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## 1. Introduction

Wales & West Utilities submitted its Business Plan, the first under the RIIO model, in 2012. The Business Plan period commenced on 1 April 2013 and runs until 2021.

Wales & West Utilities is committed to ongoing engagement with its stakeholders on both its Business Plan delivery and the company's future activities more generally.

This approach is supported by two external stakeholder steering groups: the Critical Friends Panel and the Vulnerable Customer Forum. These enable Wales & West Utilities to take the views of key stakeholders in order to help shape business decisions the company makes.

In April 2016, Wales & West Utilities held a series of workshops with wider stakeholders across their network area in order to get feedback on the delivery of the business plan to date and on its proposed activities for 2016/17.

In May 2017, a year later, Wales & West Utilities hosted two workshops in locations in its network area. The format was similar to the previous year, whereby stakeholders provided feedback on progress over the previous year and proposed activities for 2017/18.

This report details outcomes from the workshop that took place in Llandudno.

Westbourne was appointed, as a specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, to independently facilitate and scribe the stakeholder workshops on behalf of Wales & West Utilities and neutrally report back on the outputs.



## 2. Overview of the Workshop

There were four discussion sessions within the workshop that worked through Wales & West Utilities' Business Priorities.

- **Workshop 1: Social Obligations.** This included an overview of what Wales & West Utilities had done in relation to three business priorities over the last year: 'carbon monoxide'; 'fuel poverty'; and 'vulnerable customers'. It also set out what Wales & West Utilities is proposing to do for each of the three priorities for the year ahead.
- **Workshop 2: Major Incident Planning.** This workshop discussed the programme of activities that Wales & West Utilities had developed in relation to Major Incident Planning following feedback at last year's workshops, as well as the forward plan for the next year.
- **Workshop 3: Designing our Future.** This covered Wales & West Utilities' activities in relation to two business priorities: 'lower-carbon future' and 'meeting future demand'.
- **Workshop 4: Priorities for Next Year.** This included a short introduction to two 'new' priorities that Wales & West Utilities is considering adding to its business priorities: 'connections' and 'customer service'. It also ran through any outstanding priorities that had not been covered during the workshop so far. The discussion session focused on ranking the business priorities to help allocate resource for next year.

Each workshop began with presentations by senior Wales & West Utilities representatives followed by roundtable discussions. The roundtable discussions were facilitated by trained Westbourne facilitators and stakeholders' comments were captured by Westbourne scribes.

A copy of the presentation given by Wales & West Utilities can be found here: <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2425/stakeholder-workshop-final-llandudno-english.pptx>.

A Welsh language version of the presentation can be found here: <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2426/stakeholder-workshop-final-llandudno-welsh.pptx>.

After lunch, there were Q&A sessions that provided stakeholders with an opportunity to get more detail on two specific topics: 'Future of Energy' and 'Social Obligations'.

### Attendees

A total of 22 stakeholders attended the workshop. There was a range of representatives from different backgrounds, including representatives from business, local authorities (officers and members), NGOs and charities, the energy / utility industry, housing / development sector, emergency / resilience groups, as well as supply chain partners. The organisations represented were:

- Age Connects North Wales Central
- Aughton
- Compton Group
- Control Point
- Conwy Council
- Isle of Anglesey County Council
- MCL Utility
- National Grid
- North & Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent
- North Wales Housing
- Synthotech
- Warm Wales
- Wrexham County Council
- Gwynedd Council
- Citizens Advice
- NWC-KEPS



### 3. Summary of Feedback

#### Workshop session 1: Social Obligations

- Improved partnership working was seen as key to improving work across many areas, including supporting vulnerable customers, reducing fuel poverty, and innovation.
- The importance of PSR data sharing to identify and reach vulnerable customers was highlighted and it was agreed that better sharing is needed across organisations.
- Communications with vulnerable customers should be accessible (and always offered in Welsh) and available via a variety of channels (not just online – in newspapers too) to reach as many people as possible.
- Stakeholders were generally pleased by the work carried out to date to support vulnerable customers, and were very interested in how FRESH mapping could be used by Wales & West Utilities and local councils and organisation to help identify vulnerable and fuel-poor customers.
- There was a consensus that rural residents are probably the most at risk and the most difficult to help.

#### Workshop session 2: Major Incident Planning

- Better collaboration with partners was considered important for improving incident responses and general communications practices.
- There was support for Wales & West Utilities' approach to use the first day of an emergency to plan, as long as this didn't compromise safety. There was also a call for Wales & West Utilities to go further and develop emergency plans with local resilience teams.
- Stakeholders liked the self-isolation and restoration packs but felt Wales & West Utilities should be aware that many customers cannot find or access their meter or the meter key.
- There was encouragement for Wales & West Utilities to link with local Social Services to ensure that PSRs are as up-to-date as possible so that, in an emergency, Social Services are aware of actions for vulnerable customers.



### Workshop session 3: Designing our Future

- Stakeholders spoke positively about green gas production, particularly the burning of rubbish for fuel. It was suggested that there is a more pressing need to develop the business case for the technology, rather than fund further academic research.
- There was shared concern that the electricity network was not resilient, modern or big enough to cope with greater demand created by customers shifting from gas to electricity.
- Some stakeholders were very keen for Wales & West Utilities to approach local authorities and public services such as NHS Trusts and schools, to look at developing more biomethane projects using food waste.
- Changes to the connection process timescales were praised and seen as ambitious. Some thought a week would be better than 20 days, but others recognised this is not likely to be possible. Some felt the compensation would not be incentive enough to bring things forward.

### Workshop session 4: Our Priorities for Next Year

- Stakeholders broadly supported the proposed changes to the connection process timescales, although some felt that they were ambitious or that the financial penalty was not high enough.
- Wales & West Utilities' 'customer service' achievements were generally praised and it was therefore not prioritised for next year, as it was felt targets were already being achieved.
- 'CO poisoning prevention and awareness' was the top priority amongst all stakeholders.
- It was proposed that certain areas be grouped or more closely linked, such as a 'low-carbon future' with 'protecting the environment', and 'smart meters' and 'connections' with supporting vulnerable customers and the fuel-poor.
- Theft of gas was generally seen as a low priority for the tables, although a number of stakeholders disagreed on the basis of safety issues.
- 'Innovation' was considered important on some tables because it potentially leads to the improvement of all the other priority areas.
- Other suggestions for priorities and activities to consider included: improving communications; better collaboration with other companies responsible for the network; working with local authorities to support them with their strategic planning; and Wales and West Utilities approach to restoring customers.



## 4. Workshop 1: Social Obligations

The workshop on social obligations was split into three business priorities: 'carbon monoxide', 'fuel poverty' and 'vulnerable customers'.

### CARBON MONOXIDE

The presentation covered previous suggestions made by stakeholders as to how carbon monoxide poisoning prevention and awareness could be improved and how Wales & West Utilities has acted upon these (including a revised CO strategy, school safety competition, events and partnerships). It also detailed future plans for further work in this area.

#### Summary of Feedback:

Although stakeholders viewed the work carried out to date as a good start, there was consensus that more needed to be done. For example, stakeholders felt that the number of carbon monoxide monitors installed was nowhere near high enough.

Many agreed that Wales & West Utilities needs to find more effective ways of measuring the impact of CO prevention and awareness activities. For example, awareness raising was seen as more important than distributing alarms but is harder to measure.

It was felt that the materials produced would not be suitable for all households, particularly older people who might need something more bespoke.

Stakeholders suggested closer working with the social housing sector and local authorities in order to include CO messaging on their websites, newsletters etc.

The suggestion was also made as to whether Wales & West Utilities could work with manufacturers so that CO alarms could be fitted on all new equipment, e.g. boilers.

It was flagged that many customers, especially the elderly, don't have access to the internet or the necessary digital skills to use Crack the COde and so any awareness-raising strategy needed to include a range of techniques.

Further partnership work was encouraged as a means to access more customers, build more trust and promote the installation of carbon monoxide meters.

A shared PSR was considered a valuable resource if collaborated on properly.

It was suggested that Wales & West Utilities should directly target fuel-poor households or vulnerable customers to provide them with CO detectors.

Concern was voiced as to whether householders are aware that they need to service CO alarms, so there was also support for the introduction of smart alarms.



### Q1. What do you think about what we have already done?

**Charity group:** 'It's really good work that's been done, but I'm curious about how Wales & West is tracking the impact of that work. Do you know whether the number of incidents is going down?'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'It didn't seem like huge numbers to me — given the number of people you have in your region I'd have thought you'd have more take-up for your programmes and reach more people.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'The challenge is measuring the effectiveness of alarms. They aren't useful if they end up in the drawers.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'The biggest cost of the alarm is the person fitting it — surely the best opportunity is to fit the alarm when you are already attending the property.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I think it's a welcome part of a suite of solutions (Crack the COde), but if I was to look at the profile of public sector housing, you also have young single people and elderly single people. Family households only play a part of the customers we have, so this won't reach everyone.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I'm shocked about the low amount of carbon monoxide meters that have actually been installed.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I think collaboration with the fire department needs to happen. There is an opportunity to install meters with them.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Why do you not make more of a proactive effort to identify people who need monitors?'



### Q2. What do you think about what we have planned?

**Voluntary organisation:** 'The clients that I deal with aren't in contact with Wales & West Utilities, they are in contact with British Gas or EDF. If I sign them up with their PSR, will that information be given to you? If not, then there must be big holes in your register, meaning you miss a lot of vulnerable customers.'

**Local authority officer:** 'The problem is, people don't like to be labelled vulnerable, so you miss a lot of people who don't want to be labelled and don't sign up on the register. It's the same for fuel poverty.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'The thing with CO alarms is finding the poorer areas that are most vulnerable. It's finding those households and schools. We, as a fuel-poor partner, need to know what your strategy is there.'

**Engineering consultant:** '[You] should identify the people renting, as these people are more likely to be poor.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Do we know more about the profile of those who have died from carbon monoxide poisoning already?'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Rather than just throwing money at everyone, you should identify who needs the help more.'

### Q3. What else do you think we should be looking at?

**Voluntary organisation:** 'The work seems to be targeted at people with access to social media, but the people we deal with are the older age group, who often have no access to social media. You target children, but you could also target grandparents...somebody they can trust.'

**Charity group:** 'More impact measurement is important in my eyes.'

**Local authority officer:** 'In Flincher there is a scheme called Danger Point that takes school kids into a "dangerous house" so they can learn about "danger" points.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'We work with North West Wales Fire Service. They give us a box of smoke alarms, not CO alarms, and we supply them free of charge. We would love for Wales & West Utilities to do the same and give us the CO alarms that we can install.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Have you considered working with Gas Safe? Every installer has to be affiliated with Gas Safe, it seems to be an obvious one [partnership].'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Have you thought about new equipment, that boilers and things go out fitted with CO monitors?'

**Housing association:** 'Have you thought of approaching the likes of housing associations, councils? It's the sort of things we can put on our websites and newsletters quite easily. It's good for you guys and our tenants.'

**Local authority officer:** 'We have a newsletter that goes out a couple of times a year and have a section on safety and maintenance, so it could go in there.'

## VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

The presentation covered feedback from stakeholders last year on how more support can be given to vulnerable customers, and what Wales & West Utilities has done to implement new ideas and initiatives, as well as what it plans to do in the future. It detailed partnership working, the outcomes of the Stronger Together conference, customer training and Wales & West Utilities' procedures under the BS18477 inclusive service provision.

### Summary of Feedback:

Stakeholders were generally pleased by the work carried out to date on supporting vulnerable customers, although many expressed surprise at what they considered to be quite a low number of identified vulnerable customers.

There was agreement that better collaboration with other services, local authorities and charities would be very useful, but not all felt that it was necessarily Wales & West Utilities' responsibility to take the lead in this.

The importance of PSR data sharing to identify and reach vulnerable customers was highlighted and it was frequently repeated that better sharing is needed across organisations.

Stakeholders were very interested in how FRESH mapping could be used by Wales & West Utilities and local councils and organisation to help identify vulnerable and fuel poor customers.

### Q4. What do you think about what we have already done?

**Local authority officer:** 'It sounds great, I agree, but there is a huge data protection issue of a shared register.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Social services have access to that data as they need to know very quickly who is going without food water or fuel. However, I think it's the suppliers who need to be given that information more than Wales & West Utilities. Your customers are the gas companies, not the end users.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I think these approaches work. I think we're all guilty of working in our own silos, but integration should work.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'We've found new target areas in Cardiff from our FRESH mapping, and I know Wales & West Utilities have put forward new areas too.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'FRESH mapping can really help identify the people who need help.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'It seems like you're doing quite a lot. I came to this last year and I was expecting the same again, but actually you've done a lot, which is great'.

**Engineering consultant:** 'There's a lot of areas in Wales that don't have gas, so by connecting with the electricity and water companies [the Stronger Together conference] you're doing the right thing trying to reach more people.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Flintshire County Council is having another Stronger Together conference – Healthy Homes – in July.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Your assessment of how many vulnerable customers there are appears to be quite low. I suspect there are more vulnerable customers than that.'

**Housing association:** 'It's a bit of a postcode lottery. A lot of the identification for being a 'vulnerable customer' depends on the postcode'.



### Q5. What do you think about what we have planned?

**Voluntary organisation:** 'People should be placed on the priority services register and then with consent from the household there's a duty of care to share that information.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Is data mapping available? Could that be driven down to people within the mains gas area who are not connected, so we can target those people?'

**Engineering consultant:** 'You've only listed seven councils you are in active collaboration with – is there a reason for this?'

**Housing association:** 'We cover both Gwynedd and Conwy and we're not on your list.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Gwynedd already has cluster mapping, but overlaying it with census data to do FRESH mapping would be the next step.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I can see Anglesey's on the list, but I'm not sure what's happened to date.'

### Q6. What else do you think we should be looking at?

**Local authority officer:** 'I think it's about partnership work - using what is already there. Drawing on those resources rather than reinventing.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Data sharing is an issue, even though there are mechanisms out there to connect organisations.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Look at Scottish Power: they supply us with emergency supplies and they have registers that they let us look at.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Carers are often quite vulnerable themselves.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I think good support you could give is to work with local councils. We have schemes whereby people go out to vulnerable people, it would be good if we could get them to encourage the people they meet to sign up to vulnerable customers registers.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Work with Age Concern and charities as well.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'It staggers me that we do not have an identification system for sharing information about vulnerable people.'

**Local authority officer:** 'We need a sharing system whereby we all use the same list and build the same list of vulnerable people.'



## FUEL POVERTY

The presentation gave an overview of the UK's fuel poverty strategy and looked at how Wales & West Utilities has responded to stakeholders' feedback on how to support the fuel-poor. It detailed current initiatives, including partnership working and fuel-poor hubs, and provided details on plans for continued work to support the fuel-poor.

### Summary of Feedback:

Stakeholders were broadly supportive of fuel-poor hubs and wanted to see them continue.

Stakeholders urged Wales & West Utilities to increase the provision for rural areas, as there was consensus that rural residents are probably the most at risk and the most difficult to help.

It was suggested that Wales & West Utilities should look to gain insight as to how people engage with the website when searching for social obligations information.

There was support for a process within Wales & West Utilities that understands degrees of vulnerability and poverty and how to 'red flag' a customer when they urgently need help.

There were requests for fuel poverty and PSR information to be available in formats other than online, as fuel-poor customers may not be able to afford to access the internet. Other suggestions included reviewing contact numbers on the website detailing who to contact if you are experiencing fuel poverty.

Stakeholders suggested ways to compensate for the difficulties of sharing sensitive data, such as partnership work, clustering and targeting specific venues.

More collaboration with other GDNs was encouraged.

The need for better communication with partner support services, such as the social services and voluntary organisations, was raised.

There were suggestions that the language and imagery used on the Safe & Warm section of the website should be reviewed, as some of it is inappropriate or unclear.

It was suggested that media such as local newspapers should be used to promote fuel poverty support measures.



### Q7. What do you think about what we have already done?

**Voluntary organisation:** 'I have a criticism: there have been recent incidents where Wales & West Utilities has been into the home of a vulnerable customer and have capped the gas system and then left. The customer then calls us because they are cold, our engineers have gone into turn the heat up a bit, but we can't fix boilers. Do you not alert anyone to support a customer properly once you cap the gas?'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'In local authorities there are lots of 'red flag' houses, but when it comes to degrees of vulnerability, it's working out within your own organisation how to cascade people up when they need help.'

**Local authority officer:** 'There are issues in north Wales with connecting rural communities and the cost of connections. It comes out at about £4,700 per property.'

### Q8. What do you think about what we have planned?

**Voluntary organisation:** 'I'm not sure how you are identifying vulnerable customers, but we'd like to be given maps that indicate where fuel poverty exists so we can target these areas and work with the councils to indicate where the hotspots exist. Any more information to help that process would be great — we all need to communicate.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'I think the fuel poor hubs is a great idea to really target the issue.'

### Q9. What else do you think we should be looking at?

**Voluntary group:** 'We use clusters. It's a very sensitive situation, and sensitive language, so we look to target other groups, like bingo groups, rather than risk stigmatising people by singling them out.'

**Local authority officer:** 'We sometimes use partners and data to identify sites where outreach workers can go to discuss potential issues with people, like libraries.'

**Voluntary group:** 'Is there anything like Speakeasy for rural areas?'

**Engineering consultant:** 'How have you found sharing information with the other GDNs? I know there is a difference between areas contextually, but there is still likely potential for sharing and collaboration.'

### Q10. What else do you think we should include on the Safe & Warm section of our website?

**Housing developer:** 'A lot of this service we would carry out in-house, and we would link to initiatives like this.'

**Charity group:** 'It would be interesting to track what engagement you get via the website and what happens with customers afterwards.'

**Charity representative:** 'With carbon monoxide and fuel poverty, you want people to find you first, but you're not necessarily the first port of call for other things.'

**Voluntary group:** 'A lot of our customers don't use social media, and many have dementia. This isn't very dementia friendly, so I wonder whether there is an audio file option?'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Is it intended to be one contact number? I suppose the danger with putting lots of phone numbers on there is confusing people.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'If I read "Safe & Warm" I'd think it's about insulation or something like that, I wouldn't think it's something where someone would help me. Also, who's knocking at that door there, is it the police? That's not great!'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'It's more "affordable warmth and safe homes."'

**Engineering consultant:** 'The other thing is that people who are really hard-up don't really have access to the internet. I know it's got to go out on all media, but not everyone's going to see this.'



## 5. Workshop 2: Major Incident Planning

The presentation gave some background on how major incidents are dealt with and an overview of stakeholders' feedback on how planning can be improved. Details were given on what actions have been put in place by Wales & West Utilities in response, including improved communications, a revised strategy and sharing best practice.

### Summary of Feedback:

There was broad support for Wales & West Utilities' approach to take the first day of an emergency to plan, as long as this didn't compromise safety, although there was consensus that there need to be robust communications to support this approach.

Better collaboration with partners was considered important for improving incident responses and general communication practices.

There was a call for Wales & West Utilities to go further and develop emergency plans with local resilience teams and to involve them in major incident rehearsals.

Whilst there was broad support for the utilisation of partnerships to support vulnerable customers during a major incident, there was encouragement for Wales & West Utilities to link with local Social Services to ensure that PSRs are as up-to-date as possible, and so that in an emergency Social Services are aware of actions for vulnerable customers.

Stakeholders liked the self-isolation and restoration packs but felt Wales & West Utilities should be aware that many customers cannot find or access their meter or the meter key.

It was felt that self-isolation packs should be provided in Welsh, as well as a video version.

### Q1. What do you think of our proposed operational strategy?

**Local authority officer:** 'I was surprised that you had a major practice exercise on Monday. I was expecting a phone call, but it never arrived. The biggest disappointment for me is that you've had the major exercise but there were no partners involved.'

**Local authority officer:** 'There is a system called JESOP. They need to be involved as well as other multi-agency partners and the strategic communication centre, which could have cascaded information about the exercise to Conwy.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'On some of these major incidents, if you start too soon, you can make it worse. Taking stock of the situation first is better, before you make more problems.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'You need to let people know that you are working on it and let them know when you are going to do it, rather than having a vulnerable person have the TV turned off with no explanation, which happens when you rush in on day one to fix the problem.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'This red-amber-green warning is good, and if you can incorporate the contracting companies, just so we're aware and we can provide labour, equipment etc. that would be even better.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Does not doing anything for a day initially bypass any making safe? I'm assuming that in an emergency you'd still have to mitigate any chance of gas explosions and so on, even if you sat back and waited a day to plan.'

**Housing association:** 'The planning sounds good, but I think it's more a reputational risk for you if from a customer's point of view you're seen to not be doing anything on a first day.'

**Voluntary organisation representative:** 'I'm really encouraged that you're now doing emergency planning. I was a bit surprised that you didn't have that before. But taking a whole day to plan what you're going to do — that should be pre-planned for each area with the resilience teams, you should know that already. That's your next step. WPD have got a first-responder mechanism where they triage their customers, with the first people being those on life support.'

**Charity representative:** 'Something I think is missing is a focus on hacking as a major incident simulation. Like with fire safety, you should assume it will happen, and that you will be without your usual communications systems during an incident. I'm sure you have systems in place, but you should assume that won't work.'

## Q2. Do you agree with our external communications process, and what else could we be doing?

**Engineering consultant:** 'I think regular press updates are key to the strategy. And you can't just dive in, because you need to know which areas are key first.'

**Voluntary group:** 'You can't just rely on social media and digital outlets.'

**Charity group:** 'In terms of the wider communication process, assuming some people won't be happy with the time in which they are visited, perhaps include any compensation they might get in communications.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I think what tends to happen is that people revert to the police website, as that is seen as an authoritative source of information.'

## Q3. Do you agree with our proposed approach to supporting vulnerable customers during a major incident?

**Local authority officer:** 'If you're partnering, it's important that the partnership is strong, and that it works. Typically, Social Services will be involved somewhere along the line. We've not had gas outages, but we have had it before where people lost their electricity for a few days, and that did affect some very vulnerable people. It was our Social Services guys who really knew who we needed to get to.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'I've worked with councils before who haven't had PSRs when we've asked for them in emergencies. The other problem is that some councils have PSRs that only cover around 20% of people who are really vulnerable, and actually Social Services are the people who really know who those vulnerable people are. There should be a command control within Social Services who you can link in with.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'It depends on the time of year. The winter will of course be more urgent, as will the first 24 hours of any incident.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'I know from my own experience that it can be the case that responders themselves have to buy supplies with their own money because such plans haven't been tried in real life properly.'

## Q4. What do you think of the customer self-isolation and restoration packs?

**Charity representative:** 'Do you have it in Welsh and accessible formats?'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'How about condensing it into a fridge-magnet format or something? Because people will get this, think it's useful, and file it away.'

**Housing association:** 'We get a lot of calls during incidents, because people don't realise they should contact Wales & West Utilities. Something like this could be valuable in redirecting people.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'You probably need the words and information, but also an illustrative guide.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Could you do a YouTube video?'

**Engineering consultant:** 'It doesn't say how to find your meter. You'd be surprised how many people don't know where their meter is. And they might have lost their key.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'The pack should say, go and check on other vulnerable people in your area.'

**Voluntary organisation representative:** 'Far too complex, far too glossy. If it's going through a door it needs to be more obvious that it says 'immediate, urgent'. I'd ask the resilience forum coordinator, because that's their job.'

**Local authority officer:** 'This won't work for vulnerable people, it will scare them.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Have you actually trialed this anywhere? With a couple of hundred people? We could go to a social landlord and try it out.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Do you need to suggest where these appliances are. It needs a 'if it doesn't look like this perhaps it could look like XYZ'.'

**Local authority officer representative:** 'It should point to where other information is.'

## Q5. Do you have any other views on what we have done / what we are planning to do / is there anything missing?

**Local authority officer:** 'I was interested to find that there was a WhatsApp messaging service – I'd like to have that if there was a major incident, but it's just limited to your staff, why can't you roll it out to the emergency services and notify the local authorities?'

**Local authority officer:** 'Yes, I agree, because many of us aren't available all the time in the office. We need to be contacted any time of day, even when we aren't at the desk. Otherwise if something happens after 5pm we can't do anything about it, because you have no way to contact us.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'After your main isolation valve, if you've got a smart meter, what's stopping you installing a Solenoid valve? You could have it fail safe so if the electricity supply went off it would automatically go to the off position.'

## 6. Workshop 3: Designing our Future

The presentation provided attendees with a bit of background on the UK's decarbonisation agenda and how energy networks (and alternative gas) are developing. It then summarised the feedback provided by stakeholders last year on two business priorities: 'lower-carbon future' and 'meeting future demand'. For each, it ran through what activities were undertaken this year and what the forward plan is for next year.

### Summary of Feedback:

Stakeholders spoke positively about green gas production. However, there was one comment that Wales & West Utilities was considerably behind other networks when it came to numbers of enquiries to connect and needed to work to increase them.

It was suggested that there is a more pressing need to develop the business case for different technologies, rather than funding further academic research. It was felt that this business case, and any access to grant funding, should be properly communicated to drive take-up. It was also felt that more should be done to promote incentives to use alternative gas.

It was suggested that villages or energy hubs could be established to encourage renewable energy usage.

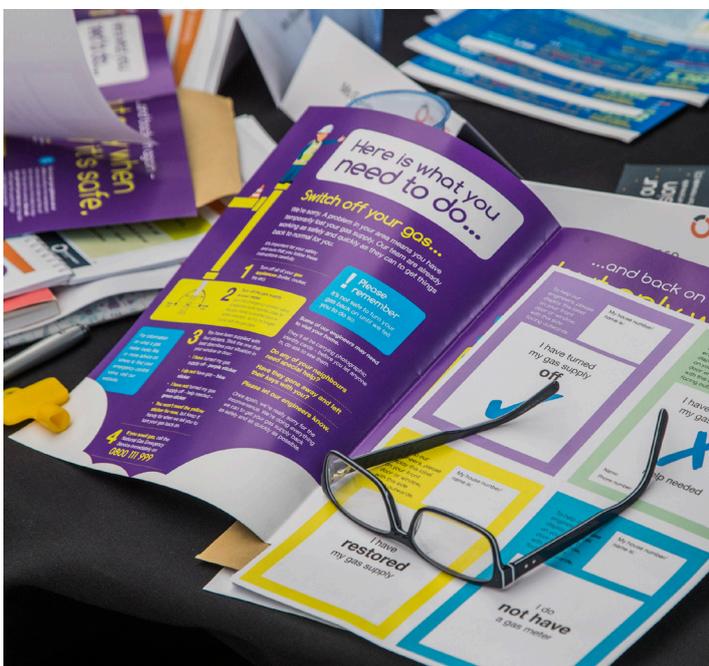
Some stakeholders were very keen for Wales & West Utilities to approach local authorities and public services, such as NHS Trusts and schools, to look at developing more biomethane projects using food waste.

There was also support for working more closely with water companies to develop biomethane projects around wastewater.

The group encouraged Wales & West Utilities to look at what competitors are doing and to learn lessons from them, including from further afield e.g. in other European countries.

There was agreement that all energy sources would require the development of individual strategies in order to drive them forward.

It was suggested that Wales & West Utilities should reach out to farmers and provide them with a solid business case for investing in green gas.



### Q1. What do you think about what we have already done?

**Engineering consultant:** 'If I had a farm I'd make waste to put it back into the grid. The money you can make from it, I wouldn't bother growing anything!'

**Engineering consultant:** 'The burning of rubbish and collecting the gas is great because the only by-product is dust – more of that would be good.'

**Local authority officer:** 'What's happening to the hydrogen generators? That was a buzz word a few years ago, but what's happening about that now?'

**Housing association:** 'We're looking at putting renewables in our new builds. Cost can of course be prohibitive, so financial assistance and legislation compelling renewable inclusion need to be established.'

**Housing association:** 'If gas is possible, somebody will pick gas. There needs to be a stronger incentive to move to other sources.'

## Q2. What do you think about our proposed innovation projects? Do you think we should be doing more?

**Engineering consultant:** 'Have you seen what others are doing with hydrogen gas?'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Wales & West Utilities have got targets to meet by 2020, you should be out there pushing these projects.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'I do know that other networks, when they launched their biomethane projects, they got 418 enquiries? You've got 16 and your area is about the same as this other network.'

**Voluntary organisation representative:** 'You need to target your approach so you don't waste your time with people who are too small-scale? It can also play a part in looking at reducing demand.'

**Local authority officer:** 'The hydrogen projects are nice to see.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'I would have thought there are loads of biomethane opportunities in South Wales using ex-mining pits as furnaces to burn rubbish.'

**Housing association:** 'Have you got contacts with Worcester for the hybrid heating systems? It would be good to develop hybrid heating in these areas – it's something housing associations would be interested in.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I have one concern, a lot of this is European-funded – will it be affected by Brexit?'

**Housing association:** 'I think it comes down to incentives to having that equipment. The cost of a lot of it has come down, but so have the tariffs.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Educating people more is important.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Wales has an ageing population. In South Wales they are developing dementia villages where people can go and live and retire. I wonder if you can do that with energy? And you could work with housing associations. There is Cadwyn Clwyd, for example.'

## Q3. Do you think we have the right approach to stakeholder engagement?

**Local authority officer:** 'I hadn't heard much about this so more engagement with people like me seems like it would be beneficial.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Yes, I think these sorts of meetings work.'

**Local authority officer:** 'What about farmers? They seem key. What do you do with them?'

**Engineering consultant:** 'I like the engagement workshops.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'I went to your conference and I was bowled over by it and thought why are we not [doing] more of it? Having success stories is great and getting execs from companies to see them as investments will get you more of them.'

## Q4. Should we continue to fund and support research groups?

**Voluntary organisation:** 'It doesn't need research, it's proven. It needs application, it needs the business case. It doesn't need more academics to look at it. The technology is there.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'It needs some political injection, the right people sitting around the tables. It's a perfect match with the green agenda.'

## Q5. Is there anything else we should consider?

**Local authority officer:** 'Is there any grant funding attached to this? Or investment? I'm trying to visualise it for farmers, they need to know how much they would need to invest and what the return would be.'

**Local authority officer:** 'An example business case may be good.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Wales & West Utilities could be working with Welsh Water. You both have a great ethos, you should be doing more together.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'And then wastewater, there's lots that can be done there.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Local authorities can galvanise so many things, think school food waste.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'We had a customer that was a brewery, and their aim was that everything could be run on gas, even their vehicles delivering to the pubs. They were so far ahead.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Where are the European examples of best practice, and how can we go on a roadshow to local authorities to sell this concept? If you don't get take up with the execs of local authorities then move on the next one quickly. Start with health boards and schools.'

## 7. Workshop 4: Priorities for Next Year

The presentation introduced two new priorities that Wales & West Utilities is considering adding next year: connections and customer service. It summarised what Wales & West Utilities was doing in each area. The presentation then covered any outstanding business priorities that had not been covered in the workshop so far, including: innovation; protecting the environment; smart metering and theft of gas. Finally, the presentation asked how its priorities should be ranked for 2017/18.

### Summary of Feedback:

Stakeholders broadly supported the proposed changes to the connection process timescales, although some felt that they were ambitious or that the financial penalty was not high enough.

Wales & West Utilities' customer service achievements were generally praised – particularly the conference call with a director to resolve customer complaints. However, although the request was made to see more comparison with other companies on the ICS and it was suggested that Wales & West Utilities should start looking at international standards as a next step.

A lot of the discussions revolved around whether a certain priority was Wales & West Utilities' responsibility. Questions were raised as to whether Wales & West Utilities was best-placed to take the lead on priorities including: 'fuel poverty'; 'vulnerable customer support'; 'protecting the environment'; and 'smart meters'.

'Innovation' was considered important on some tables because it leads to the potential improvement of all the other priority areas.

Stakeholders didn't prioritise 'customer service' as they felt Wales & West Utilities was on target after big improvements in the last year. However there was encouragement to 'keep it up'.

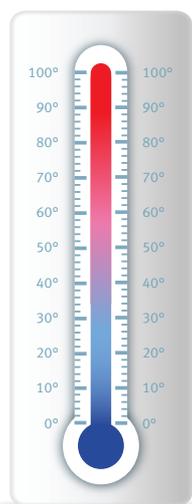
'Theft of gas' was generally seen as a low priority for the tables because Wales & West Utilities had hit its targets. However a number of stakeholders disagreed because of the safety implications.

A number of stakeholders felt that 'major incident planning' was important, despite it being ranked only 6th overall.

It was suggested that 'protecting the environment' should also consider contractors' and suppliers' contributions to Wales & West Utilities' carbon footprint.

Other suggestions for priorities and activities to consider included: improving communications; better collaboration with other companies responsible for the network; working with local authorities to support them with their strategic planning; and Wales & West Utilities' approach to restoring customers.

Stakeholders were asked to rank the priorities in order of importance. As an aggregate across all tables, the priorities were ranked as follows (high to low):



- Carbon monoxide poisoning prevention and awareness
- Vulnerable customer support
- Lower-carbon future
- =Meeting future demand
- =Supporting the fuel poor
- Customer service
- Innovation
- =Connections
- =Major incident planning
- Theft of gas
- Protecting the environment
- Smart metering

**Q1. What do you think about our proposed changes to the connections process – do the timescales / compensation seem appropriate?**

**Housing association:** 'As a domestic customer it would be nice to have it all sorted within a working week – which is included in the offer, so that's good.'

**Engineering consultant:** '20 days is way too long to provide the plan, it should be a week.'

**Local authority officer:** 'But it's a complicated task, they need to see the site, plan the connection, book a date... I don't think they can reduce the time to a week, they are struggling at 20 days as it is.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Five days is an unreasonably short time. In some cases it can take months — you have to do site visits, meet with landowners.'

**Housing association:** 'You're meeting targeted response times over 90% of the time though, can't ask for much more than that.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I think [the proposed changes are] to be commended, it's a win-win for the end user. The sooner we get the quotation and dates planned, the better. I can't see how the end customer loses here.'

**Housing association:** 'It is good for the end user, but £10 a day isn't going to break you guys, it's not really an incentive for you guys to take action. Really £100 or £200 a day would give you guys more impetus to get things done, otherwise I think it's a bit pointless.'

**Local authority officer:** 'I can see why you would want to increase the timeframes given some of the locations.'

**Q2. Do you have any comments on our approach to customer service?**

**Engineering consultant:** 'I think it's been a driven culture in Wales & West Utilities – good customer service. I think continue that good work.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'I take my hat off to you, I think these are great [ICS ratings].'

**Engineering consultant:** 'How many other utilities are on the ICS? I get a newsletter from Northern Gas Networks and they reckon they're top for customer service! You've not got any other gas companies down here to compare yourselves to.'

**Local authority officer:** 'How do you collect customer satisfaction ratings, in order to feed in to these very impressive statistics?'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Where are you relative to your industry peer group?'

**Engineering consultant:** 'The one that gets me, one of your worst results: 80% of complaints resolved in 24 hours or you get a call with a director. It makes me question why 2 out of 10 aren't getting resolved, when all your other ratings are so high.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Seems pretty good to me. The call into the director thing is very impressive.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'And now next you should be looking at international standards [as well as Ofgem and ICS].'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Keep doing what you're doing.'



### Q3. Do you have any comments on our other priorities – which are the most important to you?

**Charity group:** 'To try to frame this conversation, the most useful way of thinking about this is whether these things are suited to Wales & West Utilities. Some things might be better left to other organisations, even though they are clearly important.'

#### Fuel poverty:

**Charity group:** 'There is clearly a role for Wales & West Utilities regarding fuel poverty, but I don't think it's the most cost-effective approach given that work you do on it will go through price controls.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Supporting the fuel poor is very important, especially in Wales.'

#### Vulnerable customers:

**Engineering consultant:** '[Supporting the fuel poor] goes alongside customer services and vulnerable customers really. They are all part of the same system, they should be looked at together.'

#### Connections:

**Local authority officer representative:** 'I'd have new connections very near the top, then you'd reach the vulnerable people that you don't even know about yet, that we do know about. I'm referring to taking the gas network to where it hasn't been.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Connections in the context of people who don't have gas is supporting the fuel-poor really.'

**Housing association:** 'Connections also link into fuel-poor, getting people on the network. If it's general connections then it's quite low-priority, but if it's linked to fuel poor and vulnerable customers then it's up high.'

#### Carbon monoxide poisoning prevention and awareness:

**Housing association:** 'From our perspective, we carry our CO poisoning prevention ourselves, so I wouldn't say it is a priority for Wales & West Utilities.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'CO should stay high on the list. You haven't reached that many people with the programmes when you think about the number of deaths and incidents.'

#### Innovation:

**Engineering consultant:** 'You get funding from Ofgem for certain projects, right? But I still think innovation is key, depending on how it's classed.'

**Local authority officer:** 'What's the definition of innovation? You've got innovation way down the bottom, it should be higher up because everything else comes out of that. Everything on the board is dependent on innovation, but for some reason it comes down low.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Innovation is important but preventing deaths from CO is always the top priority.'

#### Protecting the environment:

**Engineering consultant:** 'Shouldn't protecting the environment be up there with a lower-carbon future?'

**Local authority officer:** 'Is protecting the environment Wales & West Utilities' duty? Or is it the responsibility of other organisations?'

**Local authority officer:** 'Protecting the built environment is important but they should do equal amounts as other providers, it's not just up to Wales & West Utilities.'

#### Low-carbon future:

**Engineering consultant:** 'I thought you had to have 20% of gas in your networks as renewable by 2020, so obviously 'low-carbon future' has to go up.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Isn't lower-carbon future connected with the environment? They are in very different places.'

**Housing association:** 'Protect the environment and low-carbon future go hand in hand.'

#### Theft of gas:

**Housing association:** 'I don't know how much theft of gas is an issue.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'I'd drop theft of gas because you've achieved your targets.'

**Local authority officer representative:** 'Theft of gas is a danger to the public so it should be considered.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Safety and human life must be the highest priority.'

#### Q4. Is there anything missing that is not covered in our existing priorities?

##### Major incident planning :

**Local authority officer:** 'Major incident planning should be top for me! They haven't done enough this year. I haven't heard from them, and we need to be working together.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'A major incident would be so bad that I would suggest planning for that is up there near the top.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Major incident planning will help you understand your customers a lot better, who they really are and how you serve them.'

##### Smart metering:

**Local authority officer:** 'Smart metering is a government initiative isn't it? It's going to happen either way, not sure it has to be a priority.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'You can link smart meters to the vulnerable. Once you understand who your customers are, we can help you and target the vulnerable first. You're doing something that others aren't at the moment with FRESH mapping, in that we can get the vulnerable people on smart meters first. Self-disconnection is the biggest single issue in fuel poverty, and you guys could show how you can support vulnerable people, the poor souls who are disconnecting themselves when they can't afford it.'

##### Customer service:

**Local authority officer:** 'Customer service is looking pretty good at the moment, I don't think it needs to be prioritised.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Customer service should be level with connections, because that's what the customer service is about.'

##### Meeting future demand:

**Housing association:** 'Meeting the future demands of the network has to be up there, perhaps second place.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'Do we think gas demand is going to drop off because there's a lot of other renewable demand?'

**Charity group:** 'Restoring people, even if not a major issue, is something to consider. Where does it sit? Or should it perhaps be a new focus area?'

**Engineering consultant:** 'I think improving communications is really important, so more focus on that.'

**Local authority officer:** 'There is an All Wales Utilities Group that should be talking about these things together and collaborating.'

**Voluntary organisation:** 'Working with local authorities to identify land that wouldn't otherwise be developed, unless there would be a gas connection there, at a strategic planning level.'

**Engineering consultant:** 'In determining your carbon footprint, who do you take in to account? Do you count all of us as contractors and suppliers and what we do? There's 800 of us, so if you're not looking at us, you're not really counting your true carbon footprint.'

**Local authority officer:** 'Make sure you keep prices low'.



## 8. Q&A Sessions

After lunch, Wales & West Utilities held two Q&A sessions, which were informal roundtable discussions to provide stakeholders with an opportunity for more in-depth conversations on specific topics. The sessions were 'social obligations' and 'future of energy'.

### Social Obligations

One stakeholder wanted to understand what the process was for getting a CO monitor once a customer had signed up to the PSR.

It was felt that utilities needed to work together to agree a consistent definition of vulnerability.

It was noted that low-level CO poisoning is on the rise and it was suggested that Wales & West Utilities should look to do something with heart / blood charities or other health charities.

One stakeholder questioned whether Wales & West Utilities was concerned about customers self-isolating because they are on a pre-paid meter and are worried about paying their bills.

It was noted that a lot of food banks now offer a fuel voucher and it was suggested that Wales & West Utilities look into this to see whether there is some sort of partnership they could enter into.

It was questioned how closely Wales & West Utilities work with Social Services on the PSR.

### Future of Energy

It was felt that storage is absolutely key and it was added that it is a real shame that the technology isn't more advanced in this area.

It was noted that Wales & West Utilities need to work better in collaboration with water companies.

There was praise for the way that Wales & West Utilities is looking at transport applications. For example Adnams (the brewers) has an ambition to have their whole fleet powered by alternative gas. It was suggested that perhaps Wales & West Utilities should reach out to brewers.

Whilst hydrogen is seen to be the future, it was commented that there is a real (perceived) problem with safety.

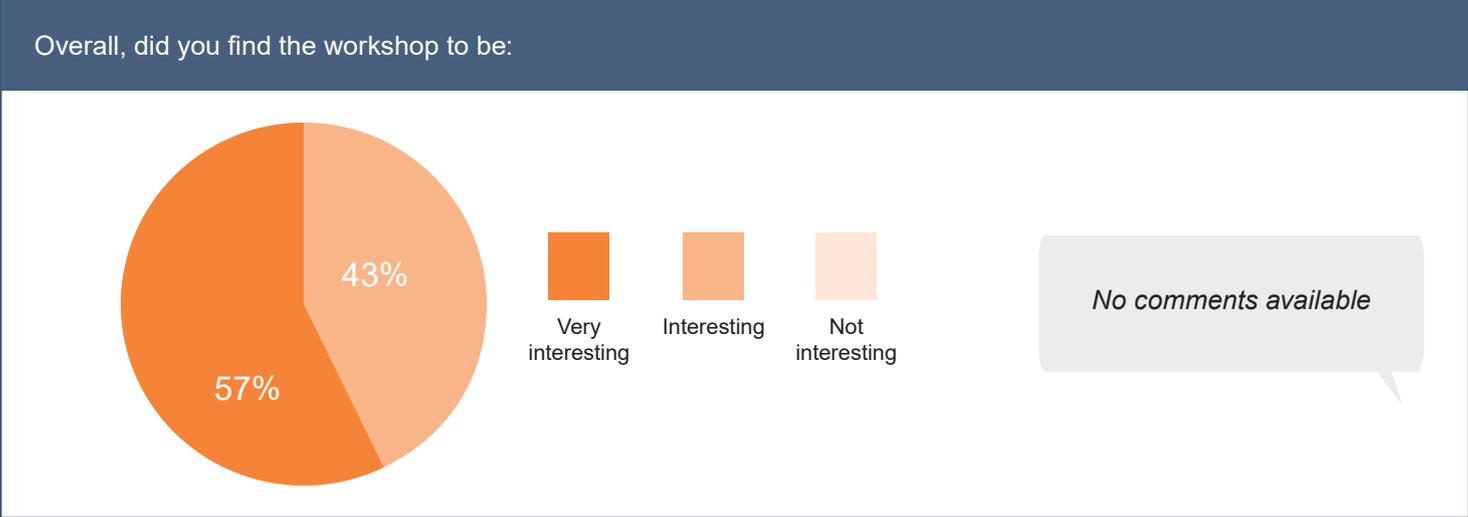
One area it was felt that Wales & West Utilities should look at involves getting biomethane from hospital waste.

Wales & West Utilities needs to be more proactive in sales. It was felt Wales & West Utilities should have someone on the team who goes out to meet new potential customers.

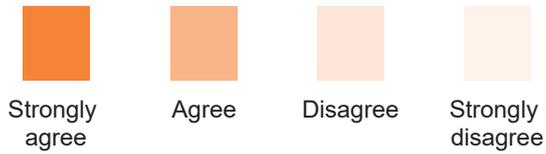
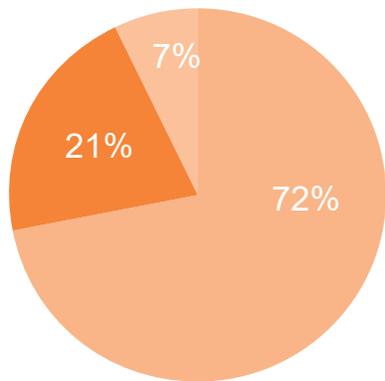
One stakeholder interested in community heating schemes felt that Wales & West Utilities isn't proactive enough in looking at connecting areas that are currently off the gas grid – the example of certain villages in North Wales was given.

# 9. Written Feedback

After the workshop, stakeholders were asked to fill out written feedback forms. A summary of the written feedback received is as follows:



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

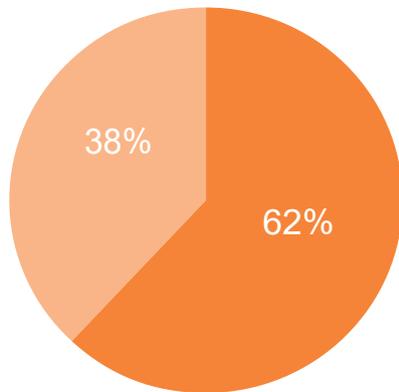


*"Perhaps more on extending the network / grants available."*

*"Good balance of topics to discuss."*

*"Did not really address the relationship between the highways authority and Wales & West Utilities."*

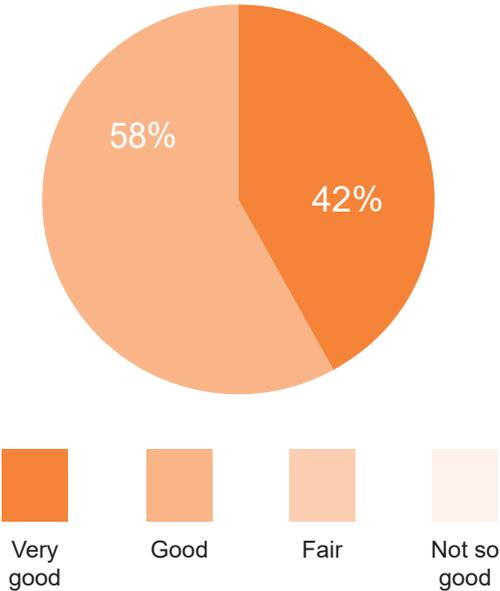
What did you think of the way the workshop had been facilitated?



*"Very professional."*

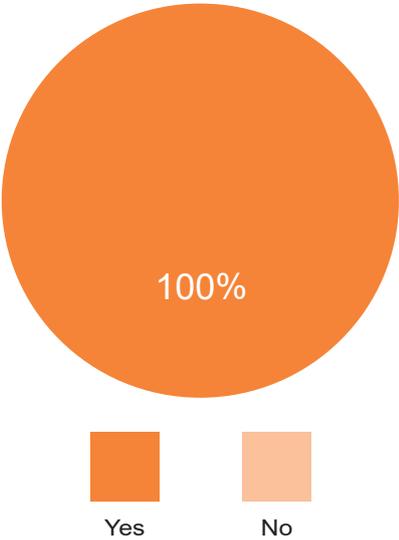
*"Good layout, plenty of breaks for discussion."*

What did you think of the venue?



No comments available

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



No comments available

Do you have any other comments?

“Would rather it was relevant to a highway authority.”

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