



Emotionally
Intelligent
Communications

WALES & WEST UTILITIES GD3 STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

FEEDBACK REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2024



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INTRODUCTION

On 5 September 2024, Wales & West Utilities (WWU) hosted a hybrid in-person and online workshop, focused on its RIIO-GD3 Business Plan draft determinations. The purpose of the workshop was to elicit feedback on WWU's RIIO-GD3 commitments, the level of ambition displayed and the approach to fulfilling them.

The workshop was hosted simultaneously in person in Newport and remotely on Zoom. Each session consisted of a short presentation given by a WWU representative (broadcast as a live feed to online participants), followed by facilitated discussions at roundtables and in virtual breakout rooms. In addition, stakeholders were asked to vote in a series of online polls using Slido.

The event was divided into five sessions:

1. Environmental sustainability
2. Transition to Net Zero
3. Workforce resilience
4. Supporting customers through the energy transition
5. Keeping customers safe from carbon monoxide

The event was attended by 73 participants (18 in person and 55 online), representing 64 organisations from a range of different stakeholder types, including charities, local authority officers and vulnerability groups.

WWU instructed EQ Communications, a specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, to facilitate the workshop and take notes of the comments made by stakeholders. Every effort has been made to faithfully record the feedback given. In order to encourage candour and open debate, comments have not been ascribed to individuals. Instead, notes have been made of the type of organisation each stakeholder represents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A summary of the major themes of the feedback provided from each session and the results from the event feedback form are provided below.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Stakeholders were taken through the three environmental sustainability commitments within WWU's Business Plan and then asked to provide feedback.

- Stakeholders generally supported the environmental sustainability commitments and gave an average score of 3.65 on Slido when asked to indicate their agreement with the statement: "Wales & West Utilities' environmental sustainability Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me." (where 1 equated to 'strongly disagree' and 5 equated to 'strongly agree')
- Attendees welcomed the extensive community collaboration outlined and the focus on biodiversity in the commitments, particularly on managing unused land as green spaces and the tree-planting approach. Some concerns were raised about the perceived lack of specific targets on the business carbon footprint and the narrow focus of some of the initiatives underpinning these commitments.
- Some participants were content with the level of ambition shown, noting that the Net Zero emissions commitment in particular was appropriate and aligned well with the national government target. However, others were underwhelmed and urged WWU to go beyond their statutory requirements. Others wanted more context about the commitments in order to judge the level of ambition properly.
- Stakeholders suggested that WWU should form partnerships with local community forests, such as the Forest of Avon Trust, in order to support its tree-planting measure, as well as higher education institutions and trade bodies in order to share knowledge around environmental sustainability.

TRANSITION TO NET ZERO

Attendees were given an overview of WWU's three Business Plan commitments to support the transition to Net Zero and then invited to give their feedback.

- Support for the transition to Net Zero commitments was slightly muted, with an average score of 3.32 on Slido from stakeholders when asked to signify their agreement with the statement: "Wales & West Utilities' transition to Net Zero Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me." (where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree')
- Participants welcomed the decarbonisation commitments, and many endorsed the hydrogen commitments, highlighting the potential opportunities in heating and transport. However, concerns were raised about hydrogen's technical feasibility for domestic heating and its public perception as a potentially unsafe fuel being barriers to overcome in supporting its wider roll-out.
- Attendees were broadly split on whether the level of ambition was correct. Some stressed that WWU should aim to have a hydrogen-ready network in place earlier than 2040, whereas others thought

that this deadline was appropriate. It was also stressed that the company should protect the most vulnerable customers from the bill impact, irrespective of the level of ambition chosen.

- Stakeholders identified a range of important partners to assist WWU with the measures underpinning these commitments, including local authorities, businesses and charities. Collaborative work with charities, vulnerability groups and local and national governments was also viewed as vital for ensuring a just transition to clean fuels for all.

WORKFORCE RESILIENCE

An overview of WWU's three RIIO-GD3 workforce resilience commitments was provided and stakeholders then asked to comment on them.

- Attendees supported the workforce resilience commitments fairly strongly, giving an average score of 3.83 on Slido when invited to express their level of agreement with the statement: "Wales & West Utilities' workforce resilience Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me." (where 1 equated to 'strongly disagree' and 5 equated to 'strongly agree')
- Stakeholders praised the continuous learning, career development and school outreach focuses of the commitments, which would help to attract and retain much-needed younger workers. However, it was also felt that WWU needed to be more explicit about how it intends to attract older workers and ensure that any diversity initiatives undertaken deliver meaningful results.
- The level of ambition was generally seen as commendable, but some believed that the company could still go further in breaking down some of the traditional preconceptions of the industry and gendered stereotypes of engineering roles in order to overcome barriers to recruiting young people and women in particular.
- Participants encouraged WWU to establish partnerships with other organisations to enhance its recruitment, skills-development and community-engagement processes. Partnerships with youth organisations to raise awareness of the company, as well as career days and apprenticeships, were suggested as other ways to recruit more young people from local communities.
- There was broad approval for looking beyond apprenticeships, including working with the New Futures Network to provide employment opportunities to former prisoners. It was praised as a socially responsible initiative that could also bring a well of untapped talent to WWU.

SUPPORTING CUSTOMERS THROUGH THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Stakeholders were introduced to WWU's four commitments designed to support customers through the energy transition.

- There was fairly strong endorsement of WWU's commitments to support customers through the energy transition, with stakeholders giving an average score of 3.73 on Slido when asked to indicate their agreement with the statement: "Wales & West Utilities' commitments to support customers through the energy transition are acceptable to me." (where 1 represented 'strongly disagree' and 5 represented 'strongly agree')

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- The measures for supporting vulnerable customers through the Net Zero transition and for staying safe and warm were viewed as vital. Attendees praised the work of the PSR support network and the funding provided for partners, but stressed that the funding must be maintained or increased this winter and that additional training for WWU staff on spotting vulnerability must also be provided.
 - Some stakeholders felt that the commitments hit their expected level of ambition, whereas others were not sure whether they were feasible or wanted more background information to determine whether they could be delivered. This was particularly the case around approaches to combat fuel poverty and minimise the number and length of gas outages.
 - Participants emphasised the need for closer collaboration with other utilities in WWU's licence area in order to avoid duplication in PSR engagement and supported long-term partnerships with charities for delivering solutions.
 - Gas Safety Ambassadors were widely supported as an engaging way of reaching out to young people in particular. However, it was stressed that the company would need to promote these schemes proactively in order to ensure that the targeted audiences access them.

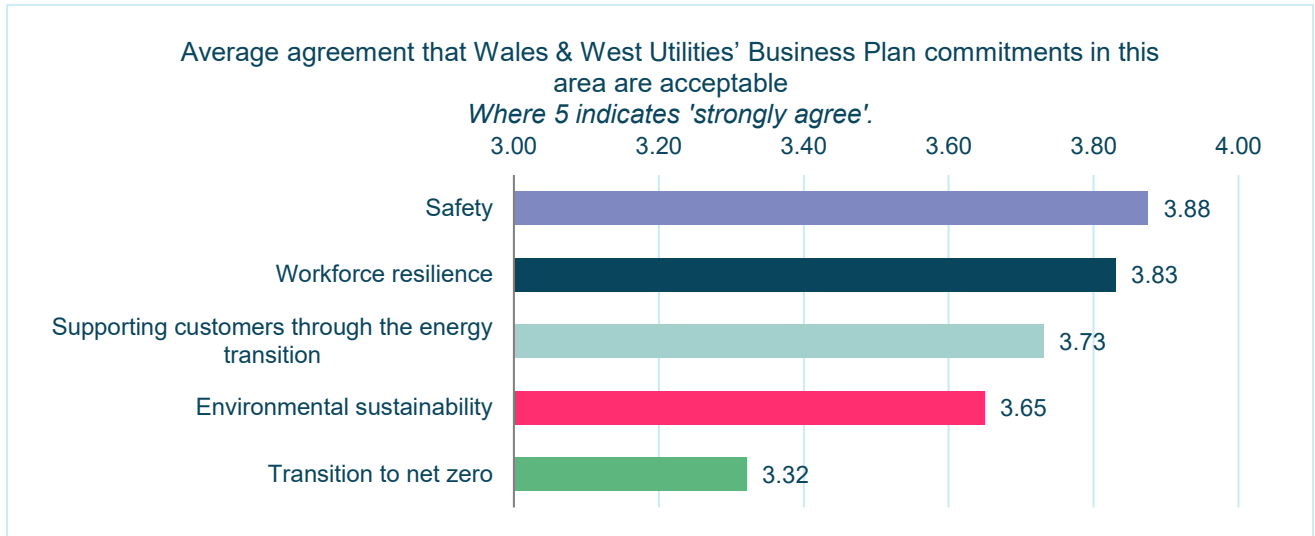
KEEPING CUSTOMERS SAFE FROM CARBON MONOXIDE

Participants were given an outline on WWU's current strategy for protecting customers from carbon monoxide (CO) and on its future ambitions to enhance this work.

- Attendees endorsed WWU's safety commitments during the Slido voting, giving an average score of 3.88 when asked to signal their agreement with the statement: "Wales & West Utilities' safety Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me." (where 1 equated to 'strongly disagree' and 5 equated to 'strongly agree')
- The CO awareness campaigns, school outreach programmes and CO alarm distribution were identified as the most valuable components for the CO safety strategy. However, instead of increased alarm distribution, some wanted to see enhanced educational materials about the dangers of CO, delivered through an expanded network of partners.
- The ambition was broadly viewed positively, with some calling on WWU to get CO meters rolled out to every home in its licence area, while others thought it should prioritise the most at-risk properties, in view of their increased CO risk. A few attendees expressed frustration that the strategy had not been implemented years ago, making the current ambition seem inadequate.
- Some refinements on how WWU should fulfil its future CO safety ambitions were suggested, from customer information campaigns on CO alarm use and maintenance through to targeting the Gas Safety Ambassadors programme at housing associations and older citizens' groups, for example.
- Additional local cross-sector partnerships with trusted community organisations were viewed as vital for targeting these CO safety projects to the most in-need groups and delivering support to them. Other potential partners, such as universities for raising awareness of CO safety among students and youth organisations for delivering outreach programmes, were also identified.

ELECTRONIC VOTING

The table below summarises the average results of the Slido voting on the acceptability of the commitments in each of the Business Plan areas.



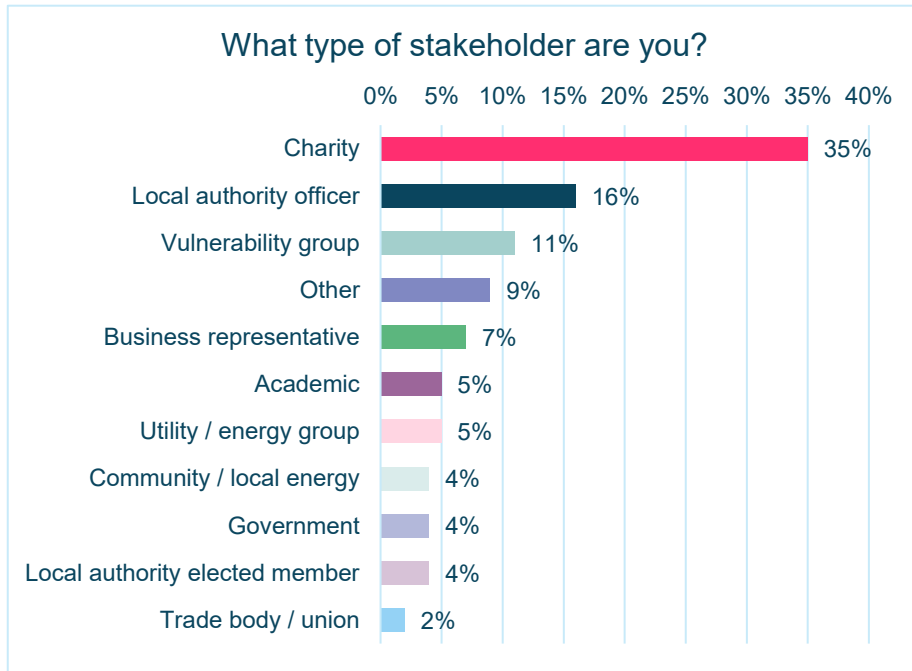
WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

After the workshop, stakeholders were asked to complete a short feedback form. Some of the key findings are shown below. A full breakdown of the feedback can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

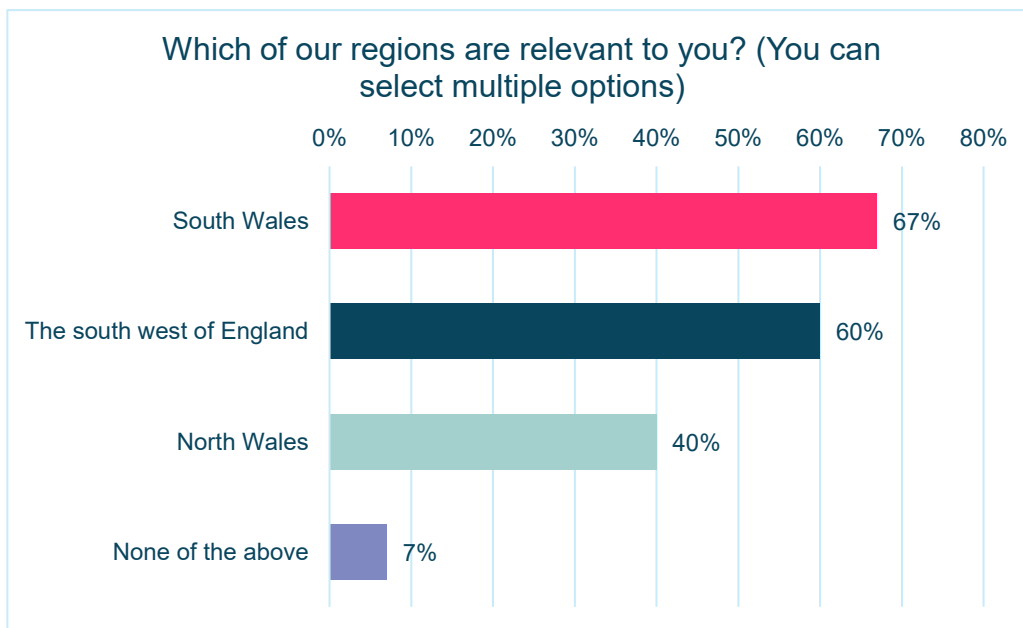
- 36% of attendees who filled out a feedback form told us that they found the workshop 'very interesting', and 64% found it 'interesting'.
- 57% 'strongly agreed' and 43% 'agreed' that they had had an opportunity to make points and ask questions.
- 11% 'strongly agreed' and 82% 'agreed' that the right topics were discussed on the day, with 4% 'disagreeing' and 4% taking a 'neutral' stance.
- 93% thought EQ Communications' facilitation was either 'very good' or 'good'.

ATTENDEES

A total of 73 stakeholders participated in the workshop (both online and in person), representing 64 organisations. The most prominently represented stakeholder groups were charities (accounting for 35% of attendees), local authority officers (16%) and vulnerability groups (11%). (See graph overpage.) A full list of organisations that attended the workshop can be found in Appendix 1.



South Wales was marginally the most relevant WWU region to participants, with 67% choosing this option during Slido voting. This was followed by the South West of England (60%) and North Wales (40%).



SESSION 1: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

After a welcome and introduction to WWU from Gwyn Thomas (Communications and Engagement Senior Manager) and an overview of its RIIO-GD3 commitments from Ian Dunstan (Asset Strategy Manager), the presentation on the environmental sustainability commitments was delivered by Liam Garvey (Regional Energy Planning Manager). To begin, Liam set out the engagement journey and the feedback that informed the final three commitments included in the Business Plan.

The final three commitments were as follows:

1. Help our business and partners to meet national biodiversity objectives. This could involve offering use of our land to community groups.
2. Support the ecosystem by planting more native trees in their natural habitat.
3. Reduce our business carbon footprint in line with government targets, aiming to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050.

Stakeholders were then invited to provide feedback on these commitments during the discussion session.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND AREAS OF INTEREST

All discussions began with introductions. Attendees represented a broad range of stakeholder groups, and many had already engaged with WWU on their own projects or were attending to get more information about WWU's plans in order to inform their own organisations' work. Stakeholders had a wide range of particular areas of interest for the workshop, ranging from support for vulnerable customers to the role of gas networks in addressing climate change and decarbonisation challenges.

OVERALL FEEDBACK ON THE BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENTS

Overall, stakeholders took the view that the environmental sustainability commitments were acceptable and aligned with equivalent commitments adopted by other utility companies. When asked to vote on Slido on their stance towards the statement: "Wales & West Utilities' environmental sustainability Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me", an average score of 3.65 was given (where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree'). The scores among local authority officers (3.75) and vulnerability groups (3.60) were slightly above this overall average, whereas the charity score (3.60) dipped slightly below it.

Stakeholders praised the focus on community collaboration and biodiversity in these three commitments. Many felt that the collaboration opportunities with not-for-profit community organisations to help ensure national biodiversity objectives are met was a positive step and noted that this mirrored the successful approach adopted by Local Nature Partnerships to improve natural environments in Wales. Similarly, the commitment around planting more native trees in their natural habitat to support local ecosystems was endorsed, with a number of stakeholders stressing that WWU should have a positive impact on biodiversity in its licence area.

However, some negatives were also raised, as a number of stakeholders argued that the commitments did not have specific targets, particularly the business carbon footprint commitment, which would make it harder to hold WWU to account over them. Others stated that the commitments had an overly narrow focus and therefore missed additional decarbonisation opportunities, such as working with not-for-profit organisations on managing unused land as green spaces and integrating environmental sustainability initiatives into the wider supply chain.

LEVEL OF AMBITION DISPLAYED

Attendees were generally split around whether these Business Plan commitments were ambitious enough. Some, most notably community group members and business representatives, were of the view that they were suitable, in view of WWU's primary role as a gas distribution network (GDN) and not a conservation group. They felt that the business carbon footprint reduction commitment was particularly appropriate in its ambition, as it conformed to the national government 2050 Net Zero target, arguing that realistic, long-term targets would result in more effective environmental outcomes.

However, despite a notable feeling that WWU's level of ambition was admirable, others were unsure or felt that there was scope for greater ambition, particularly among vulnerability groups. Many questioned the scale of the actions underpinning the commitments and stressed that these initiatives should be benchmarked in order to provide greater clarity around how far the company proposed to go. The target of 6,000 native trees planted each year was discussed in particular, with stakeholders unsure about whether this would really deliver a significant environmental impact.

Others criticised WWU for not leading the way in addressing environmental challenges and seemingly going no further than adhering to minimum statutory requirements. Many local authority officers expressed frustration that WWU was only working towards the 2050 Net Zero target in its commitments, lagging behind the more ambitious targets set by a number of local councils in its licence area. They urged WWU to show greater leadership in this area, spearhead innovation in cleaner technologies and place more emphasis on reducing overall gas consumption.

APPROACH TO DELIVERING THE COMMITMENTS

There was strong support for WWU's proposed collaborative work with local communities to deliver on its commitments around helping to meet national biodiversity objectives and supporting local ecosystems through planting native trees, particularly among charities. Working with community organisations on managing unused or redundant land was seen as a highly appropriate approach, as they often have deep-rooted knowledge of the needs of local residents and groups. If aligned with local policies, these green spaces could serve multiple community needs, being used for allotments or green enterprises, for example. However, others took the view that partnering solely with community organisations would not deliver deeper ecological benefits and felt that regional conservation organisations would be better-placed partners.

However, despite largely viewing the over 6,000 native trees planted each year action as worthwhile, others were concerned about the long-term effectiveness of this initiative. Some stressed that WWU must also

follow up with tree maintenance to ensure that any trees planted contribute to local ecosystems in the long run, while others emphasised that care should be taken to plant the right species in the right place. There were also suggestions made to consider the impact of deforestation through its supply chain in order to address its impact on ecosystems beyond its licence area.

Another key criticism was a perceived lack of detail around how WWU intended to reduce its business carbon footprint ahead of government-mandated targets, with some stakeholders, particularly from the utility sector, calling for more transparency and details on its longer-term Net Zero journey beyond RIIO-GD3. They wanted to see incremental steps outlined up to and beyond 2031 so that they could track progress toward the 2050 target, which would help them plan their long-term projects and investments.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Participants were most strongly in favour of WWU establishing partnerships with local groups and other organisations already embedded in communities, suggesting organisations such as Community Energy Wales, the Living Levels Landscape Partnership and the Forest of Avon Trust as potential suitable partners for WWU in these efforts. Local Nature Partnerships were also thought to be a good avenue to explore, as they contained multiple relevant local bodies and representatives, in addition to Scout groups on tree-planting schemes.

Others looked beyond community partnerships and suggested collaborations with larger groups, particularly around knowledge sharing. It was argued that WWU might benefit from insight on how other large organisations, such as National Highways, operate, which may offer different perspectives on biodiversity efforts. Others recommended forging partnerships with higher education institutions or trade groups in order to tap into the wider pool of environmental expertise available and get new ideas.

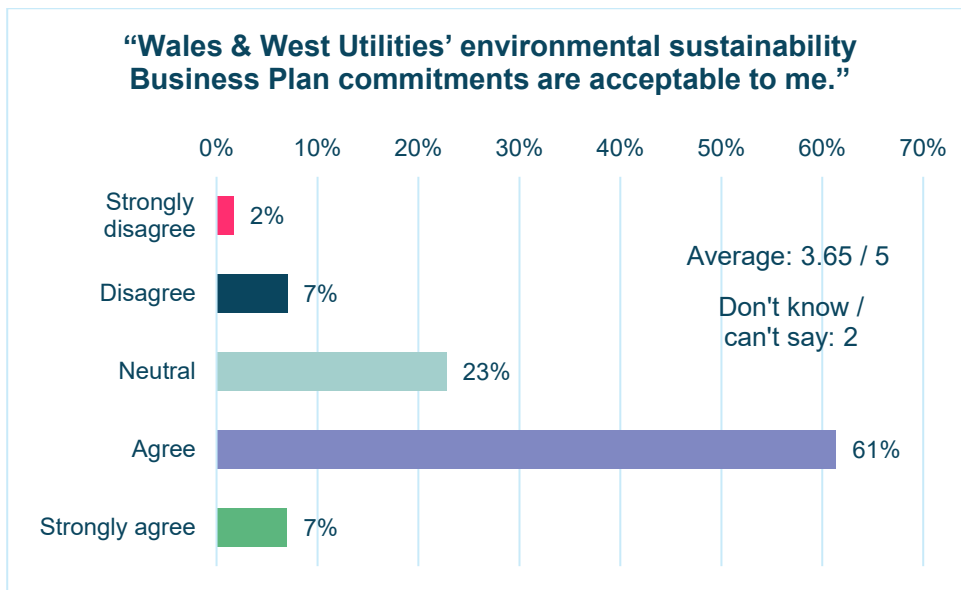
VERBATIM COMMENTS AND VOTING

1. Who do you represent and do you have any particular areas of interest for this event?

- "I'm the cabinet member for climate change and biodiversity, so that's a key issue for us, and I'd like to know what WWU is doing in this regard." Local authority officer
- "I'm from Cardiff University, and we work with WWU on loads of projects, such as the gas turbine research centre in Port Talbot and alternative fuels like hydrogen and biogas." Academic
- "I work for a not-for-profit organisation, and we work with upstream gas networks and distribution network operators to provide debt and fuel poverty advice. We are just starting a project in Somerset too." Vulnerability group
- "I'm the energy carbon manager at a university in WWU's patch. We're definitely on our way towards the Net Zero journey. Our target is 2035, but I'm very interested to see what WWU can contribute towards that journey. We are one of the large gas consumers as well, so it's important to see what the plans are for the next couple years going forward." Academic
- "I work for National Energy Action, a national fuel poverty charity. Several of our programmes are funded through the VCMA, either with individual GDNs or collaborations between all four of them.

I'm here to understand what the plans are for GD3 and provide input, where useful, around vulnerable gas customers and making sure a just transition to Net Zero is high on the agenda.”
 Charity

2. How do you feel about the following statement: “Wales & West Utilities’ environmental sustainability Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me”?



3. What do you think of our environmental sustainability Business Plan commitments? What are the positives? What are the negatives?

- “It starts strong with a number of trees, but then the Net Zero is all wishy-washy, with nothing very firm there, for example electrifying fleets or adapting buildings to make them Net Zero. You need to set specific targets. This looks like it’s taken out of a government document.” Environmental group
- “Yes, specific targets are needed for accountability, something people can look at and evaluate whether they’ve achieved.” Vulnerability group
- “Biodiversity net gain is important. We cannot just strip away the land. We need to have a positive impact. Therefore, I like this plan.” Business representative
- “There is no real substance on how you will meet the Net Zero concerns, and you seem transfixed on being a gas provider rather than looking at other opportunities to decarbonise.” Local authority officer
- “It’s really positive that you’ve got not-for-profit community organisations included in your commitments, and collaboration with community groups, but you can go wider.” Local authority officer
- “It’s great to see you’re working with local communities through the not-for-profit organisations. That’s a really good way forward. That’s how Local Nature Partnerships have been taking nature forward in Wales.” Local authority officer
- “I would like to see you look at other commercial enterprises. Why is it restricted to not-for-profit organisations, when there are others who can help foster and deliver your strategy and who have more resources to accelerate you further.” Charity
- “There needs to be an ambition about the supply chain. A business-as-usual approach and merely seeing these commitments as bolt-ons on the side is not what anybody wants, so it would be nice to see that visible.” Environmental group
- “I think that these Business Plan commitments are in line with what everyone else is doing.” Local authority officer

4. Do you feel we are showing the right level of ambition? If not, why not?

- “WWU can really show leadership in their biodiversity work, then others will follow. Therefore, it is really important for WWU to push beyond where they have to be and look to the future, and then communities will follow. It’s hard to be driving change if you’re not being the change yourself.” Vulnerability group
- “A lot of councils are declaring emergencies and have targets closer than 2050. It’s frustrating that service providers are behind on that and not supporting what can be achieved before 2050.” Local authority officer
- “If you could achieve three goals in one go, that would be really good. Planting 6,000 native trees and hedgerows is good, but putting this into a community orchard that would be an asset to the local area and produce food for local people would be far better. So, it’s about squeezing the juice

out of every action. Also, I'm not sure if 6,000 trees is a lot, so is that really a big commitment?"

Vulnerability group

- "You're supporting fuel initiatives, but I want to see more about reducing energy use. I would say that reducing energy usage belongs in sustainability, so it's strange that it's not in this Venn diagram." Charity
- "They could be more ambitious and go beyond what the Government is asking from us. WWU have to set an example for other business and partners to follow." Community group
- "For me, it's about that ambition to be able to ensure the entire gas network is fit for hydrogen. Rural communities especially are down the priority ladder, and I am not confident that WWU will ensure the hydrogen is renewable." Local authority officer
- "It sounds like the right level, considering that your organisation isn't fundamentally a conservation organisation. The local nature recovery strategy is being worked on throughout the local authorities and county. You don't want piecemeal projects, you want it fitting in at an overall landscape level." Community group
- "Setting targets is great, but sometimes people rush into things. The year 2050 for Net Zero is a good idea, as it gives us quite a lot of years. However, there are still many things to change. For example, the government have gone for 2030 for electric cars, but the target proved to be unachievable." Business representative

5. Do you agree with our approach to delivering these commitments?

- "If you're looking at reforestation, you also have to avoid deforestation overseas and take into account your global footprint and the impact you're having overseas through your supply chain." Environmental group
- "Tree maintenance will be key to delivering the ecosystem support commitment, as you need to ensure that the 6,000 trees planted deliver your intended impact long term." Vulnerability group
- "We do a lot with communities and green space use, and we have seen that there is quite a demand for food-growing sites, but also interesting green enterprises. Therefore, we feel there is scope for using green spaces for a broad range of activities, which could be particularly beneficial if they link into local policies and strategies." Charity
- "The plan could be more specific when it comes to working towards meeting Net Zero emission targets. There could be more smaller steps describing how we will achieve Net Zero by 2050." Utility / energy group
- "It's nice to focus on community groups, but there are regional conservation organisations which should be key partners in delivering real biodiversity, rather than just window dressing." Local authority officer
- "There are differences between the Welsh Government and England, so your commitments should cover the whole region, not just an element of it." Utility / energy group
- "It would be good to get feedback on how WWU measure their progress on planning work beyond 2031. It would be useful to know where the key stakeholders are, so we can predict advice and

demand areas as well as what vulnerabilities might be expected and extended.” Vulnerability group

- “In built-up areas, it’s important to plant the right trees, those with roots that grow down so they don’t buckle pavements, and that thought process seems to be lacking.” Gas safety organisation

6. Who do we need to collaborate with to deliver these commitments? Is there potential to work with your organisation?

- “My only concern with these commitments is how we get in touch with WWU. How can they be more approachable for partnership? It only operates in a small part of our country.” Business representative.
- “It’s important that you work with a comprehensive list of local community groups, such as Living Levels.” Local authority officer
- “In Bristol, you have the Forest of Avon Trust, which creates and manages local community forests. What they’re looking for is funding for this, because the expertise already exists on the ground.” Charity
- “I’d also suggest looking at other companies’ work on biodiversity outside of your sector, such as National Highways. It will give you a different viewpoint and different ideas. Look at your existing sector, but other companies with a bigger scale can also help.” Vulnerability group
- “The local councils would be an obvious one, and I know with the LAEPs you’d be doing that. Are the Hydrogen Body a trade group? Higher education is another obvious one. There’s a big list.” Academic
- “We work with community groups. Every local authority and the three national parks have a Local Nature Partnership. They’d be a good point of contact to put you in touch with the relevant groups and local communities to take things forward in a more coordinated approach.” Local authority officer
- “Community Energy Wales has said the biggest barrier for them to get renewable installations off the ground is no finance for smaller operations, which are more likely to be community-owned. Partnerships with WWU could support these types of renewable projects.” Environmental group
- “Scout groups could quite easily be encouraged to come and plant in green spaces, as they are interested in the environment. Education on the Net Zero transition is important for Scouts.” Community group
- “It depends on the activity. For example, National Energy Action doesn’t really get involved with green spaces but are more around providing advice and support to householders and campaigning around fuel poverty and energy efficiency. The key to it is finding the organisation that is the expert. It’s constructive to have a network of lots of different organisations that are specialists in what they do. You are then more likely with them to achieve your objectives.” Charity

SESSION 2: TRANSITION TO NET ZERO

The presentation on the transition to Net Zero Business Plan commitments was given by Liam Garvey. Liam began by outlining the stakeholder engagement process to develop the final three commitments and highlighted the key feedback that had influenced them.

The three Business Plan commitments were as follows:

1. Evolve the business to support energy system decarbonisation, which includes preparing to deliver low-carbon hydrogen as a substitute for natural gas. This means taking steps towards making the network hydrogen-ready by 2035 in key areas and fully ready by 2040, for example by replacing old gas pipes and apparatus to safely transport hydrogen.
2. Expand and improve our low-carbon gas connections, including biomethane from organic feed stock such as material that would otherwise go to waste.
3. Lower carbon emissions by facilitating replacement of up to 20% of the gas we transport with low-carbon hydrogen.

Stakeholders were then asked to provide feedback on these commitments during the discussion session.

SUMMARY

OVERALL FEEDBACK ON THE BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENTS

Support for the three transition to Net Zero Business Plan commitments was more muted among participants compared with the other commitments discussed at the event. When asked to vote on Slido on their stance towards the statement: “Wales & West Utilities’ transition to Net Zero Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me”, an average score of 3.32 was given (where 1 was ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 was ‘strongly agree’). This was the lowest average score across the five sets of commitments or ambitions at the workshop. The level of endorsement varied significantly between stakeholder types, with average scores of 3.00 for charity representatives, 3.25 for local authority officers and 4.25 for vulnerability group attendees.

During discussions, there was notable support for the energy decarbonisation and low-carbon hydrogen commitments, with many participants viewing hydrogen as a crucial component of the energy transition, thanks to its potential for decarbonising heating and transport systems. Local authority officers and utility groups in particular were enthusiastic about the potential opportunities presented through these commitments, such as supplying hydrogen to new-build homes through polyethylene pipe networks and using hydrogen as fuel for larger vehicles, like waste trucks and gritters. Others were in favour of the idea of using blended hydrogen, arguing it would be more cost-efficient, as it would use the existing gas infrastructure and not require investment in entirely new systems.

Conversely, other attendees were more cautious towards these two commitments and were uncertain about whether they could be delivered, due to a lack of technical feasibility and public nervousness around hydrogen safety. Some took the view that the heavy emphasis on hydrogen as a domestic heating source was a cause for concern, as there are no guarantees that it will work, in view of national government pilot

projects being cancelled repeatedly. The public perception of hydrogen was seen as a bigger issue among many stakeholders, particularly local authority officers and utilities representatives. They stressed that WWU should roll out careful engagement and communications campaigns in order to overcome myths around hydrogen and other clean gases and reassure the public that it is a safe option.

In addition to these information campaigns, it was emphasised that WWU must also provide practical support around installing new hydrogen-compatible boilers and cookers in order to minimise the stress and disruption caused to customers. There were fears that, if left to do this unassisted, many older or more vulnerable customers would opt not to adopt these newer technologies. Concerns around costs and the risk of exacerbating fuel poverty were also raised, with vulnerability group representatives in particular warning that these commitments could unintentionally increase costs for consumers, resulting in increased fuel poverty. WWU would need to address all these aspects when delivering these commitments to ensure that a just transition is achieved.

LEVEL OF AMBITION DISPLAYED

Attendees were divided on whether these commitments displayed a suitable level of ambition, with several participants asking for more clarity and transparency on the delivery approach and the targets. While some appreciated the ambition of the biomethane commitment, they wanted more precise targets for delivering it. Questions were also raised about whether the commitment to replace 20% of the gas transported by WWU with hydrogen was sufficiently ambitious, with stakeholders stressing that benchmarking should be used to clarify WWU's level of ambition.

Others took the view that WWU could show greater ambition in its commitment to deliver a fully hydrogen-ready network by 2040. Despite acknowledging the scale and challenge behind this, there was a feeling that 2040 was too far away, some stakeholders suggesting that WWU take inspiration from other countries, such as Germany, to speed up its hydrogen roll-out. Several others took the view that there were further untapped opportunities for using hydrogen, beyond cooking and heating, and believed that WWU could expand its ambition to cover these new emerging opportunities.

Conversely, a number of stakeholders endorsed the 2040 deadline for delivering a fully hydrogen-ready network. They felt that a longer timeframe to implement the required policy and infrastructure was sensible, given the major shift required, and thought that it was an achievable target. However, this support was caveated among others, as they were worried about the bill impacts of aiming for a 2040 deadline, particularly for vulnerable customers, and wanted to see them protected. Others commended the ambition of the drive towards domestic hydrogen, but stressed that it needed to align with broader energy strategies, such as the current governmental focus on heat pumps, and wanted WWU to identify areas where hydrogen could make the most impact, such as green transport.

APPROACH TO DELIVERING THE COMMITMENTS

Many agreed with the overall direction of WWU's approach to delivering its commitments, with particular support for the efforts to upskill employees so that they are prepared to work with the new technologies. In

particular, they emphasised the importance of providing comprehensive safety training to engineers working with hydrogen, including those with gas safety certificates, and noted that a well-run company should be upskilling its employees as business as usual. By contrast, others were nervous about whether the company could recruit and retain enough employees with suitable skill sets to deliver the domestic hydrogen roll-out in a competitive job market and questioned how WWU intended to address this.

By contrast, others took issue with what they perceived to be a lack of detail in the overall approach. One described it as “vague” and suggested it did not contain enough specific details about WWU’s proposed actions under each commitment. There were calls for additional communications from WWU and simpler messaging in order to spell out more clearly how the approach would affect the day-to-day lives of its customers. This was seen as particularly important in view of the current low level of understanding of these new technologies among the general population.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

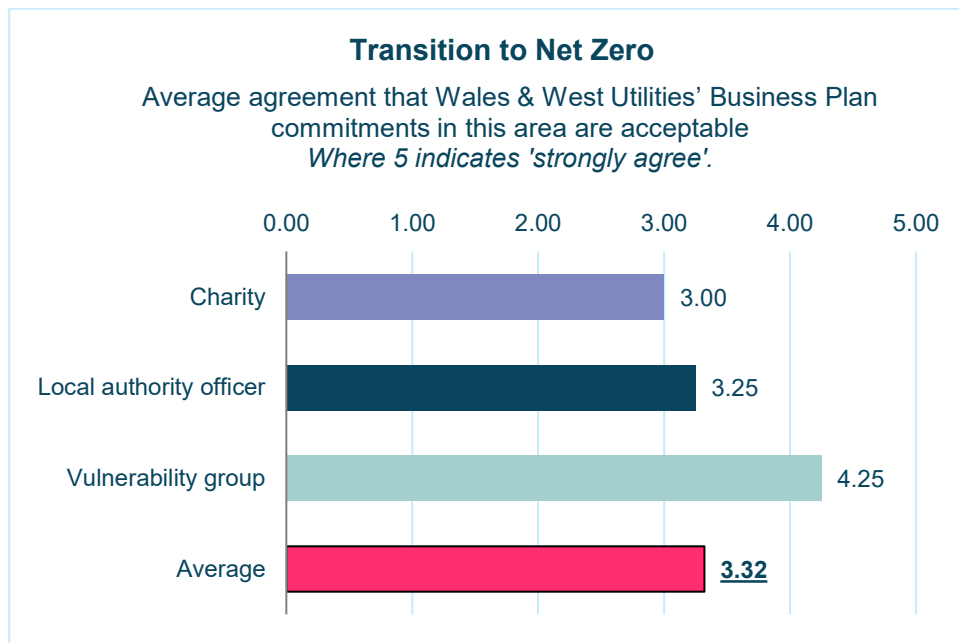
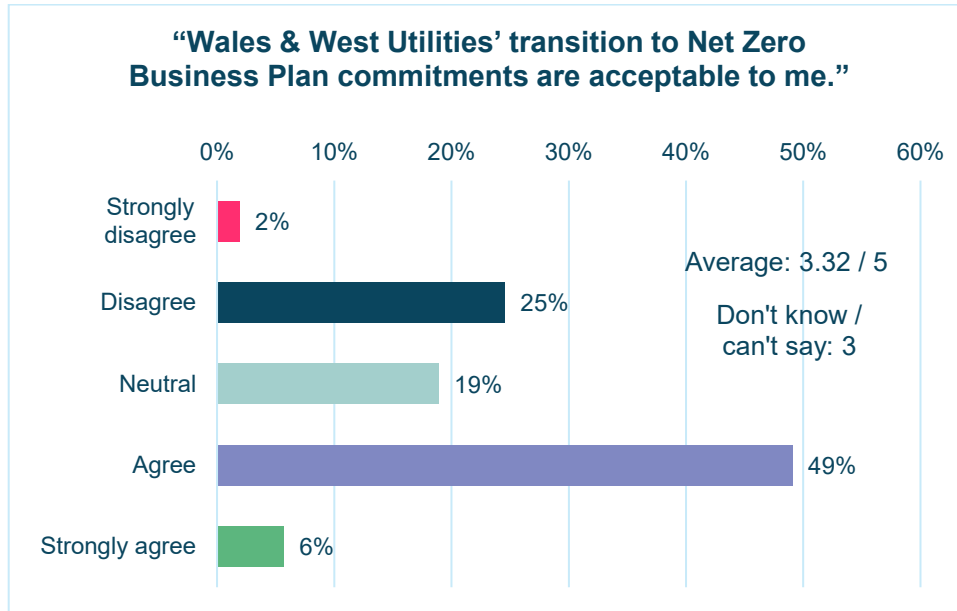
Participants emphasised the importance of collaboration between WWU and other organisations in order to fulfil its decarbonisation commitments and identified a number of partners from different sectors. Local authority officers in attendance expressed a desire to work with WWU in support of their Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs), which include gas networks, so that local authorities could help support WWU’s decarbonisation ambitions. However, WWU was urged to be transparent and proactive in communicating with them about its plans so that local businesses and organisations would have enough time to amend their own strategies and operations accordingly.

Others pointed to potential collaborative opportunities around communications and public outreach between WWU and other organisations. Business representatives in particular expressed their interest in collaborating with WWU on public outreach initiatives, with one noting their organisation’s involvement in community events and school volunteer programmes across Wales. These kinds of community events and school volunteer programmes could be used to raise awareness of WWU’s efforts to help achieve Net Zero and ease public concerns about the changes required, particularly within communities that may otherwise feel disconnected from energy transition initiatives.

Vulnerability groups argued that partnerships between WWU and themselves and local charities would play a vital role in helping vulnerable customers navigate the decarbonisation transition. They noted that they were well placed to act as independent, trusted experts to offer advice to customers, particularly around decarbonising their homes, empowering them to make informed decisions. By fostering greater awareness among these vulnerable groups, it would help ensure a more inclusive transition to Net Zero. Additionally, others from vulnerability groups highlighted the challenge of off-grid customers and called on WWU to work with local and national governments to ensure that these groups are not left behind in the hydrogen transition.

VERBATIM COMMENTS AND VOTING

1. How do you feel about the following statement: “Wales & West Utilities’ transition to Net Zero Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me”?



2. What do you think of our transition to Net Zero Business Plan commitments? What are the positives? What are the negatives?

- “We do a lot of work with network heating, and it’s debatable if that will work for new-build homes. The PE pipe network will be able to supply hydrogen.” Utility / energy group
- “It’s really positive to see the inclusion of improving the network for the possibility of hydrogen in it. My personal opinion is that’s going to be really key to decarbonising the energy systems. There’s obviously a focus here around domestic use, but there’s actually a big opportunity with hydrogen. EVs are not suitable for a lot of larger vehicles, such as waste vehicles and gritters, and hydrogen could be really useful, particularly using a blend.” Local authority officer
- “There is a lot about the increase in costs for the provision of services post the change, but history is littered with unintended consequences, and we need to make sure that we don’t create or exacerbate fuel poverty. Somewhere in the plan, you need to protect customers from unnecessary costs and from being dropped into fuel poverty, especially if they are vulnerable.” Vulnerability group
- “If you have a safety incident, just one, you will lose everyone. You have to respect hydrogen. Consumers don’t need to change anything until distribution goes over 20%.” Academic
- “You have to remember that changing a boiler and cooking utilities are part of that transition, and part of engagement will involve education but also reducing stress and pressure.” Local authority officer
- “Hydrogen is a definite positive. I think hydrogen should be put through the gas network. Why would you create infrastructure when you already have it there? Blending as well is a really good idea.” Local authority officer
- “With Powys being quite a rural community, a lot of properties are not on the gas network. There are a lot of people burning wood etc. Is there a way to support those properties to be more carbon neutral in their energy usage as well?” Local authority officer
- “How will you help customers who don’t even know what this new technology is, who don’t have time to invest? The bigger picture piece is missing, and it’s not clear how you will take every single customer and make sure no one is left behind.” Utility / energy group
- “The Business Plan as it’s structured relating to hydrogen seems out of kilter with the direction of travel. There isn’t any expectation that hydrogen will support large vehicle infrastructure, which needs to be reconciled.” Utility / energy group
- “These commitments will be supported through a communications piece that establishes among the public that this transition in domestic heating will not cause great upheaval, thanks to the simplicity of upgrading modern gas boilers. For the consumers, apart from having an appointment for an engineer to come, they should not notice a difference in terms of heating. It’s just a case of getting the logistics ready.” Local authority officer

3. Do you feel we are showing the right level of ambition? If not, why not?

- “I like the ambition around biomethane, but I’d like it to be more specific. Rather than just trying to do more, it would be good to know how much more. There is this narrative that the gas network is

going to disappear, but we have to make sure that there is investor confidence. So you show that ambition but make sure the investment will still be there in the future.” Vulnerability group

- “I’d like to have some clarification on the timescales, so saying that you’re fully ready for hydrogen by 2040 seems to be a bit slow in the progress. Could we use the lessons learned and best practice from Germany in the way that we get a blended system?” Charity
- “I do think it’s the right level. It’s a massive project and very costly. I worry about who will pay the cost and how it will affect customers’ bills, but I still think it’s the right thing to do. My concern is where the hydrogen comes from. If it’s recycled, then it’s great, but if it’s not, it’s as bad as fossil fuels. WWU needs to be clear on where it will come from.” Environmental group
- “What is the ‘20% of the gas that we transport’ based on? Is it ambitious enough?” Business representative
- “There’s a lot more opportunity for the use of hydrogen within our energy systems, which isn’t just in heating or in cooking. There’s an opportunity there to widen the ambition.” Local authority officer
- “I’m curious as to why there is a target for low carbon hydrogen but not one for biomethane? How does it stack up in sustainability credentials? Is it only 1% or is it 50% of your plans? There is nothing to gauge it against, so we can’t comment on if that’s an ambitious commitment or not.” Environmental group
- “The ambition for promoting hydrogen is admirable. I suppose there needs to be a recognition that government policy does not facilitate that, though. On the governmental level, there is a strong move to heat pumps. This plan needs to investigate that and say more about in which areas, say in green transport or long-haul freight, hydrogen can be promoted.” Utility / energy group
- “I think it’s very ambitious, but whether it’s realistic is another thing. You have to be honest that we’re miles off Net Zero by any reasonable timeline.” Charity
- “I like these ambitions. The plan includes a long delivery time, which is smart. It is not just pulled out of thin air, but there has been time given to fulfil this big target. It seems doable.” Business representative

4. Do you agree with our approach to delivering these commitments?

- “I agree with the approach. However, you must be more honest with where it becomes redundant.” Local authority officer
- “The approach seems a bit light. ‘Develop new policies’ sounds a bit vague to me.” Academic
- “Upskilling colleagues is just what a good company should be doing anyway. That just sounds like you’re stating a given, especially if you want to be using hydrogen. You also need to upskill the communities, as you’re running a network. Can you be upskilling there and making sure that people with gas safety certificates also understand how to work with hydrogen?” Vulnerability group
- “Collaborating with other organisations and other partners is key to getting all this stuff right. Working with people who are experts in the field of whatever you’re trying to achieve.” Charity

- “Community engagement is key, but you also need to be transparent. Simplify the message and make it easier to understand. When people understand what you are trying to say, it is easier to adopt certain things.” Business representative
- “The general level of understanding of this is quite low, in terms of what it practically means for the home. We need to bring people up to speed in terms of understanding what it actually means for them.” Vulnerability group
- “Everybody is in the war for the same talent, so what will WWU do to attract the skills and experience needed to deliver on this?” Business representative
- “Many say that having blue hydrogen is not good enough, as it comes from oil, so a source that is not sustainable. If hydrogen is adopted, more people will understand that this fuel is the way to go forward. Still, there is the lack of infrastructure to adopt hydrogen.” Developer
- “We must be careful and not approach this with a one-size-fits-all approach.” Local authority officer

5. Who do we need to collaborate with to deliver these commitments? Is there potential to work with your organisation?

- “You could work with local authorities. Every local authority in Wales has a LAEP, and, as part of those plans, there are commitments around the gas network, such as hydrogen production, so we are already engaged.” Local authority officer
- “Yes, it could be possible, but our customers are not even on the gas network (they are on oil and liquified petroleum gas), which means that offering hydrogen widens our gap. There’s also the fact that boilers are not ready for hydrogen, so there’s a cost increase, and who pays for this? I think WWU needs to ask themselves whether they can get hydrogen delivered to our communities’ pipes. Moreover, I think we need more conversations about priorities between utilities and governments, and see where these can meet together.” Vulnerability group
- “There’s opportunity there for collaborating with charities and groups that work with vulnerable customers.” Local authority officer
- “I think a big part of the work is general awareness raising around what hydrogen means. The aim is to utilise existing systems and will hopefully offer a much lower cost option than air source heat pumps and is more able to be used in various types of housing. There’s opportunity there for collaborating with charities and groups that work with vulnerable customers.” Local authority officer
- “My company covers all of Wales. We try to attend community events and to volunteer at schools. We want to link up somehow to deliver these messages. We want to make sure people feel more confident about decarbonisation and Net Zero.” Business representative
- “It’s going to take investment and planning. Companies need to be informed years in advance about this. You need to communicate a lot more to outside organisations about your plans so we can get our own strategies in place.” Local authority officer
- “To invest in activities that offer customers choices, WWU need to work with organisations who are subject matter experts in the field, who are trusted and independent, so people can have

independent advice and make informed choices about what is being offered to them, if they're looking to decarbonise their homes." Vulnerability group

SESSION 3: WORKFORCE RESILIENCE

Bethan Jones (Head of People and Engagement) introduced the third session of the workshop on workforce resilience. As a starting point, she set out the steps taken by WWU to form the final two Business Plan commitments in this area and the key feedback elicited from employees during the engagement process.

The two Business Plan commitments were as follows:

1. Attract diverse and talented people who reflect the communities we serve and have or can develop the skills needed to deliver a Net Zero network.
2. Invest in improving our colleagues' knowledge and skills so we can deliver a Net Zero ready network.

Stakeholders then commented on these commitments during the discussion session.

SUMMARY

OVERALL FEEDBACK ON THE BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENTS

There was a fairly strong level of endorsement for the workforce resilience Business Plan commitments among participants. During Slido voting on their stance towards the statement: "Wales & West Utilities' workforce resilience Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me", an average score of 3.83 was given (where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree'), the second highest of the scores at the workshop. The average scores were distributed fairly tightly at stakeholder group level, with 3.71 among charity representatives, 3.88 among local authority officers and 4.00 for vulnerability group representatives.

Many stakeholders appreciated the forward-facing nature of the commitments, with training, upskilling and employee diversity running through them as key elements. The wide range of actions underpinning them was thought to align with current labour market expectations and with the initiatives supporting similar commitments by major companies, indicating that WWU was following broader industry trends in this area. Therefore, there was cautious optimism that WWU was broadly taking steps in the right direction.

Nevertheless, others identified some negative aspects. A number of participants also questioned whether the commitments addressed workforce diversity explicitly enough, particularly in terms of attracting, retaining and developing older workers. While recognising the importance of recruiting younger workers, many felt that there was a gap in these commitments around considering the flexible working and training needs of this older group, many of whom may have caring responsibilities or wish to return to work after a period of absence. Others took the view that the commitments may not clearly outline how WWU intends to achieve regional diversity within its overall workforce, particularly at management levels. The point was made that employees from other utilities firms had mistakenly believed that only senior positions were available in the major cities in licence areas in the past. Therefore, WWU was encouraged to clarify to its employees that they would not have to work away from their local communities in order to move higher up the company.

LEVEL OF AMBITION DISPLAYED

Some stakeholder groups, particularly charities and environmental groups, commended the level of ambition shown, particularly around employee engagement, community outreach and efforts to equip employees with suitable skills for their changing roles within a decarbonising gas network. Despite this, concerns were raised that the focus on technological know-how may be overly narrow, resulting in some attendees emphasising that efforts to develop employee soft skills would be equally essential to building a suitable workforce for achieving the company's Net Zero goals. A key message during discussions was that, while the level of ambition was commendable, many of the actions underpinning the commitments did not push the boundaries enough to make the significant impact required to address the sizable workforce challenges.

More broadly, others voiced doubts about whether WWU's commitments and the approaches to delivering them were ambitious enough to overcome the recruitment barriers holding back young workers and females in particular from entering its workforce. In order to overcome this, it was felt that more targeted outreach work in schools would be needed in order to break down traditional preconceptions of the industry and gender stereotypes around engineering roles, and to highlight the green role played by GDNs in helping the drive to Net Zero. Such engagement would make many additional people feel that there was a suitable role available for them within WWU, particularly among the potential next generation of workers.

APPROACH TO DELIVERING THE COMMITMENTS

A key message from stakeholders was that any actions to deliver these commitments must yield substantial results and not be merely performative or box-ticking exercises. This worry was particularly acute around inclusivity initiatives. WWU was urged to ensure that diverse groups within its workforce are meaningfully integrated under these commitments and to introduce clear, measurable goals around workforce resilience so that its progress can be tracked.

Attendees also endorsed the continuous learning and career development initiatives under these commitments, particularly around providing training to employees to adapt for the future skills changes needed. However, in order to reinforce these actions, the point was made that WWU should set out long-term career paths for its employees so that they felt a sense of progression within the company. The use of outreach campaigns through partnerships with educational institutions was also viewed as a valuable way of engaging young people around STEM subjects and introducing them to career opportunities within the utilities sector. This early engagement was seen as critical for cultivating future talent and making the energy industry an attractive career path for young people.

The focus on wellbeing within WWU's approach to delivering these commitments was welcomed, with a number of representatives calling on the company to prioritise the mental health of its employees. WWU's intention to develop management programmes that foster psychological safety were viewed positively overall. However, it was also felt that more could be done around managing the wellbeing of customer-facing employees operating communications channels to reduce the level of stress in their roles. In addition, more broadly, others noted that managers could communicate more proactively about the direction of travel

within their team in order to build team resilience and ensure that members are prepared for any upcoming changes. This is particularly critical for dispersed teams working outside of office environments.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Overall, stakeholders took the view that partnerships could assist with workforce resilience through enhancing recruitment, skills development and community engagement. Partnerships with recruitment organisations and agencies were seen as potentially valuable for developing more inclusive hiring practices, tailoring recruitment models to specific communities and providing industry-specific skills to vulnerable people as well as assisting them in finding suitable roles in the sector.

Charities were particularly supportive of partnering with learning bodies and other groups developing employability schemes, such as Careers Wales, local colleges and Disability Wales. It was felt that these organisations could help WWU deliver its workforce resilience commitments, either through their available resources on recruitment and engagement best practices or as a pipeline to new talent. Community groups also highlighted the potential benefit of working with youth charities, such as the Talent Foundry and the Scouts, as they noted that these groups' hands-on activities could help identify young people with leadership potential who might be overlooked by more traditional recruitment methods.

Conversely, local authority officers and business representatives were keen to see WWU explore partnerships based around direct community initiatives and engagement. In particular, there were calls for the company to attend career days at schools and provide apprenticeships to local young people in order to present an appealing image of the industry and skills-development opportunities. It was hoped that these community-outreach partnerships would help local communities by providing meaningful long-term employment for their young people, while also helping WWU by bringing new talent into the company.

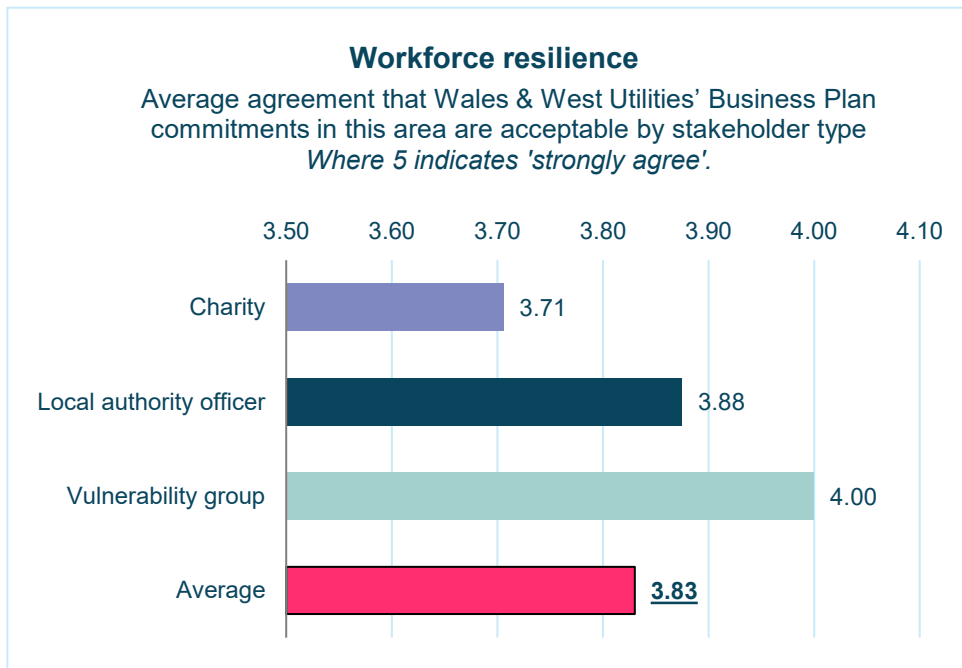
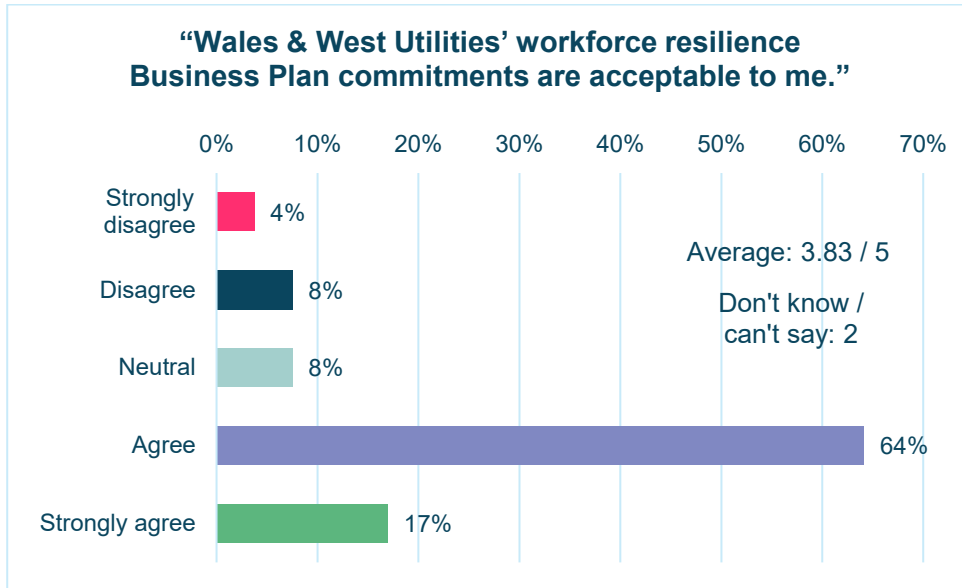
RECRUITMENT PROGRAMMES BEYOND APPRENTICESHIPS

Stakeholders generally supported WWU in exploring recruitment programmes beyond apprenticeships, such as the government's New Futures Network scheme, which offers job opportunities to serving prisoners and prison leavers, as it was felt that such an approach would be beneficial for both parties. Attendees from a wide range of different stakeholder groups took the view that providing employment to former prisoners was a vital step to helping them reintegrate into society by providing them with a stable routine and responsibilities within their role. A number of attendees pointed to the success of a similar recruitment model by Timpsons and encouraged WWU to use it as a template for its own efforts.

More broadly, others thought that recruiting former prisoners was a morally laudable approach, as it would deliver fair employment opportunities for all across society and present a well of untapped talent to WWU. Others also noted that this proposed approach is evidence that WWU is working to widen the scope of its recruitment to individuals from overlooked backgrounds and praised the intention behind it.

VERBATIM COMMENTS AND VOTING

1. How do you feel about the following statement: “Wales & West Utilities’ workforce resilience Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me”?



2. What do you think of our workforce resilience Business Plan commitments? What are the positives? What are the negatives?

- “It’s so competitive to get decent staff, and the questions that young people come back with are very different to what they were asking previously, especially around home working. They tend to expect to be able to work remotely since the pandemic. The plan seems diverse and good, but the evidence will be in the results.” Charity
- “It might be that the further up the organisation you go, the less diverse it gets, so that needs to be a focus. South Wales is very different to Cornwall and North Wales, so do you take a regional approach to that? In our work with Scottish Power, one of the perceptions was that if you were going to be promoted then it would be moving to Glasgow or Liverpool, and we had to show that there’s the potential to progress in their career but stay local.” Vulnerability group
- “When you are looking to recruit, I think there is a need to have messages that resonate with the people you want. Our students are wanting to change the world, and you need to show that students could do that at Wales and West. It would be different for people 40 years into their career.” Vulnerability group
- “I’ve spoken to Wales and West Utilities about this before. There is a lot of emphasis on Gen Z, and when I asked about older people in their workforce, so 50+, and development for them, there wasn’t anything. From what I’ve just heard, I’m not sure if that’s progressed at all.” Vulnerability group
- “In order to meet the top level of ambition, we need to strengthen and support within the organisation to ensure the transition is supported and everyone is given the skills needed, as well as looking at your external communication and outreach towards the community you’re serving.” Local authority officer
- “What about the older workforce who have training and flexible work needs, caring responsibilities, or are wanting to return to the workforce?” Vulnerability group
- “I like that you are looking after your staff by providing it with training and upskilling. These people can develop soft skills, like time-planning and communication skills, which can help them progress their career.” Business representative
- “I think it’s really forward-thinking. Lots of people with smaller organisations would love to have these sorts of opportunities. The thing is, it’s not just talking the talk, it’s walking the walk.” Charity
- “These initiatives are similar to other major companies’, which indicates to me that this is the right thing to be doing.” Business representative

3. Do you feel we are showing the right level of ambition? If not, why not?

- “Practical jobs can often be male-dominated, so maybe you need to challenge those preconceptions in order to get more gender balance in the workplace.” Utility / energy group
- “No, we are not giving young people enough knowledge that the utility sector exists and is there for them as a career choice.” Local authority officer

- “All of these are the right things, they’re the standard things to look at, and it’s more of a common-sense test. There is nothing groundbreaking or ‘wow!’ You are going to have to go a little bit further.” Utility / energy group
- “I agree the ambition is excellent. Do you engage with colleges and help them with their training courses to see what they’re looking for and look at renewable technologies with them? Are you going out there to sell yourselves?” Local authority officer
- “I think the ambition is excellent across the employee and the Net Zero side.” Charity
- “When people think about Net Zero skills or green skills, there is a lot of focus on technological skills, but a lot of research shows that the barriers are more often political, cultural and psychological.” Environmental group
- “We need to equip people to face those challenges by embracing soft skills. Compassion and empathy are really important for this transition.” Environmental group
- “Utilities is facing a recruitment cliff edge with retirees to come. It’s making yourself an attractive employer from a young person’s perspective. There will be jobs at GDNs that don’t exist in 10 years from now because of the changes.” Community group
- “Is the investment in apprenticeships going to provide specific support for people from rural backgrounds? Rural dwellers are more likely to face barriers to accessing apprenticeships, with most apprenticeships in urban areas, such as deficient transport links.” Local authority officer

4. Do you agree with our approach to delivering these commitments?

- “Inclusivity measures need to be enforced, but they can just be a box-ticking exercise. You need to have people with different abilities, disabilities, genders. It must be actually helpful.” Business representative
- “As the Net Zero grows, and your role in it, you need to make sure everyone is kept up to date and is ready. Because you’ve got a critical role in delivering. You need to make sure that you’re upskilling and people have that progression, that we encourage people to stay and have their career with you.” Local authority officer
- “All of these commitments do come from somewhere. Focus on staff wellbeing and what’s important to them. That’s what I hear from speaking to other organisations.” Community group
- “Even before university, college, or even at high school level, it’s important that we get the outreach programmes to cast a net as wide as possible to get young people engaged and interested in STEM subjects, and then give them the option that energy is a pathway amongst other career paths as well.” Academic
- “Getting the message out around Net Zero and making sure it looks authentic and real is important in recruitment processes. In the collaboration with Scouts, you could host webinars with young people and get out there physically to show them cool stuff that you’re doing. It’s not ‘build it and they will come’ anymore. You have to get out there and meet them.” Business representative
- “We were speaking about mental health and if that should be a key component of this. The communications channels can be very overwhelming, and I imagine WWU has a lot of

touchpoints. WWU could manage that and look after their employees and their wellbeing.”

Vulnerability group

- “Being a manager of people, you need to be very open and transparent about what is coming down the line so that you have as much information as you can to share with employees to then take them on that journey, so they know what is coming, so there are no surprises.” Vulnerability group
- “One of the biggest challenges is reaching not just the people in the office but all those out there doing jobs on the road. People need to be made aware of the sheer number of channels that can be used to ensure that targets are hit.” Business representative

5. Who do we need to collaborate with to deliver these commitments? Is there potential to work with your organisation?

- “Partnership working for recruitment methods. But also skills development for colleagues should include industry-specific skills, dealing with vulnerable customers and supporting people in vulnerable situations.” Vulnerability group
- “If we could get our ambassadors to do some community work, it would make a huge difference.” Business representative
- “Career days at schools might be a good way of getting to the youth and offering apprenticeship schemes. Give them aim and direction by showing them what they need to do to get onto the schemes. It’s an exciting time with renewables, so it’s offering it to them and training them up.” Local authority officer
- “Youth groups and charities that work with young people. There’s a small charity called the Talent Foundry who are working with young people who are bright but struggling in school. Scouts does that as well. Kids learn by doing through Scouts, so consider recruiting those with some of the higher awards in Scouting or Duke of Edinburgh. It’s finding charities who work with young people in a hands-on way.” Community group
- “Engaging with a range of organisations, recruitment agencies and organisations who recruit from their communities, to understand the models they use.” Vulnerability group
- “Schools and careers advisors are a core group that should be focused on.” Local authority officer
- “There is a really wide range of learning and skills partnership networks. The business is probably plugged into that already, but obviously Careers Wales. You also have local colleges and specialist charities like Disability Wales. There have been schemes around employability that could support things like best practice, recruitment and engagement of people from different backgrounds. There is a breadth of work taking place and a massive network to plug into.” Charity

6. Would you support WWU exploring more recruitment programmes outside of apprenticeships such as the governments New Futures Network scheme, which provides job opportunities to serving prisoners and prison leavers aged 18 and over?

- “People coming out of prison or with a background from criminal justice are a good group to target for recruitment. In the North East of England, it would benefit people for getting employment and reinserting themselves into society.” Community group
- “Yes, because you see individuals as they come, with their experience and skills not their labels, and we should be looking at that.” Vulnerability group
- “I know that Timpsons have a programme where they employ people from prisons, with high levels of success and retention. You could look to that as a model.” Vulnerability group
- “Any opportunity that can be given to people in a way that’s well-managed and safe, and it’s communicated that we’re giving you a chance, we trust you until you show us we can’t, that’s the best start someone can have. It’s a wonderful thing.” Vulnerability group
- “There are issues with workforce being lost. There’s such a shortage of workers on the ground. The prisoner idea is great.” Local authority officer
- “Yes. The whole purpose of leaving prison is rehabilitation and reintegration. The best way to do that is for them to work. So I don’t see any issue with that. It’s probably a good thing.” Local authority officer
- “You have to widen the scope of where you are reaching out to.” Vulnerability group

SESSION 4: SUPPORTING CUSTOMERS THROUGH THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Andrew Kennedy (Customer and Community Lead) gave the fourth presentation of the event, focusing on supporting customers through the energy transition. First of all, he highlighted the key aspects of the engagement journey to develop the final four Business Plan commitments and the most notable feedback obtained during this process. He then took participants through these commitments and the intended approach in order to fulfil them.

The four Business Plan commitments were as follows:

1. Provide an exceptional level of service to our customers, meeting their expectations.
2. Minimise both the number of and length of time gas goes off for consumers.
3. Support our customers through the Net Zero transition.
4. Identify consumers who need more help to stay safe and warm and support them.

Stakeholders then commented on these commitments during the discussion session.

SUMMARY

OVERALL FEEDBACK ON THE BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENTS

Participants generally approved of the Business Plan commitments to support customers through the energy transition. During Slido voting on their stance towards the statement: “Wales & West Utilities’ commitments to support customers through the energy transition are acceptable to me”, an average score of 3.73 was given (where 1 was ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 was ‘strongly agree’). The average scores among charity representatives (3.83) and local authority officers (3.75) were fairly close to this average, but the average for vulnerability groups was far higher at 4.40.

These four Business Plan commitments were viewed as essential pillars of WWU’s offering to customers. While the commitments to deliver an exceptional level of service to customers and minimise the number and length of gas leaks were endorsed, the commitments to support customers through the Net Zero transition and to identify and support customers with additional needs to stay warm generated deeper discussion.

When providing feedback on these latter two commitments, stakeholders praised WWU’s intention to support vulnerable customers as a priority, particularly in order to ensure that no customer is left behind in the decarbonisation transition. WWU’s PSR support network and the funding provided to its partners were praised, with charities noting that the lack of restrictions on how the funding is used has enabled them to provide broader and more effective support during RIIO-GD2. There was an appetite to see WWU continue in this direction. However, vulnerability groups and charities noted that the level of funding available for partner charities in the energy efficiency advice and appliance repair PSR schemes needed to be at least maintained, due to the likely exacerbation in fuel poverty caused by higher bills this winter and an increase in the overall need for support as a result. By contrast, despite the general commendation for WWU’s PSR

support provision, others were nervous about this service growing larger and larger, because of the cost implications on customer bills.

Work to identify vulnerable customers was viewed as critical, and many put forward ideas for how WWU could enhance its efforts in this area. In particular, it was felt that regular internal training programmes for staff about what vulnerabilities look like would help the company find people who have become vulnerable for the first time and provide support to them. This should also be supported by taking an adaptive approach to providing assistance under the vulnerable customer support commitment, as increasing numbers of people are likely to find themselves in situations of vulnerability in the years ahead.

LEVEL OF AMBITION DISPLAYED

A mixture of support, scepticism and uncertainty about the ambition of these commitments was expressed by participants. There was a feeling among some that the commitments and the initiatives used to achieve them contained a lot of buzzwords and did not contain enough tangible actions. More specifically, there was a sense of unease about the ambition of its commitment to identify and support vulnerable customers in staying warm, particularly in view of the scale of fuel poverty that WWU was setting out to tackle in its region. With concerns raised that the current resources seem to hardly scratch the surface and that huge numbers of hidden vulnerable customers may not have been factored into WWU's thinking, the company was urged to be more ambitious towards this commitment, specifically in expanding its PSR. In addition, others did not feel confident about the company's ambitions around minimising the number and length of gas outages, as they were not sure whether the actions underpinning them were feasible.

A number of stakeholders wanted more context behind the actions to support the commitments in order to gauge whether the ambition of these four commitments was appropriate. They argued that the numbers may look impressive on paper, but they wanted more benchmarking and details about the methodology for achieving these commitments, particularly around supporting vulnerable customers. Without this, they could not necessarily feel inspired by the company's level of ambition.

By contrast, some participants were heartened by the level of ambition displayed, as they felt they met their overall expectations. While there was a suggestion that the ambitions around delivering exceptional customer service could be slightly higher (such as aiming for a customer satisfaction score of 10/10), these participants felt that the current ambition overall constituted a sensible approach.

APPROACH TO DELIVERING THE COMMITMENTS

Attendees generally commended the approach outlined for supporting consumers and delivering a network that meets their needs, particularly for vulnerable customers. However, some stakeholders wanted clarifications and felt some aspects needed to be slightly refined. Even though the annual support for 20,000 vulnerable consumers through partnerships seemed laudable, questions were raised about whether this was an increase on RIIO-GD2 and how impactful it would be long term when combined with collaborative action with charities to support an additional 12,000 consumers on the PSR. To build on these outreach efforts to find vulnerable customers, WWU was urged to go further in diversifying its workforce by employing

individuals from local communities, as demonstrated by one organisation in Bristol that employed a Somali worker to engage with its Somali community.

Participants took the view that disseminating advice about sustainable energy solutions or energy efficiency was worthwhile and welcomed the use of trusted partners for this. However, it was stressed that any information provided must contain clear and specific details about WWU's long-term strategy for achieving Net Zero. The point was made that the current lack of clear guidance could cause confusion for customers and potentially result in investments in technologies that may become obsolete in the medium to long term.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

A key theme of discussions was the need for closer collaboration with the other utility companies within WWU's licence area around expanding the PSR. Many were wary of potential duplicated efforts in PSR engagement and wanted closer coordination in getting people signed up to it. This would also be beneficial for the charity partners, as they would be able to make better use of the limited resources available, being less likely to contact the same vulnerable person multiple times about the same support package.

Stakeholders also reiterated that WWU should continue increasing its partnerships with charities and work to foster an even more cohesive approach with the third sector around sharing best practices and knowledge. As these organisations are generally known and trusted within their communities, they were seen as ideally placed for delivering WWU's support packages for vulnerable customers. Charity representatives also noted that they would prefer long-term, formalised partnerships with WWU on this rather than short-term collaborations, as this would more likely result in permanent solutions being delivered to the targeted individuals.

Conversely, others argued that partnerships with other community groups, such as housing providers and in-home community groups, could be equally fruitful. These groups also regularly interact face to face with potentially vulnerable individuals and could therefore act as a signpost for WWU's PSR and wider vulnerability support services, stopping them from falling through the cracks.

EDUCATION THROUGH GAS SAFETY AMBASSADORS

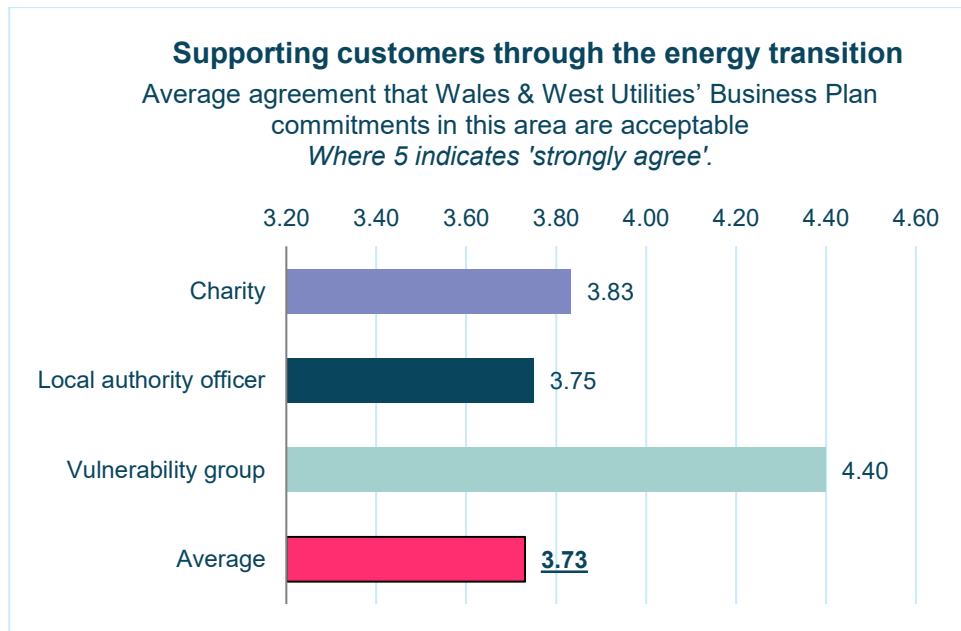
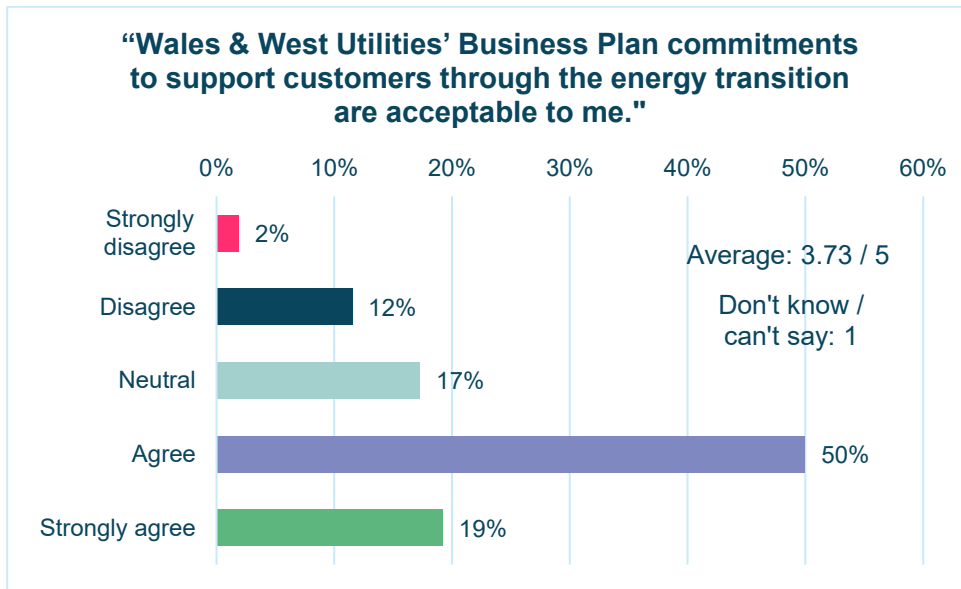
Overall, participants endorsed the idea of using community-based learning programmes, such as Gas Safety Ambassadors, to educate customers. Many stakeholders, particularly charity representatives, took the view that this type of approach could be very effective in engaging young people, particularly on areas like carbon monoxide (CO) safety. One noted the tragic case of a friend's daughter dying as a result of CO poisoning and suggested working with schools to deliver these types of educational schemes in PSE lessons. Others did not want these programmes to be restricted to just gas safety, however, and felt that there was value in including practical information about new domestic heating technologies in order to demystify and build up trust towards them.

Conversely, despite acknowledging the potential benefits, some attendees were uncertain about the level of engagement that the schemes may attract. WWU was cautioned against adopting a "build it and they will come" mindset towards them and was instead urged to advertise them proactively through local engineers

in order to generate interest. Without this promotion, there was a risk that they would be poorly attended and, therefore, WWU would not increase the community-level gas safety awareness, as intended.

VERBATIM COMMENTS AND VOTING

1. How do you feel about the following statement: “Wales & West Utilities’ Business Plan commitments to support customers through the energy transition are acceptable to me”?



2. What do you think of our Business Plan commitments to support customers through the transition to Net Zero? What are the positives? What are the negatives?

- “There are a couple of issues. There’s a bit of a cliff edge coming around funding that WWU needs to be aware of, and unless you keep the funding at the previous level a lot of charities are going to struggle. Every additional pound on the bill will push more people into fuel poverty.” Vulnerability group
- “We need to be careful of building a programme so big that it’s funded via gas bills. PSR services are great if you know someone is on it, but we need to try and capture people who need to be on it.” Vulnerability group
- “Recognition around tailored approaches to engagement is a positive, and the need for partnership working and support across various organisations. I think there are a lot more consumers in vulnerable situations these days, so there may be scope to ensure the strategy is adaptive as time goes on.” Vulnerability group
- “You mention training, but there’s also education internally to be done on what vulnerability means. That’s missing here.” Utility / energy group
- “I applaud the target for customer satisfaction.” Charity
- “You must make sure advice is genuinely unbiased to avoid fuel poverty by tailoring communications.” Vulnerability group
- “It’s good that you know you’ve got to work with those who know those struggling the most and interact with them. The funding we receive from WWU isn’t as restricted as others in terms of who we can advise. It’s a bit broader, which is great.” Charity
- “I’m in support of these plans. You’re never going to hit 10 out of 10, but you are aiming very high which is important. Obviously keeping the time off gas to a minimum is critical. One particular point of interest to me was energy efficiency advice for vulnerable customers on the priority services register.” Local authority officer

3. Do you feel we are showing the right level of ambition? If not, why not?

- “You need more joined-up thinking. At the moment, I am uninspired by your statement on fixing gas leaks, because I am genuinely not sure you can achieve it.” Local authority officer
- “It is good seeing numbers, but you can put on paper whatever you want to make yourself look good. The methodology behind it would be good. We need to know the story behind those numbers, the context.” Business representative
- “No, 55% of our customer base are vulnerable, so I want to better understand your growth on the PSR and what commitment you will make to those vulnerable customers, and see you make it a bit more ambitious.” Utility / energy group
- “In relation to the commitment around identifying and supporting consumers who need more help to stay warm, the need is huge. 45% of households in South Wales are in fuel poverty, and their levels of debt are increasing. Our work is touching the tip of the iceberg.” Charity

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- “I have some reservations about the level of ambition, because I think vulnerability is on the increase and there are lots of people who are hidden in their vulnerability, so the estimate is probably underestimating reality.” Charity
 - “They could do more. All I see is a high concentration of buzz words, but it could be more concrete and more action.” Local authority officer
 - “The ambition was to be 9/10 on customer service, but the ambition should be to be 10/10.” Community group
 - “Your overall plan is what I expect. I don’t think it’s underambitious.” Community group

4. Do you agree with our approach to delivering these commitments?

- “The biggest and most important commitment is getting your customer service right. Is the 20,000 vulnerable consumers supported an annual average or an increase from GD2? It doesn’t align with the numbers you’re looking to support with the Priority Service Register.” Vulnerability group
- “There needs to be greater clarity on your positions and strategies relating to Net Zero. Often people are asking whether they should replace their boiler with an air source heat pump but without knowing if it’s appropriate. The information isn’t out there. We also need to know long term what the plans are, because people could end up installing a gas boiler for a network that won’t exist in 15 years.” Charity
- “It’s getting out into the community and training staff how to deal with vulnerable people. We have a large Somali community in Bristol, and they often have problems. We’ve actually employed a Somali person who has directly engaged with this community. If you employ people living in the communities, you can get your point across.” Vulnerability group
- “We’ve seen a whole new sector of the community that have fallen into difficulties that have never needed to look for help before, so there needs to be signposting from all relevant organisations towards the services that are on offer.” Charity
- “Let’s focus more on outcomes rather than hitting a number. Yes, we have to measure, but I fear it is the subtleties that get lost, and you risk getting the wrong outcome because you are so focused on a number.” Utility / energy group
- “Community outreach could be a good way to show that you are actually acting. Adverts can be misleading, and you cannot always trust them. Go into communities, do community workshops, and show people what you are doing. Tell them why you are doing it. Engage with the stakeholders from all different businesses.” Business representative
- “If you know there is a failing, go to that area and ask people if they are okay. Do not just wait for the people to report things, but be proactive. Set up pop-in local hubs.” Business representative

- “Those of us receiving funding through the VCMA currently would advocate for a continuation of that at a similar level to the funding available now. It’s a really valuable fund that allows us to do great work. It’s really important for WWU, your customers and the charities that support them.” Vulnerability group
- “I really like the reference to trusted partners and the best advice for customers in the action around sustainable energy solutions.” Local authority officer

5. Who do we need to collaborate with to deliver these commitments? Is there potential to work with your organisation?

- “I am curious about the opportunities for cross distributor partnerships. I don’t work in Wales, but a lot of these things can benefit from knowledge sharing and best practice sharing, and then a more joined-up approach at distributor, charity and third-sector level.” Vulnerability group
- “We need to think about how the PSR engagement links to DNOs, and making sure the people on your lists are not the same people on their list. We do a lot of work for DNOs, and they send us lists of people who want to talk to us, but you need to be careful that you’re not sending the same person to us twice and using up a charity’s resources unnecessarily.” Charity
- “Trusted voices who are already well known to customers.” Vulnerability group
- “Partnerships should include health services.” Local authority officer
- “You could be looking for ways to collaborate with housing providers to talk to difficult-to-reach people.” Vulnerability group
- There are so many more people who can help beyond charities to simply sign people up to the PSR. You’re restricting delivery of your own target by picking just one route.” Charity
- “Those who engage with us don’t tend to link up with or seek charity, so I would advocate a review of that particular approach if you want to actually reach people and maximise on the PSR.” Charity
- “Local in-home community groups can be utilised as they are face to face with customers.” Vulnerability group
- “We would prefer longer-term collaborations that you can establish and can be part of a framework. A business plan that you can see is longer-term.” Charity

6. Should we be investing more in educating future consumers through our community-based learning programmes, such as Gas Safety Ambassadors?

- “Community-based learning programmes are great, but you cannot be sure how much engagement you are going to get. You cannot just turn up and hope to get loads of people turn up. Get local engineers to spread the word in advance.” Business representative
- “I would like to know more about the approach for these community-based learning programmes.” Business representative
- “Yeah. I haven’t worked with them, but our staff are doing CO training. It’s close to home for me, because a friend’s daughter died in a camping accident from CO poisoning. I do think it should be part of the PSHE curriculum in schools, especially because this was a child. If you think about the

amount of young people that go to festivals, it brings the danger home with tents and barbecues.”

Charity

- “Working class families need to understand what’s out there. People need to understand things like air source heat pumps and what that means. People need to know what financial support is out there and what the costs are.” Local authority officer
- “I don’t see a reason why not to do more of that. I have worked with Welsh Water quite a bit, and they have their outreach people. It is always very handy, especially teaching children about safety. That can be quite critical as well.” Local authority officer

SESSION 5: KEEPING CUSTOMERS SAFE FROM CARBON MONOXIDE

The final presentation of the day was delivered by Paisley Carpenter (Community and Partnerships Officer) on the theme of WWU's carbon monoxide (CO) strategy. Paisley explained that WWU's CO activities and projects are funded through Ofgem's Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA). However, discussions were taking place with Ofgem around placing specific vulnerability and safety activities now considered business as usual into baseline allowances. This would embed these activities and provide confidence for long-term project planning.

Paisley then outlined WWU's current strategy for protecting customers from CO and its future ambitions to enhance its work further.

CURRENT STRATEGY	FUTURE AMBITION
Collaborative and independent seasonal CO awareness campaigns through various channels as well as a range of leaflets and online materials with vital CO messaging	Expand our CO campaign to include more collaborative messaging built alongside our partners, which is influenced by research and statistics
Providing CO educational messaging through our schools' programme, via our colleague Gas Safety Ambassadors	Expand our Gas Safety Ambassadors programme to cover more topics and broaden our audience to include more community events across our network
Working with partners to provide CO alarms to those in the most vulnerable situations	Work with strategic partners to provide standard and accessible CO alarms to customers in vulnerable situations in targeted regions such as CO hotspot areas
Working with our engineers to provide CO alarms to vulnerable customers during emergency call-outs	Work with our engineers to provide CO alarms to vulnerable customers during emergency call-outs and planned replacement work and collect more detailed data that's built into a collaborative ecosystem

Stakeholders were then invited to provide feedback on these projects during the discussion session.

SUMMARY

OVERALL FEEDBACK ON THE BUSINESS PLAN COMMITMENTS

Attendees were generally in favour of WWU's safety Business Plan commitments. During Slido voting on their stance towards the statement: "Wales & West Utilities' safety Business Plan commitments are acceptable to me", an average score of 3.88 was given (where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree'), which was the highest of the five average scores at the workshop. While the average score among

charity stakeholders (3.47) was slightly lower than this overall average, the averages among local authority officers (4.29) and vulnerability group representatives (4.40) exceeded it significantly.

Attendees were encouraged in particular by the CO awareness campaigns, school outreach programmes and CO alarm dissemination included in the company's CO safety strategy. CO awareness initiatives were generally viewed as valuable, but some concerns were raised that WWU was addressing the dangers of CO poisoning in isolation and should consider embedding these awareness programmes into broader support programmes, such as those targeted at customers in financial difficulties. By doing so, it was hoped that the more at-risk groups would engage with the information more readily, particularly as they may not treat CO safety as a priority.

Distributing CO alarms was strongly welcomed and viewed as a quick and easy win, with many stakeholders arguing that they should now come as standard in new-build homes alongside fire alarms, as CO could affect any customers from any background. However, a number of stakeholders warned WWU not to rely solely on them to keep customers safe from CO, noting that harm can be done before the alarms were activated. WWU was urged to be more proactive and increase its educational provision so that customers were aware of the warning signs of potential CO exposure and increased risk scenarios. Other attendees were worried about the lack of a formal regulatory framework for CO testing and of obligations around CO exposure data, both of which pose a barrier to building reliable data sets. WWU was urged to find ways to improve how it gathers and reports its CO exposure data.

The collaborative work and partnerships at the heart of this strategy, such as work with schools on the CO awareness outreach programme, were greatly appreciated by attendees, who supported WWU going further on this. For example, it was suggested that the company should forge more links with trusted local charities that interact regularly with vulnerable individuals in communities. These charities could act as a channel for safety information and therefore increase awareness and engagement.

LEVEL OF AMBITION DISPLAYED

Attendees broadly felt that the ambitions of the projects under the CO safety strategy were a step in the right direction, but many stressed that WWU should raise its ambitions to the highest level possible, with customer safety viewed as a non-negotiable aspect of its operations. Some wanted to see the company be as ambitious as possible by ensuring that CO alarms were installed in every home in its licence area. However, others were more keen on a targeted preventative approach aimed at vulnerable populations, in view of their increased risk of CO poisoning, in the form of free boiler servicing and repairs and CO alarm maintenance.

Conversely, a number of others expressed frustration that WWU was showing this level of ambition now. They took the view that these kinds of essential initiatives should have been in place decades ago and, as a result, the company should now be in a far more advanced position around addressing CO safety. Additionally, some were uncertain about the level of ambition displayed, as they were not sure about the scale of the problem and wanted more information in order to make an informed judgment.

APPROACH TO DELIVERING THE COMMITMENTS

There was general agreement about using awareness raising, community engagement and CO alarm distribution as the key projects under WWU's CO safety strategy, but some stakeholders argued that the delivery could be refined slightly. While the concept of CO education initiatives was praised, questions were raised about whether they will be sufficiently resourced, stakeholders noting the huge workload on the single CO educational representative for all of Wales. Additionally, others called for specific customer information campaigns to be rolled out, illustrating how to use and maintain CO alarms, in order to minimise emergency call-outs and prevent dangerous situations before they arise. It was stressed that any such information should be presented in a clear, engaging and digestible way so that customers would more be likely to share it among their personal networks. However, at the same time, it should aim to empower customers and not scare them into never turning on their gas again.

Participants welcomed the proposed expansion of the Gas Safety Ambassadors programme, but called on WWU to target it at specific community groups or organisations, such as housing associations, tenants groups and older citizens, rather than just running it through schools. Similarly, attendees identified additional target groups for the CO alarm distribution programme, such as owner-occupiers, and urged WWU to disseminate alarms directly, rather than through charities, in order to ensure that the at-risk individuals pinpointed in its datasets receive them. Although the proposed future ambition of providing standard and accessible CO alarms to customers in vulnerable situations was seen as laudable, the point was made that WWU should also look to provide combined sensors for different types of dangerous gases in addition to CO, so that people would not have to have separate devices for each potential risk in their homes.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Participants broadly felt that localised cross-sector partnerships and collaboration would be vital to delivering these CO safety projects, particularly with organisations that have deep-seated relationships with their communities. These types of organisations were viewed as crucial inroads into local communities, thanks to the trust they hold in these communities (in contrast to the widespread public mistrust towards utilities) and the network of individuals that WWU could reach through them.

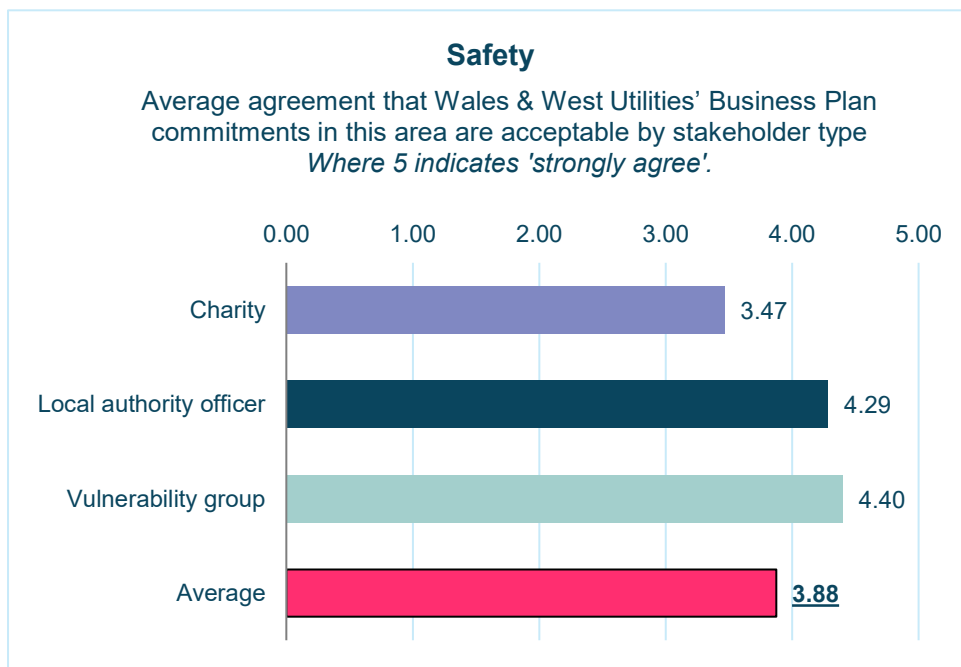
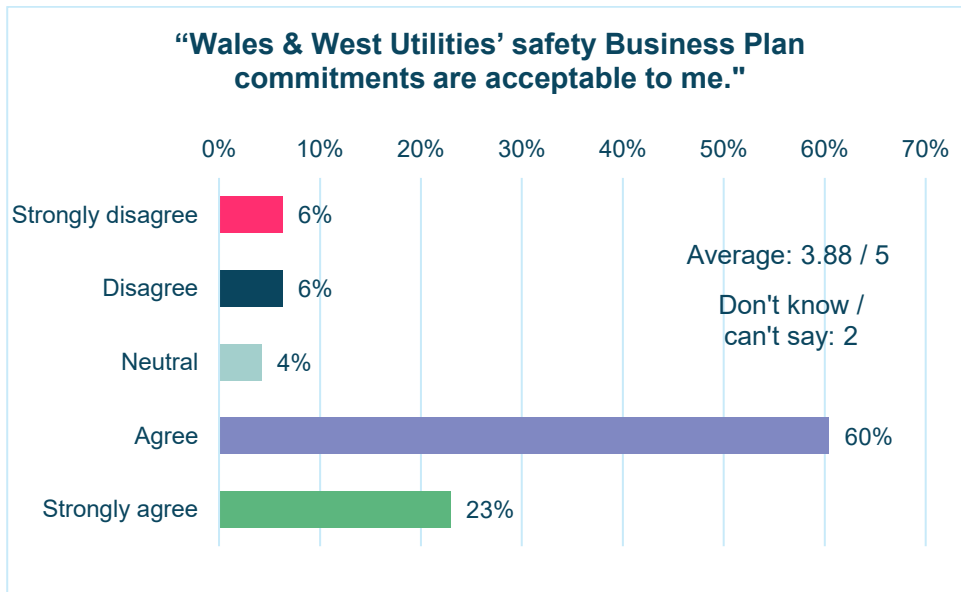
Specific potential partners were also identified to support the various proposed projects under the strategy. For example, universities could be used as good platforms for disseminating information under the CO awareness programmes, in light of the number of students living in private housing with little to no knowledge of the dangers of CO poisoning. Others argued that collaboration and engagement with letting agents and local authorities around disseminating safety information and distributing suitable CO alarms would be valuable and could pressurise landlords and housing associations to ensure that their properties contain safe gas equipment.

Several participants suggested ways in which partnerships could be used to creatively engage younger demographics through outreach programmes. WWU was encouraged to forge links with the Scouts and other youth charities, which could then roll out gas safety initiatives to their young members through fun and

engaging hands-on activities. This was seen as a potentially valuable step, as, in a similar way to school outreach schemes, if children are energised about a topic, they will go home and spread the word to their families, building up further awareness organically.

VERBATIM COMMENTS AND VOTING

1. How do you feel about the following statement: “Wales & West Utilities’ Business Plan safety commitments are acceptable to me”?



2. What do you think of our strategy and projects to protect our customers from carbon monoxide?

- “I’m not sure what WWU’s role is around CO. Is it about just your network or is it about your role in the community? If you could do outreach around education, such as explaining the risks around log burning stoves, then that would be very exciting.” Vulnerability group
- “As part of the work we do, we send out a leaflet with lots of information. Engagement is so hard. If you have debt issues, then that’s all that’s on your mind, even if CO safety could save your life. Therefore, it’s easier to bolt things like CO safety on when giving debt support than engage separately.” Vulnerability group
- “Whenever someone comes through, my team has a checklist of support so that we can deal with the issue at hand, but then give them even more. CO could be included in that.” Charity
- “The focus on vulnerable consumers is really important. The plan should address the fact that alarms are not the perfect way to protect vulnerable groups. Harm for customers can start way beyond the level of an alarm going off.” Utility / energy group
- “I think the message should be consistent, but I think working with other charities that have worked with vulnerable customers opens up doors for going to houses that may not admit to being vulnerable. You can uncover the safety issues that they might have.” Community group
- “Carbon monoxide affects everyone, not just vulnerable customers. Monitors should be free to everyone. Like fire alarms, they should be put in new homes as standard.” Local authority officer
- “I think that working with partners is really good. The bit about their engineers providing CO alarms should just be a norm. That’s quite easy for them to implement.” Vulnerability group
- “I think the points that have been mentioned about the vulnerability of the customer and the level of awareness are critical. The professions doing the inspections seem to be afraid of using gas advice. Back in the 1960s people were reluctant to use a heating system because of the cost, and now the trend is back again.” Local authority officer
- “There’s no automatic testing and no duty on anyone to test for CO, and there’s no duty to pass the parts per million that the customer has been exposed to on to the customer. How can we get trusted statistics if nobody tests?” Gas safety organisation

3. Do you feel we are showing the right level of ambition? If not, why not?

- “I think those ambitions are always in the right direction, but I wonder if we can do more, for instance, servicing particular customers' boilers or fixing them free of charge for those in fuel poverty.” Utility / energy group
- “It’s all very well and good in the moment, but you will have to react again. Where are the preventative measures?” Utility / energy group
- “Surely an ambition should be to have a CO detector in every house in the country?” Community group
- “The level of ambition should be to shoot for as many of the vulnerable customers as possible. Those we do not care for properly could suffer.” Vulnerability group
- “The level of ambition should be as high as possible.” Vulnerability group

- “Do not put a ceiling on the ambition you have.” Vulnerability group
- “If this saves a life, it should be free, and it should be installed in 100% of houses. The home inspectors should check the batteries and check they’re all working. Lots of people aren’t in a situation where their equipment is being regularly checked.” Local authority officer
- “No, this could have been done at least 20 years ago.” Gas safety organisation
- “I don’t know what the extent of the problem is, so it’s difficult to know if you’re being ambitious enough or not.” Local authority officer
- “It is great to see such ambition. You could link this with your skills agenda to show how you focus on upskilling and diversifying the workforce, and how this could help the safety aspects. More engineers could prevent issues and mitigate problems.” Utility / energy group

4. Do you agree with our approach to delivering these projects?

- “Have you asked your existing staff whether they’d like to lose the education aspect of their job, as this could get more appropriate people in?” Charity
- “If you’ve just got one individual going around Wales trying to educate, then that will be a big challenge for them.” Vulnerability group
- “Landlords in Wales are required to provide CO alarms to their tenants. Owner-occupiers or people living in other circumstances may be in more need of free CO alarms than renters. The awareness piece should be the first port of call, rather than focusing on the emergency when it happens. The two go hand in hand, but focus should be placed on prevention.” Vulnerability group
- “I think the hotspots are going to relate to areas of deprivation, because these will be places where people don’t maintain their systems. On the other hand, social housing tends to be very good at this, as well as private landlords.” Charity
- “I agree with the approach of supplying CO alarms to customers, but, at the same time, I think it’s a good opportunity to educate them around how to operate them so that we can minimise emergency call-outs. Hopefully, the alarm can be sounded before something bad happens with either the boiler or cooker. It all comes back to education.” Academic
- “You’ll need to think of a combined sensor. People won’t want three different ones for three different gases.” Vulnerability group
- “It would be nice to join the dots. Providing an alarm is a way in to talking about the climate crisis, and it’s a great idea to make these much more widely available. I didn’t realise they had a shelf life, so a great thing they could do is hand out alarms and use it as a talking point for wider conversations.” Environmental group
- “I think Gas Safety Ambassadors would be best in housing associations and tenants groups, and student ambassadors would work best within student housing. I think partnership working with organisations is definitely the way to go with awareness raising.” Vulnerability group
- “I think it is a good approach. Obviously expanding the use of the Gas Safety Ambassadors to more communities is a very good thing, but also including partners in the CO campaign is a very good thing as well.” Local authority officer

- “People need to be aware of the signs of CO poisoning. You should be telling people what symptoms they might experience. Make them more aware of signs of a slow leak.” Local authority officer
- “Do not scare people into never turning on their gas again. Make them realise that there is lots that can be done to mitigate the risk.” Gas safety organisation
- “Give people information, let them take it home and then spread the word for you by disseminating that to their families.” Local authority officer
- “You need to focus on finding the older people and getting the alarms to them and giving them to people for free rather than relying on charities to signpost back.” Vulnerability group

5. Who do we need to collaborate with to deliver these projects? Is there potential to work with your organisation?

- “My project starts on 1 October, and we will be giving out CO alarms, but we have got quite a vast partnership, and we work with diverse community groups. That is where I think it is good for WWU, because you really get into the root of the different communities. We have already got the links. We know the people. They trust us.” Vulnerability group
- “Universities. I grew up and live nearby a gas grid, and I have never received any training or information around safety. We need different sectors to spread and share information about safety.” Local authority officer
- “Letting agents and landlords on the books. They have a role to play.” Vulnerability group
- “Collaborating with landlords would be a good idea. You would get support from the local authorities as well. That would then put pressure on other social landlords and housing associations to follow suit. By lobbying the government, you get that pressure put on the private landlords as well. They have to do the gas safety checks every year, so having a CO alarm as well is not onerous for them.” Local authority officer
- “Partnerships will be really good because one of the difficult things is getting into schools, and what you don’t want is a bunch of charities competing in this space. Maybe you could develop shared resources for them to use.” Vulnerability group
- “Getting the Gas Ambassadors to work with Scouts, alongside youth groups and schools, would be helpful because it’s learning through fun. They’re there because they want to be there. Getting it out there that you’re working with Scouts would be a good way to promote your work with young people because we’re trusted.” Community group
- “We have a lot of students living in private housing, and they could definitely be a target for gas safety. I would support having student Gas Safety Ambassadors.” Academic
- “Everyone should be working to deliver this. It shouldn’t be the responsibility of one company. We have a virtual pod where you walk yourself through the scenario, and you could put this online for anyone to access. It shows you as a person what would happen when you’re in the situation and encourages you to stop the video at a certain point and look for clues and then get a yes or no.” Vulnerability group

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- “Local resilience forums, such as fire, ambulance, police and health services.” Local authority officer
 - “The education side needs to not just be two people, but two people plus some important strategic partners.” Vulnerability group

APPENDIX 1: ATTENDEES

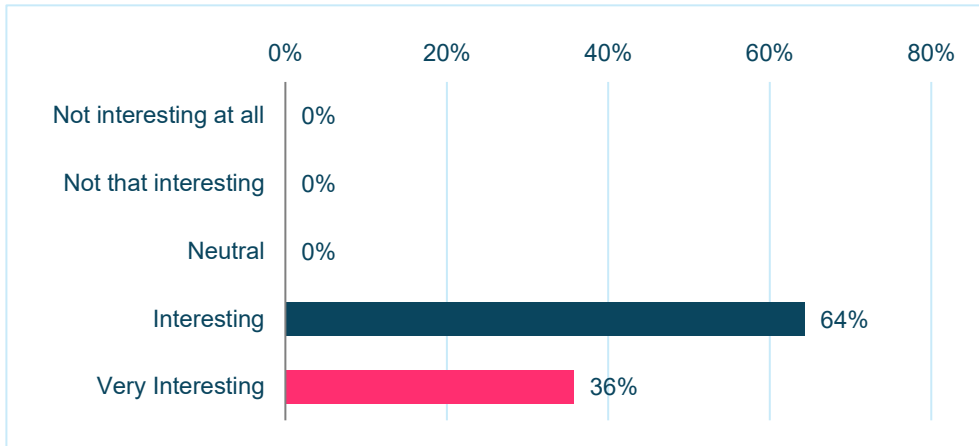
A total of 73 stakeholders attended the workshop, representing 64 organisations. The organisations represented on the day are shown below:

Age Cymru	National Energy Action
Auriga Services	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Bath & North East Somerset Council	Newport City Council
Biogeinie	Northern Powergrid
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Ofgem
Bristol City Council	Pages Creative
Caerphilly County Borough Council	Pembrokeshire County Council
CAHN	Pietro Fiorentini
Cardiff University	Plymouth Energy Community
Care & Repair Cymru	Policy Connect
Carmarthenshire County Council	Powys County Council
Caribbean and African Health Network	Rural England
Centre for Sustainable Energy	See Science
Charis	Severn Wye
Citizens Advice	Shelter Cymru
CO-Gas Safety	SMS Energy Services Ltd
Conwy County Borough Council	Somerset Council
Cornwall Council	Steve Vick International
Cynnal Cymru	Swansea City Council
Denbighshire County Council	Swansea University
ECOE	Sweco
First Choice Housing Association	The Carents Room
Fuel Bank	The Niblett Whellams Partnership Limited
Gas Safe Charity	The Scouts Association
GMB Union	The Wise Group
Growing Mid Wales	Vyntelligence
Gwent Energy CIC	Warm Wales
Healthy Homes Solutions Ltd	Wiltshire & Swindon Local Resilience Forum
Hope4u	Worcestershire LEP
Isabella Myers	Wrexham County Borough Council
Joint Radio Company	YMCA England & Wales
MS Society	Zemo

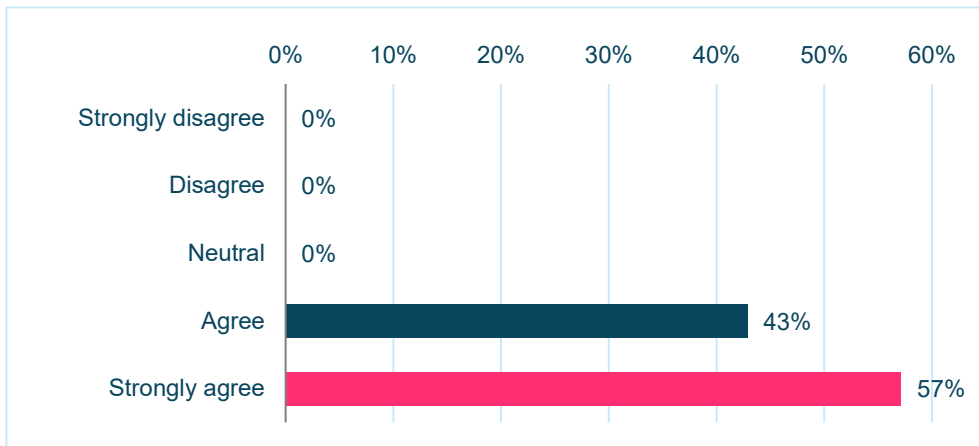
APPENDIX 2: WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

After the workshop, stakeholders were asked to complete a short feedback form. The feedback was as follows:

1. Overall, did you find this workshop to be:



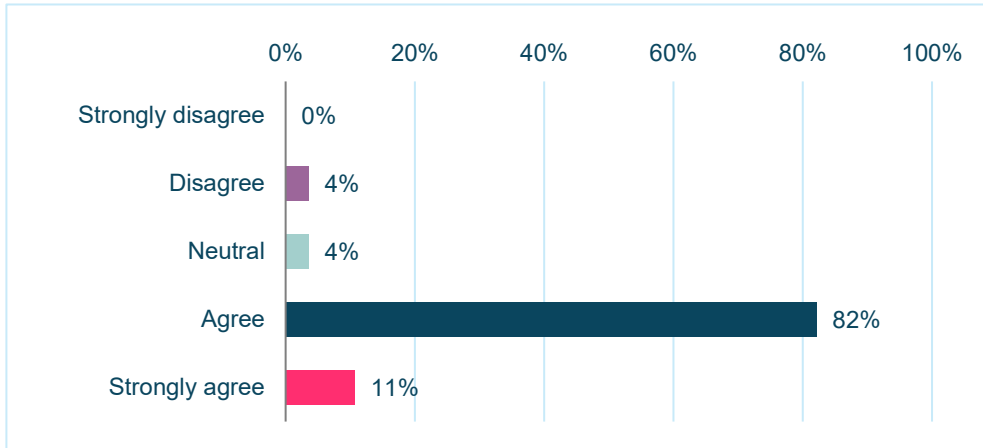
2. Did you feel you had the opportunity to make your points and ask questions?



Comments:

- “It might have been useful to have representatives from WWU in each of the breakout groups, in addition to the facilitators, so that questions relating to the work of WWU could have been answered there and then, rather than being taken away by the facilitators.”
- “Discussion groups were very well-facilitated and everyone had ample opportunity to input. It would have been handy to be able to see reasons for people disagreeing with the statements on the polls, to ensure that feedback was as full as possible.”
- “Good discussions in our breakout room.”

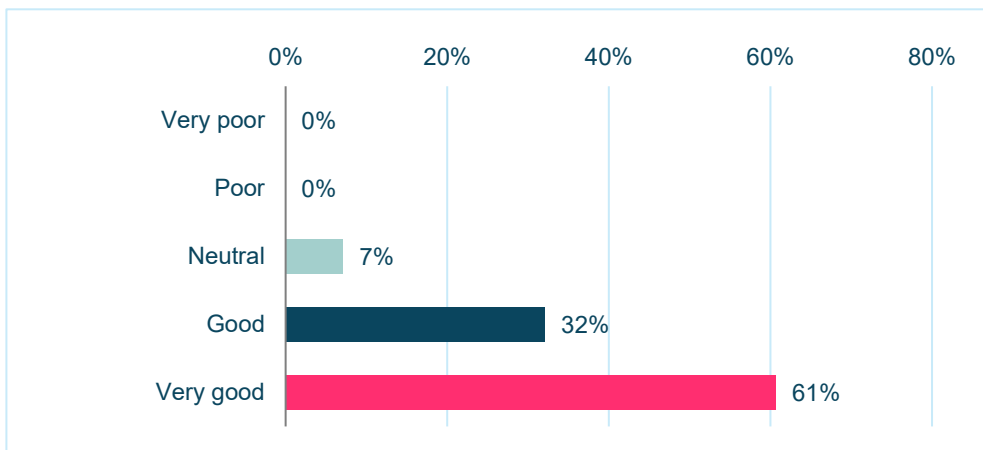
3. Did we cover the right topics for you on the day?



Comments:

- “Some topics were less relevant to the vulnerable customers I represent, but this was a great opportunity to feed into the business planning process regardless, in order to ensure that their interests are kept at the forefront of the decisions made.”
- “I was looking to hear the plan for the communities part of the work that you do, and the vision for GD3 was very clear. I felt the input of ideas that I had for more partnership working and increasing the length of time of a project were listened to.”
- “A bit more detail on the commitments would help with discussions.”

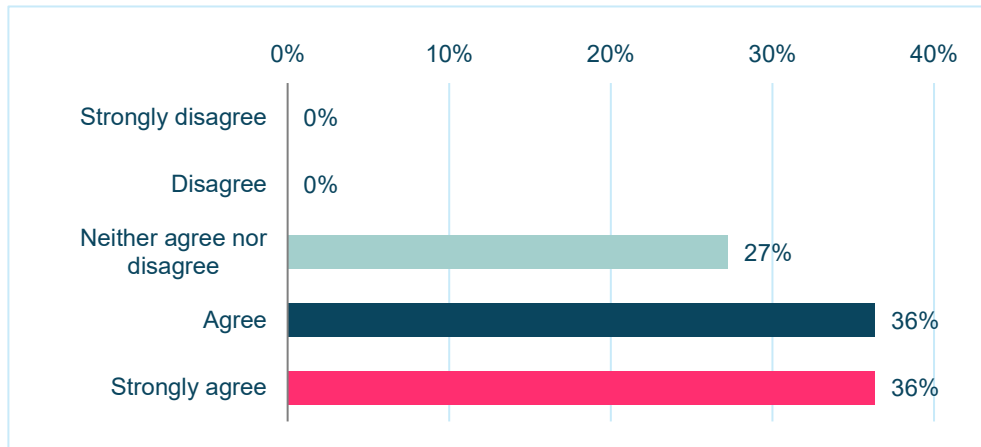
4. What did you think of the way the workshop was chaired by your facilitator?



Comments:

- “Excellent, everyone was given plenty of opportunity to have their say.”
- “Even online, everyone felt involved in the discussion.”
- “They struck the right balance.”

5. If you attended online, did you find the online format accessible and easy to use?



6. Any other comments?

- “The only improvement that I would suggest is more detail on the polls, to ensure that the feedback collected has enough depth to be valuable. It would be very interesting to know why certain people were disagreeing with some of the statements.”
- “I found it very interesting to learn about the plan for GD3, and it was great to be able to be part of that plan for the community and partnership work.”
- “A really helpful, well-run and informative workshop. Brought complex and diverse topics together well in a holistic, understandable and logical format.”
- “Brilliant as usual, thank you.”
- “It was good to learn from you and other stakeholders about the issues facing the industry.”



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