



Emotionally  
Intelligent  
Communications

**WALES & WEST UTILITIES**

**LOCAL AREA ENERGY PLANNING  
ONLINE STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP**

**FEEDBACK REPORT**

**11 DECEMBER 2023**



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## INTRODUCTION

On 11 December 2023, Wales & West Utilities (WWU) held an online stakeholder workshop aimed at seeking feedback from local authority representatives and other stakeholder groups. The purpose of this workshop was to elicit feedback on how it engages with local authorities and how it could assist with Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) during the GD3 Business Plan period, which runs from 2026 to 2031.

Each session consisted of a short presentation given by a WWU representative, followed by facilitated group discussions in virtual breakout rooms where feedback was noted down by scribes.

The event was divided into two sessions:

1. WWU's engagement with local authorities
2. Looking to the future

The event was attended by 24 participants representing 20 organisations from a range of different stakeholder groups including local authorities, consultants and business groups. A significant majority of these stakeholders had already engaged with WWU on their LAEPs.

WWU instructed EQ Communications, a specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, to independently facilitate the event and to take notes of the comments made by stakeholders. This document summarises the feedback received and every effort has been made to faithfully record the feedback given. To encourage candour and open debate, comments have not been ascribed to individuals.

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## 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.

### WWU'S ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- The majority of stakeholders were at the beginning of their LAEP journey, with 53% of Slido respondents indicating that they were at the 'early planning' stage. At the same time, 80% of Slido voters noted that they or one of their colleagues had already engaged with WWU on their plans.
- Funding was identified as the primary barrier to making progress with LAEPs. However, concerns about cross-utility engagement and a lack of national direction in energy planning from central government were also noted as challenges to address.
- Attendees broadly felt that more support was needed from WWU to help local authorities develop their LAEPs. 50% of voters on Slido opted for 'neutral' when asked whether they received sufficient support from WWU in this area.
- The Pathfinder tool was appreciated for its potential use in comparing data with similar projects during planning phases. However, concerns were raised about data reliability and granularity, with attendees urging WWU to ensure accuracy and provide effective user training.
- A significant interest in hydrogen's role in the future energy mix was evident, but this was not shared by all stakeholders, with 45% of voters on Slido 'agreeing' and 5% 'strongly agreeing' that it was part of their future energy mix.
- Most stakeholders were supportive of the use of hydrogen for industry, with 95% of Slido voters indicating that they intended to use it in this sector. By contrast, using hydrogen for domestic heating was seen as completely unviable and just 5% of responders on Slido indicated that they were considering it for their LAEP.

### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- Stakeholders were in favour of WWU's enhanced role in assisting with data and scenario planning for LAEPs from 2026, while emphasising the need for standardised data across utilities. Suggestions included evolving Pathfinder for optioneering and displaying transparent information around plan costs, as well as pushing for innovative whole system solutions, particularly in supporting local hydrogen production and electrification to ensure a fair and low-cost transition for consumers.
- Participants strongly recommended that WWU leverages its influence in advocating for hydrogen at government level, backed by LAEPs and local partners. They argued that the most effective approach for this would involve gathering evidence to build a compelling investment case for hydrogen, aligned with active discussions in the industry and government.
- Attendees were divided on WWU's current support level for LAEP or local development plan (LDP) developments. Some praised its current level of service, while others called for additional support

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in areas such as network resilience against climate events, community engagement to establish consensus on green solutions and a national communications campaign to build wider trust in the net zero transition.

## **WRITTEN 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.

- 100% of attendees who filled out a feedback form told us that they found the workshop 'interesting'.
- 50% 'agreed' and 25% 'strongly agreed' that they had had an opportunity to make points and ask questions, with 25% taking a 'neutral' stance.
- 75% 'agreed' that the right topics were discussed on the day, but 25% were 'neutral'.
- 100% thought EQ Communications' facilitation was either 'very good' or 'good'.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

A total of 24 stakeholders participated in the workshop, representing 20 organisations. The most prominently represented stakeholder group was local authorities, which accounted for 75% of attendees. A full list of organisations that attended the workshop can be found in Appendix 1.

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## SESSION ONE: WWU'S ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Following a welcome and an overview of WWU by David Robinson (Business Services Director) and an introduction to WWU's overarching strategy to support the net zero transition by Henry James (Net Zero Project Manager - Industrial Clusters), Ben Cawardine (Scenario Development Analyst) delivered the first presentation on WWU's approach to engaging with local authorities. He started by providing an introduction to WWU's LAEP approach in the preparation of future energy scenarios on its network and gave a quick picture of the current state of play. Ben then talked stakeholders through WWU's Pathfinder tool, which has been designed to check the feasibility of different potential future energy scenarios, by exploring scalability, different energy mixes and impacts on carbon emissions and costs. After taking stakeholders through examples of Pathfinder inputs and outputs, Ben invited attendees to introduce themselves and provide feedback on the tool.

### Introductions and areas of interest

All discussions began with introductions. The majority of stakeholders represented local authorities, who were principally interested in hearing about how they could make further progress in rolling out their LAEPs. Some voiced other areas of interest, such as WWU's proposed actions in support of biodiversity and future gas alternatives such as hydrogen. The event also involved business representatives, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and consultants, who pinpointed their role in supporting local authorities on their LAEP journeys. Attendees were asked to indicate their main area of interest for the event on Slido, with the data largely tallying with the main points of discussion: 'funding' (three mentions), 'LAEP support' (two mentions), 'dynamic tool open source' (two mentions) and 'data' (two mentions).

According to the Slido voting data, the majority of attendees were only at the start of the LAEP process, with 53% of voters indicating that they were at the 'early planning' stage. Conversely, 33% of respondents selected 'almost complete' and 7% each chose 'made some progress' and 'made good progress'. At the same time, almost all participants stated that there had been some engagement with WWU during this process. When asked to vote on the question: "Have you engaged with WWU before as part of your LAEP?", 60% of respondents selected 'yes' and another 20% chose 'I haven't, but someone from my organisation has'. Just 7% picked 'no' (in addition to 7% who opted for 'don't know / can't say' and another 7% for 'not relevant for my organisation').

### Barriers to moving forward with LAEPs and WWU support to overcome them

Many attendees, most notably from local authorities, stressed that the main barrier to progressing their LAEPs was a lack of funding, particularly for the delivery phase. Therefore, many in the planning phase were seeking as many different funding streams as possible. However, a number of other obstacles were also identified. One local authority representative pointed to difficulties in engaging with WWU as well as the relevant Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and hoped to see an improvement to this. However, at

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the same time, there was praise for WWU for its timely engagement on their LAEP from some participants. Concerns about cross-utility engagement dovetailed into another local authority participant's worries about a lack of gas network infrastructure to support their LAEP and wanted to hear more about support provided in the form of electricity generators to bridge the capacity gap. At the same time, a consultant also worried that whole system decisions were being made by gas distribution networks (GDNs) and DNOs solely on the basis of their own economic considerations, and emphasised that any decision-making should also bear in mind technological factors. This also tallied with a final obstacle: a perceived lack of national direction in future energy planning from central government. It was argued that this is creating uncertainty for local authorities, due to ambiguity around the type and size of roles played by electricity and clean gas in future systems, making public engagement on the subject difficult.

In light of these difficulties, many logically felt that more support could be provided to them as they build their LAEP. When asked to vote on Slido on the statement: "WWU currently provides me with sufficient support to enable me to develop my Local Area Energy Plan", 50% chose 'neutral', with 20% 'strongly agreeing', 20% 'agreeing' and 10% 'disagreeing'.

### **The Pathfinder tool**

Despite this desire for more support from WWU to help local authorities develop their LAEP, the Pathfinder tool was broadly well received. A number of stakeholders thought that it would be useful and would deliver benefit to their work, particularly for comparing planned projects with work being undertaken by other local authorities within WWU's licence area, in order to identify what works and what doesn't. One stakeholder also suggested a number of data types that could be added to build on the information already available, such as conservation-based planning restrictions and proposed development and transport schemes.

There was, however, a sense of uncertainty about the platform from several stakeholders, with questions raised about the reliability of the numbers that it produces. Another stressed that they were unsure about which data their local authority would need to input in order to enjoy the benefits of the platform. Therefore, WWU was urged to undertake deeper testing to ensure data reliability and provide training for customers on how to use the tool most effectively. One attendee was notably negative, arguing that the data sets were insufficiently granular for the intended purpose of the platform and noting that they dive more deeply into data in their daily LAEP work than Pathfinder does.

Attendees did not specifically request new information to be added to Pathfinder. However, one felt that it would be worthwhile for WWU to signpost the existing information more clearly for customers, as it was thought that this would save them a lot of time. In addition, another called on WWU to explore standardising data found on Pathfinder across the utilities industry in order to give a clearer picture to stakeholders exploring projects involving whole system solutions.

### *Hydrogen within LAEPs*

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A good number of participants indicated that they were exploring the use of hydrogen within their LAEP, but many were also hesitant about its viability in the future energy mix. When asked to express their level of agreement towards the statement: “I see a role for hydrogen as part of the future energy mix in my local authority”, 42% ‘agreed’ and 5% ‘strongly agreed’, with 32% taking a ‘neutral’ stance, 16% ‘disagreeing’ and 5% ‘strongly disagreeing’. The sentiments expressed in this data also played out in the discussions, with several attendees displaying a sense of uncertainty around the most effective role for hydrogen in the future energy mix (if any at all) and therefore noting that they were exploring as much data as possible to ensure they were making the right choices. One participant noted that their local plan had been specifically designed to be easy to update, in light of the volatility around the part that hydrogen will play.

Stakeholders were strongly in favour of using hydrogen for industry within their local authority, although there was a feeling that using hydrogen for domestic heating was not viable. When asked to indicate on Slido which sectors they could foresee a role for hydrogen within their local authority, 95% of respondents chose ‘industry’, with 55% selecting ‘public sector transport’, 23% picking ‘private transport’ and 5% each going for ‘public buildings’ and ‘domestic heating’. A number of stakeholders showed enthusiasm towards using hydrogen in private transport in order to reduce the huge emissions from this sector, such as heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), tractors and aviation.

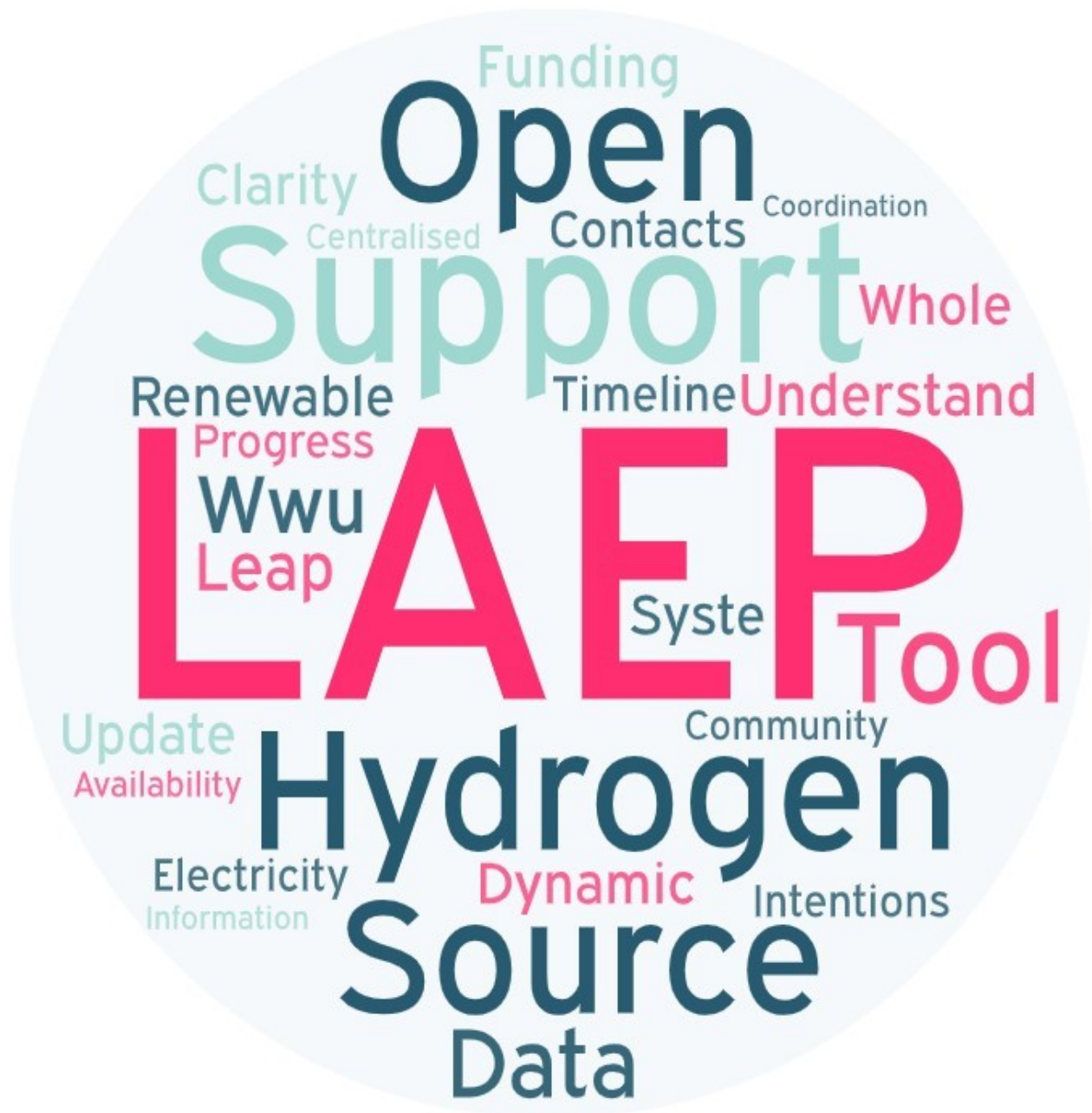
During these discussions, it was also argued that WWU should not present hydrogen as a ‘silver bullet’ that would solve all of its intended aims for all communities, with suggestions made that alternative sources may be better for some areas. This tallied with a point made by a consultant, who argued that strategic clustering might be a better avenue for tailoring energy solutions to different communities’ needs. With this in mind, the potential role of biomethane within future energy systems was also proposed and discussed.



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## FEEDBACK

1. What is your role and your reason for attending today? What would you like to get out of today?

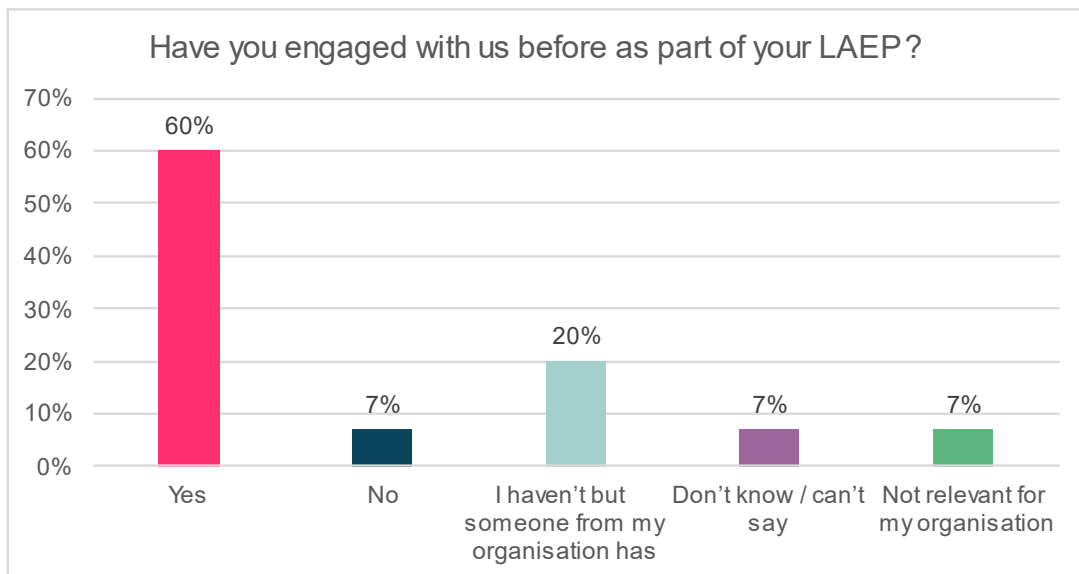
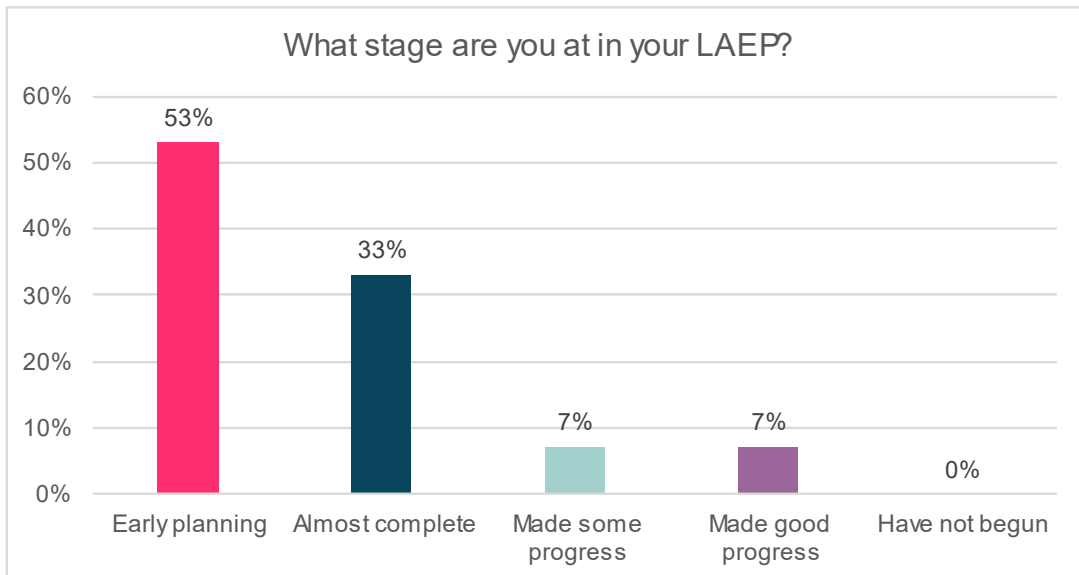


- “I’m an environment specialist and our organisation is acting on the climate emergency. We’re looking at what opportunities we have for 100% renewable energy. I want to stop WWU pushing hydrogen for houses.” Local authority officer
- “I lead our climate emergency project. We’re in the early stages of an LAEP.” Local authority officer
- “I’m currently working on LAEPs and action plans across the UK, especially Wales. We help different local authorities.” Business representative
- “We’re a charity that works a lot with local authorities on energy masterplans.” Consultant

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- “I’m a project manager and our organisation works on LAEP. The original initiative was to look at capacity constraints, and we’ve grown from there. We’re now working on static maps. We’ve developed a lot of what could be construed as an LAEP.” LEP
  - “I’m a council member for climate change and biodiversity. I’m here to keep up with developments.” Local authority officer
  - “I’m here to see what WWU is doing in terms of future supply.” Local authority officer
  - “We work a lot with WWU on hydrogen ecosystem. There is an unfortunate split between hydrogen and heat pumps now, so we need to create space for that conversation.” Consultant
  - “We’ve had our plan in place for nine months now and are in the early stages of delivery. We want to see how WWU can support us with signposting issues when talking to social housing providers in our area.” Local authority officer
  - “I’m a non-exec director at Worcestershire LEP. We’ve been working with various organisations to bring together data and information before the public launch of formalised LAEP arrangements. We’ve got a range of static maps that are updated periodically. We’re seeking the funding to develop a dynamic tool to overlay issues that may appear on the system. We’re looking forward to seeing development plans.” LEP
  - I’m from Bath and North East Somerset Council. We’re working on a wider energy strategy and are part of an LAEP with Bristol. We’re trying to get funding for that.” Local authority officer
  - “I’m from Torbay Council and we’re working on an LAEP with the rest of Devon. We’re looking to get more funding, but want to find out more about how we can move forward if we don’t get it.” Local authority officer
  - “I’m from Caerphilly Borough Council and we’re doing an LAEP. I’ve been working with WWU on hydrogen and that will be a main focus for us as a council. That’s something that we would like to hear more about.” Local authority officer

**2. Have you faced any particular issues or challenges in your local authority / organisation when it comes to your plans to decarbonise and / or produce your LAEPs?**

- **What stage are you at in the process?**
- **Have you engaged with us before?**
- **Would you know who to talk to?**

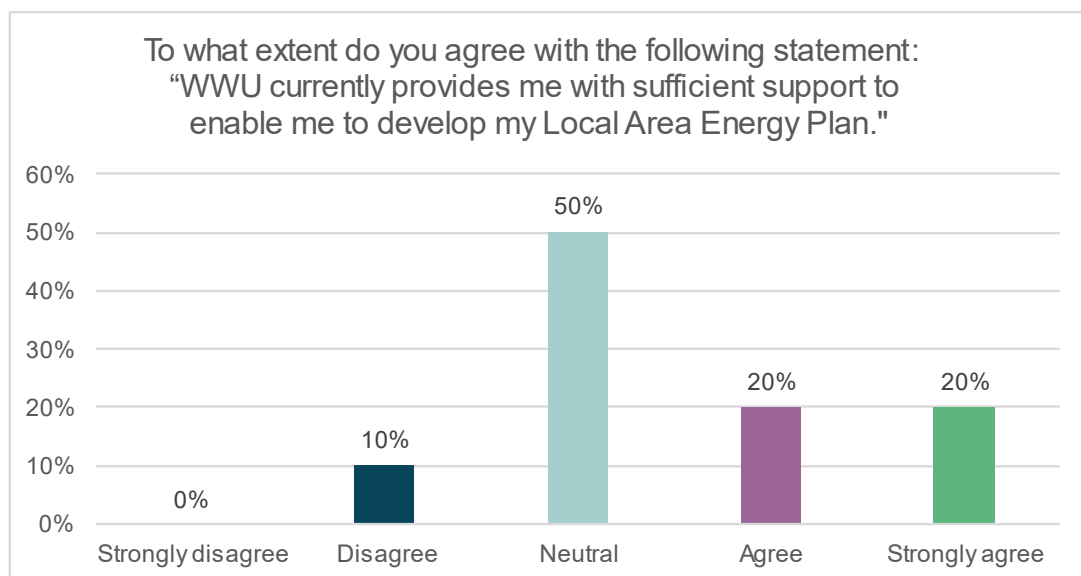


- “Local authorities look to organisations that have done LAEPs, but there’s not necessarily funding available for delivery. They also struggle to engage with WWU and the DNOs. We end up with a PDF that we struggle to interpret. This is what the hubs are looking at collectively.” Local authority officer
- “To make our plans useful, we want to point to as many sources of funding as possible.” Consultant
- “Funding is a major challenge and infrastructure is an issue. I’m also interested in how WWU could bridge this with generators. The hierarchy must be done correctly.” Local authority officer
- “Funding is the big issue. In Devon, we have an engaged climate partnership that meets regularly. As an offshoot of that, we have an energy planning group. We also have a mandate from a citizens’

assembly, and we've set up a group for an LAEP. We've requested money for an LAEP. We engage a lot with WWU and NGED, and WWU plays a key role." Local authority officer

- "We were considering a digital twin, but the costs were astronomical. However, we recognise the value of a digital twin that could do rapid sifting. We will likely default to a dynamic map you can toggle." LEP
- "Our challenge is not knowing which way people will go. With retrofitting, are we steering public sector housing towards heat pumps or hydrogen? Decisions have not been made at national level. It's difficult to engage with the public without that certainty. Currently we are drafting high-level points for next year." Local authority officer
- "My concern is always about whole system approaches. There are connections between the electricity and gas through hydrogen electrolysis, but I'm concerned about whether hydrogen is economically viable, particularly for domestic heating. Therefore, we need to ensure that there is a sound economic basis, in addition to a sound technological basis, for decarbonisation discussions." Consultant
- "There are so many different options that can support decarbonisation and I don't think that we know enough to understand the ramifications of our decisions to adopt new technologies on our local communities. Surely the infrastructure is already there to deliver quick solutions for residents without disrupting their ways of life too much?" Local authority officer

### 3. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "WWU currently provides me with sufficient support to enable me to develop my Local Area Energy Plan."



### 4. What are your views on our Pathfinder tool?

- "When we do LAEP modelling work, we go into more detail. It requires more detail than what you get in the Pathfinder tool." Consultant
- "There is definitely a benefit. There are a lot of datasets we would want to merge in. We've got different property types showing potential planning constraints from a conservation point of view.

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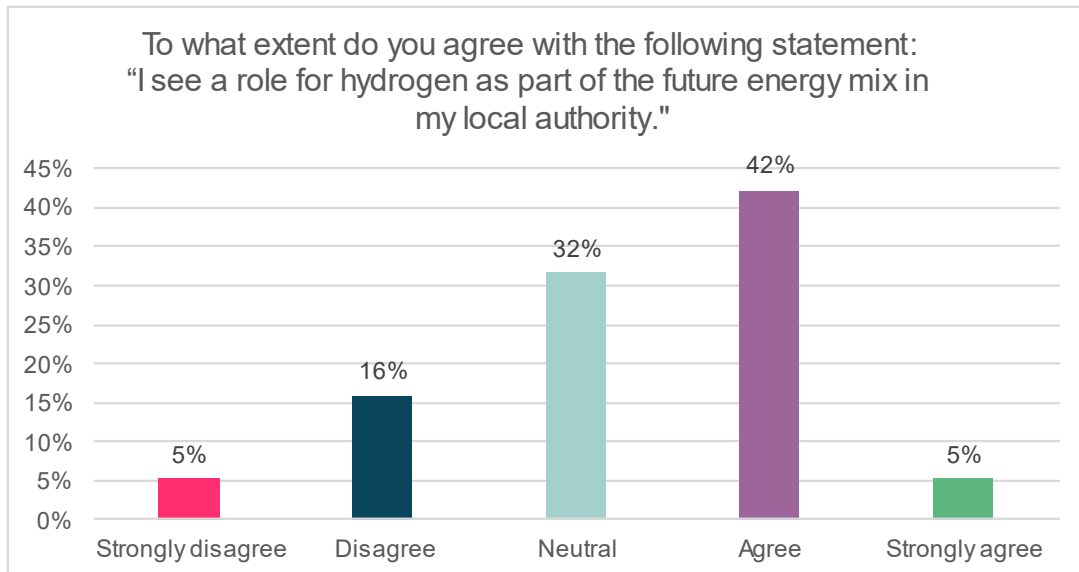
We're also mapping projections from development planning of new industrial, residential and mixed-use developments. We have transport issues in there too and whether there could be bio-gas and fuelling supply. We have landfill opportunity maps as well on the demand and supply side. With hydrogen, we've mapped industrial premises that might be looking to hydrogen as a resource or supplying hydrogen." LEP

- "I like the tool. There are some drawbacks. For local authorities, you have to pick solutions that are most likely to be chosen across the country in order to secure funding. LAEPs appear to be the 2023 approach for energy planning." Local authority officer
- "It looks interesting and useful, but I don't know what inputs we would need to put in. Is there a light version available with less granular data that would be easier for non-experts to understand?" Local authority officer
- "As we're at the start of our planning process, I feel that we would either use it or at least check in with it to check how our plans align with other councils' plans. It looks like it could be a really useful tool for benchmarking purposes." Local authority officer
- "We have actually used it already for these comparison purposes, particularly in relation to what optimisers do. I feel that it could give you a theoretical outline for your projects, so it could definitely have a role in councils' projects." Consultant
- "We try to focus our efforts on the five years ahead and we don't think that hydrogen will play a role in that time, but we don't have a benchmark for Milford Haven LAEP. However, we don't want to shut the door on hydrogen altogether." Consultant
- "I come from the world of modelling and we worry about how it might reflect reality. Does the platform crunch the numbers as it claims it does? There needs to be benchmarking and testing to ensure that it reflects reality and that it delivers as WWU claims it does. Some 'driving lessons' on how to use it would really help us." Consultant

## 5. Are there any other types of information that would be helpful to you?

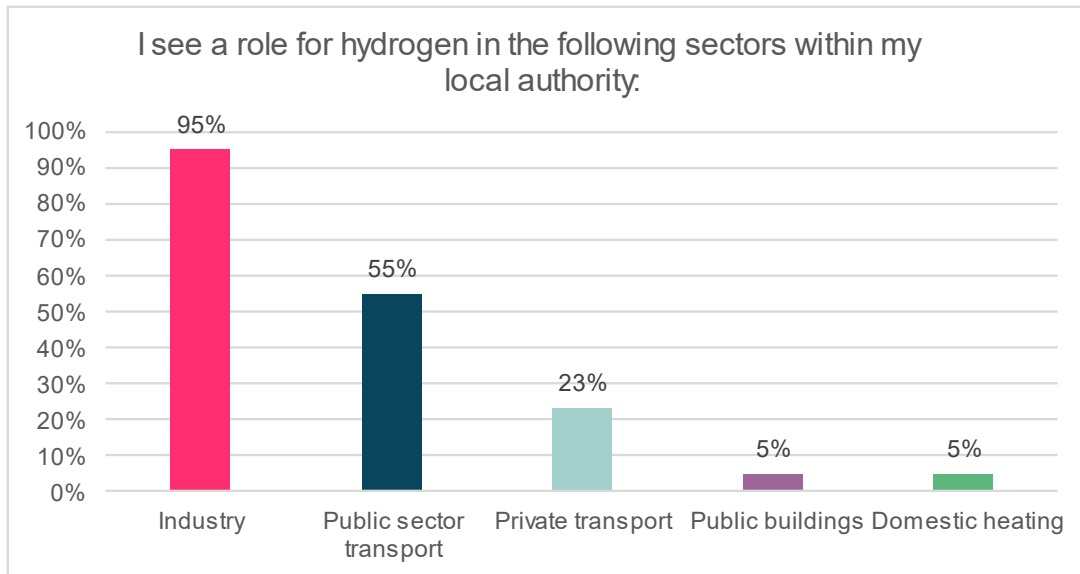
- "This is the first time I've come across Pathfinder. Reliable information is the key thing. We're interested in understanding how you give credibility for what's coming online on the grid. We've sense-checked what those schemes are." Consultant
- "SWNZH and others are trying to coordinate on this. SSEN and NGED have tools. There is an opportunity for standardisation and Ofgem could potentially lead on this." Local authority officer
- "We haven't quite got there, but it would be good to hear about what you can get from WWU rather than having to mine it from national data. We need more signposting about what is out there and what might be useful for us." Local authority officer

## 6. Are you considering hydrogen as part of your LAEPs?



- "We need clarity on the role of hydrogen in different sectors – where it's needed and where it's not. I personally think hydrogen should move away from the domestic sector. However, it does have a role in larger-scale transport and production industries where heat is required, such as cement. Currently, we have a muddled picture." Local authority officer
- "The data is key to making decisions and forward planning. Our biggest carbon emissions come from transport. We'd be more in favour of hydrogen for transport rather than domestic use. We must stop thinking in silos. We've got a lot of sun and wind in the South West, plus bio-gas, that we can tap into. We'd like to be able to overlay all this data." Local authority officer
- "We will model a hydrogen-heavy scenario for Devon. We want the plan to be easy to update. We'll be looking at shorter-term, no-regrets measures. If government plans change, this means we've not wasted time and money." Local authority officer
- "We're gathering as much comprehensive information as possible to make a fair call." Consultant
- "What about biomethane? As a rural area, there are big opportunities there. We also need to stop seeing the network as a whole entity. It can be split up, and that's where the opportunities lie." Consultant

## 7. Where do you see a role for hydrogen?



- “I see hydrogen as viable for high-energy use industries. The idea that it’s a miracle gas neglects the whole picture. You need a lot of electricity to split a water molecule to source it. We risk talking about it in the wrong context. Until we have enough alternative renewable solutions, we shouldn’t consider it. Other forms of storage are more effective.” Local authority officer
- “We don’t necessarily think hydrogen is right for home heating. It could play a role for industrial uses, plus shipping and aviation.” Business representative
- “If used for transport, hydrogen should be limited to HGVs.” Local authority officer
- “The main usage we’re looking at for hydrogen are industrial uses. We’re not planning for it to make up a significant proportion of domestic usage. We’ve been working with partners on hydrogen development.” Local authority officer
- “We don’t think hydrogen is viable for domestic heating, so we are seeing it as a solution to hard-to-decarbonise vehicles, such as HGVs and tractors.” Local authority officer
- I think that there is value in exploring strategic clusters for projects, rather than one-size-fits-all comprehensive projects that might not necessarily fulfil all stakeholder needs.” Consultant
- “It’s not for domestic heating at the moment, but we’re keeping an open mind. We need to be led by the science as much as possible on using it for the hard-to-decarbonise aspects more widely.” Local authority officer

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## SESSION TWO: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The second presentation of the day focused on how WWU could work together with stakeholders to reach net zero through LAEPs. This was again given by Ben Cawardine, who began by touching on the company's desire to support the implementation and delivery of LAEPs, but noted that it wanted to understand the need for future support as models update. Ben then highlighted the need for WWU to get an understanding of local authority engagement needs on future energy systems and of whether they may need more support around engaging their own communities on this.

**Stakeholders were then invited to provide feedback on the role of regional LAEPs for delivering net zero and the potential support needed for engaging with local communities about them.**

Many attendees strongly encouraged WWU to assist them with data and scenario planning within LAEPs from 2026, calling for the company to act as a signposter and information disseminator. It was thought that this would play a useful role in helping local authorities to plan and implement LAEPs. Several stakeholders gave examples of how they felt that WWU's offering in this area could also evolve to achieve this, such as enabling Pathfinder to help with optioneering once energy scenarios have been identified, and providing even more comprehensive and transparent data around costs of plans. Others once again called on WWU to explore how it could standardise the data that it holds with other utilities. This was seen as a worthwhile area to explore as it would make it possible to input consistent information from other local authorities into modelling. Accordingly, a number of stakeholders encouraged WWU to look at similar platforms developed by UK Power Networks (UKPN) and National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) as templates to follow.

There was also a feeling that WWU should be looking to support innovation in order to drive forward LAEPs, particularly around whole system solutions and harnessing local hydrogen production. A suggestion was made that WWU should look to push the envelope as far as possible to really leverage hydrogen's potential at a local level, with hydrogen for aviation and for long-term storage put forward. However, these two schemes identified were not universally supported. Despite this, others were keen to see WWU go further in supporting whole system solutions and electrification of parts of its network in order to help deliver a low-cost transition that is fair for consumers as a whole. Finally, it was also thought that WWU could play a role in helping local authorities to secure investment for projects within their LAEPs and in disseminating information about the national direction of travel for hydrogen, in light of its complex systems and volatile government policy.

There were strong calls for LAEPs to look to influence WWU's plans around hydrogen, in view of the active discussions across industry and government at present. Therefore, WWU was urged to use its trusted voice to make the case for hydrogen at a government level, with support from LAEPs and other partners at a local level in the form of working to gather evidence to create an investment case for it.



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Attendees indicated a range of different planning and delivery timelines in their local authority areas. One noted that their funding project ran until October 2025, but another noted that their organisation did not have a certain timeline on their project, owing to uncertainties around funding streams.

Participants were divided on whether WWU could provide additional support for further LAEPs or LDPs within their local authority. Some praised the service provided thus far and did not think that the company could go any further, with one noting that there is 'nothing more that [WWU staff] could do'. However, a couple of areas were also identified as areas for additional support. Firstly, one stakeholder took the view that WWU should explore the future impact of climate change to its network assets and then address the relevant fragilities in the assets on its network. By doing so, it was hoped that WWU could improve the resilience of its network. At the same time, there were also strong calls for assistance on engagement, with one attendee suggesting that there should be more support on helping communities come to agreements on suitable solutions and another urging WWU to help reassure communities that are nervous about the change involved in the net zero transition. With the latter in mind, another participant encouraged WWU to develop a net zero national communications campaign, containing simple information presented in an eye-catching way to try to win community trust.

## FEEDBACK

### 1. What do you think our role should be in regional LAEPs from 2026 onwards?

- “This will be pivotal, depending on the government’s decision on the role of hydrogen. We’ve worked with WWU, and they’re very responsive to our demands for data. The Pathfinder tool could help with optioneering once energy scenarios have been identified. Gas networks definitely must be part of the process.” LEP
- “What’s enormously valuable to us is having as much transparent data on cost expectations as possible. This will allow us to give an accurate view of futures to give local authorities decent guidance.” Consultant
- “Presumably, we agree electrification will happen domestically. WWU could start thinking of how to manage this transition in a low-cost, consumer-fair way. Ensure people who do stay on the gas network are given a fair deal.” Consultant
- “There is a lack of consistency and standardisation for producing decarbonisation pathways and LAEPs. Part of this comes down to cost. WWU could help create a consistent route for local authorities to develop LAEPs. WWU could be a central repository for consistent standardised data. You’ll benefit by getting consistent results from local areas that you can plug into your modelling. Currently, you can’t get this.” Local authority officer
- “UK Power Networks have just finished Project Cleo to create a centralised tool that local authorities can submit their data to. WWU could refer to this and speak to Lynne McDonald, who may have good insights on how you can work with local authorities.” Consultant

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- “NGED created a network data portal. At our end, we’re still going through a manual process to get this data with WWU. There could be a swifter process.” LEP
  - “Without knowing what the national policy is going to be on domestic heating, it’s hard to say what that sector looks like longer term. From a hydrogen perspective, being privy to discussions within industry would be helpful. You need supply, storage and demand to fall into place at the right times for projects to be viable. It’s hard to know what those conversations are going to look like in a few years’ time. Retrofitting is a unique problem domestically. Local authorities are aware of the issues we have with our estate with listed buildings.” Local authority officer
  - “LAEPs will be inputting into WWU and National Grid ESO regions, as well as DFES. What’s unclear is how best to secure investment. LAEPs seem to be the right thing at the moment, but it’s not entirely clear. I’m sure local authorities would appreciate WWU’s support on projects as well. Opportunities are there.” Local authority officer
  - “We tend to focus on balancing up domestic and industrial system needs, but we should really open up the scope and look at hydrogen for aviation, as these could be good seed points for whole system approaches.” Consultant
  - “Hydrogen for aviation would fall outside of the LAEP and we can’t keep straying outside of this guidance. There does need to be a whole national plan for hydrogen in terms of what goes on outside of the LAEP. But for these purposes, we do need to be conscious about what is and what is not in the LAEP.” Consultant
  - “As a hydrogen hub, we’ve been looking at production for the local area. We need to produce hydrogen strategically at a large scale for energy security and skills building in a local borough. We need to look at hydrogen at a local level, really.” Local authority officer
  - “The future is electric and it’s tempting to say that everything should be electric. One way that hydrogen could play a role is long-duration storage and how it changes renewables installations in energy. Hydrogen may be useful rather than throwing everything at solar, for example.” Local authority officer
  - “In terms of aviation in Gloucestershire, I understand why international flights are not in the LAEP, but small domestic flights really should be considered. It’s an important business in my local area.” Local authority officer

## 2. How should LAEPs look to influence our plans and future network development?

- “The question of hydrogen for heating is a really live one at the moment. There are questions about the level of engagement across government. I think there is a role for us and other partners in this. How do LAEPs go down to create a case for investment favouring certain approaches?” Consultant
- “The level of UK government investment in Port Talbot raises questions on how hydrogen is viewed in future. WWU has a powerful voice on this issue.” Consultant

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### 3. What does the planning and delivery timeline look like in your local authority area?

- “Our funding project runs until October 2025, but we will probably have completed the planning before then.” Local authority officer
- “We are working more widely with Devon Council and are in stages one, two and three. However, I don’t know what we’ll do if we don’t get the funding.” Local authority officer

### 4. What ongoing support do you need from WWU for further LAEP or LDP developments within your local authority?

- “I don’t think there’s more WWU can do. We have access to the Pathfinder tool, and your staff are really engaged. We just need our partners to agree on how to manage the energy system. There’s a growing awareness amongst people committed to 2030 that they may have to fall back to 2050.” Consultant
- “It’s about knowing how major energy users will be shifting.” Local authority officer
- “We found Pathfinder quite useful to start with. If we get more into things, we can see how everything matches up. It’s hard to comment without seeing the underlying model.” Local authority officer
- “We need to establish what the overall solution would be. WWU can then focus on areas where there is established need rather than focusing on everything at once. We are trying to look at current and future constraints and stresses on the network. I’d like to see improvement in looking at the impact of future climate change – tidal and coastal effects, flooding – that we get a lot of in Worcestershire. Certain types of soil affect gas pipes quite dramatically when temperatures rise and land gets completely flooded. Looking at your own network to see areas that are a bit shaky and addressing that to start with. Can we have that dialogue sooner rather than later?” LEP
- “We’re at an early stage, but I’m nervous about the community engagement element and how we bring local residents along with us. One thing that we’d be keen on is for you to support us through that. We need that to give our residents reassurance, as people don’t understand how this transition will work and it makes them scared.” Local authority officer
- “There is a need for some kind of national communications campaign to get the word out around this. Involve interesting graphics to catch the general public’s eye and talk about what it will involve, so that non-experts can understand.” Local authority officer
- “WWU has supported us incredibly well on the LAEP. I don’t know whether there is anything more that it could do.” Consultant

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## APPENDIX 1: ATTENDEE LIST

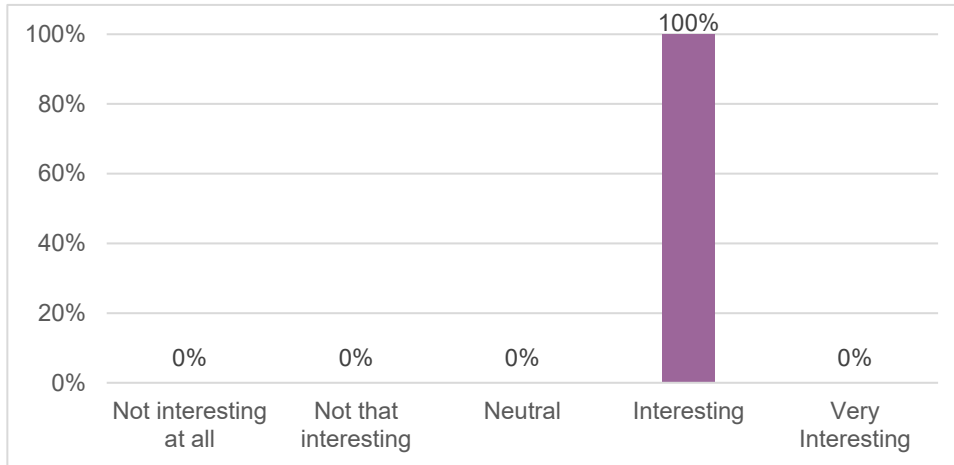
A total of 24 stakeholders attended the workshop, representing 20 organisations:

Arup	Stroud District Council
Bath and North East Somerset Council	South West Net Zero Hub
Blaenau Gwent Council	Swansea City Council
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Swansea Council
Carbon Trust	The Schumacher Institute
Centre for Sustainable Energy	Torbay Council
Devon County Council	West of England Combined Authority
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	Western Gateway
Newport City Council	Wiltshire Council
Somerset Council	Worcestershire LEP

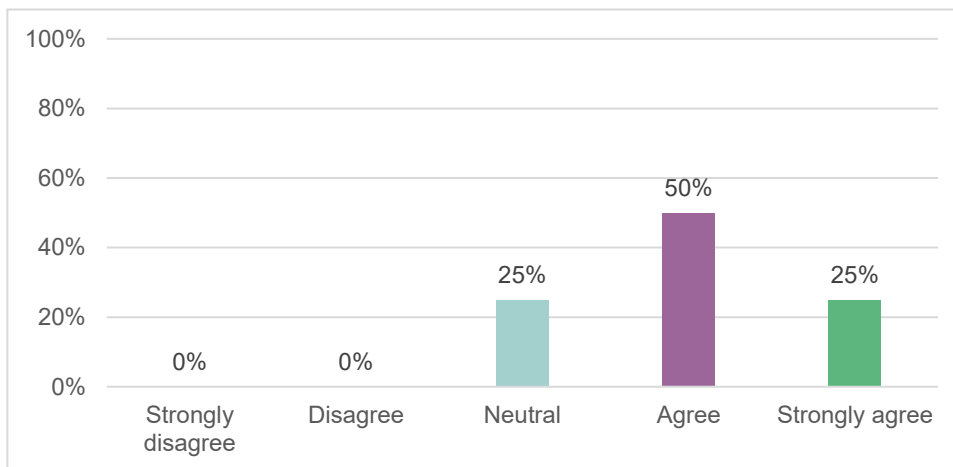
## APPENDIX 2: WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

After the workshop, stakeholders were asked to complete a short feedback form. Some of the key findings are shown below.

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



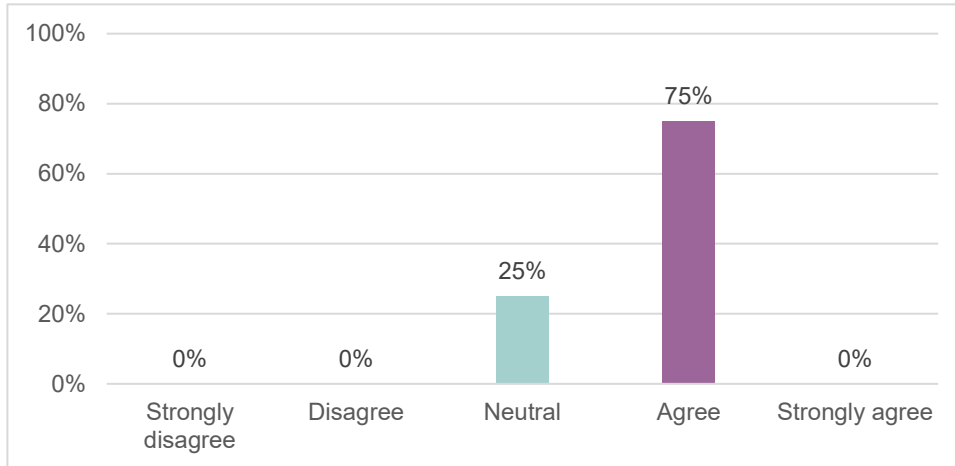
### 2. Did you feel that you had the opportunity to make your points and ask questions?



### Comments:

- “Good facilitation, but we needed more time in the breakout sessions and during the presentations to ask questions.”

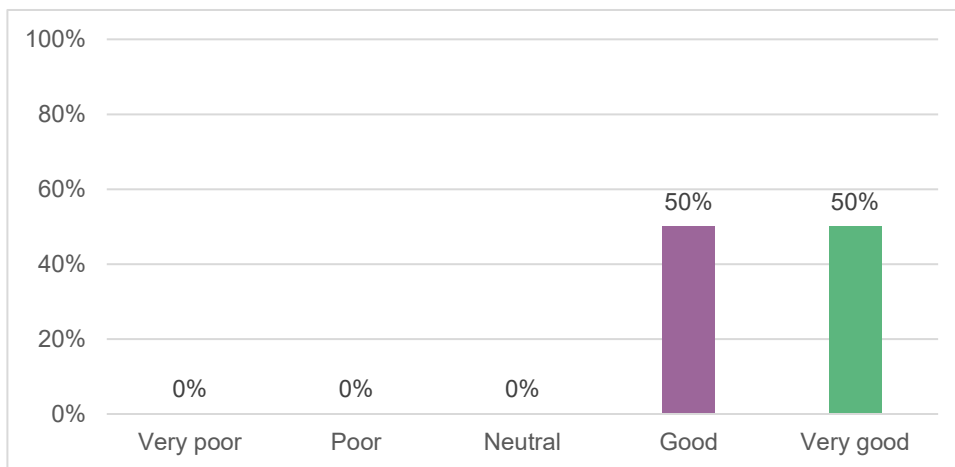
### 3. Did we cover the right topics for you on the day?



#### Comments:

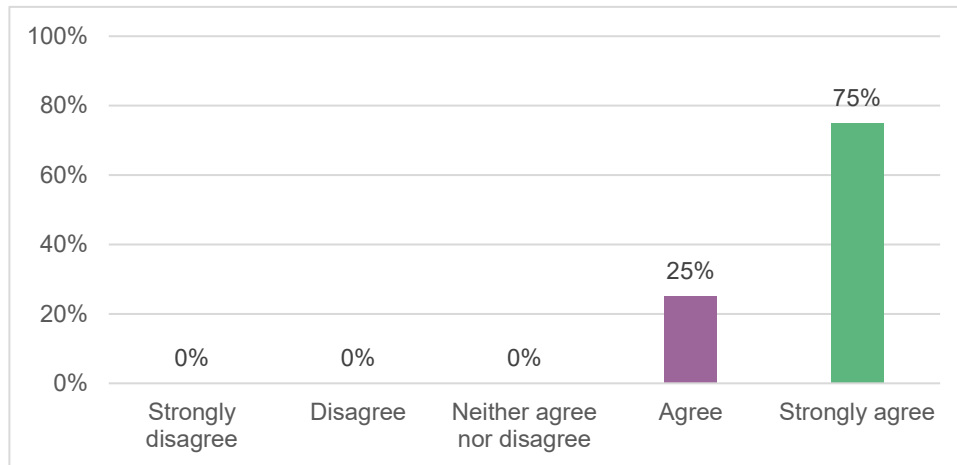
- “It would be useful for councils to be supported in funding LAEPs and how GNOs and DNOs can collaborate to support delivery of renewable energy more urgently.”
- “I would have liked to have heard more detail about WWU’s involvement in LAEPs so far.”

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



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## 5. Did you find the online format accessible and easy to use?



## 6. Do you have any other comments?

- “Thanks for running this event. We would welcome all of the stakeholder engagement that we can get over these crucial next couple of years.”



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