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Annex

SP Energy Networks 2015–2023 Business Plan

Stakeholder feedback report - Phase 1

Explain

December 2012

RIIO ED-1 Stakeholder Consultation

developed for

SP Energy Networks
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Executive Summary

Introduction

- Explain was commissioned by SP Energy Networks to carry out a consultation with their stakeholders to understand their priorities for future investment planning in line with RIIO-ED1
- Discussions focussed around the following six areas, however stakeholders were given the opportunity to make any other suggestions that they felt were important:
 - Reliability and availability
 - Customer service
 - Safety
 - Social issues
 - Environment
 - Network innovation
- Explain carried out eight focus groups with domestic customers, 2 workshops with stakeholders and business customers (total of 47 attendees) and 33 in-depth interviews to ensure a representation of a wide audience in consultation
- Verbatim transcripts were written up for all focus groups and in-depth interviews and notes were taken at each table at both workshops
- This qualitative information has been thematically analysed with the key themes identified highlighted throughout the rest of this report, alongside key conclusions, however please find a short summary of findings below

Results

- Security of supply was a top priority for domestic customers and other stakeholders and a number of themes were highlighted in the reliability and availability section of discussions:
 - The importance of reducing the length and number of power cuts experienced
 - Paying some attention to those customers who are currently 'worst served' e.g. improving their power supply, engaging with communities so that they understand the issues or providing some other form of support such as generators or replacement light bulbs
 - Replacing an ageing network
 - Investing for storm resilience, considering changing weather patterns that are being experienced



- When discussing customer service, domestic customer focussed on the customer service experienced when reporting a power cut with some areas for improvement identified:
 - Improving awareness of who SP Energy Networks is and when to contact them
 - Making the telephone number to report a power cut easier to find, potentially by sending something out in the post
 - Ensuring the recorded message customers listen to when they report a power cut is kept up to date and there is an option to speak to a telephone advisor if they wish to do so
 - Ensuring customers are kept informed during power cuts, increasing the use of text messaging
 - Providing regular updates during an extended power cut and working with third parties, such as the local council, to provide support on the ground, particularly for vulnerable people

- Improvements to customer service during the connections process were largely around partnership working:
 - Ensuring greater flexibility in the connections process, removing red tape and helping customers to find solutions to any issues faced to achieve a joint goal of completing a development
 - Ensuring there are good lines of communication between the customer and SP Energy Networks and that the customer has a single point of contact to go to with any queries
 - Improving transparency of information, for example allowing developers access to information in regard to available capacity in the network and providing budget quotations
 - Further consideration to be given to the passing of costly upgrade works on to the individual developer, can these costs be socialised?

- SP Energy Networks was felt to have a strong track record for safety and thus many stakeholders struggled to identify priorities for the future over and above what SP Energy Networks already do, key themes in discussion were:
 - The need to protect equipment from metal theft, whilst accepting that eliminating metal theft was outside of SP Energy Networks control
 - Educating young people about the dangers of electricity as well as how to lower their energy consumption
 - Replacing old services provisions in buildings
 - Providing cable plans where needed to avoid cable strikes when working with SP Energy Networks' area



- Prior to the section of discussions around social issues, many respondents discussed their concern for vulnerable people during power cuts. Supporting vulnerable people was a key focus of the social issues section alongside a number of other themes:
 - There was very low awareness of the priority services register and it was felt that this needed to be promoted more widely to ensure the right people were registered. Working with third parties such as charities, GPs and social services were popular suggestions as means of identifying vulnerable people
 - It was also suggested that SP Energy Networks work with organisations like the local council, social services and local charities in order to build partnerships so that these organisations can support vulnerable people during a power cut
 - Many respondents in the focus groups commented it was also the responsibility of the public to look after vulnerable people in communities and thus this could be leveraged further
 - The fuel poor were a concern for stakeholders, however they struggled to suggest a role for SP Energy Networks in supporting this sector of society
 - Several respondents were aware of community and charitable initiatives that SP Energy Networks were involved in and this was well received, however perhaps not widely known
 - Providing apprenticeships, training and job opportunities for local people was felt to be a responsibility of SP Energy Networks as a large employer

- The environment was the area of the consultation given the least attention by stakeholders as many of the aspects discussed were felt to be “given”:
 - Undergrounding cables was discussed often, however this was more often in relation to security of supply rather than visual amenity
 - Flood prevention at substations was important given changing weather conditions, again in order to ensure security of supply
 - As a large organisation reducing their carbon footprint was important and something stakeholders would expect SP Energy Networks to be doing already
 - Oil and SF6 was not widely discussed, however some highlighted the importance of minimising leakage

- Domestic customers typically struggled to comment on network innovation, however this was a key priority for other stakeholders:
 - Future proofing the network was important, however in order to achieve this in the first instance there was a need to gain a better understanding of available capacity in the current network using smart technology and monitoring equipment



- Strategic engagement with local authorities and developers was also important in order to allow understanding of the aspirations of different areas so that plans could be dovetailed going forward and investment made in line with future developments
- Once this knowledge base has been developed this would allow investment in the network to be made in the areas that need it most
- Research into means of storing electricity was felt to be useful



Introduction



Project background

Ofgem has undertaken a major overhaul of the framework for regulation of networks companies, and introduced its 'RIIO' model of regulation. One of the largest shifts from previous regulatory practice is the enhanced role of customers, network users and other stakeholders in developing and scrutinising company business plans.

SP Energy Network's business plan will ultimately be submitted to Ofgem as part of its next regulatory price control (known as RIIO-ED1) and must be informed by the views and priorities of its stakeholders.

It is critical that stakeholder requirements shape the priorities of the business plan and that stakeholders endorse the plan in its final form. In the past the electricity distribution industry has been criticised by Ofgem for merely consulting on plans once they have been developed, rather than building stakeholder feedback into the plans themselves. For this reason SP Energy Networks must engage stakeholders earlier in the process of developing business plans so feedback and priorities can be built directly into the content.

Explain was therefore commissioned by SP Energy Networks to carry out a wide reaching consultation to understand stakeholder priorities going forward.

Objectives

The key objectives of the research were to consult with domestic customers, business customers and wider stakeholders to understand what they felt were SP Energy Networks priorities going forward. Stakeholders were prompted to think about six areas and in addition asked about any ideas they had of their own. The six areas that stakeholders were prompted on were:

1. Reliability and availability
2. Safety
3. Customer service
4. Social issues
5. The environment
6. Network innovation



Methodology

In order to ensure a wide breadth of stakeholders were included in the research Explain carried out three separate strands of engagement. Initially two stakeholder workshops were carried out with business customers and wider stakeholders.

All members of SP Energy Networks business/connections customer and wider stakeholder database were sent an invitation to the workshops which was followed up with a telephone call to encourage attendance. The dates and times of the two workshops are detailed in the table below alongside the number of attendees at each event:

Workshop	Date and Time	Time	Venue	Number of Attendees
Glasgow workshop	Tuesday 11 th of September 2012	9.30am to 1pm	Blu Radisson Hotel	20
Chester workshop	Wednesday 12 th of September 2012	9.30am to 1pm	Chester Grosvenor Hotel	27

The agenda of the event consisted of a number of presentations followed by facilitated discussions as summarised below:

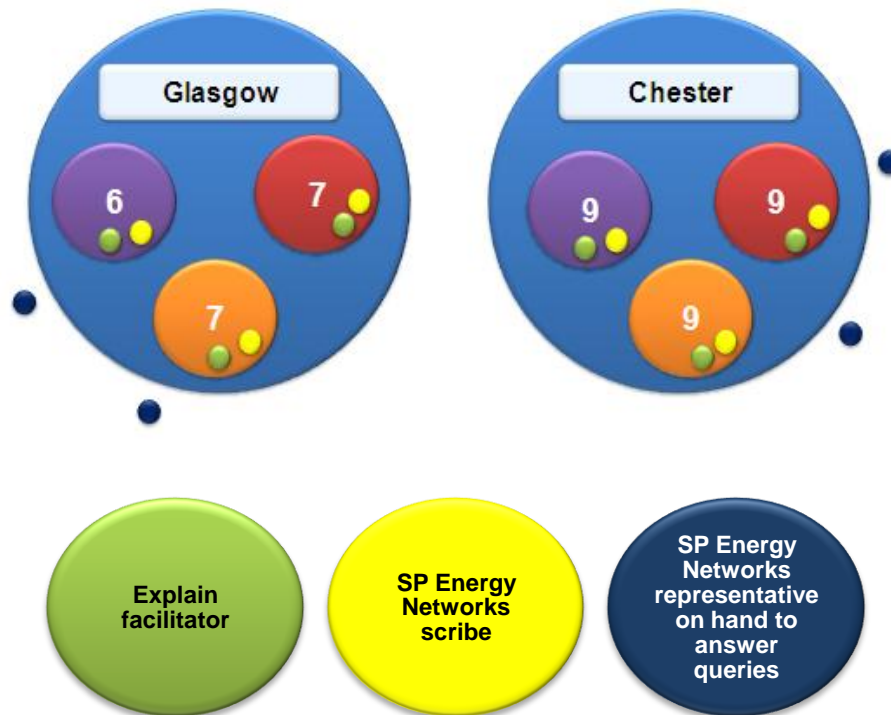
Duration	Start	Finish	Activity
Introductions			
00:30	09:30	10:00	Registration, arrival and refreshments
00:10	10:00	10:10	Welcome from Stakeholder Manager (Lynn Wilson)
00:10	10:10	10:20	Introduction to SP Energy Networks (Scott Mathieson, Regulation Director, SP Energy Networks)
00:05	10:20	10:25	Explain introduce structure of event (Emma Hopkins, Research Director, Explain)
Workshop Topic Areas			
Reliability, availability and safety			
00:10	10:25	10:35	Presentations 1 and 2 by SP Energy Networks
00:20	10:35	10:55	Table discussion facilitated by Explain
Customer service and social issues			
00:10	10:55	11:05	Presentations 3 and 4 by SP Energy Networks



00:20	11:05	11:25	Table discussion facilitated by Explain
Environment and Network Innovation			
00:10	11:25	11:35	Presentations 5 and 6 by SP Energy Networks
00:25	11:35	11:55	Table discussion facilitated by Explain and to include round up of discussions
Closing			
00:05	11:55	12:00	Completion of forms
00:05	12:00	12:05	Closing remarks
01:00	12:05	13:00	Buffet Lunch and networking opportunity

The six topic areas were paired into couples and a representative from SP Energy Networks ran through current performance within each area and potential improvements for the future, this presentation can be found in Appendix 1. The attendees then discussed what they felt were the priorities going forward based on the presentation that had been delivered as well as their own thoughts and experiences.

Attendees were split across three tables, a member of the Explain team facilitated the discussions on each table and a member of SP Energy Networks scribed. SP Energy Networks representatives were also on hand to deal with any technical questions or comments. The layout for the events is summarised below alongside a key:



As noted, scribes made notes on the discussions that took place and these have been used as the basis of analysis.

Following the workshops, Explain presented key themes back to SP Energy Networks highlighting stakeholder priorities. Explain also conducted a gap analysis to identify those stakeholder types that had not been engaged thus far. In the case of domestic customers these gaps were filled using focus groups, for business customers and wider stakeholders additional one to one telephone in-depth interviews were carried out.

A total of eight focus groups were carried out with customers who had experienced a power cut in the last 12 months covering three hotspot areas. The groups were carried out in local hotels or community centres and members of the public were invited to come along and discuss their views. The groups were carried out across two weeks in October, the locations of the eight groups are summarised below:

Distribution licence area	Location	Hotspot?
SPD	Castle Douglas	N
SPD	Kilmarnock	N
SPD	Edinburgh	N
SPD	Cupar	Y
SPM	Holyhead	Y
SPM	Bangor	N
SPM	Wrexham	N
SPM	Middlewich	Y

All focus groups were audio-recorded and full transcripts developed. These transcripts have been used as the basis of the analysis.



A total of 33 in depth interviews were completed with stakeholders in addition to those that attended the two workshops and thus in total the following breakdown of stakeholders were consulted (totalling 80 plus the eight focus groups with domestic customers):

Stakeholder type	Number consulted
Charities representing the vulnerable	2
Connections (Housing)	1
Connections (I&C)	3
Conservation groups	1
Customer (demand)	2
Customer (generation)	3
Electricity suppliers	6
Emergency services	3
Environmental group	1
Housing association	2
IDNO / ICP	2
Local Government (England)	5
Local Government (Scotland)	5
Local Government (Wales)	2
MP	1
Orgs representing business	1
Orgs representing consumers	3
Parish councillors	7
Renewable developers	5
Service provider	3
SMPs	3
Supply chain	16
Trades union	1
Welsh Assembly Members	2

All in-depth interviews were audio-recorded and full transcripts produced.



Transcripts from in-depth interviews and focus groups and the notes from the workshop events have been used as the basis of analysis in order to identify stakeholder priorities which are detailed in the remainder of this report. Stakeholders at the workshops and customers at the focus groups also completed prioritisation questionnaires and results from these questionnaires are also included in this report. Full transcripts are provided in a separate document.



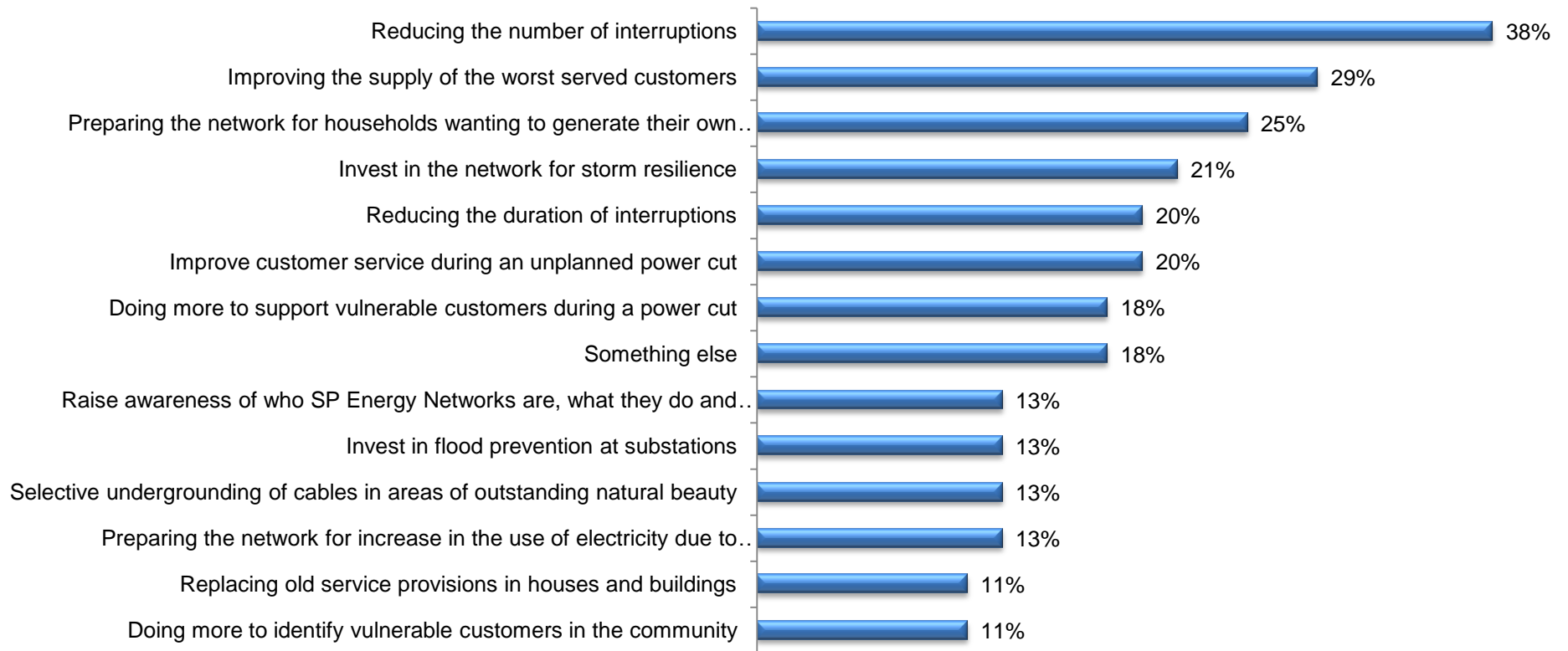
Key Findings



Priorities: A Summary

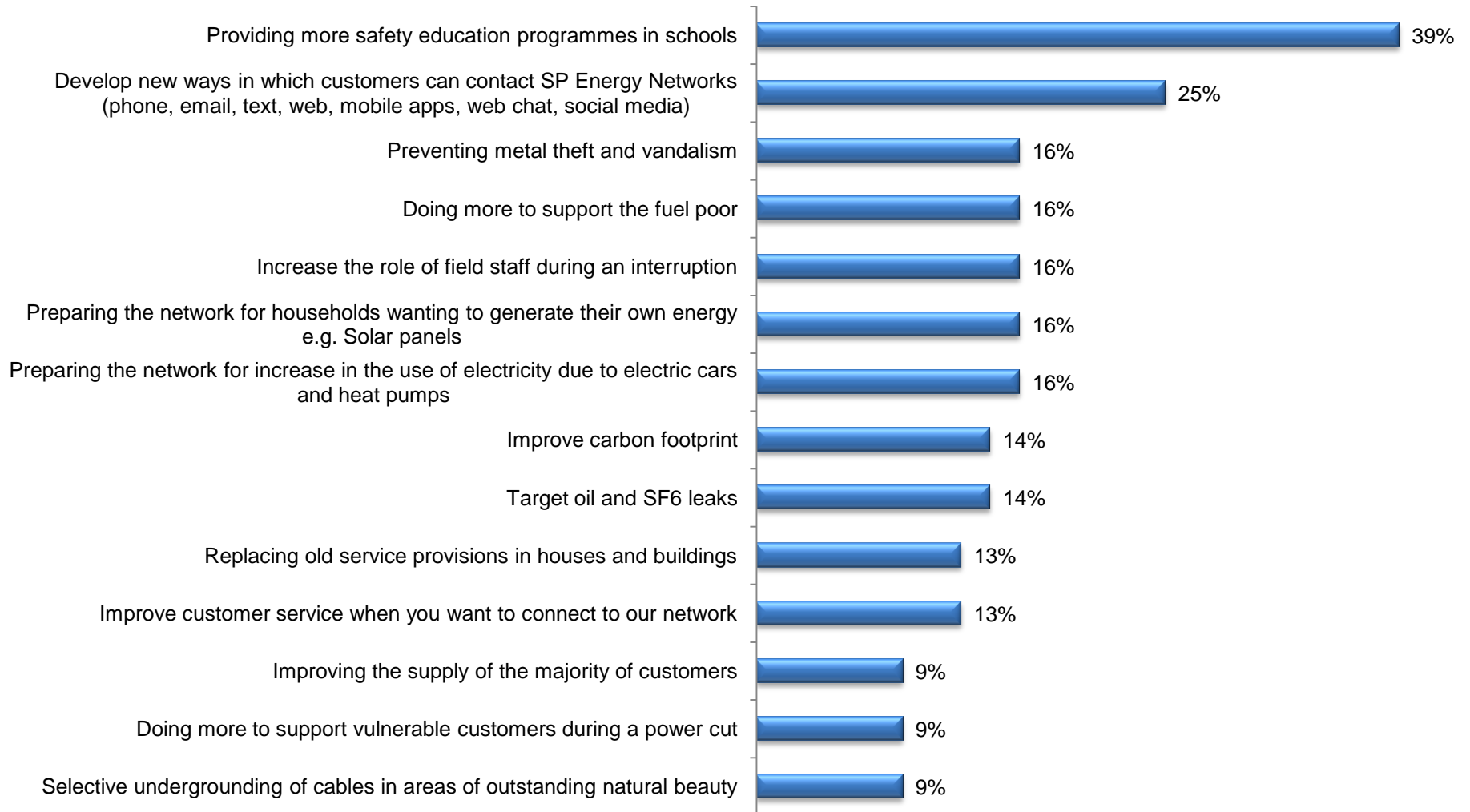
As noted, at the end of each focus group after priorities had been discussed, respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire selecting their top three and bottom three priorities for SP Energy Networks to consider going forward. The graph below shows the proportion of respondents who selected each item as one of their top three, only those items that were selected by at least 10% of respondents are shown. Typically customer priorities were around security of supply, to be expected considering all had experienced at least one power cut.

Focus Groups - Top Priorities



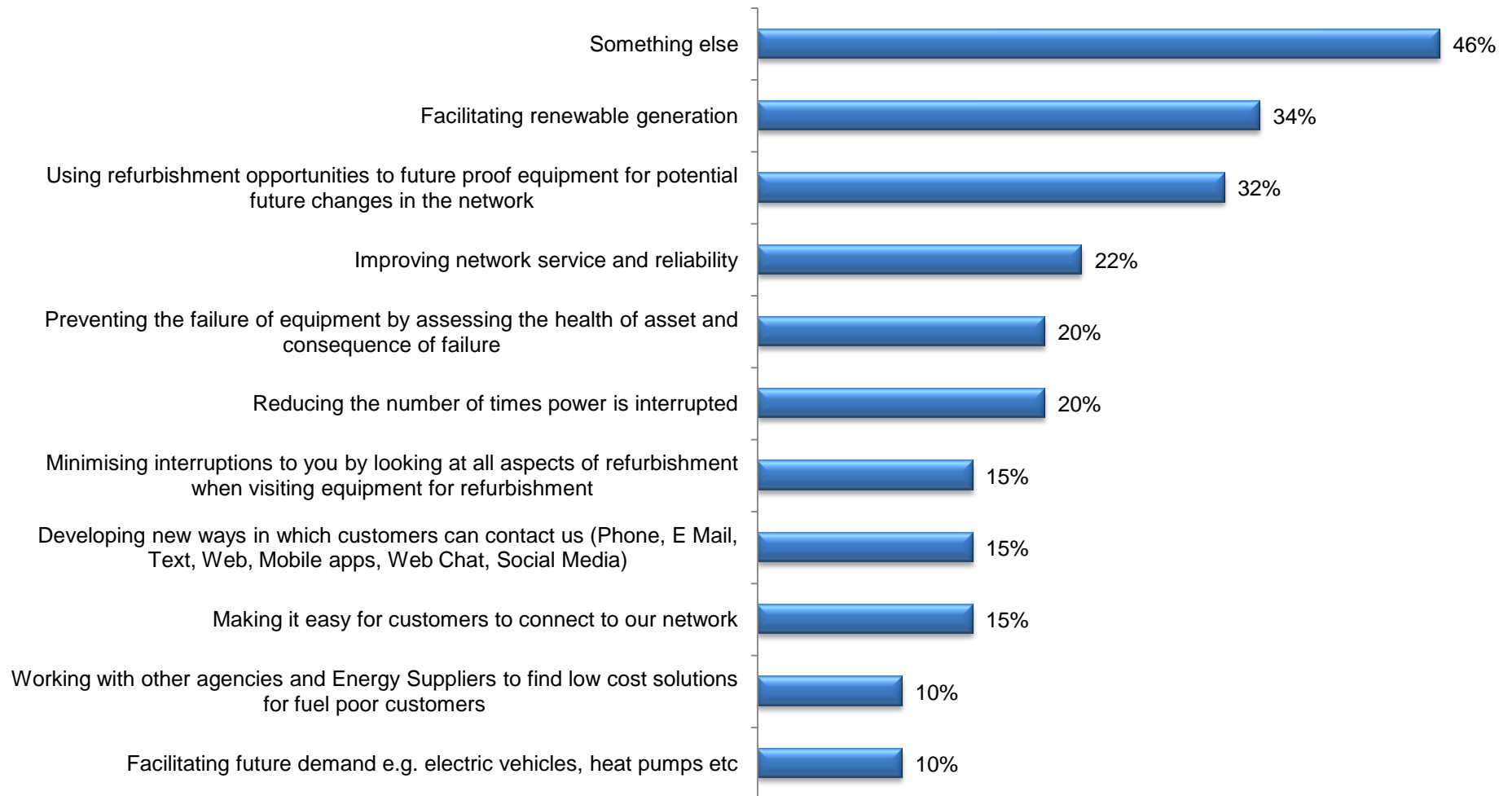
The graph below shows the proportion of customers that selected each item as one of their bottom three priorities, only those items that were selected by at least 9% of respondents are shown. Providing more safety education programmes in schools and developing new ways to contact SP Energy Networks were most likely to be selected as a bottom priority.

Focus Groups - Bottom Priorities



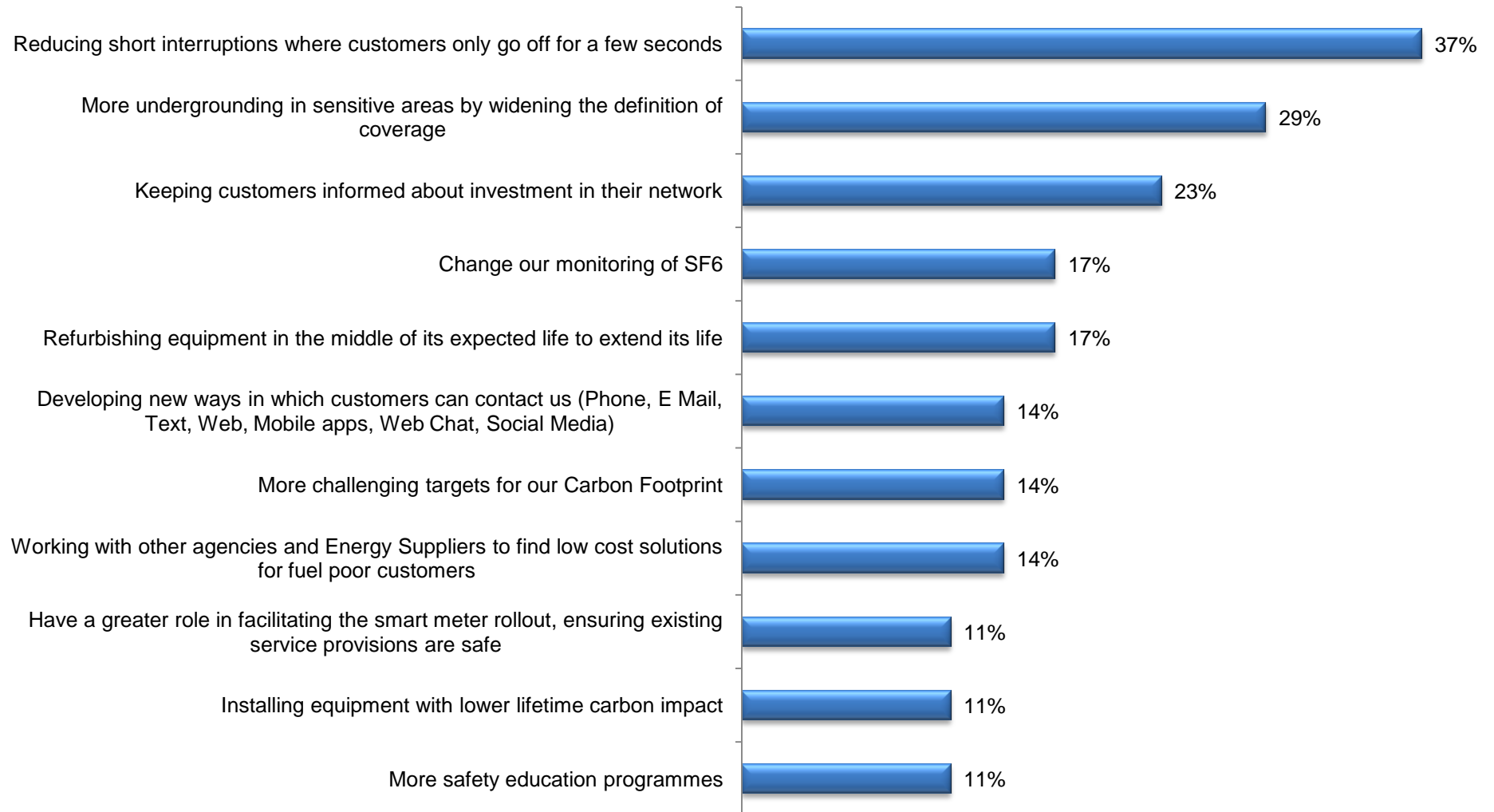
Stakeholders at the workshops completed a similar questionnaire at the end of the session. The graph below shows the proportion of stakeholders who selected each item as one of their top three; only those items selected by 10% or more respondents are shown. Priorities were typically around facilitating renewable generation, future proofing the network and ensuring security of supply. 46% of respondents also selected ‘something else’ which included items such as ensuring equality between urban and rural areas and better partnership working between SP Energy Networks and stakeholders.

Stakeholder Workshops: Top Priorities



Reducing short interruptions and undergrounding more cables in sensitive areas were most likely to be bottom priority for the stakeholder audience, again only those items which were selected by at least 10% of respondents are shown.

Stakeholder Workshops: Bottom Priorities



Awareness

Awareness of SP Energy Networks was discussed within the introductions of the focus groups and in-depth interviews to set the context and understand respondents' viewpoint. In terms of the stakeholder sample, all attendees at the workshops were aware of SP Energy Networks and their role, as to be expected. It is however important to note that some stakeholders involved in the in-depth interviews did not have sight of whom SP Energy Networks is and what they do. Both charities interviewed and five of the seven parish councillors interviewed, were not aware of SP Energy Networks prior to the research.

In the focus groups, although all respondents had communicated with SP Energy Networks when reporting a power cut, confusion between the supplier and the distributor was evident. Some respondents were not aware they had been in touch with SP Energy Networks and thought that they had just been in touch with their electricity supplier who had dealt with the issue. This confusion was particularly apparent when respondents' supplier was Scottish Power as they did not see the divide between the two companies. There was also confusion between the distribution network and the transmission network. The comments below demonstrate these points:

- “I thought Scottish Power...I mean obviously for my provider I've never changed so I suppose what it is that isn't clear is when you phone up to report a fault that's who we're actually phoning, Scottish Power Energy Networks not Scottish Power.” (Cupar, SPD)
- “Well no... I am not aware of that happening whenever I have reported a power cut it has just been a recorded message from Scottish Power, I don't think I have ever been passed on.” (Castle Douglas, SPD)
- “Well complaining about power cuts to Scottish Power and then it being picked up by SP Energy Networks in response.” (Castle Douglas, SPD)

It was felt that the lack of awareness of the role of the distributor and who to call during a power cut needed to be addressed and respondents typically suggested that something was sent out in the post to inform customers of the organisation and their role:

- “I think sometimes it can be a wee bit confusing in this day and age when people change suppliers annually, depending on who has the best deals and things. You lose track of who to call.” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “I think knowing who they are, a lot of people like I know that they use N Power so they just don't have a clue who to phone. You're trying to get through to people and you've not got a clue.” (Wrexham, SPM)
- “So there could be more understanding of the hierarchy of this a bit better starting off with the distribution, the manufacturers of the electricity the distribution board and then the network, the grid and then... but I think I don't understand the hierarchy properly.” (Bangor, SPM)



- “There’s not a clear distinction. I don’t think people are aware of that. There should be some effort applied to making the consumer know the difference between the supplier and the distributor.” (Edinburgh, SPD)

Parallel with the customer view that SP Energy Networks needed to do more to ensure customers understood who they were, was the view from stakeholders of the importance of partnership working, particularly with the local authorities and contractors, to ensure dovetailing of plans and ensuring that stakeholders have the contact details of a key contact they can get in touch with if they have any queries:

- “As I said, only I feel really in that it should be clearer which department handles what. I always feel that you never get put through to the correct department a lot of the time. It’s a long-drawn-out process. If there is a call required to make to ScottishPower, we all dread it here, to be honest. It’s like, ‘Urgh, we’ll phone this number,’ and then we get put all over the country until finally we get somewhere. It’s not always the case, but I must admit...” (Housing Associations)
- “Yes, well, it is getting better. They used to be quite standoffish, it was difficult to get information out of them, and get programmes out of them, and get them to work with you in terms of interfaces, but as I say, the recent experience at one of our wind farms has been very good, they’ve been very proactive, so maybe there’s been a stepped change and improvement there.” (Renewable Developer)
- “Local authorities have no sight of SPEN investment plans currently and, therefore, there is no co-ordinated approach. There should be face to face meetings between the two on planned investment on an annual basis.” (Chester Workshop, Local Authority)



Reliability and Availability

Following the introductory section of the discussions around awareness, all respondents at the workshops, focus groups and those who took part in the in-depth interviews discussed reliability and availability. Respondents were asked what the key priorities were for SP Energy Networks in relation to reliability and availability going forward.

Reducing the number and length of power cuts experienced

All respondents at the focus groups had experienced at least one power cut in the last 12 months and thus a key priority in this area was to reduce either the length or the number of power cuts experienced. There was some debate as to which was more important dependent on the person's experience. For example long power cuts were felt to be inconvenient by some as they had more of an impact, for example if more than one meal was missed. Whereas respondents who had experienced lots of power cuts felt that reducing the number was most important in order to ensure their supply was interrupted less often. Some example comments are shown below:

- “The duration I think because as they said 4 hours is a lot and if you need to eat or cook and especially in a case like X said I think it is important.” (Bangor, SPM)
- “For me it is the number, the number is totally unacceptable, if there is a genuine reason for a power cut so something like an act of God shall we say then that is fair enough and if it takes 10 hours or 24 hours or a couple of days to fix it if it is an extreme storm event for example, that is acceptable. But just having the frequency of power cuts that we experience I think this is just unacceptable.” (Castle Douglas, SPD)
- “I think if they reduce the length of them, you think ‘That’s not so bad, it’s only been off about half an hour’ so that makes it a bit easier. It’s if it’s for two or three hours and you are staring out the window like... I feel if they were to shorten the length of the cuts rather than reduce the amount of them that’s my opinion anyway.” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “Certainly having had a three and a half day power cut I would say that many short power cuts aren’t really a problem but one big power cut is a serious pain. For those three or four days it is a serious pain.” (Cupar, SPD)



More accepting of power cuts caused by weather

A number of other themes in terms of perceptions of power cuts were evident from the focus group feedback. Firstly it was clear that respondents were more accepting of power cuts that were caused by severe weather. In these instances they could understand that their power supply could be interrupted as they could physically see the cause. Instances where they could not see cause of the power issue caused the most frustration, particularly if they had been given mixed messages as to the root cause or no information at all:

- “I can appreciate that if you have inclement weather or lightning, sometimes that can strike a pole. I think it happened at Craigie one time and they were less ‘stranded’ you might say. What are the major problems that the company experiences? Is it due to the equipment malfunctioning or needing replacing because we don’t always have lightning and it doesn’t always strike the pole?” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “I don’t think the weather thing is a big one, I mean we’ve had some pretty bad experiences because of weather but you just can’t plan for trees falling down and transformers going down. There’s nothing you can do about it if a tree falls down and takes out a bunch of wires.” (Cupar, SPD)
- “The thing that annoys me sometimes is that it just goes off, so if there is a big storm or the wind is higher than normal you would expect that some tree would fall on the line and that is okay but sometimes when the weather is fine it just goes off for no apparent reason.” (Bangor, SPM)
- “I mean I would like to know... I mean every time the power goes off they are working around the corner and it is the same thing and I would like to know whether it is someone that goes in there each time and says ‘Yes yes it is just this door has a hole in it.’ I would hate to think it was just one little thing that was doing it. I don’t know why it is in the same place every time and I don’t understand why it can’t be put right.” (Holyhead, SPM)

Confusion as to why neighbouring properties were not affected during a power cut

There was also confusion, leading to frustration as to why their power supply was off when sometimes their neighbours were unaffected.

- “You don’t really get to know where other people are having problems or issues. I mean I can walk down Chester Road and I live on Grange Lane and it’ll be cut out black completely whereas some houses have got their lights on, it’s so frustrating...” (Middlewich, SPM)
- “We had one in our street and two doors up still had their lights on, and then people across the road had their lights on.” (Edinburgh, SPD)
- “Where I live half way up the hill and my daughter who lives in the old school is probably 500 yards away maybe and I’m off she’s on and if I’m on she’s off but I know about that because we had a little surprise, what happened to us was my husband went next door to a neighbour and they said ‘no ours is fine’ so then he said that he’d ring somebody and I said ‘why have you rang them?’ so we’ve got to pay now if somebody’s coming out because we didn’t realise that the house that’s not attached to us but the other side are actually together and so forth, there’s no logic in it. It’s bizarre!” (Wrexham, SPM)



Surprised SP Energy Networks rely on the public to report power cuts

Additionally, respondents were surprised that SP Energy Networks needed to rely on the general public to report a power cut:

- “Well what I am trying to get at is sometimes when you phone up they are looking for the fault and you would think in the 21st century they could actually look on a board and they could say it is between X and Y.” (Castle Douglas, SPD)
- “You would think that there would be some form of technology that would tell you at the beginning of the spur at the transformer and the end that something was amiss.” (Bangor, SPM)
- “When I rang up when we had a power cut they said that they had no idea, at Scottish Power Networks, of who has power cuts. The only way they work out where the fault is is by putting on a map where all the people are saying there is. So one phase, a whole area, or just one street, and then they can work out where to start looking for the problem. I would have thought they might monitor internally. So it's not waiting for phone calls otherwise...” (Edinburgh, SPD)

Poor quality power

When discussing reliability and availability, the natural focus was to discuss power cuts. However it was highlighted across several groups that power quality was just as important. Some respondents experienced low power or spikes in power, causing damage to equipment and thus this was a concern:

- “We’ve only had a couple in the last year. Previous to that it was every other day. And it wasn’t so much the power cuts, we could put up with that, it was the low power, which burnt out water pumps, alarm systems, televisions. You could hardly light a light. We were running about switching off everything. But it hasn’t proved a problem in the last year although there are a few poles that look as though they’re not very... Well I think now the problem rather than the overhead line from here to where we are is that something has happened in Fenwick, rather than our overhead line. But no, it’s not too bad at the moment.” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “I certainly agree that trying to work out a situation that would provide a more constant, less spiky and variable supply is probably more important than trying to deal with extra precautionary things for storm damage.” (Cupar, SPD)



Concern around vulnerable people

Another important point to note, which is discussed in more detail later in this report, is the fact that often respondents' focus instantly went to vulnerable people and ensuring they were okay during power cuts. Respondents often commented that they would be okay but someone they knew who was elderly or disabled would need extra care and attention:

- “Now that’s okay, but we have a few elderly neighbours, who I think are not as resilient as we probably are and that’s a concern for us because we are then prey to anybody to come down, and make use of the houses, because the house alarms are all off as well, they all disconnect.” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “I think the meals would be a concern for me especially for older people living on their own who maybe only have electricity heating and so on, especially for long durations in the winter time I think there should be somebody who knows that this is happening and can come in with... I don’t know a flask of hot water or something because that is what I thought last year. Even if it was just at the Community Hall and people said ‘Whoever has got power let’s get down there and make somewhere where people can go and get hot soup.’ Or something.” (Castle Douglas, SPD)
- “A couple of days is a long period, for my in-laws for example my mother in law is in a wheelchair so they have a lot of food in a really big freezer and if it is four days without electricity then they would lose all of the food. You cannot go out and buy food and my mother in law she finds it difficult to go into shops and they have their food delivered so what happens if they lose all of this food?” (Bangor, SPM)

Outside these themes that were highlighted in the focus groups particularly, there were a number of themes apparent across all stakeholder feedback identified below.

Worst served areas

Although there were some differences in opinion, the majority of respondents did feel that those living in worst served areas required some attention as it was not acceptable for them to continue experiencing a poor power supply:

- “Surely it would make sense to invest in that equipment that’s causing the cuts because that’s costing them money so if you invest in replacing the kit that you are having to repair constantly surely that is not as big an investment as just replacing stuff that never needs replacing.” (Middlewich, SPM)
- “No but the point is that inequality regarding rural customers as a bit of a nuisance stems from that, it’s inherent in it because as X was saying it’s reasonable for them to do that as a business case but this wasn’t a business, this was a service provided to the community and we were all paying for it through taxation, now we’re paying for it by the electricity bill so basically if we’re paying the same bill then we want the same service, I reject the business case for it.” (Cupar, SPD)
- “I would like to think that we made the decision on exactly the same as on the safety issue, you replace the infrastructure first that needs most replacing.” (SMPs)



- “I think the supply in general terms is good within the urban areas, and I think that a lot more effort should go into some of the rural areas to make sure the quality of supply is improved in rural areas.”
(Scottish Local Government)

It is however important to note that some people living in the most rural of areas accepted their poor power supply as the downside of living where they do. Some also suggested that if they were to experience a poor supply, then potentially they could be compensated in some way for experiencing this e.g. providing compensation when equipment is damaged or providing generators so people have a back up supply.

- “Understandably. I think if you can put 50,000 back on then you’re not going to put eight back on at the expense of 50,000. I don’t think the system will allow them to actually improve the worst served customers. I think they’ll always be the worst served customers just because they are small numbers.”
(Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “They could put a generator together so that the people who are the worst served customers could have access to a generator and they could offer whatever price was appropriate and people could either take it on or not.” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “Obviously when you are running a business you would look at costs and where you put that money but from a personal point of view my concern is the amount of money we lose because of the damage that is done. I am just making suggestions on this but they could say ‘We have better places to spend the money but what we will do is bring a generator in or we will make sure you are covered or won’t have to pay so much for the damage.’ That sounds like a poor excuse but if they are going to say ‘Well we are sorry you are not going to get any help for the next 10 years’ it would be nice to have some sort of solutions.” (Holyhead, SPM)
- “Well maybe buy some more fluorescent rechargeable lights or maybe in really bad areas some form of power source, a separate power force so a generator or something like that. Just sort of something... a pack or something they know that people have problems and they could say ‘Look we are very sorry but we can’t invest in you, we can at least provide this’ or reduce the charges.” (Holyhead, SPM)



Ageing network

Many stakeholders discussed the ageing nature of the network and emphasised that proactive maintenance to replace outdated equipment was key as well as looking for long term solutions to issues rather than 'band aid' fixes:

- “For the reasons that X has just described our supply or the supply that we’re on is very vulnerable particularly to bad weather conditions but that would be because of its age and the fact that it’s in a rural community where there are lots of trees etc so as soon as you get storms it seems that it’s not resilient enough to withstand it.” (Middlewich, SPM)
- “Replacement or refurbishment of high risk equipment. It is important that a complete fix is carried out. Not just a couple of ‘band-aid’ solutions” (Contractor, Chester Workshop)
- “I think a lot of it is that Scottish Power Networks are reactive as opposed to proactive. They’re not going out and checking on installations and renewing things, I’m from North Quinn as well and the system up there is all on wooden poles.” (Wrexham, SPM)
- “So rather than waiting until the end of the life and then replacing everything at once, because the reality is that a lot of the network was built just after the second world war and now a lot of it has been replaced all at once. Along with the change in the shape of the network to allow for wind farms and such like. So this is all happening at once whereas if there was a trickle feed approach that would be better for them, it would be easier for them to manage, but it would also be easier for the suppliers to manage.” (Non Attendee (Connections (I&C)))

Storm resilience

Given the changing weather that had been experienced, storm resilience was felt to be important in order to minimise the impact of severe weather. It is important to note, however, that respondents in the focus groups did seem to be more accepting of power cuts caused by weather as previously outlined:

- “Well, you can get storms anywhere, but I suppose what they really need to look at, if anything, is to actually identify where the most likely places are to have the storms. For example, I used to go to the Isle of Harris and they had terrible interruptions weather-wise because it’s such a windy place, and yet it’s well known to be a windy place.” (Charities representing vulnerable people)
- “I think if they can. Yes, certainly when we’ve had bad storms in the last couple of years there were places in my area that were cut off for a few days. So yes, storm resilience would seem to me to be a sensible thing.” (SMPs)
- “Absolutely, because that tends to be the area where we’ve had failures. I’ve had whole villages cut off because storms have blown down lines. And sometimes it happens at the most inconvenient times. I had one Christmas day when the whole of the village went down, and obviously, it’s very difficult at Christmas to find out what’s happening. So it’s absolutely a vital area to focus on.” (MP)



Customer Service

The next area that was discussed was customer service including customer service for the domestic and business customer. Looking at customer service for the domestic customer first, typically these conversations centred around the customer service provided during a power cut and there were a number of themes in response that were identified, each of these themes is discussed in detail to follow.

Ease of reporting a power cut

In terms of reporting a power cut initially, there were many comments from respondents that it was difficult to find the telephone number for SP Energy Networks and also that often people were not sure who they needed to call. There was evidence that customers often contacted their electricity supplier first which added to confusion and frustration of trying to get in touch with the right organisation. Respondents recommended that the telephone number be made easily available in the Yellow Pages and that something is sent out to customers so they have the telephone number to hand. In addition there were many comments that there needed to be greater awareness of who SP Energy Networks is and what they do as indicated already:

- “Yes, well, a card that sits by the phone or something that sticks on the phone so they can actually find it and it doesn’t go missing. One of the other things, and particularly for older people, is making things accessible in large print and thinking about colours that are used. So taking advice on size of print, the style of print, background colour and colour of print because so many older people are visually impaired.” (Charities representing vulnerable people)
- “Well I’ve tried looking in the Yellow Pages and you think well who supplies the energy? Do I need to ring the wire company or the electric company, who is it? You know you’re thumbing through and the Yellow Pages that they deliver come for the wrong area and it doesn’t include you so you’re all over the place. Once you know the number it’s great, it’s actually getting the number in the first place.” (Middlewich, SPM)
- “The stickers [with the emergency number on] could even be glow in the dark; you know that they charge up normally through the day. We have candles but we don’t smoke so we didn’t have anything to light them with!” (Wrexham, SPM)
- “I think the evidence I’ve read, most people tend to call their supplier. So there’s probably an issue there about how you let consumers know who they should contact in the event of a power cut. That also feeds through to the guaranteed standards that I mentioned earlier. A lot of people don’t appreciate who their DNO is, although there seemed to be a higher appreciation in the ScottishPower region than other regions. So they would instinctively call their supplier rather than the DNO, and then be routed by the supplier to the DNO. It would presumably save people the hassle of ringing two different numbers, a wrong number and then being transferred.” (Non attendees)



Recorded message

When calling to report a power cut, customers often got a recorded message. The majority felt that the recorded message was a good idea and gave a useful update; however in some instances this had not been kept up to date which was a problem. In addition it was felt to be useful to provide the option to speak to a call agent if you needed to; this option is currently available but is placed at the end of the message:

- “It is when you get a recorded message and you think ‘I can understand this but sorry I need to speak to somebody because I need you to know that I can’t get any information back from you.’” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “In my experience they tell you to phone back and they must have this kind of system that they know where you are phoning from because the automatic service comes on and says ‘We know about the problem and there will be X amount of hours until repair, if it is still off at this time phone back again’ and they have an updated message on.” (Bangor, SPM)
- “At least with the automated message, they give you the postcode so you know exactly that it’s your area.” (Edinburgh, SPD)
- “I think the recorded message that you get is very useful, they say ‘Have you phoned from this phone number?’ And you can press one and you can say ‘Yes that is where I am phoning from’ and then you get a recorded message saying ‘We know there is a power cut and it will be restored by this estimated time.’” (Castle Douglas, SPD)

Keeping customers informed

Keeping customers informed during power cuts was important and this has been highlighted in many research projects conducted in the past. Respondents did feel that text message updates would be useful and some stakeholders commented that providing updates via the web would be useful going forward. Local authorities commented that it would be useful to notify local authorities of problems in their area so that they could relay the message to any members of the public that telephoned them in error:

- “Just what we’ve been saying an update on how or who the faults affecting us by text wouldn’t be a bad idea either because you phone them up and they say ‘it’ll be fixed within six hours’ but then once they get an engineer on site they’ll have a better idea of what the problem is so if they were able to update us on the little details.” (Cupar, SPD)
- “So why couldn’t Scottish Power have a text message based service that you sign up for and if there’s an outage in your area you’ll get a message telling you how long it’s likely to be, or something.” (Environmental Group)
- “The SP Energy Networks website doesn’t currently give live information about outages. Could customers sign up for a text service to be given information about outages?” (Delivery, Glasgow Workshop)



Extended power cuts

Respondents also thought about extended power cuts and severe situations and the level of support SP Energy Networks should provide in these instances. It was noted that information is key in an unplanned power cut, regardless of length but in an extended power cut additional support may need to be provided on the ground. It was typically suggested that SP Energy Networks works with partners in order to achieve this, i.e. local councils, social services or charities, understanding that providing practical support themselves would be difficult. The provision of generators was also suggested. Again, vulnerable people were a major concern:

- “Do they have anyone inside of the Local Authority because they have got Emergency Planners as well and people in charge of contingency plans and the Local Authority will also know who the most vulnerable people are through Social Services and the care sector. So the power companies could liaise with the Local Authorities so they could identify who is likely to be at risk in those areas.” (Holyhead, SPM)
- “If I can jump to providing additional support during extended power cuts, I think we don’t want to set up another Social Services department. I think if there’s a degree of cooperation, then that can be covered by existing services.” (Edinburgh, SPD)
- “Well, I think probably some hot food and something hot to drink, and possibly a thermal blanket if things got really bad because people can wrap themselves up in them. Maybe these gel packs you put in your pockets and put your hands on, that might be a good idea to give to people.” (Charities representing vulnerable people)
- “I think yes, for vulnerable customers, then certainly, that is a priority. For non-vulnerable customers, I guess perhaps less so. I think information really seems to be the key thing that’s demanded there, in terms of the duration and an explanation of why things have happened. Also where there are customers who have persistent problems, that action is taken to look at addressing that.” (Non attendee (Consumer Group))

Engaging with those worst served

In terms of ‘hot spot’ areas, i.e. those worst served there was felt to be a need to engage with those communities to help them understand the issues that SP Energy Networks were facing in their area and any plans long term to improve their service. In addition it would be useful for these communities to understand SP Energy Networks guaranteed standards so that they knew what they should expect as a customer. Community engagement was felt to be much less important for areas that did not have issues with their power supply and there was doubt that whether this sort of information would be of interest.

- “I suppose we think that there could be more proactive marketing of the guaranteed standards, compensation to consumers, more effective compensation to consumers, where they’ve experienced a standard of service that falls short of those stipulated.” (Non attendee (Consumer Group))
- “I think wider investment plans probably not so much, except for those areas that maybe have had long term problems; they probably want to know what has happened. But if it’s an area that has had a fairly



constant supply and there's something being done to upgrade it I doubt they're that interested unless it's going to cause an element of disruption." (SMPs)

- "They were doing it down the hill from us and they took some of the pylons down and they put it into the local papers and they let people know that was what they were doing, they let everyone know that it was all going to be changing and that they were all working on that." (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- "When you mention about informing people now we are talking about it here it would be nice to know so 'We are not going to do anything in your area for the next 15 years' or until 2023 or whatever but we could say 'Okay, if you are not going to improve the supply are you going to do anything else?' so yes." (Holyhead, SPM)

Flexibility in the connections process

In terms of customer service in relation to connections customers and renewable developers again there were a number of themes, particularly around partnership working, flexibility and making it easy to connect. It was commented on that there was not enough flexibility in the connections process; it was too rigid with too much red tape. There was a view that SP Energy Networks needed to work with renewable developers to help find solutions when an issue is identified.

- "Yes. I've got a really good recent example of the frustration of dealing with SP. We're doing a fairly major refurbishment project in part of Liverpool and we were looking to put a PV on about 70 properties there. When we applied to do this, SP would only allow us to do 33 of them. It's sort of a bit infuriating really when we're blocked from doing this, and then trying to force to pay for infrastructure upgrades that support, supposedly, the doing, which is a very weak reason really. I wrote an email to X who is a fairly senior director of SP and I, to date, have not had a response, which is pretty poor as far as we're concerned." (Housing Associations)
- "I think they are a bit, and I understand why they are, I know they've got a big organisation, it moves, so they have to lay down fairly specific guidelines, and ultimately their staff have to follow these. All I'm saying is, from time to time, they tend to dig their heels in, because it does follow a process, and ultimately they could take a more pragmatic view. To get yourself to the pragmatic viewpoint, generally speaking, you have to speak to somebody more senior. And I don't necessarily think that that's always a good thing." (IDNO ICP)
- "I think they're not bad as far as communication goes in relation to phone calls coming in and answering it within a certain period of time, and responding. I think they're fine, I mean you could always improve it. As I say, I think unfortunately because it's a downside to having standards of service, folk work to the standard of service instead of trying to improve it, so you don't have any argument as a customer to say, you could have told me that yesterday, and they say, well, we're within our five days X, you know. Yes alright, but I really wanted to know today where we are." (IDNO ICP)
- "Sometimes I think they could be more accommodating. Sometimes there's that much red tape put in front of you, and procedures and protocols and stuff like that. It seems to depend on what department



you speak to. They don't speak to other departments, when I believe there's an element of overlap there." (Non Attendees)

Single point of contact

These issues also overlapped into communication and the need of a single point of contact in order to build a partnership and develop an effective line of communication between the two parties. Many respondents did have this sort of relationship already; however this was not the case across the board:

- “Yes, well, it is getting better. They used to be quite standoffish, it was difficult to get information out of them, and get programmes out of them, and get them to work with you in terms of interfaces, but as I say, the recent experience at one of our wind farms has been very good, they've been very proactive, so maybe there's been a stepped change and improvement there.” (Renewable Developer)
- “For an organisation, communication is key. From a business point of view: they do not view us like a valued customer. There needs to be vast improvements to SPEN's customer services including responsiveness. Connection customers are spending a lot of money and feel like a burden when trying to communicate with SPEN. It also takes far too much time to get things done when dealing with SPEN. There should also be improvements to flexibility. And SPEN should listen more carefully to what their customers are saying and respond in an appropriate manner.” (Distributed Generation Customer, Glasgow Workshop)
- “Yes. It's a massive company; we accept that. But that's SP's problem, really [laughs], and it's something that everybody else is left with the burden of really, of trying to figure out how you get a route in. But we did think X was potentially the person that would be... because he purported to be - 'If you have an issue with SP, you come to me and I'll put you to the right person.' The first time we tested that, we don't even get a response..” (Housing Associations)

Transparency of information

Another area of improvement was in relation to transparency of information particularly in regards to availability of capacity in the network in order to inform an application, rather than this information only becoming apparent after an application has been submitted:

- “100 per cent because it must cost them a fortune. It must cost a fortune for them and what gain are they making from it? They're hiding behind the fact that, if a generator comes along and says, I'd like a connection onto your network, they say, well, you know, we need to do a network study, we need to find out what the impact is on our network, and then we might need to upgrade it, and if they have to upgrade it then ultimately, there's a cost associated with that, that goes to the generator. That's back to my point that I made earlier. You know, if they're more transparent why they need to do the upgrade, what the costs are, then they would probably not have as much bad publicity as they're in, but it would also let folk access network information, then ultimately they could see that they can make their own decisions and then have more informed debates.” (IDNO ICP)



- “Yes, I think the key thing is balancing the potential of smart metering to avoid costly reinforcement of the network. Partly that’s to do with improving the ability of DG and small sources of distributed generation, making it easier to connect, and giving DG greater visibility on where there’s spare network capacity...” (Consumer Group, Non attendees)
- “Yes. In general, the network operator is the only organisation that has a handle on the amount of demand from large businesses or for small businesses. And even that is probably not level. They would probably want more information. But if a renewable generator is looking for a connection and the connection on the network is constrained, it’s no ability for that generator to have an oversight of, well, actually, maybe there’s a big need for energy, hopefully that we could supply, and avoid the need for lots of costly reinforcement of the network. They can’t do that through the DNO at the moment. There is no route for that at the moment.” (Interest Groups (Charities Scotland), Non Attendee)

Budget quotations

The provision of budget quotations would also be useful to give an idea of costs before submitting a full application:

- “Well, they tend to give you a price for everything, which must have a massive resourcing issue. Whereas, they must know what the overall average is for a certain standard of service that goes for somebody that’s building a one off new house in an urban environment, off of existing networks. So they can say right if there’s an existing network within fifteen metres then your connection cost will be this. And that’s it. Instead of that what they do is, they take the information, you fill forms out, you have to apply for it, you get all that application form, somebody then visits the place, measures it all up, then gives them a quote. So there are massive costs in doing all that. So you could save money on that and then with that cost saving improve service elsewhere.” (IDNO ICP)
- “I suppose they probably could. Again, that would be down to them letting you see if there’s an application already there. If they asked for grid coordinates or something like that, they said, right where is it you want to build, and you could go into their system and say, right well, somebody made an application for this two weeks ago, or seven months ago, and it’s sitting there and you could have a look at it and say, right well, actually I know it’s going to roughly cost me 70 grand, that’s what I need to know. I don’t even need to speak to anyone, I can just go online, call that up, there’s where I was looking to get a connection, the last time somebody looked for it was on this date, there’s all the information, and bang, there’s your answer. It’s not contractual; it’s just purely a guide.” (IDNO ICP)
- “Well, also what I think would be very useful, would be to have an annual price list for new connections. And some justification behind that, because I had a case recently where I got a quote off them, because the other thing you have to do is you have to pay up front for the work, now therefore you’re paying upfront for work and then they’re saying, well, the price has now increased from that original quote we gave you, and no justification behind it. We have a fixed fee we have to pay for a new connection, but how is that broken down into a cost? It’s such an extraordinary amount.” (Parish Councillor)



Costs of upgrading

There was also comment around costs of upgrading the network that had been passed on to developers. It was felt that SP Energy Networks should take a strategic view of projects in the area in order to socialise the costs, rather than it being passed to one individual:

- “And the other one is, at the moment what happens is, each individual customer who wants to connect a heat pump risks getting hit for significant additional network upgrade costs. So say you want to build a heat pump for 25 grand, and then on top of that you have to pay another 15 grand to upgrade the local distribution network. They should have regulatory settlement which says that stuff like that is effectively free at the point of use. So, when you've got a need which arises like that, that cost should be socialised because the long term aim is expected to be that you build a bigger grid to accommodate low carbon energy. Does that make sense? Yes, rather than those costs being charged directly, now for generation I'm not so bothered but for demand that clearly should happen, because essentially, probably that first person has got a first mover disadvantage, and they're picking up the costs of network upgrade for a number of users coming through.” (IDNO ICP)
- “When issuing regeneration plans and the costs of primary substations in derelict sites, there has been no help from Scottish Power with the cost of replacing said substations. It is very unfair that the developer has to pay so much. Scottish Power needs to take responsibility of the reliability and stop passing on costs.” (Local Authority, Chester Workshop)



Safety

Strong reputation for safety

When discussing safety, many stakeholders, including domestic customers, viewed this area as a “given”. There was comment that SP Energy Networks had a strong track record and reputation for safety and thus this was not something that concerned them:

- “No I think to be fair they’re a very safety conscious organisation. I’ll give them that, they’ve got a very strong ethos in safety, and as long as they’re always looking to improve on that, and keep investing in it, then I think they’re alright. They’ve had a couple of fatalities, they’ve had a few incidents here and there, but they don’t tend to tolerate these situations, and they’re always at the forefront of trying to improve there, so I’m all for that, and as long as they keep doing that I’ve not got any suggestions particularly, to make to that.” (IDNO ICP)
- “Not particularly. I think we’ve got a pretty safe system; you don’t see many accidents.” (Scottish Local Government)
- “No, not really. Maybe I’m just lucky, in the areas I live in there’s never been problems from that sort of stuff. Perhaps if you spoke to somebody who lived in one of the rougher parts of Glasgow you might get a different answer. I don’t think so, I think they are very safety conscious. There’s no doubt about that, you can tell that working with them, that is genuinely the number one priority, it’s not just some bit of bull****.” (Non Attendee (Connections (I&C)))

Metal theft

Metal theft was identified as a major problem and it was typically agreed that SP Energy Networks should do everything that they could to protect their own equipment. However it was accepted that metal theft is a wider issue and is not necessarily entirely under SP Energy Networks control:

- “Obviously, companies have to take precautions to protect themselves and the important infrastructure they have, but criminal activity is something that the law enforcement agencies should be dealing with.” (Scottish Local Government)
- “Well, if it’s their property then yes. I think they need to focus on how they can lessen it, again I accept there are practicalities involved, and there’s only so much they can do. Yes, as far as they can if they can lessen it then they should be.” (SMPs)
- “No, I don’t think so. But I think in today’s climate where every opportunity maybe is seen as a money-making scam for people, whether it be lead off roofs or anything else, I think it’s something that should be considered.” (Housing Associations)
- “As bad as metal theft and vandalism is that is really an issue for the police isn’t it and I think that goes along with the education. I work in a school in a really deprived area and I do know that this kind of thing



goes on. So maybe a little more education rather than just teachers doing lessons about it they could actually come in with real life stories and tell them about the accidents that happen.” (Kilmarnock, SPD)

Educating young people

Another area that was discussed often was the education of young people in relation to electricity safety as well as education around the sensible use of energy. This was highlighted as a priority for many stakeholders, however respondents in the focus groups were more mixed in their opinions as to whether this was a priority for SP Energy Networks:

- “I think that’s right, but also I think the main educational message is about the usage. Obviously, you want the public to be safe; you don’t want them to get into situations where they might inadvertently cause themselves harm. But equally, in terms of education, an educational programme should really be built about responsible use of energy.” (Scottish local Government)
- “I think it helps, yes. We’ve got a place called Danger Point which is a big school’s liaison place in the constituency and all schools go there and Manweb/Scottish Power have an element of that Danger Point place where people talk around live cables and power points/electricity in the home, and all that sort of stuff as part of that.” (MP)
- “They could do some kind of fun pack for a secondary level. I mean all said and done electricity is basic physics and maybe they can bring something in just so they understand the principals of what it does do you know what I mean? I mean I think we have a great problem to get over when I’ve got work experience people the fact that our electric fence puts out 5000 volts but it doesn’t kill you! Do you see what I mean? If they understand it a bit better then perhaps they’ll treat it with a bit more respect.” (Middlewich, SPM)
- “I think most of the children that get a lot of this safety thing you know with the environment and stuff so leave it to the curriculum. I think a lot of them do projects; I’m sure my own children have done projects on reducing energy and so forth so I think that’s there anyway. Maybe it’s not the real safety of don’t put your fingers in the plug and things like that but you know I mean with the RCDs now anyway they’re not going to get the same shots as I got when I was little of seeing a lad who did stick his fingers in a plug.” (Wrexham, SPM)



Replacing old service provisions

Several respondents in the focus groups had experienced old service provisions within their homes and businesses and where this was the case they identified replacing these as a high priority going forward, this was also important for stakeholders in order to minimise risk of fire:

- “Definitely. Fire is a major concern and we know that casing that is corrupted can cause fire.” (Scottish Local Government)
- “Yes, definitely, absolutely. Having lived in a very old cottage several years ago that had no earth, yes, I do. Because I had to put it in myself. I am trained. But if it had been somebody else that moved in there, I don’t think they would have known. Yes, I think that’s definitely needed.” (Housing Associations)
- “Looking at replacement of old provisions means you’re looking at fire prevention there which is obviously pretty important and the sorts of houses and locations where provisions are pretty old might be inhabited by old people who are vulnerable and it’s their responsibility so that would bump it up in my list of priorities.” (Middlewich, SPM)
- “Well they had to do mine, I was doing some painting outside my house and it is a bungalow but a very tall person could probably reach the cables going around the house and I thought I would phone up to ask whether it is okay to go near that because I wanted to do some work and the guy came round and he said ‘Do you realise you have got three phase coming in, in unshrouded wire?’ and it was all at reachable height and he said ‘That has probably been there for donkeys years.’” (Holyhead, SPM)

Provision of cable plans

There were also discussions in the Chester workshop around the importance of providing cable plans in order to minimise the chance of workmen hitting cables when carrying out works in the area:

- “Records of cables should be made more readily available to local authorities and suppliers of the existing network.” (Supplier (Law), Chester Workshop)
- “In terms of the dangers of UG Cables. SP could produce a readily made layout that could be handed out when people are digging holes in that area. This could then help in avoiding accidents.” (Renewable Developer, Chester Workshop)



Social Issues

Awareness of the priority services register

As noted already, concern for vulnerable people during power loss situations was often mentioned unprompted in the reliability and availability section. Typically respondents were not aware of the Priority Services Register currently and so felt that raising awareness was important. Many suggested working with third party organisations to get in touch with relevant people. It was also suggested as important that contractors were informed where vulnerable people lived when they were conducting works in the area so the appropriate considerations could be made.

- “I think probably raise awareness of it amongst the general public, so say, ‘Are you aware this is a service you can have your name listed on?’ Maybe organisations working with older people, like WRVS, Age UK, Age Scotland, could contact the elderly as well. People in these organisations can inform older people, ‘Do you know that there is a register for people?’ We found out about it years and years ago because we had my aged parents here with us and we went on the list because of that. I don’t know how we found out about it, but probably something like a bill that came in or something like that.” (Charities representing vulnerable people)
- “I think work on improving the effectiveness and quality of the PSR register – the priority services register – so that that’s fit for purpose and responsive. And working with suppliers to make sure that the data is up-to-date, and has captured as many vulnerable consumers as possible” (Non attendees (Consumer Group))
- “Well I have never seen any communication about the fact that such a list even exists so I think at some point there should be something provided to every customer to make them aware of what facilities are open to them.” (Castle Douglas, SPD)
- “Vulnerable customers suggest aged or someone who goes to a General Medical Practitioner and my wife is one and they would know who is vulnerable and who isn’t because quite often they have these gentlemen and ladies on their books for life.” (Bangor, SPM)



Engage with other organisations that have lists of vulnerable people

It was also suggested that SP Energy Networks engage with other organisations that already have lists of vulnerable people in order to make use of resources that may already be available and avoid duplicate registers:

- “Well not just that but surely if people are vulnerable, you know elderly or anything like that the local council is aware of that and providing some sort of support, I don’t know.” (Cupar, SPD)
- “How does that interface with other support services? Like through the council or through Meals on Wheels or whatever? Or wherever there is support for elderly people at risk.” (Castle Douglas, SPD)
- “If you’re going to identify vulnerable customers, then you’re going to have to have quite a large database, and a large number of staff devoted to that aspect, which is a cost for the distributor. I just wonder whether in fact it’s value for money when there are other services who I think should be more connected to that than the distributor.” (Edinburgh, SPD)
- “I think they should be working with the local authority to ensure all measures to alleviate any difficulties are taken. I would say the local authority and the health services because there could be health issues when power goes down.” (Scottish Local Government)

Encourage the public to look after vulnerable people

Encouraging the public to support the vulnerable people that they are aware of in their own communities was potentially very powerful, given comments from respondents that they have a personal responsibility to do this:

- “Yes, I think we all have a duty to make sure all our neighbours are okay.” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “Like we said the sticker perhaps some sort of a leaflet out there, you know we talked and said about community spirit and stuff like that so maybe some kind of thing saying you know ‘be aware if you’ve got an elderly person next door in the case of a power cut or somebody with small children’ just to sort of say to keep an eye out and that sort of thing. Like the community watch sort of thing.” (Middlewich, SPM)
- “Is this not where the old community spirit comes in! You know your neighbours and if they’re vulnerable then look after them.” (Wrexham, SPM)
- “It’s kind of like you’d think within the community itself they’d know of vulnerable people and they’d be looking out for them.” (Cupar, SPD)



Fuel poor

When discussing the fuel poor views were very consistent. It was felt important that the fuel poor were considered, however respondents were unsure how SP Energy Networks as the distributor could do this and whether this was their responsibility. Suggestions to help the fuel poor included supporting people to reduce their own energy consumption and reduce their bills using smart meters, supporting community micro-generation projects and supporting the placement of PV on social housing:

- “I think that’s an interesting, philosophical question. From a charity’s point of view, I think we all understand that energy prices are high. Everything that SP Energy Networks can do to help people understand how much power they’re using, how they can spread cost, be very clear to them that having power and light and heat is vital, and be very clear to them about what mechanisms they have for people who are in financial difficulty. All of those are helpful and should be being prioritised.” (Charities representing vulnerable people)
- “Well, I think if they’re going down that route then the obvious place to start is with Care Poverty Action, Age Scotland, people like that, to take their advice to then work out how you actually go about this. Well one, what their role is, and if they have a role, what’s the best way of approaching it.” (SMPs)
- “Oh, yes, I see what you’re saying. Yes, I think possibly they could focus on especially poverty-stricken areas and maybe coming up with innovative schemes to maybe help those areas. But maybe in terms of grants for insulating your properties and rolling out smart meters to those areas first maybe and stuff like that.” (Housing Associations)
- “Well I think the fuel poor are a big problem, but I think a lot of their problem is that they have difficulty managing their fuel because they don’t understand how to conserve fuel and use it wisely so perhaps they are resistant to people coming into their house to insulate their house and put double glazing in and things like that.” (Bangor, SPM)

Involvement in community initiatives

Several members of the stakeholder sample were aware of community and charitable initiatives that SP Energy Networks was involved in. This activity was perceived very positively but potentially was not that well known:

- “Yes, I was at a Scottish Power event on Friday, celebrating volunteers and things like that, so quite how widespread that is known, I think is an issue. I think there are some companies, who probably do as much, if not less, but get a lot more attention for it.” (Welsh Assembly)
- “I think for vulnerable people... I mean, it is interesting. If you look at the community where you are in Scotland, you’ve been good employers, you’ve supported local charities, or the company has. I think it’s just really continuing to be aware of what local people need. I think it might not be directly supporting vulnerable people, but supporting community events, supporting community funding.” (Scottish Local Government)
- “They do a community awards things with the local newspaper, Manweb/Scottish Power Community Awards from memory, and they do other charitable donation type things. But if you said to me, ‘What do they do?’ I couldn’t give you a picture of it, but I know they do certain things. I might be talking about



20% of what they do or 100% of what they do, I don't generally know. But I know they do sponsor the community awards with the local paper.” (MP)

Apprenticeships and job opportunities

Finally in this section, as a large organisation and thus employer providing work and training opportunities for local people was seen as an important responsibility:

- “I think school education programmers are fantastic and SPEN should multiply their apprenticeships by ten, there are lots of good kids out there” (Renewable developer)
- “I think looking at apprenticeships, looking at encouraging young people, and employing local suppliers for the ancillary stuff in the supply chain, would be really helpful.” (Scottish Local Government)
- “The Local Authorities are well placed to assist with that. My company would love to sign on to assist with an Apprentice Scheme” (Chester Workshop (Contractors))



Environment

The environment was potentially the area of the consultation that was given the least attention by stakeholders. Many of the areas that stakeholders were prompted with were felt to be a “given” and few stakeholders had any personal interest or experience in this area outside of renewable energy.

Undergrounding cables

The importance of undergrounding cables was discussed frequently, however this was typically not in relation to visual amenity; this was usually to improve security of supply. It is unclear whether undergrounding to improve visual amenity or undergrounding to improve security of supply was more important to stakeholders:

- “I’m just wondering about the huge controversy about the underground cables the cost of it and you were saying that it was really difficult to find your problem but it just seems that because of the storms it would make more sense to have it all underground.” (Cupar, SPD)
- “But I think this is important that undergrounding should be done where it is economically feasible and not just for areas of outstanding beauty but to improve the reliability of the network as a whole and then we are not so likely to have lightening issues and certainly not storm damage with the underground network as you will with the over-ground network. But the economic models might not be long term enough so I think this is an important issue.” (Castle Douglas, SPD)
- “It’s not so much a matter of the beauty here. As I say, the power cuts we’ve had would have been avoided, because there are usually trees falling on the lines, or snow of course. We do get a great deal of snow in this particular vicinity. X has a record of having highest rainfall, highest snowfall, lowest temperatures. Certainly there’d be benefits in having underground cabling, especially as many of the wooden poles or wooden posts that support the electricity thing have to constantly be repaired because they do rot in an area like this.” (Parish Councillor)
- “Obviously, it’s all to do with costs, but the more cables that could be put underground and remove all the overhead cables would be an improvement” (Scottish Local Government)



Flood prevention at substations

Flood prevention at substations was also felt to be important; again this was in relation to security of supply given changing weather conditions and flood plains:

- “Well it’s a problem in lots of different areas now flooding isn’t it as we pave more and more of Britain?” (Middlewich, SPM)
- “I wouldn’t have thought flood prevention is ongoing. I would have thought at every substation now I would have thought they say ‘is that going to flood?’ and they’ll do something about it when they build it or they lift it higher.” (Wrexham, SPM)
- “Well, yes, but I don’t know if that’s an environment imperative as much as a continuity of supply issue. Perhaps if that has an impact environmentally as well that might be a good by-product, but I suppose that’s not so much the environmental prospect than it is the supply and reliability.” (SMPs)
- “Yes, I suppose the resilience of the network to climate change and flooding, yes. But I don’t really have any comments on the other aspects.” (Non attendees)

Carbon footprint

Reducing SP Energy Network’s own carbon footprint was felt to be important and an expectation given the size of the organisation:

- “Well that seems to be an international concern doesn’t it and they have guidelines to follow. They are going to have to meet statutory targets aren’t they?” (Bangor, SPM)
- “I mean they’ve got two roles haven’t they? As a company they’ve got to think of their own carbon footprint, but also they are at the forefront of the distribution of clean, green energy.” (SMPs)
- “That is something they should be doing anyway that is a given.” (Holyhead, SPM)
- “There’s always the one about security, we can’t have a situation where we don’t have power, but taking that as a given, it’s got to be the low carbon thing, for me, that’s the future, that’s where they’ve got to put their time and attention. And to be fair to Scottish Power, I think that’s where they are, to be honest.” (Environmental Group)

Oil and SF6 leakage

There was not a great deal of consideration given as to whether SP Energy Networks should reduce oil and SF6 leakage from their switchgear, however some stakeholders did comment that avoiding leakage was important:

- “Well, that would all be good. I think certainly reducing the oil leaks and things like that.” (Charities representing vulnerable people)
- “I think it’s important that companies have got their own carbon footprint as well. There’s issues about SF6 Leakage. So welcome reporting on that, and publicising of that.” (Non attendees (Consumer Group))
- “Yes absolutely. I’d assume there’d be none really. That’s to me, a minimum, so I, these days, expect a big company like Scottish Power to have no leaks, and to be using no hazardous chemicals that are



toxic. I also would be expecting them to eliminate greenhouse gas use like that, pronto really.”
(Environmental)

- “If they’ve got oil and SF6 leaks and all the rest of it then clearly those should be done, and there’s a legal requirement to do that anyway.” (Non Attendee (Contractor))



Network Innovation

Domestic customers

The final area covered in this report is network innovation. This was a key focus for a lot of stakeholders however domestic customers struggled to relate to this area. Typically domestic customers did not have any appreciation of the issues that the network was facing and were not able to think long term enough to consider the impact of the greater onset of things such as electric cars and solar panels. Those who did understand the concepts did feel it was important for SP Energy Networks to be planning for the future:

- “I don’t think it’s these things, I think they should future-proof the network because there is going to be more and more demand for power. I mean, I don’t think we should start looking because of electric cars. I think there is a greater demand for power because there are more and more things now that use power. You need to make the network capable of handling future demand.” (Kilmarnock, SPD)
- “I said before it should be ongoing, they should be future proofing the network so they should be building it in all the time and there’s no point waiting until we get to the point of destruction when it’s not going to work to do something with it.” (Wrexham, SPM)
- “The demand for energy is only going to grow for as long as we are still able to use it and I would have thought wherever they are laying cables or putting cables they should always be doing it with the biggest size that they can, it is common sense.” (Holyhead, SPM)
- “So you may not see yourself driving an electric car at the moment because they can only go 50, 60, 70-miles on a charge, and the infrastructure for charging points publicly is going to be so costly, but then things do happen, so that probably will happen.” (Edinburgh, SPD)

Moving towards a smarter network

As noted ‘future proofing’ was of key importance to stakeholders and thus this was discussed widely in order to ensure the network was ready to cope with future demand, generation and government targets for renewable energy. Securing the network for the future was of the utmost importance to ensure reliability long term and in order to attract foreign investment into the area. Firstly before any additional investment was made in the network it was felt to be important for SP Energy Networks to gain a better understanding of the capability of the current network enabling better management of supply and demand and the ability to make investment in the right places. Thus the installation of monitoring equipment was important to achieve this and create a smarter network whilst also more closely managing supply and demand in conjunction with the transmission network:

- “I don’t think there’s any point in putting in increased capacity, I think they’ve probably got quite a lot of excess capacity, to be honest with you, if they put the right monitoring equipment in and then utilised the assets that they’ve got, more effectively. But they’d only be able to do that unless they put in the monitoring equipment.” (IDNO ICP)



- “I think it’s a logical progression given that controlling the energy supply is quite a complicated process. We always hear about when the half time whistle goes and everybody puts the kettle on, the network has to be ready to make sure that it doesn’t overload the system. So I think any system to increase their capability of being able to control and ensure supply when supply is required is a good thing.” (Scottish Local Government)
- “Yes, I think the key thing is balancing the potential of smart metering to avoid costly reinforcement of the network. Partly that’s to do with improving the ability of DG and small sources of distributed generation, making it easier to connect, and giving DG greater visibility on where there’s spare network capacity, so they can attach the network without the need for costly reinforcement.” (Non attendees (Consumer Group))
- “There’s got to be a cleverer, smarter grid coming, and this sort of stuff plays directly to the environment stuff, if you can avoid building infrastructure, because you don’t need to manage demand, because demand is lower, or if you can encourage customers to use less electricity, or have smarter devices, that to me is the future. So I expect to see way more investment, I know we’re putting a lot into the actual grid itself at the minute, and generation, I expect to see much more attention in the future to decarbonising and to the local grid two way flow demand management stuff.” (Environmental Group)

Anticipating future needs

Anticipating and responding to future demand was also important to allow capacity to be built into the network where it was needed most. It was felt to be important to strategically engage with renewable developers and local authorities to understand potential demands for particular areas so that capacity could be built in accordingly, avoiding constraint on the network or any delays in build:

- “I do, I think that’s right. It’s about capacity and I think we have to estimate capacity accurately. The biggest thing that gets up people’s noses is you put in a ring road and then two years later you are putting another carriageway on. It’s about anticipating future demand and trying to build in the capacity to have it so the road doesn’t get dug up again.” (Scottish Local Government)
- “Well, they’re forced to now. They’re going to have to. All the overhead cables are coming to the end of their life. Whether they think that they’re genuinely ready for people to be pushing electricity back into the grid or not, they’re going to have to answer their own questions on that. But they’re going to have to do something, but clearly, we are the social agenda to anything that’s going to benefit our customers. That’s the direction we would support.” (Housing Associations)
- “I also expect that, you know, we’ve got a system that is largely one way centralised power, produced and sent, and that’s not going to be the future, the future’s going to be people like me putting things on my roof and sending power backwards. So I’m expecting the grid to become something much more able to take two way power flows, and I think, my impression is, I trained as an engineer and at the time, in the 80s, the distribution network was pretty crap, and pretty old fashioned, and rubbish, and I suspect it hasn’t changed that much really, you know, there’s been a lot of investment in the grid itself, but not the



local bit of it. so I would expect to see way more investment in the future in managing two way power flows...(Environmental Group)

- “Oh, they can certainly do that, there's enough information within the various industry bodies, you know, in terms of where wind farm consents are in place, and planning applications are in place, etcetera, etcetera. So, yes they should have that knowledge, so they should be maybe, have some joined up thinking, so instead of, I don't know, if there's five wind farms in one area, treating them all separately and running a separate connection to each one, they could look at providing a hub substation and running separate links. That does now happen on the transmission side, but I'm not aware of it happening on distribution.” (Renewable Developer)

Storing electricity

Several respondents also commented that in terms of innovation, it would be useful to be able to research means of storing electricity going forward:

- “It would be good to be able to store energy from PV.” (Glasgow Workshop (Connections (I&C Consultant))
- “More money should be spent on improving battery technology for storing energy produced by renewable“(Glasgow Workshop (Contractor))



Conclusions



Key conclusions

The key focus of the majority of stakeholders was security of supply. For domestic customers this was typically in relation to reliability of electricity supply here and now and reducing the number and length of power cuts experienced. Other stakeholders had more of a focus on the future and ensuring that the electricity network is able to cope with future demand and generation securing electricity supply for years to come. It is concluded that security of supply for the present and the future should be central to any business plan that SP Energy Networks develops. In order to achieve this it is felt that SP Energy Networks need to develop a greater understanding of their own network and thus focus on monitoring in the first instance, building in additional capacity where it is needed most.

Predicting future demand was acknowledged as difficult and thus alongside this should be strategic engagement with relevant stakeholders in order to understand the aspirations and requirements of the areas that SP Energy Networks operate in. This will enable better prediction of future demand and generation and allow plans between SP Energy Networks and the local authorities to be dovetailed. This level of engagement is equally important with renewable developers and the transmission network to manage supply and demand.

It was strongly felt by a large proportion of respondents that the worst served customers required some attention. Whether this was actually improving their electricity supply or merely engaging with the area so that they could understand the issues that SP Energy Networks were facing in regards to their local network. In instances where it is not viable to improve resilience in these areas it was suggested support could be provided in other ways e.g. helping customers be prepared for power cuts by advising on generators, replacing light bulbs damaged during power cuts or providing compensation when equipment was damaged. It is also important to note in these areas it is not just about power cuts, low power and spikes in power are equally concerning and frustrating to customers.

In relation to the service provided to domestic customers awareness was the key issue. There was a lot of confusion in the industry and often customers contacted their supplier rather than SP Energy Networks to report a power cut. They also struggled to find the correct number to report a fault. It is therefore important that SP Energy Networks communicates with their customers so that they are aware of who they are and the number they should call if they experience a power cut. There was suggestion something be sent out in the post to customers to provide the emergency number, a glow in the dark sticker with the phone number to stick by the meter or trip switches was a popular suggestion. Once a customer does report a power cut, communication was the key contributor to overall satisfaction and this is apparent in loss of supply research that has been carried out in the past.



It did appear that the connections process required review for both renewable developers and standard connections customers. In particular it was felt that SP Energy Networks processes were too rigid and that increased flexibility and partnering was required. Customers wanted SP Energy Networks to work with them to achieve the end goal helping them reconcile any issues or barriers that came up along the way. It was felt that often SP Energy Networks would identify an issue that would compromise a particular development but not come up with solutions or alternatives to allow progression.

Positively SP Energy Networks was felt to have an extremely strong reputation for safety. The potential areas for investment for the future were around protecting their own equipment from metal theft where possible and educating young people about electricity safety. In engaging with young people it was also felt to be important to educate on energy consumption to ensure that young people are aware of the importance of energy conservation.

In terms of the environment reducing the carbon footprint and SF6 and oil leakages was a given. Respondents tended to focus on environmental issues that directly impacted on security of supply such as protecting substations from flooding and undergrounding cables to protect them from severe weather.

Vulnerable people were top of mind for many stakeholders, in particular how vulnerable people are affected during a power cut. Awareness of the Priority Services Register was very low and it was felt this needed to be addressed. In addition working with partners was of key importance in order to identify vulnerable people as well as to ensure that there was someone on the ground that could support those on the register in times of need. This was particularly important during severe weather or extended power cuts.

SP Energy Networks involvement with the fuel poor was less clear. Although the fuel poor were a concern, respondents struggled to identify how SP Energy Networks could help given that they do not control the electricity bill. Engagement with organisations specialising in fuel poverty is recommended in order to brainstorm opportunities for support.

SP Energy Networks support of community initiatives and charities could be maximised as this was acknowledged by few but perceived very positively. It is important to continue with these activities but also ensure that involvement is more widely known. Providing apprenticeships and training opportunities are also important, but also communicating more broadly to encourage appreciation of the contribution SP Energy Networks makes to the local economy.

Overall the research has identified key priorities for stakeholders are around security of supply now and in the future, supplemented by the other activities discussed within this report.



Appendices



Appendix 1 – Workshop Facilitation Guide

SP Energy Networks Event Agenda and format

Overall agenda

Duration	Start	Finish	Activity
Introductions			
00:30	09:30	10:00	Registration, arrival and refreshments
00:10	10:00	10:10	Welcome from Stakeholder Manager
00:10	10:10	10:20	Introduction to SP (Scott)
00:05	10:20	10:25	Explain introduce structure of event (Emma Hopkins)
Workshop topic Areas			
Reliability, availability and safety			
00:10	10:25	10:35	Presentations 1 and 2 by SP Energy Networks
00:20	10:35	10:55	Table discussion facilitated by Explain
Customer service and social issues			
00:10	10:55	11:05	Presentations 3 and 4 by SP Energy Networks
00:20	11:05	11:25	Table discussion facilitated by Explain
Environment and Network Innovation			
00:10	11:25	11:35	Presentations 5 and 6 by SP Energy Networks
00:25	11:35	11:55	Table discussion facilitated by Explain and to include round up of discussions
Closing			
00:05	11:55	12:00	Completion of forms
00:05	12:00	12:05	Closing remarks
01:00	12:05	13:00	Buffet Lunch and networking opportunity



Facilitator discussion guide

Introductions

Facilitator opener:

- Introduce self, scribe and SP Energy Networks 'expert' (of which there will be one per table)
- Only have one minute each to contribute to each of the 6 topic discussions so points need to be precise in order to maximize the information that can be collected
- Facilitators job is to keep the discussion on track and make sure everyone gets an equal say
- Avoid use of jargon and abbreviations
- Introduce the scribe and their role and the importance of speaking clearly
- Introduce the table expert and their role

Session 1: Reliability, availability and safety

10.35 to 10.45: Discussion 1a: Reliability and Availability (10 mins)

What should be the key areas of focus for SP Energy Networks be in relation to reliability and availability?

- **Prompt to think about themselves as a representative of their organisation but also an SP Energy Networks customer**

Facilitator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondents do not provide responses unprompted)

- Should the focus be on reducing the duration of interruptions or the number of interruptions?
- Should they be focussing on improving the supply of the average customer or the worst served customers (see stats below for detail)?
- Should urban customers support improvements in network for the benefit of worst served customers?
- In terms of the service around planned interruptions versus unplanned interruptions, which is more important?
- Should they invest in the network for storm resilience or accept interruptions in storms?

Proportion of Worst Served Customers

Customers experiencing more than 6 supply interruptions (2011/12 Nos.)

- SPM – less than 800 (<0.53%) customers
- SPD - We would expect less than 5500 (<2.75%)

Customers experiencing single supply interruption lasting more than 18 hours (2011/12 Nos.)



- SPM – less than 1000 (<0.66%)
- SPD – We would expect less than 3500 (<1.75%)

10.45 to 10.55: Discussion 1b: Safety (10 mins)

What should be the key areas of focus for SP Energy Networks in relation to safety?

- Prompt to think about themselves as a representative of their organisation but also an SP Energy Networks customer

Facilitator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondents do not provide responses unprompted)

- Focus on the impact of metal theft and vandalism?
- Focus on replacing old service provisions in houses/buildings to reduce risk?

Section 2: Customer service and social issues

11.05 to 11.15: Discussion 2a: Customer service

What should be the key areas of focus for SP Energy Networks in relation to customer service?

- Prompt to think about themselves as a representative of their organisation but also an SP Energy Networks customer

Facilitator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondents do not provide responses unprompted)

- Do you want to know more about what SP Energy Networks does?
- What method would you like to find out via? Newsletters, website, e-mails, TV advert
- How do you want to be notified of power loss updates? Text, phone, in person
- What do you expect during an emergency – community centre accommodation, meals
- What would make it easier for you to connect to the network?
- Same process for all connection customers or simplified cost and process for smaller connection customers?

11.15 to 11.25: Discussion 2b : Social Issues

What should be the key areas of focus for SP Energy Networks in relation to social issues?

- Prompt to think about themselves as a representative of their organisation but also an SP Energy Networks customer



Facilitator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondents do not provide responses unprompted)

- What could their field staff be doing more of during an interruption? (already trained to identify houses with ramps)
- What should they be doing to help the fuel poor. Gas distribution companies try to provide gas supplies where there are none. But they already have electricity supplies so what role could SP play?
- What information would communities like to know about? All investment plans in their area? The wider investment agenda?
- How should they engage with local communities? How often? By what means?

Session 3: Environmental and Network Innovation

11.35 to 11.45: Discussion 3b: Environment

What should be the key areas of focus for SP Energy Networks in relation to the environment?

- Prompt to think about themselves as a representative of their organisation but also an SP Energy Networks customer

Facilitator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondents do not provide responses unprompted)

- Invest in flood prevention at substations. Allows quicker return to service after flood events
- Improve carbon footprint – reduce power losses on network by using low carbon transformers and cables
- Improve carbon footprint – reduce demand on system through commercial customer arrangements i.e. an agreement to reduce energy use in peak teams
- Selective undergrounding of cables in areas of outstanding beauty

11.45 to 11.55: Discussion 3a: Network innovation

What should be the key areas of focus for SP Energy Networks in relation to network innovation?

- Prompt to think about themselves as a representative of their organisation but also an SP Energy Networks customer

Facilitator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondents do not provide responses unprompted)

- Invest in network in advance of renewable to allow quicker connection
- Get more out of the existing network or invest in additional network capacity



- Manage network capacity - Commercial arrangements with domestic customers to limit demand at peak times of day
- Commercial arrangements instead of new network in constrained areas
- Link new generation to new demand to balance off each other constrained network areas (i.e. balance each other out)

11.55 to 12:00: Discussion 3c: Conclusions

- The event has given you the opportunity to discuss your views and also hear the views of others, bearing in mind the discussions that have taken place today, if you can now complete your forms to show the top three and bottom three priorities going forward...

[COMPLETE FORMS AND THEN COLLECT IN]

[LYNN THEN CLOSES EVENT]



Appendix 2 – Focus Group Discussion Guide

SP Energy Networks - RIIO Consultation - Focus group discussion guide

Thank you for coming along today. My name is X and I work for a company called Explain who are an independent research agency based in Newcastle. We have been commissioned by SP Energy Networks to speak to customers to understand your priorities for SP Energy Networks investment programme going forward.

SP Energy Networks is the electricity distributor in the south of Scotland, Cheshire, Merseyside, North Shropshire and North Wales. This means that they own and operate the network of cables and power lines that transport electricity to around 3.5 million homes. They distribute the electricity on behalf of electricity supply companies and it is their role to operate and maintain the electrical supply system in these areas. Customers can choose from a range of electricity suppliers, but your distributor is based on the area where you live.

- **Introduce MRS Code of Conduct, anonymity, etc.**
- **Ok to record?**

1.0 Awareness and experience (10 minutes)

- Has anyone heard of SP Energy Networks before?
 - How about Scottish Power Distribution / Scottish Power Manweb?
- Were you aware of the difference between the distributor and the supplier?

SHOW HANDOUT DEMONSTRATING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPPLIER, DISTRIBUTOR AND GENERATOR, EXPLAIN IT AND ENSURE EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS

SP Energy Networks is in the process of developing investment plans for the period 2015 to 2023; they are interested in hearing customers' views as to what the priorities for investment are. The areas they are considering are:

- Reliability and availability
- Safety
- Customer service
- Social issues
- The environment
- Network innovation



We will talk about each area to try and identify what is important to you going forward.

2.0 Reliability and availability (10 minutes)

- There are a number of areas where SP Energy Networks can give greater priority or focus in relation to reliability and availability as shown on **Handout 1**:
 - Reducing the duration of interruptions
 - Reducing the number of interruptions
 - Improving the supply of the majority of customers
 - Improving the supply of the worst served customers
 - Invest in the network for storm resilience
- Does anyone have any experiences they would like to share about anything in this list? (Probe for potential changes that could improve experiences in the future)
- Is there anything on this list that stands out as being particularly important? (Probe for thoughts on each point)
 - What sort of changes could they make in these areas?
- Is there anything missing from the list as an area where you think SP Energy Networks should be focusing in relation to reliability and availability?

3.0 Safety (10 minutes)

- Thinking about safety now, if you look at **handout 2** you can see there are a number of areas where SP Energy Networks could focus less or more...
 - Preventing metal theft and vandalism
 - Replacing old service provisions in houses/buildings
 - Providing more safety education programmes in schools
- Does anyone have any experiences they would like to share about anything in this list? (Probe for potential changes that could improve experiences in the future)
- Is there anything on this list that stands out as being particularly important? (Probe for thoughts on each point)
 - What sort of changes could they make in these areas?
- Is there anything missing from the list as an area where you think SP Energy Networks should be focusing in relation to safety?



4.0 Customer service (10 minutes)

- There are a number of areas where they could give greater priority in relation to customer service as shown in **Handout 3**:
 - Improve customer service during an unplanned power cut
 - Improve customer service during a planned power cut
 - Develop new ways in which customers can contact SP Energy Networks (Phone, E Mail, Text, Web, Mobile apps, Web Chat, Social Media)
 - Raise awareness of who SP Energy Networks are, what they do and when and how to contact them
 - Provide additional support during extended power cuts (E.g. emergency rest centres)
 - Improve customer service when you want to connect to our network (e.g. extending your property). Improve customer service when you contact us with a general enquiry
- Does anyone have any experiences they would like to share about anything in this list? (Probe for potential changes that could improve experiences in the future)
- Is there anything on this list that stands out as being particularly important? (Probe for thoughts on each point)
 - What sort of changes could they make in these areas?
- Is there anything missing from the list as an area where you think SP Energy Networks should be focusing in relation to customer service?

5.0 Social issues (10 minutes)

- There are a number of areas where SP Energy Networks could focus in relation to social issues as shown in **handout 4**:
 - Doing more to identify vulnerable customers in the community
 - Doing more to support vulnerable customers during a power cut
 - Doing more to support the fuel poor (**Check understanding of what fuel poor is - More than 10% of household income is needed to adequately heat your home**)
 - What could SP Energy Networks do to help fuel poor use less power? Work on our own or with other specialist agencies?
 - Engage more with local communities
 - Provide communities with information about investment plans in their area
 - Increase the role of field staff during an interruption, e.g. already trained to identify houses with ramps
- Does anyone have any experiences they would like to share about anything in this list? (Probe for potential changes that could improve experiences in the future)
- Is there anything on this list that stands out as being particularly important? (Probe for thoughts on each point)



- What sort of changes could they make in these areas?
- Is there anything missing from the list as an area where you think SP Energy Networks should be focusing in relation to social issues?

6.0 Environment (10 minutes)

- There are a number of areas SP Energy Networks could focus on in relation to the environment as you can see on **Handout 5**:
 - Invest in flood prevention at substations
 - Improve carbon footprint
 - Target oil and SF6 leaks
 - Selective undergrounding of cables in areas of outstanding beauty
- Does anyone have any experiences they would like to share about anything in this list? (Probe for potential changes that could improve experiences in the future)
- Is there anything on this list that stands out as being particularly important? (Probe for thoughts on each point)
 - What sort of changes could they make in these areas?
- Is there anything missing from the list as an area where you think SP Energy Networks should be focusing in relation to the environment?

7.0 Future networks (10 minutes)

- The electricity network was built around the 1960s and was built for electricity to run one way, from the power station to homes and businesses, this is called centralised generation. Now with more and more solar panels, wind farms and other sources of renewable energy the network has to cope with electricity entering it from many more sources. This is called distributed generation and the network is not ready for this at the moment.
 - Do you think this is an area where SP Energy Networks should be focussing? Looking to “future proof” the network?
 - Do you think you might have solar panels (for example) on your property in the 2015 to 2023 period? Would you expect the network to be ready to cope with this or should we wait until the need is there?
 - Would you pay more on your bill to ensure that you have this option available to you when you want it instead of waiting? How much more a year?
 - Electricity demand is also expected to increase in the future as we move to using electric vehicles and heating our homes with electricity. Do you think you’ll use an electric vehicle or a heat pump in the future? Would you expect the network to be ready to cope with this or should we wait until the demand is there?



- Would you pay more on your bill to ensure that you have this option available to you instead of waiting? How much more a year?
- Has anyone got any other comments to make on future networks?

8.0 Conclusions (5 minutes)

- Are there any other areas where you feel SP Energy Networks should be focusing?
- Please fill in the questionnaire to outline your top three and bottom three priorities...
- Do you have any final comments to make?

END



Appendix 3 – In depth Interview Discussion Guide

SP Energy Networks

Stakeholder Consultation

In-depth interview discussion guide

Thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview. SP Energy Networks is currently running a large-scale consultation and is interested in speaking to key stakeholders, like you, about priorities for future investment planning. The interview will last around 30 minutes and we are really interested to hear your views.

Just so you are aware as I work for an entirely independent research company and abide by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, which means everything we talk about is entirely anonymous. I will ask you at the end of the call whether you are happy to be listed as someone we have spoken to or not and that is entirely up to you.

Can I just check that I am okay to record the interview to speed things up and so I don't have to take any notes?

9.0 Awareness and experience (4 minutes)

- Have you heard of SP Energy Networks before?
 - What about Scottish Power Distribution / Scottish Power Manweb?
- Do you know what they do? Please explain:

SP Energy Networks is the electricity distributor in the south of Scotland, Cheshire, Merseyside, North Shropshire and North Wales. This means that they own and operate the network of cables and power lines that transport electricity to around 3.5 million homes. They distribute the electricity on behalf of electricity supply companies and it is their role to operate and maintain the electrical supply system in these areas. Customers can choose from a range of electricity suppliers, but your distributor is based on the area where you live.

Less than 20% of your annual electricity bill is made up of costs associated with the network of distribution cables and power lines that SP Energy Networks owns and operates. The remaining 80% of your annual electricity bill is largely made up of energy costs.

SP Energy Networks does not send you your electricity bill (they are not an electricity supplier).

SP Energy Networks does not own or operate any power stations.



- What experiences have you had with SP Energy Networks?
 - Overall were they positive or negative? How could they innovate or change to make your experiences better?

SP Energy Networks is in the process of developing investment plans for the period 2015 to 2023, they are interested in hearing stakeholders views as to where the priorities of investment are.

SP Energy Networks faces two key challenges in the coming years:

- *Renewing an ageing network that dates back to the 1950s to 1970s and is coming to the end of its life*
- *Investing in the network to facilitate the move to a low carbon economy*

The areas they are considering are:

- *Reliability and availability*
 - *Safety*
 - *Customer service*
 - *Social issues*
 - *The environment*
 - *Network innovation*
- Are their particular areas that stand out from the list we went through that are most relevant to your role?

RESEARCHER NOTE – START DISCUSSIONS WITH THEIR KEY AREA OF INTEREST TO ALLOW MORE TIME TO BE SPENT ON THIS.

2.0 Reliability and availability (4 minutes)

Thinking about reliability and availability of power is there anything that comes to mind as an area where they should be focussing less or more? How do they have an impact on this area?

Moderator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondent does not provide responses unprompted)

- **Should the focus be on reducing the duration of interruptions or the number of interruptions?**
- **Should they be focussing on improving the supply of the average customer or the worst served customers (customers who have the highest number of power interruptions and longest duration of power interruptions)?**



- Should urban customers support improvements in network for the benefit of worst served customers?
- Should they invest in the network for storm resilience or accept interruptions in storms?
- Should they invest in the network in the middle of its life to extend its life or wait until the end of its life to replace?

3.0 Safety (4 minutes)

Thinking about safety is there anything that comes to mind as an area where they should be focussing less or more? How do they have an impact on this area?

Moderator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondent does not provide responses unprompted)

- Focus on the impact of metal theft and vandalism?
- Use education programmes to communicate dangers of theft and vandalism (as well as electrical safety?)
- Focus on replacing old service provisions in houses/buildings to reduce risk?
- Smart meters will be rolled out by the electricity supply companies but is there a role for the network operators to play?
- Equipment is replaced at end of life but should this be advanced in areas of high risk e.g. near schools and in buildings.

4.0 Customer service (4 minutes)

Thinking about customer service is there anything that comes to mind as an area where they should be focussing less or more? How do they have an impact on this area?

Moderator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondent does not provide responses unprompted)

- Do you want to know more about what SP Energy Networks does?
- What method would you like to find out via? Newsletters, website, e-mails, TV advert?
- In terms of the service around planned interruptions versus unplanned interruptions, which is more important?
- How do you want to be notified of power loss updates? Text, phone, in person?
- Do you know what number to call in the event of a power cut? Where would you look for that number?
- How could we make it easier for customers to find that number in a power cut?
- What do you expect during an emergency – community centre accommodation, meals/
- What would make it easier for you to connect to the network?
- Same process for all connection customers or simplified cost and process for smaller connection customers?



- Would you like to know what investments we are planning in your area? How would you like to find this out? What method should we use to provide that information?
- Should we give more priority to reducing power interruptions of a few seconds?

5.0 Social Issues (4 minutes)

Thinking about social issues is there anything that comes to mind as an area where they should be focussing less or more? How do they have an impact on this area?

Moderator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondent does not provide responses unprompted)

- What could their field staff be doing more of during an interruption? (already trained to identify houses with ramps)
- They have a priority services register for customers that may need more assistance during a power interruption, how do they ensure they have identified all relevant customers?
- What should they be doing to help the fuel poor? Gas distribution companies try to provide gas supplies where there are none. But they already have electricity supplies so what role could SP Energy Networks play?
- Should they be trying to work directly with the fuel poor or working with agencies and charities that have been established to work with the fuel poor?
- What information would communities like to know about? All investment plans in their area? The wider investment agenda? What the local issues are and what we're doing about them?
- How should they engage with local communities? How often? By what means?

6.0: Environment (4 minutes)

Thinking about the environment is there anything that comes to mind as an area where they should be focussing less or more? How do they have an impact on this area?

Moderator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondent does not provide responses unprompted)

- Invest in flood prevention at substations? Allows quicker return to service after flood events because substations are less likely to be affected by floods.
- Improve carbon footprint – reduce power losses on network by using low carbon transformers and cables
- Improve carbon footprint – reduce demand on system through commercial customer arrangements i.e. an agreement to reduce energy use in peak times?
- Targeting oil and SF6 leaks from oil filled cables and switchgear?
- Selective undergrounding of cables in areas of outstanding beauty?



7.0 Network innovation (4 mins)

Thinking about network innovation and future networks is there anything that comes to mind as an area where they should be focussing less or more? How do they have an impact on this area?

Moderator probes: (Use probes to guide discussion if required i.e. if respondent does not provide responses unprompted)

- Invest in network in advance of renewable to allow quicker connection and ensure capacity is available? Investing in advance on the assumption that there will be renewable generation in an area may result in underused network.
- Should they invest in the network now in anticipation of electric vehicles (for example) or wait until there is evidence of a demand for electric vehicles?
- Get more out of the existing network or invest in additional network capacity? Invest in monitoring and switching equipment to get more out of the existing network or invest in increasing the existing capacity.
- Empower customers with more information - give customers such as generators more information about the network so that they can see where there is capacity for new connections?
- Manage network capacity issues- Commercial arrangements with domestic customers to limit demand at peak times of day
- Commercial arrangements instead of new network in constrained areas
- Link new generation to new demand to balance off each other constrained network areas (i.e. balance each other out)

8.0 Conclusions (2 minutes)

- Are there any other areas where you feel focus should be directed?
- Out of everything we have discussed what do you think are the key areas for SP Energy Networks to focus their investment planning on going forward?

Are you happy to be listed as someone we have spoken to as part of the research?

Are you happy for your comments to be attributed by name?

As a thank you for taking part we can send you through £10's worth of wine vouchers or make a £10 donation to the charity of your choice. Which would you like? **RECORD DETAIL IN SHEET**

That is all my questions so thank you for your time today!

