Electricity Distribution

# The Big Conversation: From Insight to Action

## Birmingham and Bristol Feedback Report

15 and 23 September 2026









nationalgrid

# Contents

2 Introduction
3 Executive summary
12 Session One:
Introduction to ED3 and Our Business Plan ‘North Star’
16 Session Two:
Value for Money and Engaged and Confident Consumers
33 Session Three:
Building a More Resilient and Reliable Network
45 Session Four:
Great Customer Experience
56 Session Five:
Timely Connections
66 Session Six:
Societal Benefit
77 Session Seven:
Assessing the Balance of the ED3 Plan
82 Executive panel Q&A
89 Appendix 1:
Attendee list
91 Appendix 2:
Workshop feedback
95 Appendix 3:
Electronic voting data detail

# Introduction

**On 15 and 23 September 2026, National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) held hybrid stakeholder workshops in Birmingham and Bristol. The workshops built on the round tables held in April, June and July by working with stakeholders to discuss and refine for the final time the commitments for NGED's business plan for the third electricity distribution price control period (ED3). The events sought feedback from stakeholders on the following topics: value for money and building confident customers; resilient and reliable networks; customer experience; timely connections; societal benefit; and the overall balance of the plan.**

The workshops were hosted simultaneously in person and remotely on Zoom. Each session consisted of a short presentation given by one or more NGED representatives (broadcast as a live feed to online participants), followed by facilitated discussions in real and virtual breakout rooms. In addition, stakeholders were asked to vote in a series of online polls using Slido. Each day finished with an executive panel, which fielded questions from stakeholders both online and in the room.

For the purposes of this report, no differentiation will be made between feedback gathered from the in-person and virtual elements of the workshops.

This report is a summary of the feedback from both workshops, with reference where appropriate to places of divergence or differences of priority between the regions.

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

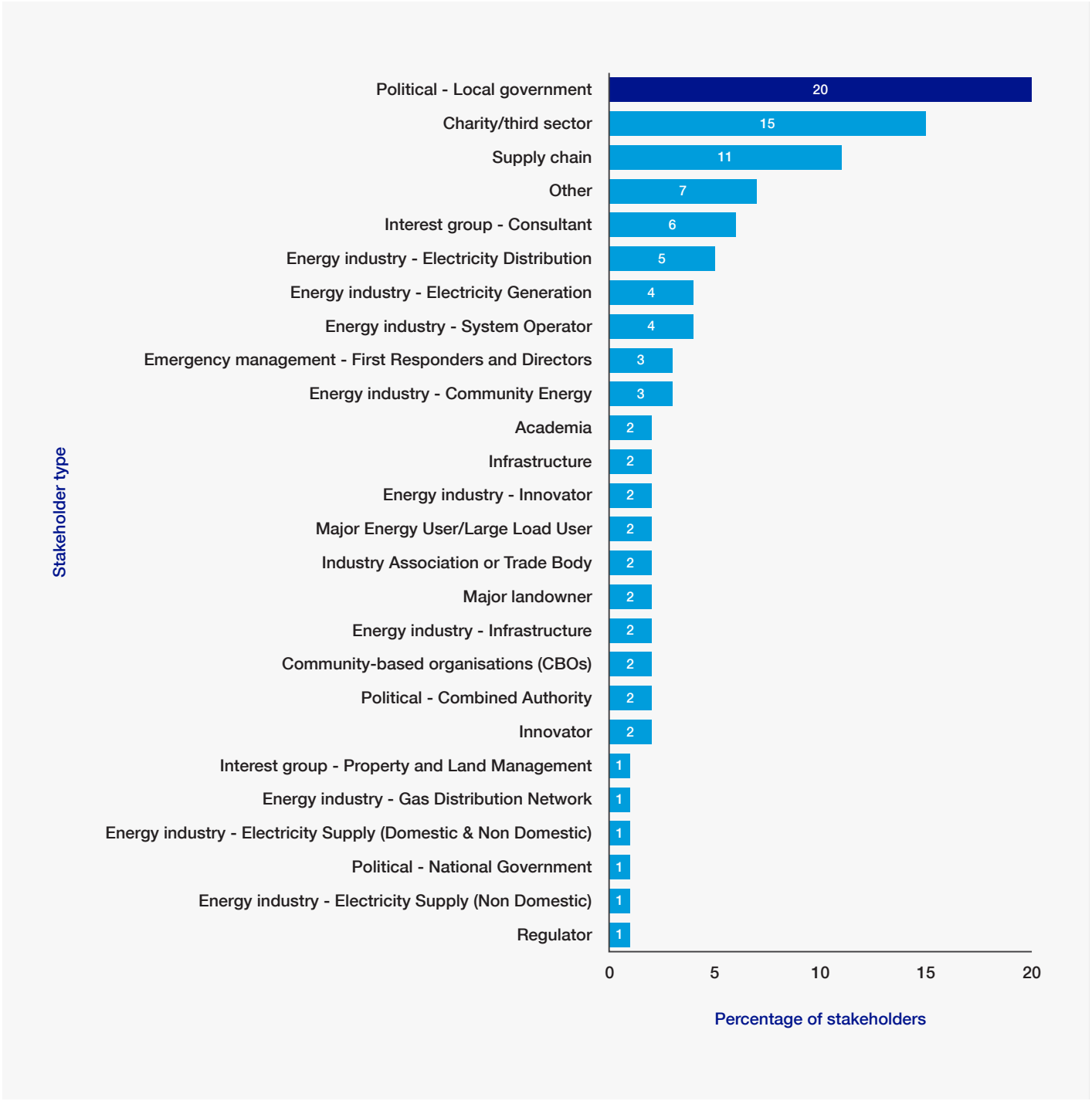
# Executive Summary



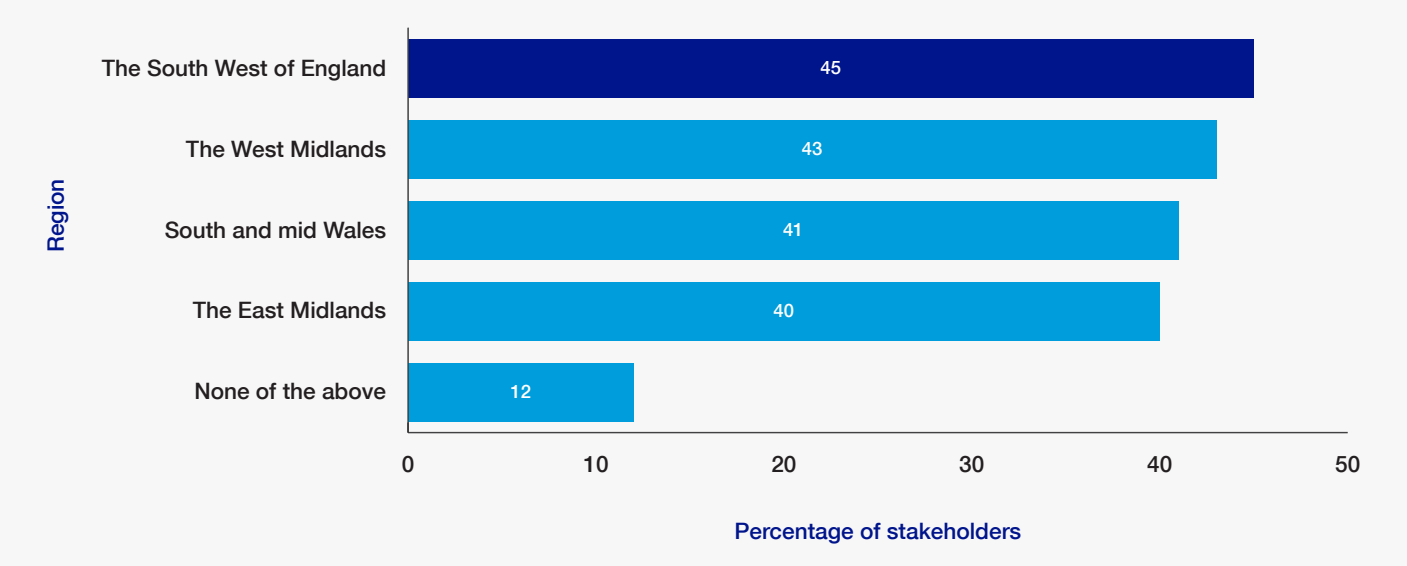
## Participants

- A total of 202 stakeholders participated in the workshops (both online and in person), representing 173 organisations.
- The most prominently represented stakeholder groups were political – local government (20%) followed by charity/third sector (15%), supply chain (11%), other (7%) and interest groups – consultant (6%).
- The most widely represented region was the South West of England (45%), followed by the West Midlands (43%), South and mid Wales (41%), and the East Midlands (40%).
- 89% of attendees who filled out a feedback form said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the workshops. When asked how likely they would be to recommend the events, the average vote was 8.10 / 10, where 10 indicates "extremely likely to recommend".

## What type of stakeholder are you?



## Which of our regions do you represent?




## Introduction to ED3 and Our Business Plan 'North Star'

Stakeholders were given an overview of the work done with stakeholders to date in shaping the ED3 plan, and how they had informed the 'North Star' approach, which always strives to strike the right balance between reliability, affordability, growth and faster delivery.

- Stakeholders were asked what was most important for them to see from their distribution network over the next decade, and the top priority was faster connections enabled by confidence in network capacity, narrowly followed by resilience and reliability.
- Better collaboration and communication also emerged as key priorities for the next ten years, with NGED urged to better integrate with local area energy plans, regional energy strategic plans (RESPs) and other utilities and housing growth targets, and to work on making relationships two-way rather than transactional.
- Discussion also focused on the difficulty of striking the right balance between ambition and affordability. It was felt that most stakeholders will accept ambition where it visibly unlocks connections and strengthens resilience, provided the plan evidences how investment is targeted and how its benefits are distributed equitably.

## The ED3 Business Plan

Over the course of the rest of the workshops, stakeholders were introduced to each of the outcomes and associated commitments in NGED's developing ED3 business plan and asked whether they felt the commitments would deliver their stated aims, if they showed the right level of ambition, and whether there was anything missing. For ease of reference, the draft commitments have been included under the outcome headings in this report.

## Outcome: Value for Money and Engaged and Confident Customers

| Value for Money |
|---|
| **Unlock capacity at the lowest cost for our customers**<br>Use innovation and technology to optimise asset lifetime |
| **Grow our workforce to meet future needs**<br>Preparing our workforce for the future |
| **Use AI and innovation to drive efficiency**<br>Leverage AI to reduce costs and improve services |
| **Turn proven innovation into customer value**<br>Align innovation portfolio with strategic priorities |
| **Reduce costs and improve efficiency in our supply chain**<br>Stronger, earlier supplier engagement |

## Engaged and Confident Customers

Provide access to better network data, to inform decisions

Develop flexibility markets to meet local and national needs

Stakeholders were introduced to the first two ED3 Business Plan outcomes: value for money and engaged and confident customers. It covered NGED's strategy to balance building more capacity while maintaining affordability, delivering the required network through rigorously-informed investment decisions and more efficient operations. The engaged and confident customer strategy included expanding the flexibility offering for ED3, alongside increased accessibility to network data.

- The overall direction of the value for money commitments was supported, but stakeholders felt they could not judge their worth without hard figures, targets and a clear bill impact. They asked NGED to attach numbers, milestones and costs to each commitment and explain how progress will be tracked.
- The commitment with the strongest endorsement in the Slido voting was "Turn proven innovation into customer value" with 3.93 / 5, and the commitment viewed with the most caution was "Use AI and innovation to drive efficiency", with 3.53.
- The commitment to develop flexibility markets was widely welcomed, with 71% agreeing that successful delivery would improve customer confidence. To ensure this, stakeholders stressed that flexibility needs to be simplified and communicated in terms of direct customer benefit, delivered through trusted intermediaries, and designed to include those least able to participate.
- Stakeholders were asked whether NGED's overall plan to deliver value for money is ambitious enough, and the answer was a relatively subdued average of 2.89 / 5. With 28% disagreeing, 23% agreeing, and 40% remaining neutral, the result shows that many stakeholders needed more information to confidently assess the ambition of these commitments.
- Stakeholders were similarly muted on the level of ambition of the engaged and confident customer outcome, and with 36% disagreeing and 41% remaining neutral, it ended up in last place overall. To better assess ambition, baselines for every target were sought, as well as raising the data commitment's ambition from data quality towards genuine foresight.
- Discussing what was missing from the value for money commitments, stakeholders wanted to see: an estimate of the impact on bills and the end price of electricity; scenario-based evidence comparing the costs and outcomes of investing with not investing; measurable customer benefits for each commitment; transparency on how headline targets, such as the 10% utilisation increase, were derived; and a broader definition of value that covers societal and place-based benefits, not just cost savings.
- Looking at what was missing under the engaged and confident customers commitments, stakeholders identified a gap between NGED and the end customer, and called for: clearer, more accessible communication, using plain language and tiered information without technical terms; greater use of trusted intermediaries such as local authorities, councillors and third sector organisations; clarity on the respective roles of distribution network operators (DNOs) and energy suppliers; consistent messaging across the industry; and integrated planning with National Energy System Operator (NESO) and local government.

## Outcome: Building a More Resilient and Reliable Network

| |
|---|
| **Maintain exceptional average network reliability and improve performance for those who experience the most power cuts** |
| **Transform our network's resilience to a changing climate** |
| **Ensure customers can rely on a safe, resilient and high-performing network** |
| **Grow network capacity** |
| **Use data and AI for smarter decisions** |
| **Strengthen our cyber defences to protect customers and the network** |

For this outcome, stakeholders were shown that a key focus of ED3 was to maintain high reliability while ensuring affordability remained paramount by making resilience investment smarter and more data driven.

- Stakeholders were confident the plan would maintain network reliability and welcomed its specific targets and its focus on monitoring, automation and fault prediction. At the same time, it was seen as a plan the DNO should already deliver rather than a leap forward, and questions remained over how it will be achieved and whether it is built for a future with far more distributed generation and electrified demand.
- Cyber security was the most widely endorsed commitment in both the discussions and the Slido voting, where it received an average score of 4.10 / 5. To ensure successful delivery, stakeholders urged NGED to demonstrate how the commitment goes beyond compliance, set out its approach to isolation and recovery, address AI and data-release risks explicitly, and coordinate cyber investment across the sector.
- The specificity of the changing climate commitment was also singled out for praise, and it received a high average score of 3.78 in the Slido voting. To go further, stakeholders advised NGED to publish its climate assumptions and regional risk assessments, set out the strategic rationale and cost-effectiveness of its chosen interventions, integrate environmental and landowner considerations into delivery, and give heat resilience the same prominence as storm resilience.
- The commitment that stakeholders felt needed refining centred on using AI, and received 3.64 / 5 in the Slido voting. Although there was more confidence in the use of AI in a network operation context rather than a customer-facing one, NGED were also asked to set out concrete operational use cases, explain the relationship between network visibility and AI, broaden its data partnerships, and demonstrate safeguards against overreliance and cyber risk.
- Voting on the overall ambition of these commitments, stakeholders were divided, with 35% disagreeing, 33% agreeing and 26% staying neutral. To improve both the ability to assess ambition and confidence the plan was deliverable, stakeholders wanted to see baselines, historical performance and comparisons with other DNOs nationally and internationally.
- Stakeholders felt the reliability and resilience commitments lacked: storage to keep supply on during faults and repairs through batteries at substations, community and home batteries that can island, and temporary storage for customers who rely on medical equipment; a challenge to the regulatory rule that stops DNOs owning and operating storage; predictive, condition-based maintenance of ageing assets, with attention to damaged poles, which often cause prolonged outages; permanent fixes in place of temporary repairs that leave the network exposed to the next storm; and a focus on power quality, such as voltage dips, which matters to businesses as much as outright interruptions.

## Outcome: Great Customer Experience

| |
|---|
| **Set and measure a new standard for customer service improving support through simpler, tailored services** |
| **Keep customers proactively informed about outages, with clear, real-time communications** |
| **Proactive, targeted support for vulnerable customers** |
| **Provide targeted support during named storms for vulnerable and medically dependent customers** |

For the great customer experience outcome, stakeholders were given an overview of NGED's strategy for ED3, which aims to provide a better core service by tailoring support and acknowledging that all customers are different and with different needs from their network.

- Stakeholders widely endorsed these commitments, feeling they showed new thinking and clearly set out the "how" of the ambitions as well as the "what". They particularly welcomed the support for vulnerable customers, including in-person welfare checks and the partnership with the British Red Cross.
- The most supported commitment was proactive, targeted support for vulnerable customers, receiving the highest score across all commitments of 4.13. Stakeholders felt that successful delivery here would positively change customers' lives, and to scale it even further, suggested guaranteeing human contact and power-independent communication routes and extending support to include a fair share of the energy transition's benefits.
- The commitment with the lowest endorsement was the new standard for customer service, with 3.67, and while stakeholders liked the idea of a measurable, customer-led standard in theory, they felt it was too new to know if it would work in practice and that the wording was too corporate to pin down.
- Stakeholders were confident about the level of ambition under customer experience, and this was reflected in the Slido voting, where it received the highest score across all categories, with 3.28 / 5. To improve this even further, stakeholders suggested publishing baselines and key performance indicators (KPIs) against all the commitments, shortening the medically dependent response time, extending support beyond named storms, scaling field resources to match demand, and broadening the ambition to everyday and business customers.
- Discussing what was missing from the commitments, stakeholders suggested that NGED extend its customer commitments to businesses, developers and local authorities with their own metrics, and position itself as an active, visible partner in helping customers through the transition, working alongside suppliers, NESO, local authorities and communities.

## Outcome: Timely Connections

| |
|---|
| **Simple, standardised, digital-first connections**<br>Prepare a network that benefits everyday homes and small businesses |
| **Efficient, timely delivery of large connection works**<br>Track performance where we control delivery |
| **Co-create solutions for complex connections** |
| **Proactively unloop homes, making them ready for low-carbon technologies** |

For the timely connections outcome, stakeholders were told the goal is to give customers access to the electricity they need when they need it, with a more proactive, simple, and tailored connections process and greater visibility as the key drivers to achieve it.

- Stakeholders welcomed these commitments as what they had been asking for, especially early engagement, co-designed solutions and one seamless customer journey, but their support depended on NGED delivering. They pointed to slipping dates, shifting connection points and slow responses, and warned that a smoother process means little if network capacity limits or rigid designs still leave projects unviable.
- Co-creating solutions for complex connections was the most enthusiastically received commitment under this outcome, and received the highest average score in the set, 3.99 / 5. Stakeholders cited the value of connection surgeries, an account manager style of engagement, and the value of a single, dedicated point of contact.
- Stakeholders rated timely connections the second most ambitious outcome in the ED3 plan, with 3.13 / 5, and welcomed a largely new set of commitments as a significant step for a slow-moving industry.
- Despite this, many felt the ambition was still too low for constraints that were felt to be a drag on economic growth, and wanted to see NGED set out its baselines, delivery dates, resourcing and the change customers will see for the extra spend before they could judge with confidence.
- When asked what was missing from the commitments, stakeholders urged NGED to publish KPIs and an accountability mechanism, give customers early clarity on cost and timescale, and integrate its connections approach with NESO, local authorities, other utilities and communities.

## Outcome: Societal Benefit

| |
|---|
| **Transform our network's environmental performance**<br>Accelerate decarbonisation, enhance biodiversity, and build a more sustainable future for the communities we serve |
| **Enhance support for local and community energy**<br>Turn local ambition into action through clear pathway |
| **Coordinate and accelerate the rollout of low-carbon technologies (LCTs)**<br>Work together with local authorities and other organisations on their improvement |
| **Create a safety and wellbeing culture**<br>Protect our workforce, contractors, customers and the public through proactive risk management and continuous improvement |

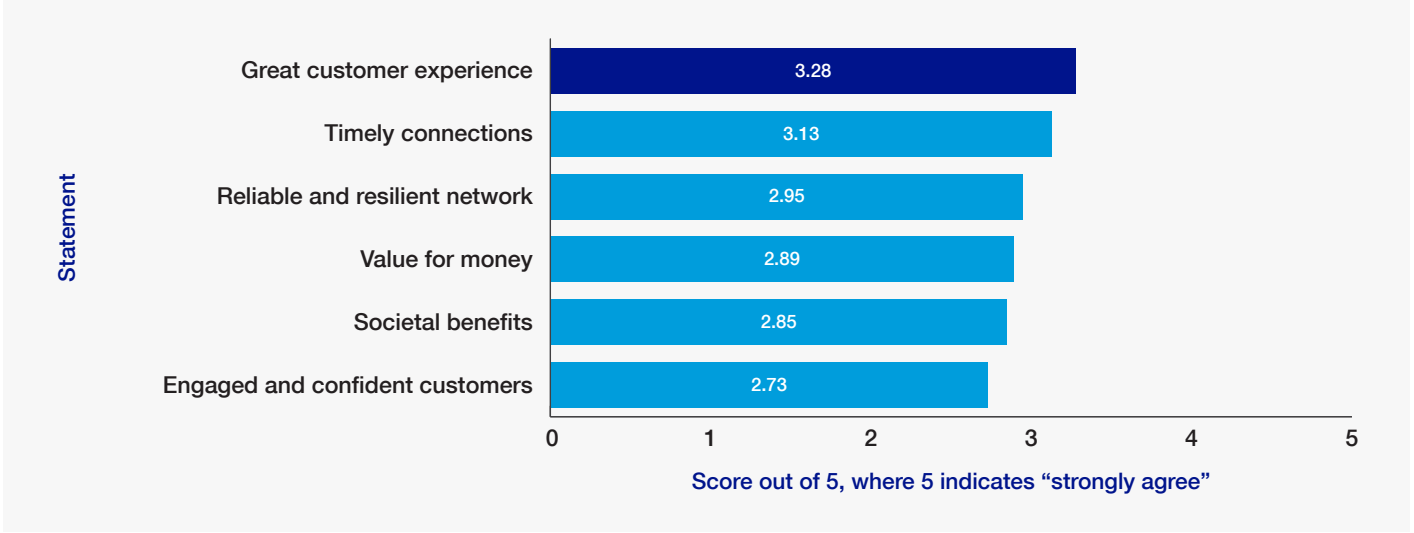
For the societal benefit outcome, it was explained that the growth of the network meant that NGED needed to work harder than ever to mitigate its environmental impact, with particular focus on decarbonisation, SF6 reduction, and fluid-filled cable removal. Other key societal benefits in these commitments included community energy, safety and wellbeing, and the rollout of low-carbon technologies (LCTs).

- Stakeholders were very pleased to see a societal benefit outcome, and saw the environmental, community energy and low-carbon commitments as a coherent package, though the safety commitment felt bolted on. They valued NGED's attention to community energy and social value, which many had rarely heard from a DNO, but had real reservations that the targets are too qualitative and that delivery depends on aligning with local and national government and National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET).
- Enhanced support for local and community energy was really positively received, and in the Slido voting received the highest average score, 3.92, showing that stakeholders were clear that with effective delivery it would deliver societal benefit.
- Transforming the network's environmental performance was the commitment that stakeholders suggested needed the most work, and stakeholders suggested that NGED publish quantified SF6 and fluid-filled cable baselines and targets, set a biodiversity ambition that clearly exceeds the statutory minimum, collaborate with other DNOs and the supply chain on SF6 alternatives, and explain the cost and environmental trade-offs in accessible terms.

- Although stakeholders were really supportive of NGED's societal benefit outcome in principle, they did not yet feel it demonstrated enough ambition: in the Slido voting 40% disagreed that the plan was ambitious enough, and 31% were neutral.
- To improve this, stakeholders advised NGED to restate each commitment with a quantified baseline, peer benchmark and cost, and to set stretch targets above the floor wherever statute already sets one. They also advocated for bringing the community energy and LCT commitments together under a place-based delivery model and a credible plan for how NGED will secure the workforce and supply chain to deliver them.
- Stakeholders felt the societal benefit commitments lacked: a clear local return for host communities, through local jobs, apprenticeships, local manufacturing and upskilling residents; a visible presence in schools and stronger STEM outreach to strengthen the electrical engineering skills pipeline; any account of AI's energy, water and biodiversity footprint, and whether it could cancel out environmental gains elsewhere; and explicit standards on materials, such as GM-free and palm oil-free biofuels.

## How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver […] is ambitious enough"?

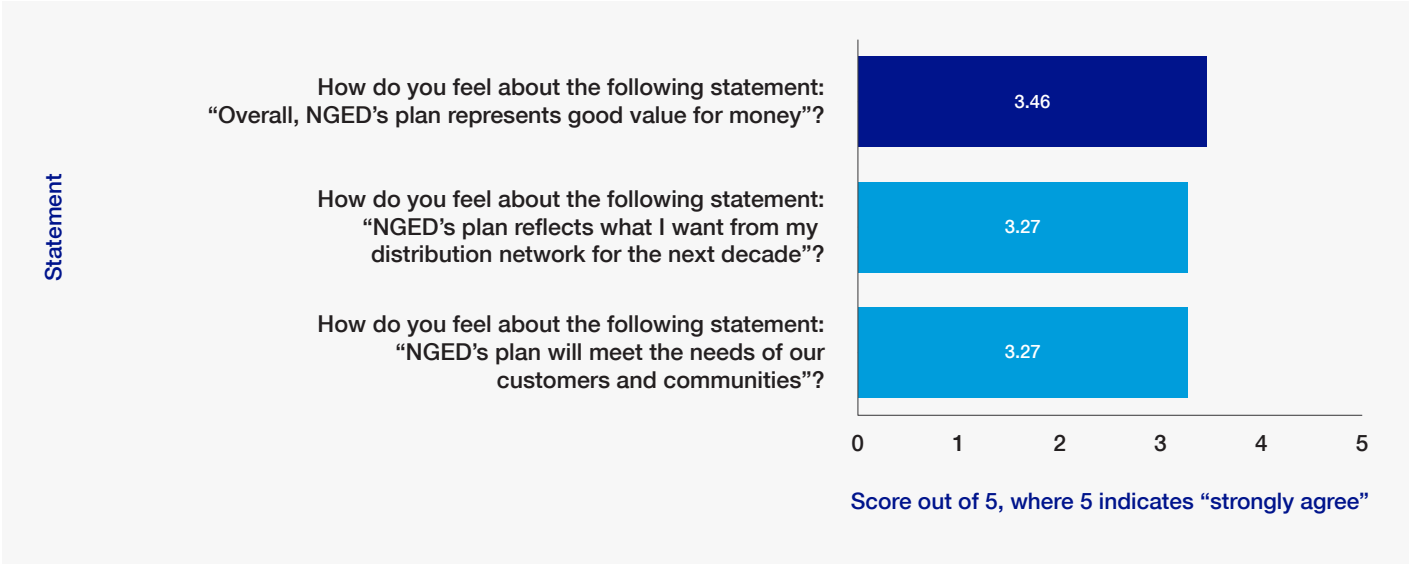
The following graph shows the average ambition score for each outcome area, based on the Slido vote. The outcome 'great customer experience' was regarded as the most ambitious overall, whilst 'engaged and confident customers' was the outcome that stakeholders felt most lacked ambition.



## Assessing the Balance of the ED3 Plan

Stakeholders were given a transparent view of the estimated cost of the new business plan, calculated to be £11 billion, a £3.1 billion increase from the second electricity distribution price control period (ED2). Feedback was sought from stakeholders on whether they thought the plan got the balance right between investment and affordability.

- Stakeholders largely accepted the plan as a fair trade-off between investment and cost, but with reservations: just over half, 56%, judged it good value for money and a third stayed neutral. Most saw a rise of about £26 a year as a reasonable price for renewing an ageing network and preparing for electrification, though many said they could not reach a firm view without more evidence on delivery and outcomes.
- Only around half agreed or strongly agreed the plan meets community needs (45%) or reflects what they want from their network (51%).
- Stakeholder type played a role here: those representing supply chain and consultancy felt the plan too cautious, underplaying growth in demand, flexibility and investment ahead of need. Others, many from the charity and third sector, focused on cost: the increase will hit struggling households hardest, runs counter to public expectations of cheaper energy, and raises questions about the role of shareholders.
- Stakeholders want NGED to earn trust by showing its ED2 track record, reporting regularly against ED3 targets, and telling customers plainly what the increase pays for, including the half driven by financing. Many saw partnerships with local authorities and communities as the cheapest way to get more from every pound invested.



# Session One:
## Introduction to ED3 and Our Business Plan ‘North Star’



## Session One:

**Roisin Quinn, President of NGED, opened the day in Birmingham, and Julie Taylor, Director of ED3 at NGED, did the same in Bristol. They showed that ED3 is being shaped by rising expectations for reliability, affordability, growth and faster delivery. Striking the right balance between these potentially competing priorities is key. They showed how the business plan had been built to strike this balance, setting out what it would seek to do over its five-year period, how much it will cost, and what it will deliver for customers. They finished by reminding stakeholders that this was the final chance to test the parameters of the plan before submission in November.**

**Stakeholders were then invited to introduce themselves and discuss what was most important to see from their electricity network over the next decade.**

### Top Priorities for the Network Over the Next Decade

The most widely cited priority was faster, more certain and more transparent connections, backed by enough network capacity. Developers, generators, landowners, community energy groups and local authorities all described long connections delays as the main barrier to growth, housing delivery, electric vehicle (EV) charging and decarbonisation. Several said timely connections should be NGED's starting point rather than one outcome among many, because nothing else can happen until a customer is connected. Stakeholders asked for firm delivery dates given in quarters rather than windows of two to four years. They also asked for early warning of delays or cost changes, instead of hearing about them just before energisation. They wanted clear, up-to-date information on where headroom exists and when reinforcement is planned. Many wanted NGED to publish forward plans for reinforcement and upgrades, in a similar way to the five-year plans gas networks provide.

Reliability and resilience came a close second, and on several tables was the first priority. Stakeholders stressed that keeping the lights on becomes more critical as heat, transport and cooking inexorably electrify and there is no gas to fall back on. Extreme weather, storm damage in rural areas, the length of power cuts, restoration times and cyber-attacks were highlighted as growing risks, with a clear expectation for NGED to plan for them all. Two practical imperatives emerged. First, when assets are replaced, NGED should install equipment fit for the future rather than a like-for-like replacement. Second, rural customers should get the same level of resilience as the rest of the customer base, with emergency responders and charities placing particular weight here.

A third consistent theme was that NGED needs to improve its communication and collaboration better in the next decade. Many stakeholders described their relationship with NGED as transactional rather than collaborative. They said meetings were hard to arrange, cost increases went unexplained, and they did not know who to contact. Local authorities felt this most strongly. Some said that despite repeated engagement they still did not know NGED's priorities or where they could invest in schemes such as solar. Stakeholders wanted NGED's plans to be joined up with local area energy plans, RESPs, other utilities and housing growth targets. They also wanted data shared openly and presented in a way that non-specialists can use. Supply chain stakeholders added that NGED will not be able to deliver the plan without enough skilled workers. They urged NGED to plan its workforce early, simplify procurement and make more use of existing expertise in the supply chain.

Stakeholders were keenly aware of the difficult balance between ambition and affordability, with a key comment here: "We have a public consensus around net zero and it will break if we're not careful with costs on customer bills". By this measure, stakeholders broadly supported an ambitious approach for the next decade, provided investment is targeted, proportionate and good value. Many asked NGED to get more out of the existing network before building new assets, through better use of current assets, flexibility, storage and smarter connections. They were wary of costs landing on customers' bills, with fairness emerging almost as often as cost. Stakeholders wanted a just transition in which low-income and vulnerable customers, rural communities and those who cannot afford LCTs are not left behind or subject to a postcode lottery.

## 1. What is most important for you to see from your distribution network over the next decade?

### Connections

- "Connection times need to come down significantly to allow the level of growth forecast by the government." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Capacity is the biggest. There isn't enough capacity anywhere in the country." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "It's important to get connections moved up the list of outcomes. Number 5 is timely connections, but that should be your start point. You can't become a customer until you've connected, and everything flows from there." **Supply chain**
- "Set time frames on delivery instead of open windows which kills our projects and funding lines. Be more specific, saying quarters rather than years. Having a window of 2 to 4 years kills our projects." **Interest group - Property and Land Management**
- "I think that the most important area of focus should be improved communications about connections risk for renewable-generation projects. We are only hearing about these kinds of issues when we are on the cusp of energising, and that's not acceptable." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "I would like NGED to be more transparent about its plans, so that we know what's happening and where you intend to dig up. Cadent normally give us five-year plans and we would like NGED to do something similar." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "Publishing plans for reinforcement works and upgrades to the network." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Ensuring sufficient grid capacity... Having this good awareness through your network, interactive network maps, and knowing the grid capacity, so all involved can properly plan, and knowing the connection times and costs for where we do need new connections." **Political - Local government**

### Resilience

- "It's a basic answer but resilience has to be number one. People don't care what the technicals are in the background, they just want to flick a switch and have the lights come on." **Supply chain**
- "I agree with resilience, because if everything is electric and there's no gas as back-up, then it can't go off." **Political - Local government**
- "Climate resilient future proof. We want reliability in a changing climate. When something goes wrong replacing it with the future. Not a like for like replacement." **Political - National Government**
- "We have had rural areas knocked out during storms and getting people back up and running and keeping houses warm is a big issue." **Political - Local government**
- "Having equal grid resilience in urban and rural areas so people can decarbonise if they want to." **Political - Local government**
- "I agree, and more investment in restoration times, and the duration of outages, is one of our big ones." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "What measures are in place if cyber attacks take down the grid? It would be good to have reassurance for consumers around that." **Political - Local government**
- "Specifically, for someone running dialysis at home, it is critical that they have a reliable supply of electricity." **Charity/third sector**
- "I would like to see consistent engagement in local resilience forums in terms of planning and exercising." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**

### Communication and Collaboration

- "I have found our engagement with NGED and NESO to be transactional, not collaborative." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "This is my third event in four months, and I still don't know what you're doing. What are you planning to do first?... We're talking but not engaging and I'm not being told where I can do the work." **Political - Local government**
- "Can't get anything out of the network at the moment, arranging a meeting is a challenge. Response rates are difficult." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "When we experience cost increases for projects, we don't get explanations about why they're happening, which is really frustrating." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "I think it's about more collaboration with RESP. We need to work quite closely together on alignment." **Energy industry - System Operator**

- "There's something around data sharing and being able to share data once across utilities. If planning and energy and water were connected, how great would that be for planning applications."
  **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "Accessibility and transparency of data. Colleagues can be a little bit intimidated and not know where the information is when they aren't used to engaging with it all day."
  **Political - Local government**
- "Appropriate staff and skill levels are the big challenge for NGED to overcome, in my opinion. We are a niche business and there is a three-year lead time to train up workers to operate substations." **Supply chain**
- "For us to grow, they need to free up procurement by thinking differently about how procurement is done." **Infrastructure**
- "When we talk about capabilities that underpin resilient networks, we already have a huge wealth of knowledge available."
  **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**

## Affordability and Equity

- "Investing ahead of need but it has to be proportionate. We're concerned about the cost impact... It's customers who are going to be paying for this in the long run."
  **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "I think that 'asset utilisation' is my big ask. We're at the edges of the affordability envelope for people, so the electricity-distribution industry needs to operate as efficiently as possible by not building unneeded network... We have a public consensus around net zero and it will break if we're not careful with costs on customer bills."
  **Supply chain**
- "I think flexibility is a big part of where we want to go in the next ten years. Proactive investment. We still need wires to distribute the energy. It's a mix of smart grids and investment in the network."
  **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "I'm happy to pay more money if I'm getting more value or seeing improvements." **Supply chain**
- "I would like to see the largest focus on fairness and, in particular, on delivering a just transition... It is vital that no one is left behind during ED3."
  **Charity/third sector**
- "At the moment, it feels like a postcode lottery, and that needs to be addressed."
  **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I want support for the customers on the lowest incomes. The projection for 2035 will benefit affluent people, who can afford EV cars."
  **Charity/third sector**

# Session Two:
## Value for Money and Engaged and Confident Customers



## Session Two:

**Ben Godfrey, Director of Distribution System Operator (DSO) at NGED, presented the second session of the day in Birmingham, and David Tuffery, DSO Head of System Access Reforms at NGED, fulfilled this role in Bristol. They showed that customers want them to stay ahead of need while protecting affordability, reliability and fairness, and that the strategy to deliver this was to cost-effectively deliver the requisite network through better-informed investment decisions and smarter operation. They then walked stakeholders through the proposed commitments to ensure value for money in how NGED both build and use the network to meet future demand.**

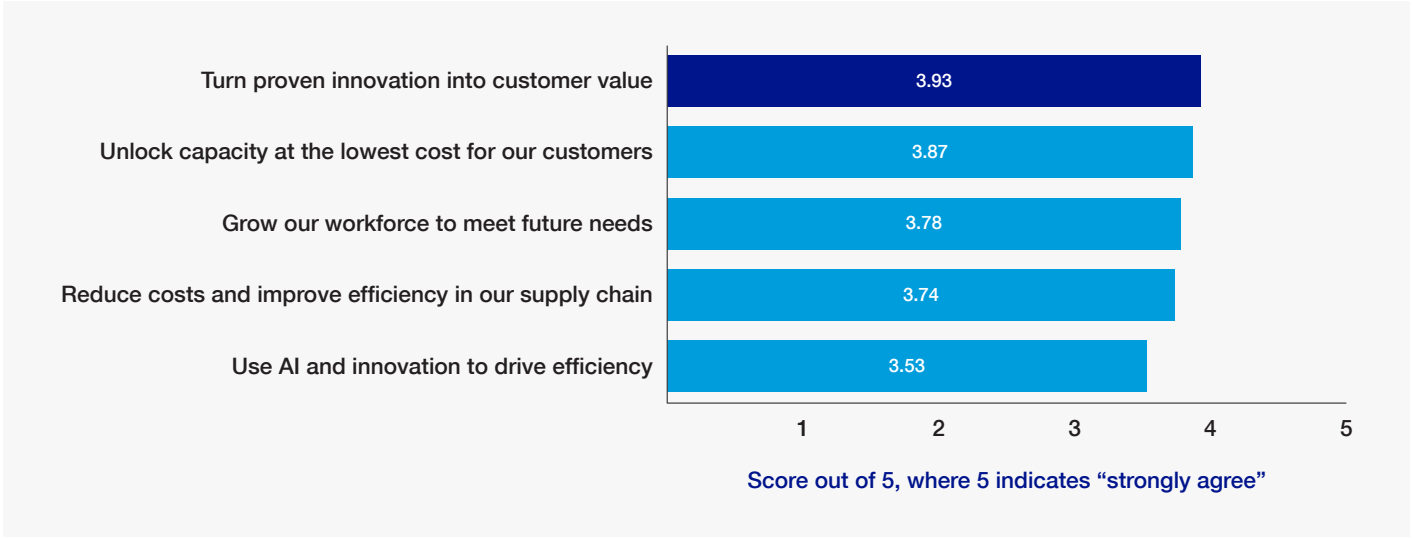
**They then turned to flexibility, showing how it provides value for the whole system, and how NGED plan to build on the foundations of ED2 by expanding and scaling its use. Key to achieving this is to make participation in flexibility markets as simple, accessible and inclusive as possible. They concluded by demonstrating the proposed commitments to both expand and develop accessibility to flexibility markets. Stakeholders were then asked to give their feedback on these commitments, followed by a vote on a number of questions using Slido.**

## Outcome: Value for Money

Stakeholders supported the five value for money commitments in principle, but most felt unable to say whether they would deliver their stated aim. A recurring refrain was that without figures, measurable targets or an indication of how distribution charges and household bills will change, stakeholders could not judge value, with several saying that "the proof will be in the pudding". To build confidence, it was felt that NGED could attach clear numbers, milestones and an expected bill impact to each commitment. It could also show how progress will be measured and reported, and set out the alternative options it considered, so stakeholders can see why this plan is the best value.

Stakeholders were also keen to discuss who the value is for, and the concept of value itself. Many defined value for money simply as affordability for bill payers. Some felt the commitments focused more on reducing NGED's own costs than on reducing customers' costs, and that savings passed on to customers should be explained clearly. For others, particularly developers and community energy groups, value lay in network capacity, which mattered more than cost, because a lack of capacity is blocking their projects.

### Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver value for money in ED3?



## Unlock capacity at the lowest cost for our customers

*Use innovation and technology to optimise asset lifetime*

Facilitate a 10% increase in primary network utilisation from current levels **[stretch of 10% on current levels]**

New assets installed to increase available capacity will have 10% lower overall losses than current assets **[new metric]**

Stakeholders widely supported this commitment, and it received the second highest level of endorsement in the Slido voting, with 3.87 / 5. For many, the potential value was clear, with network capacity cited as the main constraint on growth, renewables and electrification. However, many found the wording hard to interpret. They asked what unlocking capacity means in practice, whether it simply means "sweating the assets", and who the capacity is being unlocked for. Stakeholders accepted that not everyone can connect at once, but many wanted to see transparency on prioritisation included as part of the commitment. Who is NGED prioritising and how are those decisions being made? They also wanted decisions to reflect regionally significant needs identified through the RESP, rather than whoever is first in the queue. There was concern that data centres and other large projects could absorb capacity that housing, transport and local businesses also need.

Many stakeholders framed value in terms of fairness. It was argued that rural and deprived communities should have equal access to capacity, and customers who do not benefit from additional capacity should not see their costs rise. Some supply chain and local government stakeholders felt the 10% increase in primary network utilisation was too modest. Stakeholders supported proactive investment, but only if it is proportionate and based on good demand data. They asked NGED to show how the choice between flexibility and building new assets is made in customers' interests, not only NGED's. Several noted that connection delays are themselves pushing up costs, so greater certainty of delivery would be one of the most effective ways to deliver value.

## Grow our workforce to meet future needs

*Preparing our workforce for the future*

+ 1,000 apprentices, graduates and trainees across the ED3 period **[stretch from 639 trainees in ED2]**

Undertake targeted local outreach and recruitment from local and underserved communities **[continued ambition]**

Discursively, this was the most strongly supported of the value for money commitments. In the Slido voting it came third overall, with 3.78 / 5, but received the highest proportion of "strongly agree" votes, with 25%. Stakeholders agreed that NGED's ambition means little without enough skilled people to deliver it, pointing to an ageing workforce, retirements and a shortage of people entering engineering. Stakeholders particularly welcomed the 1,000 apprentices and graduates, although some felt the figure was not ambitious enough. These stakeholders cautioned that 1,000 should be a minimum rather than a target, and that planned workforce growth looked modest compared with the growth in network activity NGED expects.

Stakeholders saw a clear link to value for money. A larger in-house workforce, based in the right places, could speed up responses to faults, cut travel time and reduce reliance on subcontractors. Several suggested targeting recruitment at the parts of the network where LCT uptake and pressure are greatest. Stakeholders also saw retention and recruitment as major risks. They encouraged NGED to promote long-term energy careers through schools and communities, invest in local green skills organisations, and retrain engineers from declining industries. Those representing supply chain raised two important questions. First, NGED and its supply chain could end up competing for the same limited pool of workers and suggested an open conversation about workforce planning. Second, some supply chain firms had hired staff to meet expected ED2 demand, only for the work not to materialise. It was therefore critical for NGED to be transparent about the scale and location of workforce growth, and to plan it in partnership with supply chain so the investment delivers value rather than waste.

## Use AI and innovation to drive efficiency

*Leverage AI to reduce costs and improve services*

Deliver AI-assisted customer contact handling functionality across all routine enquiries by March 2029, improving first-contact resolution rates to 90%+ **[new function]**

Demonstrate a significant increase in digital-first delivery across all contacts and market segments, achieving at least 80% for connections related enquires. **[new measure]**

Stakeholders were cautious about this commitment, and this ambivalence came through in the Slido voting, where it received the lowest overall acceptability score of 3.53. Stakeholders broadly accepted that AI will become integral to network operations, but many regarded the commitment as too loosely defined to assess, describing AI as "all things to all people" and a term in danger of becoming a buzzword. Stakeholders urged NGED

to specify concrete use cases, the efficiencies each is expected to deliver and how benefits will be realised and evidenced. Support was clearly concentrated on operational, behind-the-scenes applications: predictive analytics, fault location and restoration, demand forecasting and the optimisation of flexibility markets were all seen as credible routes to value. By contrast, customer-facing deployment attracted strong resistance, driven by widespread poor experiences of chatbots. Charities and consumer representatives were particularly emphatic that those on the Priority Services Register (PSR) and other vulnerable customers must retain access to human contact, and that automation should be reserved for simple, transactional queries.

Several stakeholders challenged the value proposition itself, noting that AI is only as effective as the data and expertise behind it, and questioning whether savings would come at the expense of jobs and social value. Stakeholders also identified risks the plan should address explicitly, including cyber security, the resilience implications of AI-dependent systems, the governance of sensitive customer data and the environmental footprint of AI. Some called for a clear governance framework before any wider deployment. A number also highlighted the interdependency with the workforce commitment, questioning how AI-driven efficiencies would affect planned headcount growth.

### Turn proven innovation into customer value

*Align innovation portfolio with strategic priorities*

Introduce a deployment pathway and investment route for proven innovations and deploy at least 5 proven innovation solutions into business-as-usual operation during ED3 with measurable benefits **[stretch from running trials in ED2 to deployment in ED3]**

This commitment generated relatively little discussion compared with the others, and yet scored the highest in the Slido voting, with 3.93. This might suggest it was seen as less contentious but also less tangible as a commitment. Stakeholders who did comment were broadly supportive and recognised proven innovation as an important lever for a more affordable and accessible network. The dominant theme, however, was speed of adoption. Several argued that the value of innovation erodes quickly if the transition from successful trial to business-as-usual (BAU) takes five to ten years, and that innovation is expensive precisely because so much of it never reaches deployment. Stakeholders therefore urged NGED to accelerate this transition and to establish standardised routes through which innovators and partners can engage. Some also encouraged NGED to adopt proven practice from elsewhere rather than reinventing it, citing Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN)'s use of Active Network Management in heavily constrained areas as an example of best practice. On the question of value, a concern over fairness resurfaced. Some felt the benefits of innovation were likely to accrue mainly to large businesses and sophisticated investors. To address this, some urged NGED to direct innovation towards customers who cannot afford LCTs and those on isolated rural supplies, for example through behind-the-meter storage and tariffs targeted at social housing.

### Reduce costs and improve efficiency in our supply chain

*Stronger, earlier supplier engagement*

Move to a strategic supplier model based on earlier market engagement, long-term frameworks, forward workload visibility and capacity reservation **[new function]**

Stakeholders endorsed this commitment in principle, and it received an average acceptability score of 3.74 / 5 in the Slido voting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, for many supply chain participants it stood out as the most relevant of the set. Others were more sceptical about how much NGED can achieve, given that many supply chain cost pressures are global. The discussions were practical, centring on the view that the greatest efficiencies lie in how NGED procures and plans work rather than in squeezing supplier margins. Procurement bureaucracy was the most frequently cited barrier. Suppliers described the burden of framework applications and repetitive pre-qualification questionnaires, and called for simpler, more consistent processes, with some proposing a single industry-wide set of supplier questions. Pipeline certainty was the second major lever. Suppliers said that uncertainty over when contracted work will materialise makes resourcing inefficient and inflates costs. They pointed to water companies that bring work forward on the strength of a long-term programme as a model for avoiding dips in productivity, and some advocated a shift from competitive tendering towards direct allocation and longer-term partnerships. Other suggestions included developing local supply chains through social value requirements and community-based procurement events, introducing greater flexibility into supply arrangements, and moving from buying components to buying services. Several stakeholders stressed that efficiency must also be improved on NGED's side, citing long waiting times and a lack of fast-track processes that other DNOs offer.

## Level of Ambition

Stakeholders did not reach consensus on whether the commitments, taken together, are ambitious enough. This feeling was echoed in the Slido voting, where the question: Is NGED's overall plan to deliver value for money ambitious enough, received a relatively muted average of 2.89 / 5. With 28% disagreeing, 23% agreeing, and 40% remaining neutral, the result reflects the difficulty many stakeholders had in assessing the ambition of the value for money proposition.

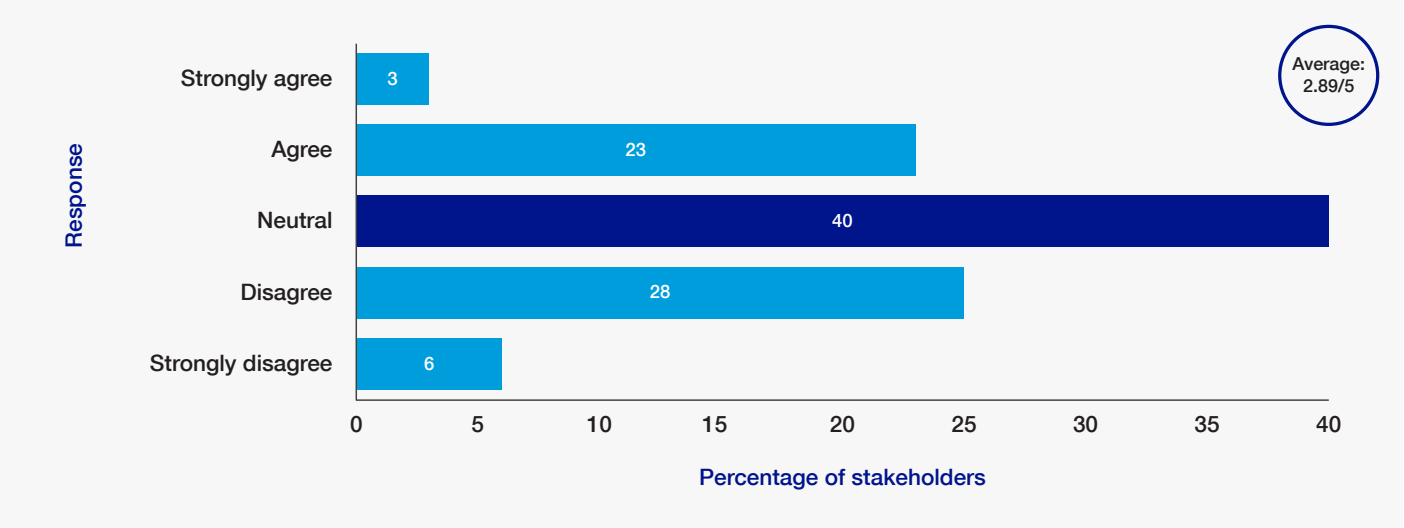
The most common position was that ambition cannot be properly judged without baselines, benchmarks, costs and delivery timescales. Several said the statistics had been presented without the context needed to show whether they represent a genuine stretch. A significant group, particularly among local authorities and charities, considered the package balanced and pragmatic. They accepted that a phased, affordable programme is preferable to rapid and costly overbuild. Among those who questioned the level of ambition, the prevailing view was that it was too low rather than too high, especially when measured against Clean Power 2030, the scale of connections required and the anticipated growth in data centres. Several stakeholders noted that the ambition itself was not the main problem, but confidence that it will be delivered quickly enough, with a dispiriting example of this a major landowner who having lost faith in timely capacity was already planning gas-based provision for new sites.

The debate on ambition varied considerably by commitment. The 10% increase in primary network utilisation attracted the most comment and was widely seen as modest relative to wider electrification needs. Some thought 1,000 apprentices was too low given the scale of network expansion, while others doubted it could be filled given the constrained recruitment pipeline. On AI, a clear divergence emerged. Some consultants argued that NGED's ambition was far too narrow and should extend to agentic AI for fault finding, active network management and data-driven decision-making. Most other stakeholders urged caution, particularly on customer-facing uses. Supply chain cost reduction was the only commitment widely seen as overambitious. Stakeholders cited rising commodity prices, concentrated supplier markets, global insecurity and connection costs that had risen by as much as 50%, and some suggested that containing cost increases would be a more realistic objective.

## Anything Missing?

The most frequently identified gap was the absence of any indication of cost to customers. Stakeholders argued that value for money cannot be meaningfully assessed without an estimate of the impact on bills and on the end price of electricity. Some went further, calling for scenario-based evidence that compares the cost and service outcomes of making these investments with not making them. Stakeholders also asked for measurable customer benefits against each commitment and greater transparency on how headline targets, such as the 10% utilisation increase, were derived. Others felt that the commitments define value too narrowly and read primarily as cost-saving measures. These stakeholders urged NGED to expand the view and articulate wider societal and place-based value.

**How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver value for money is ambitious enough"**



## 1. Do you think this plan will help deliver value for money in ED3?

### Overarching Feedback

- "Value for money look like good commitments, it's hard to argue the opposite. They are common sense consensus views." **Charity/third sector**
- "It is difficult to argue with those five commitments, but converting those into reality will be difficult." **Political - Local government**
- "It sounds good, for example 1,000 apprentices and the 10% increase, but the proof will be in the pudding, when we come back in 5 years. But they are all fantastic to hear." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. They all look fine. They all support what we're all driving towards." **Charity/third sector**
- "The use of AI, that is clearly big focus in terms of technology and that's in there. Operational efficiency, reducing, these are all areas that I would expect to see. So it just feels right." **Supply chain**
- "These are ideas without any figures. How can I tell if its value for money?" **Charity/third sector**
- "These are high-level statements. It's very difficult to put the detail in at this stage. They seem appropriate but until the detail is there. They are hooks to hang a business plan on." **Supply chain**
- "It's impossible to judge because you haven't told us how much your DUoS charges will rise in ED3. Most people aren't interested in what's going on, they're interested in the price of electricity." **Supply chain**
- "The issue is, how do you measure value for money? Don't know how that goes into end value? Monetary, societal? Very vague. Needs to be pinned to a value to achieve." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Some of the numbers are extremely ambitious numbers. How does that affect us directly?... We need to see more details of how the ambitious targets will be met. I would want to see other options you have not presented so I can understand the value for money." **Interest group - Environmental**
- "Affordability is value. If they can't afford it then it's not value. If you can't pay the rent, then it's not value." **Charity/third sector**
- "In a customer-engagement piece, we should focus on reducing costs for the customer. This plan looks like it's focussing more on reducing costs for NGED. While there may be a knock-on, this needs to be clearly communicated to the customer." **Political - Local government**
- "Sometimes it is hard to understand how these commitments would reflect in the experience of the most vulnerable customers... Value for money would be most beneficial for vulnerable people, but it is hard to see how it will work on the ground." **Charity/third sector**
- "Blocking the capacity is the biggest issues for schemes that we are involved in. The capacity just isn't there. I look more at this than the money, as that is what is stopping us from doing the work we want to do." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "Two of the main parties and at least one other party have said they will review or appeal the Climate Change Act, so what value for money will there be if assets are not in line with government policy by 2029? I don't want stranded assets, personally." **Supply chain**
- "I think NGED can be more ambitious... They should invest more now and save more later." **Energy industry - Community Energy**

### Unlock Capacity at Lowest Cost

- "I think people are really frustrated, there's a lot of willingness and people want to install renewables, they want to be doing the right thing here. But at the moment, it is the grid that is the main constraint." **Political - Local government**
- "The speed of making new connections is important. People should be able to have energy when they want and need it. I think unlocking capacity is a good thing." **Infrastructure**
- "I do not understand the investment under unlocking capacity. Is that just sweating the assets?" **Political - Local government**
- "I would like more transparency about priorities. For example, an airport might be planning to decarbonise but if the capacity is going to the HGVs, they can't connect... Who is being prioritised if not everyone is being supported? Who is your customer?" **Political - Combined Authority**
- "I want to know that a deliberate decision has been made in terms of who to prioritise. We can wait for our turn, but we need to know what the priorities are so we can know how long things will take and where we stand with our plans." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**

- "We also need to understand what's regionally significant and do more work through the RESP process. Development in the Midlands will struggle to get their capacity as a big data centre has come in and taken that capacity. Should they take precedence over other priorities for demand? Don't go with what's first in the queue." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "Our communities who do receive more blackouts than others, making sure that their costs aren't increasing if they're not receiving any of that extra capacity, I think is really important. It's making sure that capacity is fair across the region, not just focused on the big cities and data centres." **Political - Local government**
- "As we move towards heat pump technologies, we need to make sure rural areas have the same access as urban areas." **Political - Local government**
- "I like the measure around increasing primary network utilisation, as it suggests that not all of the network capacity is currently being harnessed and a shift towards doing so. It would be great to see NGED embrace flexibility more in order to harness the fluid headroom of assets." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I was less impressed by the plan to increase load by 10% at substations, and it wasn't clear where that would come from... 10% doesn't sound like a big change by 2030 and I wonder if that's being suppressed by the lack of connections. You've got long enough to tackle some big things, where the network utilisation could be increased by more than 10%. That's where it seemed a bit weak to me." **Supply chain**
- "I think that it would also be useful if you could provide us with real-time information about how many assets are operating at their limits, and more background information about how often this occurs. This could help us to hold you more broadly accountable around this commitment." **Supply chain**
- "I'm not sure whether it is possible to deliver value for money through this commitment in ED3, as the constant connections delays are increasing connection costs for generation projects." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "On the supply-chain side, we would really welcome the move to certainty, as this would result in reduced costs and projects being delivered on time." **Interest group - Consultant**

## Grow Our Workforce to Meet Future Needs

- "I would endorse anything that sets out to tackle the workforce challenges outlined. Please put all of the investment necessary in place in order to deliver it." **Charity/third sector**
- "This is extremely important." **Supply chain**
- "We need to grow the workforce and have more engineers. Ambition is good, but if there is nobody to carry out the work then it won't happen." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "There's no point having a network if there's no one to look after it." **Supply chain**
- "I would agree that investment in human resources is vital. AI just cannot replace humans on the ground maintaining and repairing network assets." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I agree with the workforce and we're struggling with this as people are retiring and don't want to work the same hours as before." **Charity/third sector**
- "It's great to see 1,000 apprentices. I'm strongly recommending my kids go into energy." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "I agree on the points, particularly growing the workforce, we are under mounting pressure and so I think the thousand mentioned there must be the minimum rather than the maximum." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "If you can plan this right, it will deliver value for money, as you would have more staff appropriately located around your licence area to address issues. That means that you would be able to respond to issues more quickly, and would cut down the travel and fault times involved. The commitment seems fine on the surface, but the devil will be in the detail." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "It would be good if we knew you were not going to keep sub-contracting to third parties instead of using your own people. Sub-contracting is more expensive." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "The question then becomes, where do you put them? You need to look at the bottom of the network and see where it is needed. I would look at where the networks are changing most and where the uptake of LCT's the highest." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "Your biggest problem is retention." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "Communicating long-term career opportunities will be essential over the next 10 years." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The crunch is a major issue across the whole sector. I think it's really important starting early on from education. Where will the new blood come from?" **Interest group - Consultant**

- "This one scares me. There are a finite number of people in this industry... There needs to be an open conversation between customer and supplier. It might make more economic sense to approach supply chain, but we could cannibalise each other. We'll be competing with each other when we are trying to serve each other. You need to get on top of this before it's a big problem." **Supply chain**
- "We need to stop being in competition when it comes to workforce." **Supply chain**
- "ED2 ambitions were not met, and so employees were hired by my company to meet the expected demand but there was no work for them and they had to be let go. Mistakes like that cost money and are inefficient." **Supply chain**

## Use AI and Innovation to Drive Efficiency

- "Businesses that cannot find some way of making use of AI are going to be left behind." **Political - Local government**
- "AI is always good to see, although it's a question of what it actually means, and how it will play out in reality. It's the world we're going to be moving into, so it's important." **Political - Local government**
- "This is the only one I'm not sure of. It's quite a broad statement. It's one of those buzzwords that are flying around at the moment, but I'd like to know what you're going to do with it." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution (Independent)**
- "Theoretically AI could help deliver efficiencies, but it's like anything else, the devil is in the detail... The detail isn't there yet." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "I would like more information about the use of AI, where will this be used and how does that impact sustainability." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "We have seen use of this technology that has had a huge impact on the time taken to locate faults and repair them." **Political - National Government**
- "Predictive analytics for usage will be brilliant." **Innovator**
- "The AI stuff will be more useful in flex markets." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "AI should be used more to help the customer be efficient and save money... AI should be used to help direct our behaviour on when we use certain amounts of electricity." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "This should be deployed in the running of the network rather than customer services." **Supply chain**
- "All the businesses I deal with use chatbots, and they never answer my questions. I've never had a chatbot who can answer a question beyond what's on the website and it's a nightmare." **Academia**
- "I worry about this one. I can't help thinking about the priority services customers that get in contact and are confronted by an AI bot. If you're a vulnerable customer and you end up going round in circles with an AI bot, that could drive you away further." **Interest group - Consumer**
- "We do have to be efficient and cost effective but if you want to support the most vulnerable clients they need to speak to someone." **Charity/third sector**
- "But how is AI going to save money? Particularly if all it is doing is taking away jobs... makes me ask what value is it adding?" **Political - Local government**
- "If this reduces the cost by having fewer human beings in the network, it won't create a social benefit." **Political - Local government**
- "Using AI might not necessarily improve services, it depends on how good the inputs are. Using AI can increase costs at no benefit." **Supply chain**
- "I think using AI is a mistake and I think you will end up using more staff. The more data you get the more people you will need to analyse that data. I don't think you'll save any money in that way." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "Do you understand what data you need to be collecting to make improvements in efficiency?... Is it just about automating processes, as opposed to learning and growing to improve efficiency? You can't expect an AI to know what it's doing, you've got to teach it." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "If the output is something new for the sake of it, like an unhelpful chatbot, that isn't efficiency." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Use of AI and innovation is fine, but what about cyber security? A smarter network needs to be cyber secure or else we'll all have a problem. It's presumably in there somewhere but it's not explicit." **Political - Local government**
- "It raises the question of the resilience of the network, which might lead into costs down the line. But what vulnerabilities does it bring to the network, and what might that mean later on cost-wise?" **Academia**

- "We have all heard the horror stories in the US about data centres, water and energy use." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "You really need a framework in place before you start using AI. We need a proper engineering view on where this is going and we have not got that at the moment." **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "We may need legislation on AI before using it." **Energy industry - System Operator**

### Turn proven innovation into customer value

- "Harnessing proven innovation will be a great support for transitioning towards a more affordable and accessible approach to running the network." **Political - Local government**
- "I think that this commitment is useful, but I would stress that there needs to be a more immediate turnaround in turning a proven innovation into business as usual. If you don't harness one of these innovations until 5-10 years later, you will lose all of the potential value." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Innovation can be very expensive. It doesn't always go into BAU, or it's very slow in doing so. Picking up the pace of this is essential. Create multiple innovation routes or standard processes that are already in place for people to engage with." **Political - Local government**
- "I see tens of innovation projects come online every year. I think there's a challenge turning them from ideas into real projects... There's a real issue bringing them online. We're looking at solutions for companies so it's easier for people to find out what projects are taking place here and elsewhere in Europe, for example." **Interest group - Consumer**
- "You could talk to Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) and share expertise on Active Network Management (ANM). SSEN had to add considerable ANM to cope with demand for connections. They had to do this in Reading, the most overloaded grid in the country." **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "Very nebulous, five different demonstration projects which I couldn't quite see what they were doing." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The accessibility to the network is being improved but this will only be managed and understood by big businesses. The investment seems to mainly prioritise big business and large investors. It will be harder to access for everyone else." **Political - Local government**
- "In addition, people who have deeper knowledge of the electricity network are engaging proactively around innovative technologies, but there is still a bit of a gap around people are less interested." **Political - Local government**
- "I'm most concerned about customers who cannot afford green technologies and customers with isolated supplies in the rural South West. Could NGED explore supporting an autonomously flexible system on the other side of the meter where surplus generated energy can be stored in batteries and then targeted at social housing? Is there some kind of tariff that can be developed to support that?" **Innovator**

### Reduce costs and improve efficiency in our supply chain

- "This is the one that is shining out to me." **Supply chain**
- "I agree with the supply chain engagement." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "That's a good one, but I don't know how they are going to achieve it as its global and based on so many different factors. I don't know how the network can help with that." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "That seems to be quite aspirational." **Political - Local government**
- "You often don't know when you will be delivering bids you win, makes it very difficult to plan works and create different pressures." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "Huge amounts of bureaucracy around getting on to frameworks. Have a huge bank of PQQ answers. I often wonder who is reading all the framework applications. Reduction of bureaucracy would be a huge help, by removing some of the red tape around procurement. The industry could get together and agree to put together one set of questions for the supply chain." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "More consistency would be good because you get approved suppliers, and saves you having to sift through huge amounts of suppliers and application forms." **Interest group - Property and Land Management**
- "When I've worked with water companies, some of the better ones have been bringing the work forward by about a year because they have a rough idea of what they'll need to do and they can be confident in what they will be able to spend going forward. This helps them avoid the dip in productivity. They've taken the long-term view." **Infrastructure**

- "Moving away from competitive tenders to direct allocation is important. They need to be the DNO of choice when there are so many out there." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "You can improve the procurement process if you focus on local. You can run events like this in the community to gauge interest and ensure the right companies are applying." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "Supply chain for me is pretty key because in my experience it's been so fixed. I'd like to see flexibility in supply chains." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "If you change the supply model to buying services not components you can drive costs down and improve resource efficiency." **Political - National Government**
- "For us who work with DNO there are a lot of barriers to make it efficient. Long waiting times. Competent people on the other side are needed. I am wondering how this will be carried out." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "Some DNOs have a light system where everything is fast tracked with lower waiting times. There's no similar light system with National Grid." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**

## 2. Taken together, do you think our commitments have the right level of ambition?

- "Since there is no data on what needs to be done, it's difficult to compare how ambitious it is. We don't know if it makes a significant difference." **Regulator**
- "It is hard to see if the value for money is being achieved without hindsight or actual figures." **Supply chain**
- "I do think mostly they are ambitious enough." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "Is the target of 1000 apprenticeships across the price control ambitious or a substantial increase? I'm not really sure, as there isn't really any benchmarking to help me to gauge this." **Charity/third sector**
- "I think it's balanced. Life's a compromise, isn't it?" **Political - Local government**
- "I think people are realistic, they don't expect you to suddenly build a new future-proof system now because it will cost an awful lot of money... It's better planned than suddenly building something big in the next five or ten years, which would cost an awful lot of money. It's better to have a plan laid out that seems sensible." **Political - Local government**
- "We think if we're going to hit Clean Power 30 and the associated goals, then this isn't ambitious enough. The amount of stuff that needs to be connected in to facilitating these, a lot more needs to happen. We've got 384 gigawatts to connect in ten years which is an enormous amount, and I'm not sure that the stated 10% increase will be sufficient." **Supply chain**
- "I thought that some of the ambitions in terms of the 10% reductions over a 5-year period were a bit soft. That's 2% a year." **Charity/third sector**
- "The ambition comes across very positively. The reality is it's moving too slowly so we're still sceptical... we know we will fall short in terms of power so what we tend to do now is rather than anticipate that, and think it's all going to be fine, is make our own provision and that might be gas again... I can hear the ambition is there, it's just trusting it will come through quickly enough." **Major landowner**
- "I don't think that the target of a 10% increase in primary network utilisation from current levels is particularly high in view of wider electrification targets." **Political - Local government**
- "It is very ambitious, and it's great to see the increase in utilisation and lower losses." **Academia**
- "I think that this is too ambitious and just not feasible. Looking at the Clean Power 2030 agenda, things are mainly being driven by need rather than cost, which will hinder your ambitions." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "There is a huge amount of work needed to grow the workforce, not just in terms of apprenticeships and graduate schemes, but also the wider workforce, and I think this target can go further." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "I worry, if anything, that this may even be too ambitious. It's a big number, but the main challenge here is finding all of the people to take them up, as this is a niche sector and not heavily promoted." **Supply chain**
- "These aren't ambitious enough. My heart sinks when I read some of this, particularly the AI stuff. AI is about agentic decision making, fault finding, working smart with data. It's not about customer contact." **Interest group - Consultant**

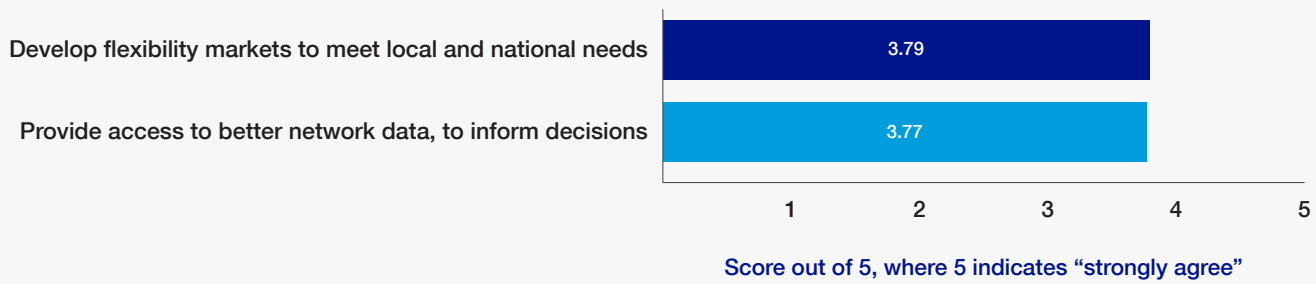
- "I think that this entire commitment is far too ambitious. We're on Gate 2 in the connections queue and we've seen a 50% increase in costs. It may just be more realistic to focus on stopping costs from going up." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "They have talked about balance. I think they are most likely getting it right. I came to previous ED3 [stakeholder] sessions and much has changed, now they have the figures to back up those first thoughts." **Charity/third sector**

## 3. Is there anything missing?

- "The one thing that's missing is what is NGED's view in how much it's going to cost?... I think an idea of what it's going to be, what the estimated impact is on the customer bill. It needs folding into value for money discussions." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "How much the electricity is going to cost and if that can't be pulled back putting all this stuff in is simply pointless already we are the highest energy in the developed world... It's just unbelievable what's going on and it's not entirely NGED's fault." **Political - Local government**
- "Knowing the end price of electricity when you've done all this stuff." **Political - Local government**
- "But the baseline is what would it mean in terms of increased cost and service delivery, if you did or didn't make those investments, in order for people to understand the value for money. So it would be good if you painted out those different scenarios... you talk about lowest cost, but is it really at lowest cost, really? Lowest cost is not doing any of this and just maintaining the network. But really, you're talking about something much more ambitious. I'm not convinced lowest cost makes sense as an ideal here." **Academia**
- "Just knowing how those figures are deducted. It's difficult to know if the 10% is right or wrong. I'd like a bit more clarity about how that figure was arrived at." **Political - Local government**
- "I think that you need to broaden your perspective of what value for money is and maybe change your focus. I believe that value for money is not just about quantity, so I would urge you to think about motivating the right kind of incentives to deliver wider societal benefits... More broadly as a society, we've seen what happens with driving costs further and further down, as, in the end, huge outlays are needed to catch up." **Charity/third sector**
- "A lot of the points made seem like cost saving points." **Supply chain**
- "The place-based value is not clearly set out here." **Political - Local government**
- "Efficiency is a red flag to me, can lead to issues. Critical bits of kit that aren't there, waiting list on transporters is months or years, so be careful with efficiency. There's a trade-off to be done on these things, so if we have a failure on this it impacts something else." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Is there anything in there for which we can look to our partners in Europe for inspiration? Is there anything we can avoid from their experience?" **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**

## Outcome: Engaged and Confident Customers

**Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver engaged and confident customers in ED3?**



Stakeholders questioned whether this set of commitments, as currently framed, would materially improve customer confidence. In this view, there was a significant gap between intention and likely impact. Many characterised the commitments as passive and oriented towards customers who are already informed and well-resourced. They felt the commitments did little to empower the majority, who have limited understanding of the energy system and little appetite to learn about it. Concerns about exclusion were prominent. Charities highlighted the risk to vulnerable customers and to the millions without internet access if engagement becomes increasingly digital. Several also observed that flexibility markets principally benefit households that own and control their own assets. Some stakeholders challenged the premise of the outcome itself. Citing evidence that most people have never switched tariff and lack the bandwidth to engage, they argued that the aim should be fair, affordable and seamless outcomes rather than engagement for its own sake. That could mean automated flexibility, simpler connections and support through intermediaries such as electricians, rather than asking customers to educate themselves. Stakeholders also asked how engagement and confidence would be defined and measured and noted that the plan says more about what NGED intends than about how it will deliver. For NGED, the implication is that confidence will depend less on the volume of engagement and information it provides than on making the network easy to use, and on targeting support to distinct customer groups, including those least able or inclined to engage.

## Provide access to better network data, to inform decisions

90% of data meets quality standards and 95% of datasets will have published data quality assessment reports **[new measure]**

Achieve average accuracy of our new day-ahead forecasts to be within 15% error margin **[stretch from 40% currently]**

Stakeholders strongly supported this commitment in principle, and it received a good average score of 3.79 / 5 in the Slido voting. Many saw greater transparency as one of the most direct routes to building confidence. Several described a “circular benefit”: customers who trust the data are more willing to act on it, and their actions in turn help NGED target investment. The discussion drew a clear distinction between quantity and quality of data. Developers, generators, local authorities and community energy groups reported that NGED already publishes a great deal, but that much of it is outdated, incompletely populated or poorly labelled. They cited missing columns in the Embedded Capacity Register, datasets without metadata and heatmaps that have historically fallen short. For these users, better data means reliable, current and fully populated data. It also means greater predictive visibility of where and when capacity will become available, which they argued would reduce wasted applications. Some proposed specific enhancements, such as live feeds of dropped connections and changes of ownership, and better information on speculative applications in the queue. A prescient warning for the overarching question of value noted that data publication is costly, and urged NGED to establish which datasets users actually value before investing in them.

For domestic customers and communities, the prevailing view was that data only builds confidence if it is meaningful to the person receiving it. Stakeholders cautioned that flooding customers with numbers, however accurate, risks disengagement. They called for plain-English summaries with links to more detailed data, information tailored to different customer types, and communication that focuses on what is happening locally rather than across the licence area. Several stressed that access must be equitable across income levels, ages and rural and urban areas. They warned against assuming digital channels will reach everyone, and asked how NGED will reach the hardest-to-reach groups. Stakeholders felt NGED should proactively show customers how to benefit, for example through day-ahead flexibility signals delivered to smart meter apps, rather than simply publishing data and expecting customers to find it.

## Develop flexibility markets to meet local and national needs

Doubling our registered flexibility capacity to 6GW and reaching 1,000,000 assets registered. **[stretch from 3GW and 310,000 assets]**

80% of registered flexible capacity is connected to the national market on top of local markets to give more earning potential to our customers **[new ambition]**

Stakeholders broadly welcomed this commitment, and this was reflected in the Slido voting where 71% either agreed or strongly agreed that it would improve customer confidence. Several observed that flexibility now feels genuinely embedded in NGED’s thinking rather than, as in previous engagement, an afterthought or buzzword. The ambition to double registered flexibility capacity from ED2 was well received, although some asked whether the target of one million registered assets is proportionate to the size of NGED’s network and its contribution to national flexibility needs. The prevailing feeling, however, was that the market is too complex for most potential participants to navigate. Local authorities, which should be natural participants, reported that they had tried to

understand the market and given up. Charities said that the customers they support do not know what flexibility is, and in many cases do not know what NGED is, although they are familiar with supplier tariffs. Stakeholders were clear that engagement will not follow from appeals to balance the network. Customers need to see a tangible value proposition expressed in "pounds in their pockets", and NGED was urged to be far more proactive and plain-spoken in making that case.

## Level of Ambition

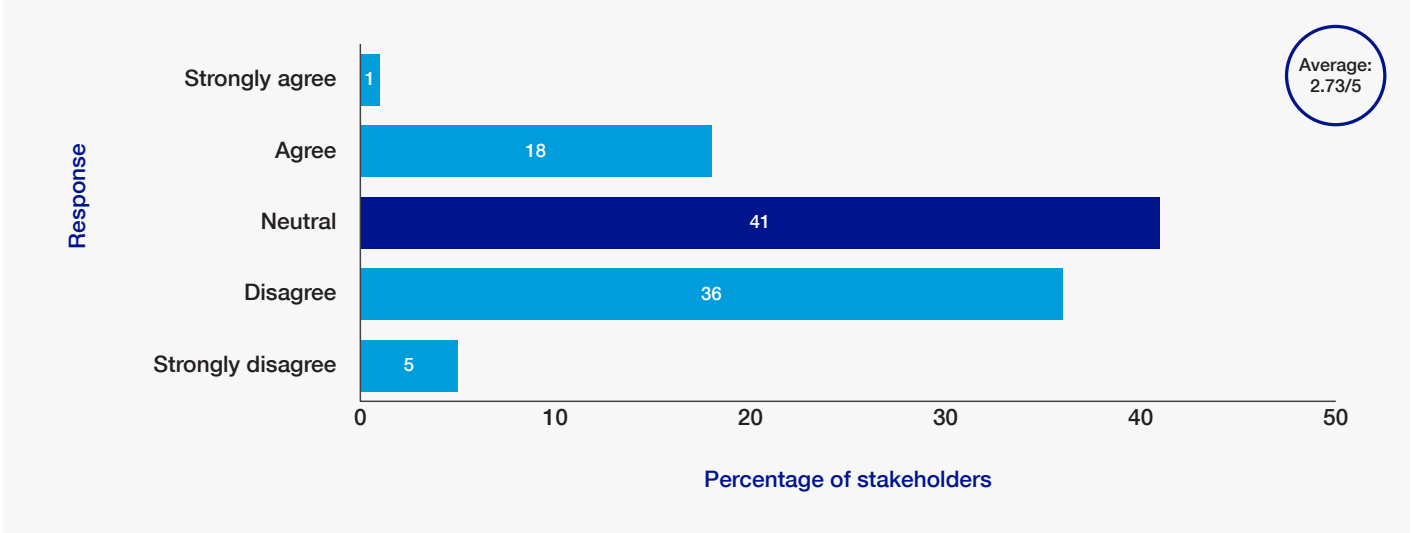
As with the value for money commitments, the dominant response was that the level of ambition cannot be accurately judged without more context. This feeling was reflected in the Slido voting, where 36% of respondents disagreed with the proposition that the commitments were ambitious enough, and 41% remained neutral. Stakeholders repeatedly asked for current baselines, previous performance measures, the evidence behind each target and the associated costs. Without these, several said, the commitments felt "hypothetical", and one asked, "How long is a piece of string?" Where stakeholders did offer a view, most considered the direction of travel sound and the ambition broadly correct, but were less certain whether NGED can resource and deliver it.

The data commitment attracted the clearest challenge. Several stakeholders questioned why the target for data meeting quality standards was 90% rather than 100%. Others felt the commitment focused on improving existing data rather than developing new datasets, pointing to other DNOs' investment in low voltage (LV) monitoring as a benchmark. Suggestions for greater ambition included using AI to help users navigate complex data and improving network opportunity maps so they show upstream dependencies and constraints, not just individual substations. They urged NGED to engage proactively with existing large customers on their 15-year decarbonisation and growth plans, so that reinforcement anticipates need. On flexibility, stakeholders welcomed the scale of ambition but questioned the metrics. The target of one million registered assets was criticised as potentially counting very small installations, and stakeholders asked how those assets would be distributed across network areas and customer types. Some called for a metric more closely tied to real-world outcomes, and the capacity target was likewise seen as needing context to be meaningful.

## Anything Missing?

Stakeholders identified a gap between NGED and the end customer, with discussion pointing to several ways NGED could strengthen confidence. The first was clearer, more accessible communication, using plain language and tiered information that avoids technical terms. The second was greater use of trusted intermediaries. Local authorities, councillors and third sector organisations all offered to help carry NGED's messages, and some suggested NGED should fund advice services. Stakeholders also identified confusion over the respective roles of DNOs and energy suppliers, as a barrier to confidence, and called for consistent messaging across the industry. Another gap was identified in integrated planning. Local authorities described a system in which NGED, NESO and councils feed into one another's processes without genuinely integrating them. They called for joint screening and pre-feasibility work, shared understanding of each other's processes, and teams that meaningfully work together rather than in parallel.

**How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver engaged and confident customers is ambitious enough"?**



## 1. Do you think this plan will help improve customer confidence in ED3?

- "My concern is that there is a gap between intention and the potential reality for both of the commitments under this plan, as the measures do not empower everyday customers explicitly. You need to make sure that you reach beyond the people at this table and bring everyone along. If this targeting isn't right, you may end up spending lots of money and not have either engaged or confident customers." **Charity/third sector**
- "I would agree that this gap is something to address, as lots of your published information is just not used by everyday customers. As a result, lots of your customers are not harnessing the benefits of some of your services." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Recognise that these are quite passive commitments." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "I think any kind of engagement helps to break down siloes and misperceptions of any issue... Broadly, I think engagement will lead to more confident customers." **Political - Local government**
- "I'm staggered by the lack of knowledge of customers." **Political - National Government**
- "Personally, I don't think enough ordinary customers understand how the system works so they won't give it much thought. They just think they need a car charger or solar panel and they'll pay you to sort it." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "The term customer is very broad, some will have confidence but others will not." **Political - National Government**
- "Each of those personas has got a different set of priority requirements. Those in fuel poverty is that they have their bill paid to get electricity and flick the switch. Others have different priority needs. It should be targeted based on a customer persona." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "I worry about the phrase 'engaged and confident'. I worry about the customers who are not engaged, confident, or are vulnerable. It feels like they're being left behind. And what about the 3 million customers that don't have internet access? I worry about digitising everything." **Charity/third sector**
- "Flexibility is great for middle-class people. I have solar panels. We have power ups and downs, but we can afford it. Not applicable to people in poverty, completely disconnected from helping people that are much more vulnerable as they don't have ownership and control of their assets." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "The question is whether it's the right outcome to aim for... A recent University of Bristol study said that 72% of people had not switched tariff in the last 2 years... Lots of people just don't have the bandwidth to engage. People should have access to fair and affordable prices, rather than everyone being engaged. You could find ways to make those people flexible if they need to be, for example you could have batteries that kick in automatically, rather than making the consumer have to engage." **Charity/third sector**
- "Why should the customer have to be educated? Why can't it be such that the customer is supported to connect and it's done." **Academia**

### Provide access to better network data, to inform decisions

- "I think the more transparent, the better. The more people know about what is being done and what the challenges are, I think people can be bit more understanding of the situation. It also then might reveal opportunities as well." **Political - Local government**
- "I think providing better access to data will help as one thing we have seen is that when customers have more confidence in their data, they feel more empowered to make those decisions and it has a circular benefit." **Supply chain**
- "That understanding also benefits the network, they will know where to invest." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "NGED already provides a lot of data, but it is often outdated or not fully populated. While it looks like you are providing information on paper, in reality, it is neither useful nor reliable." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Even labelling things is currently incredibly poor. Unless you're involved in the innovation projects, there's no way of knowing what the data is." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "There's been a lot of attempts to provide heatmaps, but that's always been lacking. If there is some sort of predictive model or can asks regions to provide much better visibility of what's happening in the network that could be really valuable." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "From my perspective, to be able to see where the capacity is available would really help reduce time wasted on applications... Good data sharing across the board isn't there yet." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**

- "If you onboarded a client to a live feed showing dropped connections, if we're active in the area we can act on it straight away. Visibility of changing owner of a connection could be beneficial."
  **Interest group - Property and Land Management**
- "This access to data is critical. In many cases we are managing a portfolio of connection requests, and the simulation data is really crucial for that. It may say that the queue load is a certain number of megawatts, but we can see that there are a lot of speculative applications." **Supply chain**
- "I would stress that NGED is improving the availability of data, but the interrogation of that data is difficult." **Political - Local government**
- "It is very difficult to understand different datasets and what they are telling us. This data needs to be presented in simple language."
  **Political - Local government**
- "What was the previous measure and what is the current baseline?"
  **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "It worries me that 1 in 10 pieces of data won't meet quality standards. I don't know if that's significantly the different norms."
  **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "Looking at the figures '40% margin for error' does not fill us with confidence."
  **Community-based organisations (CBOs)**
- "Data management is really difficult and making them available is a very expensive process. You need to engage to find out which are useful for customers. Without that insight, you risk spending money on sharing data that will not be used." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "We obviously want access to good, reliable and as immediate as possible data, but it needs to be focused and presented in a way that meets the needs of the end users, and that need will not be the same across all end users."
  **Political - Local government**
- "It could do well if data sets are explained clearly and having a fool proof guide on the data sets for infrastructure planning and substations and mapping. Sometimes it needs a short synopsis in plain English for what's that for. Links to the detail underneath." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "There's nothing wrong with the commitments at all, but anyone would say them... It's a bit passive. We expect the company to go out and see if they had a solar array, or used flexibility there would be a lot more benefit for themselves and the network."
  **Industry Association or Trade Body**

### Develop flexibility markets to meet local and national needs

- "I'm very pleased. It's a huge step forward. I thought previously flexibility was used as a buzzword but now it feels truly embedded."
  **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "The more flexibility in the network the better. Enabling people to access wider markets through NGED's network clearly has a benefit to those people who are able to offer their services. Yes, it makes sense." **Political - National Government**
- "Doubling the registered flexibility capacity from ED2 is a good approach, but I would be interested in the context sitting behind that. Is the figure of 1,000,000 assets registered a proportionate figure based on the size of NGED's network and its required contribution to the wider national flexibility target?"
  **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The second one here is important. We have tried to make sense of this and we have given up. It should be a real opportunity for local authorities to enter this market but it's too complicated at the moment." **Political - Local government**
- "With flexibility, it's complicated, what you get paid for and how it works. If you could bring out a simple explanation of it, it would help incredibly."
  **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "I don't think people know. I love it and think it's wonderful, but it's the eager and experienced organisations recognising this."
  **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The customer needs to know how it translates to pounds in their pockets. Helping the network is not enough for people to commit, they need to understand what cost savings it will bring. What's in it for them." **Charity/third sector**

## 2. Taken together, do you think our proposed commitments have the right level of ambition?

- "I don't feel that we know enough to say if this is ambitious enough. National Grid must have KPIs they need to meet. Without knowing the price tags, this seems quite hypothetical." **Political - Local government**
- "Without knowing the baseline measurements, it is difficult to know if these are ambitious enough." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "How long is a piece of string?" **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "The ambition is in the right place. It is a question of how much can be invested to deliver it." **Political - Local government**
- "There is clearly more emphasis on some areas than others. We need a bigger workforce in order to get the job done." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "It needs to be more ambitious, but we need help from other sources too. Government and third-sector workforces should be doing more." **Energy industry - Electricity Transmission**
- "When I read the stretch targets, they don't seem like they're ambitious enough. Some of them don't actually seem like they are much of a stretch. I don't know that it is ambitious enough." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "I'm not happy with the level of ambition in the target of having 90% of data meeting quality standards. Shouldn't it be 100%?" **Political - Local government**
- "When this was presented, I was hearing about improving quality but there didn't seem to be ambition to develop the data sets. SP ENW are doing this, and they cover customers by LV monitors. It's not something we're seeing from every DNO." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "The ambition feels slightly too low for me, and I think that it could be enhanced using AI to help users to obtain the information that they need. There are so many potential data available that it can be hard to skim any further than just beneath the surface." **Political - Local government**
- "Greater use of data and visibility, but data is trying to drive your car looking in the rearview mirror. You need to engage with people and find out what their business will look like over the next 15 years and what they'll need." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "These million assets, I wonder if they are all sat in one segment or spread across the network and customer types. I'd like to know this in order to better assess the usefulness of the commitment." **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "A 6GW goal sounds good, but without contextual data we don't know how ambitious it is. We need to know more." **Interest group - Consultant**

## 3. Is there anything missing?

- "NGED need to build a relationship with the general public. Most of the public deal with suppliers as their main point of energy contact and are unaware of how NGED's plans can benefit them." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "In my experience communication with industry is very good, but it is less so for residential users." **Political - Local government**
- "What's missing is the customer engagement." **Charity/third sector**
- "I think what is lacking is a regional plan for residents to understand... it's really a matter of what can people connect, where can they connect it, when can they connect it, how much is that going to cost. It's those quite basic questions that really need the answers and it's very difficult to get those kinds of answers if you are a normal person, a day-to-day user." **Political - Local government**
- "I'm trying to do a domestic retrofit on my property in Somerset, involving an EV charger, heat pump and rooftop solar panels. The whole process is nigh-on impossible, and I have a background in the industry. Where is the support for me as a proactive adopter, and how do you look at that for rural dwellers?" **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "Communication is very important. NGED need to make sure their communication is clear and easy to understand." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Communication needs to be structured clearly with a tiered approach. If a customer wants to know minimal information such as tariffs, this should be made clear immediately. If you want more information, then it should be accessible." **Political - Local government**

- "If you need people to be engaged, you need to look at who they can go to for advice and if it's free." **Charity/third sector**
- "I think that you need to establish how increased customer confidence is measured under these commitments. You need a baseline metric for measuring it so that you can be held accountable in ED3." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "There is no reference to integrated planning in the ED3 network."
  **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "At the moment we are feeding into each other but not integrating our work."
  **Political - Local government**
- "I would like to see more on the screening and prefeasibility work so that there can be an integration of how the systems between NESO, local authorities and NGED work."
  **Political - Local government**
- "To achieve that integration, we need to iterate more and have people who work together on a day-to-day basis, rather than relying on the current parallel processes."
  **Political - Local government**

# Session Three:
## Building a More Resilient and Reliable Network



## Session Three:

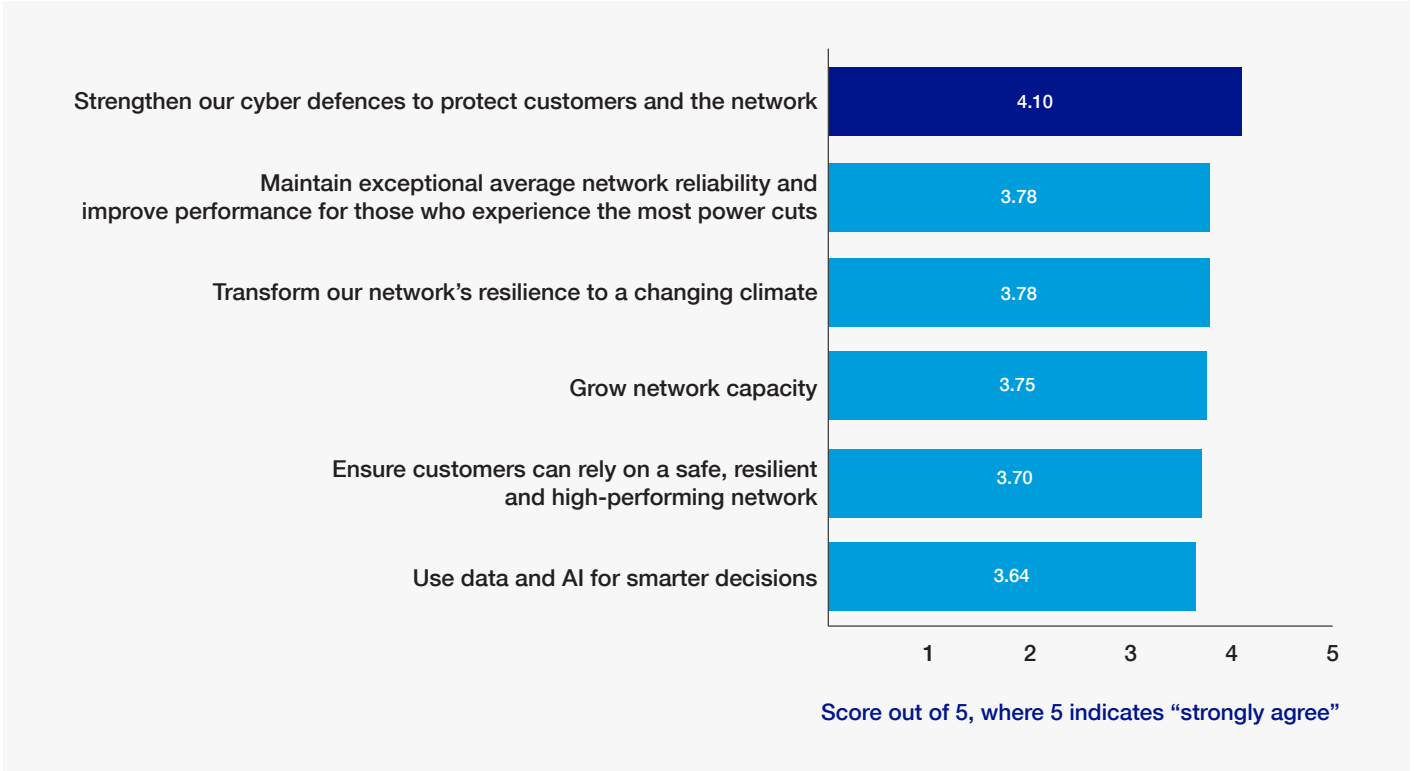
**The third session was presented by Rohan Hemmadi, Head of Asset Delivery Strategy at NGED, in Birmingham, and Ryan Huxtable, Innovation Programme Lead at NGED, in Bristol. They showed that while NGED was starting from a position of strength, they would have to work harder to maintain excellent reliability as demands on the network grow. Beyond the scope of this huge task, ED3 would also have to close the reliability gap and build for greater climate resilience. As ever, there was a balance to strike with affordability, and they explained that the focus of ED3 would be to maintain high reliability while making investment in resilience more intelligent, targeted and data driven. They then walked stakeholders through the commitments they had devised to achieve this balance.**

**Stakeholders were then invited to provide feedback on these commitments, as well as vote on a number of questions using Slido.**

### Outcome: Improving Reliability and Resilience in ED3

Stakeholders broadly agreed that the plan would help maintain and, in places, improve network reliability and resilience. The specificity of the targets, and the emphasis on monitoring, automation and fault prediction was welcomed. However, a significant number regarded much of the package as the baseline they would already expect of a DNO, rather than a step change. As in earlier sessions, the most common reservation was the absence of a clear delivery strategy: "It's the how I want to understand." Stakeholders also questioned whether the commitments are designed for today's network rather than a future system with far more distributed generation and electrified demand. Some noted that intensive network upgrades may increase planned interruptions in the short term, and that reliability could worsen before it improves. Customers would accept this, they suggested, if they are informed well in advance. Transparency in delivery, it was felt, is going to be key.

### Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a more reliable and resilient network in ED3?



## Maintain exceptional average network reliability and improve performance for those who experience the most power cuts

Maintain strong reliability, ensuring the average customer experiences no more than 1 interruption every 1.7 years **[continued ambition amidst more challenging environment]**

Reduce interruptions for the 1% of highest impacted customers by 15% compared to current levels **[stretch]**

Stakeholders widely endorsed this commitment and its specific, measurable targets. This was backed up the Slido voting, where it came joint-second, with an average rating of 3.78 / 5 and a combined 76% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it would deliver on its aim. The explicit focus on the worst-served 1% was particularly appreciated, and there was general confidence that the average reliability target would be met. Debate centred on whether the 15% reduction for the worst-served goes far enough. Many regarded it as modest. They pointed out that even reducing five outages a year to two still leaves those customers with far more disruption than average, and noted that the worst-served pay the same as everyone else. Stakeholders repeatedly asked for the baseline and for clarity on whether the target would bring this group meaningfully closer to the average. Some suggested a far more stretching goal, such as no more than one interruption every five years. Several stakeholders also challenged how reliability is measured. They noted that interruptions under three minutes are excluded from regulatory metrics, yet frequent short interruptions can be highly disruptive. Stakeholders asked for local outage history over five years rather than six months, published progress against targets and benchmarking against other DNOs.

Turning to the question of value, some stakeholders questioned the cost-benefit trade-off of pursuing the last few percentage points of reliability, and suggested that local resilience could offer better value in some places: community batteries, village-level hubs, community energy schemes, intentional islanding and local generation that allows communities to function during outages. Lived experience of prolonged storm outages among some informed a clear message that resilience extends beyond the network itself. Stakeholders asked NGED to be transparent about the cost of outages and of mitigating them, so the value of improvement can be judged.

## Transform our network's resilience to a changing climate

85km high voltage lines undergrounded in wooded areas **[stretch by adding 25% to existing commitment of 340km]**

88km low voltage overhead lines replaced with ABC conductors in high-risk areas **[stretch by adding 170% to existing commitment of 53km]**

Reduce customers in a protection zone to less than 500 in priority areas **[stretch from less than 1000 currently]**

Stakeholders strongly welcomed an explicit commitment on climate resilience, and it came joint second in the Slido voting, with a score of 3.78 / 5. Experiences of the recent summer shaped much of the discussion, and extreme heat emerged as a high concern alongside storms. Stakeholders cited hospitals closing operating theatres, rail infrastructure damaged by heat, and cable failing during testing at 40°C. They asked how NGED is modelling and planning for the full range of extremes, from prolonged drought and heatwaves to severe storms, and what operational impact the summer heatwaves had on the network. Local authorities wanted greater transparency on NGED's underlying climate assumptions, and on how risk differs between urban areas and more exposed rural, upland and wooded areas, so they can plan accordingly. Several argued that climate resilience should be tailored regionally and delivered in an integrated way with other commitments. That means combining it with capacity growth, siting new assets away from floodplains, and coordinating with water and gas networks, since utilities depend on each other in extreme weather. Local authorities also stressed that NGED must play a greater role in supporting communities during extreme weather. They highlighted rural, medically dependent customers and people not on the PSR as those most at risk.

The undergrounding and aerial bundled conductor (ABC) targets prompted the most debate. Many supported undergrounding in wooded areas as preferable to repeated tree cutting, and some encouraged a long-term vision of removing overhead lines entirely. Rural stakeholders reported that ABC conductors had brought real benefits. However, questions about scale and strategy were widespread. Stakeholders noted that 85km is small relative to the hundreds of kilometres of line

in wooded areas, and several considered 88km of ABC conductors "extremely low". Cost was a recurring concern: undergrounding is expensive to install and maintain, and some asked whether it had been demonstrated as the most cost-effective option and whether it benefits customers or shareholders. Environmental considerations were also prominent. Stakeholders asked how NGED would protect tree roots and ecosystems, noted that no environmental factors appeared in the targets, and suggested wider environmental benefits could be embedded within the plan.

## Ensure customers can rely on a safe, resilient and high-performing network

20% reduction in risk to counter deterioration and maintain overall network risk levels **[continued ambition amidst more challenging operating environment]**

This commitment attracted limited discussion, perhaps as a result of it being a continued ambition, albeit in a more challenging operating environment. It received an overall score of 3.70 / 5, which was second lowest. Those that did comment described the commitment as vague, and that the 20% reduction in network risk lacked a visible evidence base, making it difficult to judge what it would achieve in practice. Some also questioned whether maintaining overall risk at current levels is sufficient: as demand and the number of customers relying on the network grow, standing still on risk could mean resilience declines in relative terms. Stakeholders saw greater transparency as the main route to value. They asked for more data on network pinch points, and community energy stakeholders expressed surprise that low voltage networks remain largely unmonitored.

## Grow network capacity

Deliver 20% of additional network capacity to meet the enduring needs of our customers **[continued ambition amidst more challenging operating environment]**

Stakeholders saw this commitment as essential, particularly given the scale of planned housing growth and electrification, and some felt its importance had been undersold in the plan. In the Slido voting, it was given an average score of 3.75 when asked if the commitment would help deliver a more resilient and reliable network, suggesting some areas needed clarifying before full confidence could be achieved. Questions centred around a lack of context for the 20% target. Stakeholders asked what baseline it is measured against, how it was derived, whether it applies to new assets or the whole network, and which sectors and customers it will serve, including who might lose out. Many doubted whether 20% would be sufficient, especially given the demand expected from data centres, and an apparent inconsistency with the 10% increase in substation utilisation was earmarked for clarity. It was argued that capacity should be concentrated at the bottlenecks where one in five connections currently fail to proceed. Stakeholders also stressed that the target should be agile. They suggested breaking it into stages that can be scaled up or down as demand forecasts change, since the eventual need could prove far higher than 20%, and including distributed generation as well as demand. Integration with other commitments was a recurring theme: stakeholders wanted capacity growth aligned with asset replacement and climate resilience work, and built in the right locations through coordinated planning and engagement.

## Use data and AI for smarter decisions

Maintain at least 95% network visibility of our primary network through network monitoring and state estimation **[stretch from hosting separate data sources to a comprehensive digital twin of our network]**

Stakeholders were noticeably more comfortable with AI in this context, largely because the commitment focuses on network operations rather than customer contact. Several saw AI as well suited to NGED's challenges given the volume of numerical data involved, and some cited existing applications in fault prediction as proven and valuable. Others highlighted wider opportunities, including digital twins, predictive maintenance and systems that optimise where and when energy flows, particularly as a way to stretch existing assets under funding constraints. Caution remained, however, and this was also witnessed in the Slido voting, where this commitment received the lowest overall score of 3.64. Stakeholders warned against overreliance creating new vulnerabilities, linked the commitment closely to cyber security, and noted persistent public nervousness about AI's risks, with benefits yet to be proven. Conversely, others wanted NGED to go further, arguing the commitment should draw on a broader range of data. Suggestions included better data on vulnerable customers to inform restoration priorities, partnerships with mobile network operators, and addressing the regulatory barriers that prevent independent distribution network operator (IDNO) data from being visible to DNOs, which stakeholders said limits collaboration on flexibility.

## Strengthen our cyber defences to protect customers and the network

Maintain compliance with the Enhanced Profile of the Cyber Assessment Framework at a minimum **[stretch from ED2 to set enhance profile as a minimum not a target]**

Maintain and exercise cyber incident response and recovery arrangements for critical services, with lessons learned tracked through to closure **[continued ambition]**

It was clear that stakeholders regarded cyber security as increasingly paramount, and this commitment received the strongest endorsement in both the discussions and in the Slido voting, where it received the top score of 4.10 / 5. Stakeholders pointed to rising geopolitical threats, and to the way digitalisation and electrification expand the network's exposure, with some suggesting that reliability now depends more on digital than physical infrastructure. Several recognised NGED's cyber security work in ED2 and saw the work proposed for ED3 as a logical continuation. However, a recurring concern was that the commitment reads as compliance rather than genuine strengthening. Stakeholders questioned whether "maintaining" the Enhanced Profile represents real progress, noted that cyber standards date quickly, and asked NGED to be more prescriptive about the protection measures it will put in place. The most substantive challenge was that the commitment focuses on prevention rather than resilience. Stakeholders argued that every system can be breached, so NGED should give equal weight to isolating and recovering critical systems once an attack occurs, an area where they felt detail was lacking. They also identified specific risks the plan should address explicitly: retrofitting security into ageing assets and operational technology, insider threats, and the interplay with AI, which some saw both as a source of new vulnerabilities and as a tool for malicious actors. Stakeholders also noted a tension between cyber security and data transparency, questioning whether the planned release of more granular geographic network data could increase exposure. Others highlighted the cost to the supply chain and to embedded generators of keeping equipment compliant, and suggested that investment across critical national infrastructure remains insufficient. Given the shared risks, some urged NGED to collaborate with other DNOs to avoid duplicating effort in what they described as a siloed approach.

## Level of Ambition

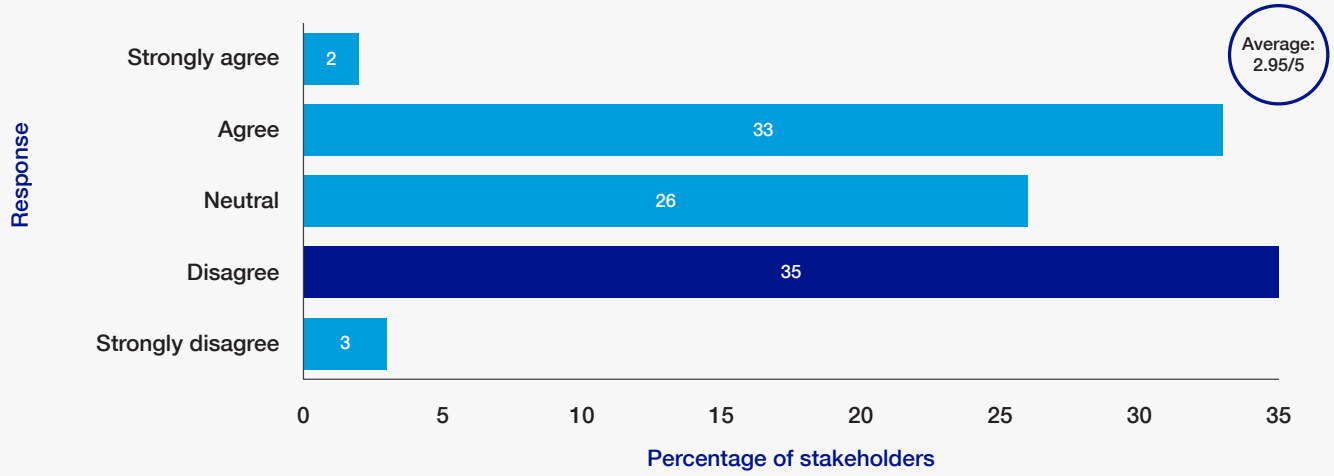
When voting on the level of ambition of the resilience and reliability commitments, stakeholders were split, with 35% disagreeing, 33% agreeing and 26% staying neutral. As with earlier sessions, many stakeholders found it difficult to judge ambition without baselines, historical performance or comparisons with other DNOs and other countries. Several described the commitments as headlines lacking substance, and noted that the plan does not distinguish between targets set by Ofgem and those that go beyond regulatory requirements. Some added that ED2 delivery had been absent from the discussion, making it harder to assess credibility. Where views were expressed, a common position was that the ambition is reasonable for maintaining today's network, but uncertain or insufficient for a future system shaped by electrification, distributed generation, data centres and more extreme weather. A number felt that some commitments, such as tree cutting and low voltage undergrounding, describe work that should already be happening rather than a genuine stretch. There was, however, important divergence from this view. Some cautioned against spending heavily to achieve marginal reliability gains on an already strong network, or against over-promising on risks that communities and local authorities also have a role in managing. Stakeholders also stressed that the six commitments are interdependent and must be delivered together while keeping costs manageable. Some noted that the level of ambition may come under political pressure: a future shift in government or climate policy could push NGED to downplay commitments. To best consider and monitor ambition and outcome, reconvening in 12 to 18 months to review delivery was advocated.

## Anything Missing?

The most frequently cited missing element was storage and flexibility. Stakeholders proposed batteries at substations or behind faults to maintain supply while repairs are made, community and home batteries capable of islanding, and temporary storage for customers who rely on medical equipment. While most were cognisant of the regulatory restriction on DNOs owning and operating storage, it was viewed as a significant barrier worth challenging. Some argued flexibility is so central to resilience that it merits a commitment of its own, and others suggested treating EVs as distributed storage, for example by encouraging customers to charge ahead of forecast storms. Ageing assets were a further gap. Stakeholders asked for predictive, condition-based maintenance of the kind common in manufacturing, noted that damaged poles rather than transformers often cause prolonged outages, and warned that temporary repairs leave networks vulnerable to the next storm. Some also argued that power quality, such as voltage dips, matters to businesses as much as outright interruptions.

Stakeholders also identified gaps in partnership and coordination. They noted the absence of NESO from the discussion, and called for closer working with local authorities, local resilience forums and community organisations to plan and exercise responses to climate-related incidents, draw on local knowledge, and join up policy and planning. On climate, several felt the plan focuses on mitigating impacts rather than adapting to them. They called for greater attention to heat, including widening vulnerability assessments beyond the PSR to capture those at risk in heatwaves, and suggested considering potential opportunities, such as reduced winter demand. Other gaps included greater transparency on all network faults and how they are being addressed, a public tool for reporting damaged assets, backup arrangements for increasingly automated systems, physical as well as cyber security, and more emphasis on export as well as import.

## How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver a reliable and resilient network is ambitious enough"?




## 1. Do you think this plan will help improve reliability and resilience in ED3?

- "Broadly speaking it will improve things." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "Reliability and resilience look like they will be improved, particularly for vulnerable customers." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I like that these commitments contain very specific details." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "It's great to see network monitoring, advanced technology. All of those tools will feature heavily. We've got decent automation and fault prediction, we can isolate networks quicker and get people back on quicker." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "A lot of it feels like basics that should already be done. Cyber security asset reliability, growing network capacity." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "There's nothing on here I disagree with. It's the how I want to understand. In terms of commitments, great, but what's the strategy?" **Charity/third sector**
- "Without knowing the how, you don't know whether it's a good idea." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "Fine for the current network. But unsure whether its future proof for a future system with more distributed energy." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "If you are doing more work on the network, you're going to cause more interruptions to deliver the required updates." **Supply chain**
- "We had a planned interruption, had letters and it was very well explained." **Political - National Government**

### Maintain exceptional average network reliability and improve performance for those who experience the most power cuts

- "The targets in this one are easier to follow so it's easier to agree. You have smart targets and percentages I can relate to." **Political - Local government**
- "These seem like sensible targets to follow. I guess it's making sure they are published and kept on track." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "As a customer I recognised what was being said and as a rural inhabitant I notices it has improved over the last five or six years. We definitely have more outages than once every five or six years but the response is good." **Political - Local government**
- "Really appreciate you highlighting the 1% that don't always have a reliable network." **Political - National Government**
- "Seems very technical but 15% seems like a low ambition, and what it means on the ground." **Political - Local government**
- "I support the 15% increase, although it is difficult to know if that's good or not, without knowing the baseline." **Political - Local government**

- "For the 1 percent having problems on a regular basis, rather than 1.7 years, more resilience needs to be put into that. 5 years would be more acceptable." **Political - Local government**
- "I think the regulations don't help us, with an interruption counted as 3 minutes. A lot of our problems are the very short duration interruptions. It can take 10 hours to recover from a 10 second power cut." **Infrastructure**
- "All of this sounds great and high reliability is good, but NGED don't appear to have benchmarks and learning, and they should." **Political - Local government**
- "I'm also worried about the mass roll-out of data centres will really strain network capacity and may push decarbonising communities down the agenda." **Political - Local government**
- "This is possibly a controversial statement, but if you've chosen to live in a rural area, I question whether everyone else should pick up the bill for your electricity network and substation upgrade... I've benefitted from the collective funding of our local substation, but is that really fair?" **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution (Independent)**
- "If you're a customer, you shouldn't expect an equal service when living in a rural area, but you also shouldn't expect to be off for several days. That's where the improvements should be targeted." **Supply chain**
- "Let's bring cost into this. How many outages did NGED have? How much did it cost them? If we were to mitigate those outages, how much would it cost? How much would it cost to fix the problems of the worst-serviced customers?" **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I'm sitting here thinking there must be a cost-benefit trade off... as the further you get to the last 5%, 2%, it becomes more difficult and more expensive. If I'm one of those customers would I be better off getting a solar panel and providing resilience outside of the grid." Industry **Association or Trade Body**
- "I would be interested in how much it costs. I personally would not want a completely disproportionate amount of money spent on me if I moved to the middle of nowhere." **Supply chain**
- "Proving battery storage on a smaller scale could help vulnerable customers, but there doesn't seem to be that much in the plan here." **Political - Local government**
- "Community energy networks can be encouraged to build rural resilience." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "NGED has an opportunity to improve reliability and resilience by engaging with local energy bodies in order to facilitate intentional islanding, whereby customers could disconnect themselves from the grid to connect to their own supply in order to be self-sufficient. That would be a real gamechanger." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Those at the far end of the network who have a lot of disruptions may face even more, but they also could have the capacity to be the most resilient. Can we learn from them?" **Supply chain**

### Transform our network's resilience to a changing climate

- "I think the section on transforming the network's resilience to a changing climate is really specific and fantastic." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "I really like this commitment, as it's good to see climate change being recognised... This is a positive step, as the network needs to be protected." **Charity/third sector**
- "This summer, we saw extreme heat and know that the rising temperatures will be the norm. Our infrastructure in the South West was struggling. Hospitals had to shut theatres and the pipes were bursting. I would like to see National Grid focus on resilience and making sure our power networks can deliver and stay safe in the face of this extreme heat." **Political - Local government**
- "How are you going to model and compensate for the extremes of weather we're seeing from long droughts to severe storms?" **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "One thing I liked was using more data to analyse which assets need to be replaced." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "On maintaining network reliability, I want to know more about NGED's assumptions and predictions on climate change, it's hard to give feedback without knowing their predictions for this." **Political – Local government**
- "Areas with higher altitude, rural areas, and woodland are more vulnerable to extreme weather. It would be good as a local authority to understand the risk calculations between the effects of extreme weather on urban areas compared to rural areas." **Political - Local government**
- "New infrastructure would be future-proofed against weather, but I need to understand where the highest risks are. Not enough detail is being provided in this." **Political - Local government**

- "If you are going to do something to accommodate the realities of climate change, make sure the network is built in the right place - not floodplains, for example. Integrated implementation rather than working them out one at a time." **Interest group - Environmental**
- "Is there a cross-utility approach to approaching climate change? The different utility systems rely on each other, so water, gas and electricity distribution networks should always be talking to each other." **Innovator**
- "Visibility of the pipeline would help us influence and assist designing for resilience earlier on in the process... It's important to have early engagement with National Grid and supply chain partners to drive innovation." **Infrastructure**
- "NGED is going to have to play a role, there are increasing constraints on local authorities in terms of how we coordinate in the event of extreme weather and loss of supply in order to support communities."
  **Political - Local government**
- "I'm quite encouraged by reducing the number of customers in protection zones. That strikes me as being really positive."
  **Political - Local government**
- "Reducing the customers in protection zone to less than 500 will make a substantial difference. To go from 1000 to 500 is good." **Supply chain**
- "In terms of burying cables underground and taking overheads down it's a massive ambition but in 50 years time I'd like to see no overhead cables so if a storm happens there's no consequence." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I'm interested in the ABC stuff for low voltage. It's very important and living in a rural area it has been highly beneficial. I'd hope that all the high-risk areas are being addressed."
  **Political - National Government**
- "The 85km high voltage lines undergrounded in wooded areas, that's very specific. We probably have many hundreds of km of cables located in wooded areas. 85km doesn't seem strategic to me." **Regulator**
- "To underground 85kms is a big undertaking. But 88kms of overhead seems extremely low."
  **Supply chain**
- "Underground supply will be very expensive in those remote regions. We need to make sure that this investment is worth it nationally, or whether there is another way."
  **Political - Local government**
- "Regarding the undergrounding of the high-voltage line, I don't know if that's the right thing to do. Is it better for the customer or the shareholder?" **Interest group - Consultant**
- "There's no environmental factors built into this."
  **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "How will you maintain lines in a way that allows the surrounding ecosystem to survive?"
  **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "You could incorporate so many spin off benefits that aren't mentioned. It's a bit narrow."
  **Charity/third sector**

### Ensure customers can rely on a safe, resilient and high-performing network

- "I think this commitment is a bit vague. I don't know where the 20% figure has come from and we don't have the data behind it so it's difficult to get feedback from us in the room about it."
  **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "It's nice to see what they're going to do, but I can't tell what they will achieve with this. Many of the assets are old and will need to be replaced."
  **Academia**
- "Presumably as you have a larger pool of people requiring resilience, you will have to improve your resilience. Unless you increase the resilience exponentially, it is going to go down relative to the increase in users and demand."
  **Interest group - Consultant**
- "National Grid are very professional in this area. They're not gaming the system and lining shareholder pockets. They do well here."
  **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "It is good that the plan mentioned rural Wales and included figures on rural communities."
  **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "I like the more real deep dive, customers losing supply every 1.5 weeks. More data and more transparency around the pitch points would be a value add." **Charity/third sector**
- "I was shocked once I started to get into community energy that low voltage networks weren't monitored. In this age of data and increasing LVs, surely we should be monitoring that? You need to start monitoring the network less by power and more by voltage."
  **Energy industry - Community Energy**

### Grow network capacity

- "This is an essential commitment and it's the right thing to do. You simply have to do this, as there are so many new housing developments coming down the track and the capacity has to be there."
  **Interest group - Consultant**
- "This entire conversation today feels centred around delivering more capacity to enable connections, and this metric could be a huge leap towards that but is instead being presented in a very understated way here."
  **Interest group - Consultant**

- "I would like to see more benchmarking on the '20% of additional network capacity' metric, as I don't know what baseline you're working from." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "20% seems quite challenging but what sectors will that support? Who will the losers be?" **Political - Combined Authority**
- "I would like some more clarity of language, for example what exactly enduring need means in practice." **Charity/third sector**
- "Datacentres are going to use half of the electricity capacity and one third of the water capacity for all of Cornwall, so this expansion of the network does not seem to be enough. It doesn't add up." **Political - Local government**
- "The statement was to be growing network capacity by 20%, but the headline for increasing load at substations is 10%, so there seems to be a discrepancy there. The point is that you know from your own experience that one in five connections are not coming through. If you want to build 20% capacity, maybe they should be increasing this where the bottlenecks are, so the load growth can be more than 10%... I want to know what NGED is doing to solve this." **Supply chain**
- "I think that a certain level of agility needs to be built into the measures under this commitment so that you can ramp up or down as forecasted demand changes. You may indeed end up needing 20% of additional network capacity, but that figure may well end up being 60%. Make sure that you break down the overarching figure into achievable stages." **Supply chain**
- "Must include demand and distributed generation." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "I like the broad intention, but it, once again, needs to be underpinned by careful planning. You need to coordinate properly so that you're building in the right place at the right time in order to deliver the right kind of growth for communities. This needs to be supported by extensive engagement." **Charity/third sector**

## Use data and AI for smarter decisions

- "I feel like AI is probably very well suited to solving problems NGED has, there's a lot of datasets and analysis it can do. On the numerical side it's much more reliable than on literature." **Political - Local government**
- "The AI stuff I've seen has been confined to certain data sets and analyses about developing network faults and has proven to be extremely useful. I can only see these things in the future improving the way these faults are identified before they actually manifest themselves." **Political - National Government**
- "Data and AI are huge, including things like digital twins, the internet of things, adding in data management centres. We've got limited funding, so we need to stretch assets and adapt for future conditions, so AI is a huge focus." **Infrastructure**
- "Focusing on a system that can decide where to put the energy and when is key." **Supply chain**
- "Balance is important. If you will rely so much on AI you have to ensure it's not overreliance and the system becomes vulnerable." **Political - National Government**
- "The more that goes digital, the more threats there are, so it's a key one, the network has to be as secure as possible from a cyber point of view. In my mind that's your biggest threat." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "I am still very nervous about AI at the moment. On one hand, we hear it is the best thing since sliced bread and it is going to fix everything. On the other hand, we hear about the security risks in the news." **Political - Local government**
- "In ED2 there was no mention of AI, only now we're thinking of it. We need to be sure that we're planning for future developments too and not just responding to what AI is doing now." **Supply chain**
- "Can NGED work with mobile phone suppliers to improve their data collection?" **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Every organisation would like to get data improved. NGED need to stay on top of data solutions, which is not present in the plan." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I speak with INA quite a lot, and they have a big concern that their data isn't visible to DNOs. That means that the flexibility of IDNO services is being hidden from the DNOs, and we're losing the opportunity for collaboration. They can't support the network without crossing that line of data, which may have something to do with the regulatory piece preventing this." **Energy industry - System Operator**

## Strengthen our cyber defences to protect customers and the network

- "I support this commitment, as protecting network cyber security is so crucial with the rising number of cyber-attacks occurring. Lots of work is needed in this space, so please do everything that you can." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "The cyber defence stuff is going to get more and more important... You can't underestimate. It's so important." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**

- "This is a good one, as I think the reliability is more about digital than physical infrastructure." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "NGED has delivered lots of high-profile cyber security projects in ED2 and this feels like a logical follow-on from that." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Re cyber security, it looks as if they're just looking to be compliant." **Charity/third sector**
- "As quickly as we've developed cyber security in Europe, as soon as they are put in place they are usually out of date because it's so fast moving." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "I want to know what the definition of prevention against cyber attack is. Every system is capable of being breached, so the focus should not just be on preventing a breach but protecting the system if it is breached. Accept that it will be breached and attacked but know how to keep it resilient when someone gets in." **Political - Local government**
- "Isolation and recovery for preventing against cyber attacks is the most important thing missing detail." **Political - Local government**
- "It's the insider threat in the organisation, if you get access to it. How do you limit that risk?" **Supply chain**
- "You can put a lot of faith in AI but it can make your cyber defence vulnerable. These two aspects need to be looked at together." **Energy industry - Energy Generation**
- "AI agents are a risk to the National Grid. There are malicious AI agents that would love to take over the National Grid as it would cause civil unrest. This needs to be taken into consideration." **Political - Local government**
- "There's an interesting tension here between visibility, the release of data later this year is threatened by cyber security as it includes better geographic data, is it going to expose us to greater risk." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "In delivering this, I would urge you to work together with other DNOs so that you are not duplicating efforts. The approach is extremely siloed at present." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**

## 2. Taken together, do you think our proposed commitments have the right level of ambition?

- "We need more comparative data and detail to know if these are ambitious enough." **Political - Local government**
- "Do you know where NGED sits at the moment compared to other DNOs? I know there's a league table. Will these targets put you at the top?" **Interest group - Consumer**
- "This feels like headlines and I'm not seeing the substance underneath." **Political - Local government**
- "This feels like another example of how you get the numbers from NGED but don't know what it means or how it translates." **Political - Local government**
- "Where there are stretch targets, it is not clear where it was set by regulator versus where they are going beyond the target set by the regulator." **Political - Local government**
- "This isn't ambitious enough. I need more transparency on what is being done. ED2 has been completely forgotten in this conversation, and it all interacts." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "Their ambition to make the current system reliable is very good. But the ambition to future proof it is unknown. So many huge changes coming to the electricity system." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "My general experience is that National Grid do a really good job with reliability... Are you going to spend the extra billion to get from 96% to 98%? Don't put another billion into this, put it somewhere else where's it's more useful." **Charity/third sector**
- "There is that community resilience side of it as well, and making sure we're not overegging what we're going to do, and saying that we can limit all risks, and then shoot for the stars, but then when we don't hit all the stars, that gives a worse reputation." **Political - Local government**
- "There are going to be outages at some point and it's how can we encourage that resilience at home as well and not expect you guys as the distributor to be responsible for every outcome and every worst-case scenario." **Political - Local government**

- "You've got to do all six at the same time. It's a complex, multidimensional problem, I'm afraid. You've got to keep the overall cost per head of customer down within manageable budgets as well, so it's a tough one." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "Some would say it's too ambitious, some would say the climate isn't changing or it's a hoax. If there's a political shift, you'll get pressured to downplay some of this." **Interest group - Environmental**
- "Political volatility also factors into this. We don't know who the Prime Minister in 3 years will be." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Time will tell. It would be interesting to come back to one of these sessions in 12 to 18 months to see how this has been delivered." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**

## 3. Is there anything missing?

- "This feels more rooted in policy. You are submitting this in a couple of months so I would hope that some of the missing detail is coming." **Supply chain**
- "We are missing the details from all of these." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "I would like to see what lessons have been learned from ED2 that are feeding into ED3." **Infrastructure**
- "I would say, look at the industry standards, maybe in other countries. And then, see how this performs against that." **Political - Local government**
- "I think that NGED being banned from owning and operating battery storage on the network is a big barrier. If that could be unpicked, you could have storage units placed in substations, which tide things over while you address faults. At the same time, I would advise you look to replace diesel generators with low-carbon alternatives." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "What can we do with new flexible-type products? Off the top of my head, how about putting batteries behind a fault? I think there is more work to be done with innovation." **Supply chain**
- "Battery storage might be able to mitigate reliability challenges partially, particularly for vulnerable customers on medical devices... these intermediate steps to assist people temporarily could be really valuable." **Charity/third sector**
- "It would make sense to hear about battery storage, how we support communities to become self-sufficient, links to connections. Give them access to storage and the tech they needed. More about the proactive and how we make them resilient." **Political - Local government**
- "Does flexibility deserve a box on its own? I think flexibility ought to be higher flagged. Achieving, ensuring, developing, promoting flexibility ought to be a commitment in some way or other." **Political - Local government**
- "I think flexibility is missing here. High heat might affect the network, so we need to adapt." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "Replacing a transformer can be done pretty quickly. It is the poles coming down that causes prolonged outages." **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "At the moment, it's being strapped together with plasters. They haven't fixed the fault so technically they've got the power back short-term but they haven't really fixed it because with the next bit of bad weather it's going to be off again." **Supply chain**
- "These will help with outages, but its not outages that create problems with our business, it's unreliability. We're seeing faults on the other parts of the network that are disrupting us. If there's a fault and voltage drop, it creates issues." **Infrastructure**
- "I haven't seen NESO mentioned in any of these conversations. They are key to everything you guys do... I haven't heard the word 'partnering' mentioned today. Are you being held back by the regulatory regime?" **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "There is a lack of coordination in place and we need to coordinate, especially in terms of climate resilience." **Political - Local government**
- "I'm not sure who's taking responsibility between the interface and engaging with RESP and I'm trying to find out who to contact." **Political - Local government**

- "For PSR registered people, we now have community chill zones... but at the moment it's not on the PSR register and you need to widen on a risk assessment. People will die." **Interest group - Consultant**

- "I have a suggestion for a quick win for you, which would involve leveraging your customer base. I can use an interactive tool to flag up potholes in Devon. I think that an equivalent on NGED's network for reporting damaged assets would be really good." **Innovator**

# Session Four:
## Great Customer Experience



## Session Four:

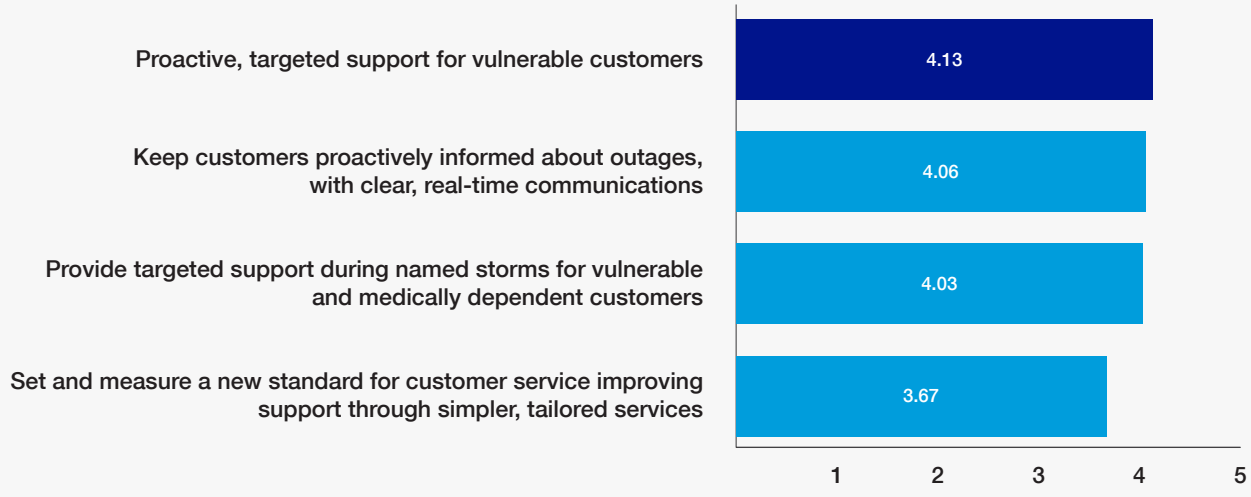
**Emma Pamplin, Director of Customer Excellence at NGED, presented the fourth sessions, beginning by showing that as the energy system changes, customers were interacting with NGED more often and in more complex ways. The challenge in ED3 was to make these interactions for all customers simple and more efficient, while ensuring no one gets left behind. To do this, Emma explained that NGED planned to provide a better core service for everyone and tailor support to each customer journey, a strategy that accepts, for example, that a vulnerable customer has very different requirements from their network than a large business user looking to connect. She finished by walking stakeholders through the commitments designed to achieve these goals in ED3.**

**Stakeholders were then invited to provide their feedback on the commitments under customer experience and vote on a number of questions using Slido.**

### Outcome: Improving Customer Experience in ED3

Stakeholders responded positively to NGED's proposed commitments to improve customer experience. It was felt they explained "not just the what but the how" and showed evidence of fresh thinking rather than acceptance of the status quo. The focus on vulnerable customers was widely welcomed, particularly face-to-face welfare checks and mutual aid with the British Red Cross, and emergency responders found the ambition reassuring. However, several caveats emerged. Some doubted NGED's high satisfaction scores, saying they do not reflect experience across the industry, and noted that DNO performance is closely bunched in league tables. They asked for more precise, measurable targets and cautioned that improvement must be felt on the ground, not just written into the plan. Some argued that the best customer service is "the power cut they never had", questioning whether spending should focus on network resilience rather than managing the consequences of failure.

### Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a great customer experience in ED3?



## Set and measure a new standard for customer service improving support through simpler, tailored services

Year-on-year improvement in all customer satisfaction measures (broad measure of customer satisfaction, and connections customer satisfaction measures), with all 4 of our licence areas ranked in the top 7 nationally **[stretch to improve on current high levels]**

Implement a new customer-centric metric setting a baseline performance and an annual improvement target **[new]**

Discursively, stakeholders were broadly optimistic that this commitment would improve customer experience, largely because it introduces measurable targets. Interestingly, it placed last in the Slido voting, with an average score of 3.67 / 5. This was perhaps due to the novelty of the target: stakeholders felt it was a good idea, but time was needed to see if it would work in practice. Several noted that customer feedback metrics tend to drive performance and welcomed the ambition to cover all customers. Indeed, the stakeholders giving this commitment the highest rating were consultants. Some reported that parts of NGED's service already work well, such as its connections journey and the direct line industrial customers have to the control room. They saw this as evidence that tailored service by customer type can succeed. However, many found the commitment difficult to engage with as written. One described it as "word salad" and "very corporate", arguing it could apply to any large retailer. Stakeholders asked what the new standard and customer-centric metric would measure, how they differ from existing satisfaction measures, and whether they were shaped by customer feedback. They also raised questions of method. How will feedback be benchmarked? Will large customers carry more weight than households? How will performance be reported for different customer archetypes? Several cautioned that metrics will only lead to improvement if NGED acts on what they reveal.

## Keep customers proactively informed about outages, with clear, real-time communications

Increase the percentage of customers that can be successfully contacted in an outage setting a baseline performance and an annual improvement target **[new]**

Develop and implement a segmented communication approach for planned interruptions across all customers **[new]**

Stakeholders rated this commitment highly, and it received an excellent average rating of 4.06 in the Slido voting, indicating that if achieved, this could genuinely improve NGED's customer experience. Those who had received advance notice of planned or imminent outages by text or email described it as genuinely valuable. Emergency responders noted that clearer public information during unplanned outages would also reduce pressure on their services. A segmented approach was seen as sensible in principle, and some suggested that large businesses need a different service, with planned outages notified months rather than days in advance. However, stakeholders questioned how NGED can reach most customers, given that it has no direct account relationship with the majority, holds limited contact details, and relies on customers opting in. Many people do not know to call 105, and some asked whether NGED knows precisely where every customer is connected. There was a strong call to extend storm and outage text alerts beyond the PSR to all customers, and to let customers nominate a relative or carer to receive updates on their behalf.

The most substantive concern was the resilience of communication channels themselves. Stakeholders repeatedly pointed out that when the power fails, so do broadband, digital landlines and often mobile signal, leaving customers unable to receive updates or contact NGED precisely when they most need to. Rural stakeholders described relying on landlines to call 105, with evidence from past flooding that the only reliable way to reach people was via traditional copper lines. Stakeholders urged NGED to plan for these failures through offline measures such as printed contact cards and fridge magnets, and to explore alternative technologies. They also stressed that many customers, particularly older people and those who cannot afford phone contracts, are not digitally engaged, and that when things go wrong people want a phone number and a human being rather than an automated system. Several raised the needs of people who become vulnerable only during a prolonged outage and are not on the register, asking how NGED will identify and communicate with them, and whether it has tested scenarios involving outages lasting weeks. Local authorities also asked that NGED's messaging during incidents is coordinated with theirs to avoid contradictory information.

## Proactive, targeted support for vulnerable customers

All customers will be able to confidently engage with us via their channel of choice. We will baseline performance with an annual improvement target. **[new]**

Improve communication with all vulnerable customers, through at least one targeted campaign each quarter **[stretch from one per year]**

Stakeholders were enthusiastic about this commitment, and this was echoed in the Slido voting, where it received the highest overall score across all categories of 4.13. This result implied that stakeholders felt it could make a material difference

to customers' lives. Equally positive was that several noted a clear improvement in NGED's approach to digital inclusion since earlier engagement. The commitment to let customers engage through their channel of choice was particularly valued, for example by people with dyslexia, those who prefer paper, or those facing language barriers. Stakeholders also praised practical support such as crisis packs and food provision, and several commended NGED's existing partnerships. However, there was also a concern that the plan relies too heavily on vulnerable customers identifying themselves. Stakeholders stressed that many people do not regard themselves as vulnerable, or actively avoid disclosing it, so NGED must take responsibility for finding them. They urged NGED to combine its own data with health, deprivation, income and local authority datasets, to strengthen referrals from healthcare providers, many of whom are unaware of the PSR, and to recognise vulnerability beyond health, including financial hardship and language barriers. Some queried NGED's reported 88% PSR coverage, noting that other DNOs report far lower figures. Several warned that the channel-of-choice commitment could be undermined by greater use of AI, and asked NGED to ensure a clear, simple route from automated systems to a person, backed by staff with the right skills to support vulnerable customers.

A recurring theme was that the commitment treats vulnerability narrowly as a matter of outage response. Stakeholders called for vulnerable customers to be supported through the energy transition as well, including access to flexibility and LCTs such as batteries and heat pumps, as some other DNOs are doing through partnerships with councils. They also suggested linking this support to customers with poor reliability, and integrating vulnerability across the wider plan rather than treating it in isolation.

### Provide targeted support during named storms for vulnerable and medically dependent customers

All customers will be proactively contacted and where possible our critical medically dependent customers will receive a face to face welfare check during a prolonged outage **[new]**

Equip all known community hubs with welfare provision during a prolonged outage **[new]**

Stakeholders were widely approving of this commitment and felt that the focus on vulnerable customers continues to improve. Similarly, in the Slido voting it received a high average score of 4.03. Face-to-face welfare checks, partnership with organisations such as the British Red Cross, and training for frontline workers were all viewed positively. However, many questioned whether the commitment is deliverable at the scale of a major storm, when large numbers of customers may be affected across many areas at once. They asked how NGED will mobilise partners on the ground, what counts as a "prolonged" outage, and how partners' performance will be measured, given that some lack capacity and that local authorities and NGED often fund the same organisations without clarity about what each is paying for. The commitment to equip "all known" community hubs raised concerns that some hubs are not known, and local authorities asked NGED to use the same definition of a community emergency hub as Category 1 responders, so that emergency planning partners share a common vocabulary. Stakeholders stressed the importance of coverage across rural and isolated areas rather than urban centres, cautioned against relying on declining numbers of volunteers, and urged closer coordination with local authorities, local resilience forums, health and social care bodies and emergency services. The four-hour response time for medically dependent customers drew particularly strong criticism. Stakeholders noted that a dialysis session lasts around four hours, called for a faster response prioritised by the level of medical need, and asked NGED to publish a KPI on how quickly vulnerable customers are contacted.

The most widely cited challenge was that the commitment is too narrowly defined around named storms. Stakeholders argued that heatwaves, flooding and other extreme weather can be equally damaging, that recognised definitions exist for such events, and that NGED is focusing on historical stresses rather than future climate risks. Local authorities described the growing need for cool spaces during heatwaves, and the limited capacity of councils to provide them. Several also argued that the most effective support would be continuity of power rather than contact during an outage. They called for backup supplies for the wide range of medical equipment people now rely on at home, delivered through clean battery systems rather than diesel generators, and ideally longer-lasting than a few days.

### Level of Ambition

Stakeholders were positive about the level of ambition under customer experience, and this showed in the Slido voting, where this question received the highest score across all categories, with 3.28 / 5. There was a feeling that NGED was aiming higher than other DNOs, with those representing emergency responders considering the vulnerability commitments well targeted. However, enthusiasm was inevitably tempered by realism. Some saw a significant risk of failure given the scale of the change, and many again asked for baselines and published KPIs to judge the level of stretch, with one suggesting benchmarks from outside the utility sector, where trust is higher. A common view was that the ambition is strong for incident response but weaker for everyday service. Several felt the commitments target too small a pool of

customers, leaving out businesses, prepayment customers and those seeking connections. Views on the scope of NGED's role diverged. A minority felt too much responsibility for vulnerable customers is being placed on DNOs, and that the money could go towards network capacity instead. Others urged NGED to go further than Ofgem's minimum requirements, and warned that ambition is undermined if delivery relies on volunteers or the NHS.

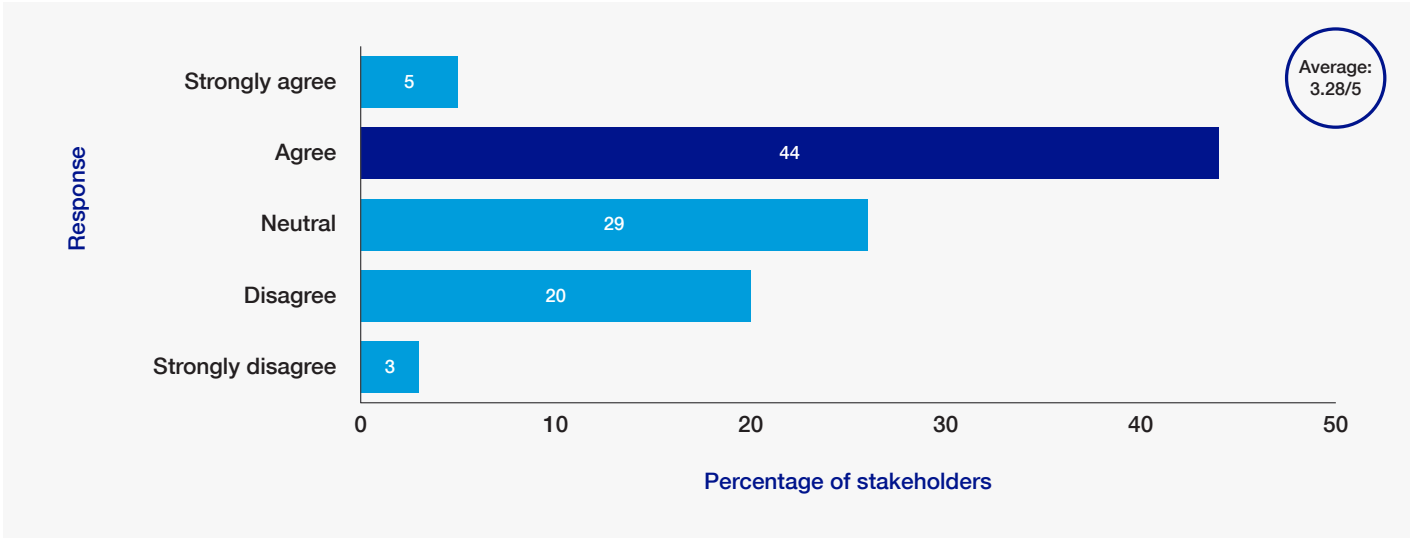
At commitment level, the four-hour response time for medically dependent customers was the clearest example of insufficient ambition. Stakeholders said it lacked urgency, and some suggested an hour or less. Limiting storm support to named storms was also seen as matching the regulator's expectation rather than exceeding it, given that "one in 20 years" weather events are becoming more frequent. Stakeholders doubted that one welfare van per licence area would be sufficient during major storms, particularly in Devon and Cornwall.

## Anything Missing?

A key identified gap was that the package is oriented towards emergencies and domestic outages, offering little for day-to-day service, business and commercial customers, developers seeking connections, or local authorities as customers in their own right. Stakeholders argued that an outage can be existential for small businesses, that small firms are too readily grouped with households despite very different energy profiles, and that manufacturers and energy-intensive industries expect to deal with NGED business to business. Commercial customers observed that, despite investing millions in connections, they are never asked for feedback at the end of the process. Stakeholders also felt the package lacked measures for the energy transition. They called for customer satisfaction metrics covering connections, business customers and the experience of flexibility, noting that ED2 had clear numbers where ED3 has few. Some also warned that measures such as call-answering speed say little about whether problems are actually resolved.

Stakeholders also felt that a commitment to support customers through the energy transition was missing. They suggested NGED could help people navigate heat pumps, retrofit and solar through community partnerships, clear signposting and even an approved-installer register, and asked how transition funding would be distributed. Several warned that the plan reads as meeting Ofgem requirements rather than bringing everyone along. Collaboration was a further gap: NESO and other DNOs were described as missing from the plan, alongside the police, voluntary sector and community energy groups, and local authorities asked that NGED's plans align with their existing responsibilities and agreements for coordinating voluntary support.

**How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver a great customer experience is ambitious enough"?**



## 1. Do you think this plan will help improve our customer experience in ED3?

- "I thought there was more structure in that than the previous sections. That delivery was a bit more compelling and I got more confidence from it." **Major landowner**
- "I felt like they were telling us not just the what but the how in that presentation." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "A lot of these are new targets. Not much of this was present in ED2, which is a good sign that new thinking is occurring." **Political - Local government**
- "I think it's great to see these commitments. The fact that they aren't sitting back and accepting the status quo is great." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "I like all of these commitments, as they show that you really are trying to deliver an excellent service to your customers, which is all the more critical with your geographic monopoly." **Political - Local government**
- "I really welcome the focus on vulnerable customers in these commitments." **Charity/third sector**
- "In general, the four targets will improve customer experience. Particularly if you target vulnerable people and access community hubs." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The ambition that was described around the support that is going to be offered in person welfare checks, mutual aid with the British Red Cross, etc., that was really reassuring to hear. It sounds really promising and a good way forward because I know it's been a huge challenge." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "I was surprised with the 9.1 number. If you talk to industry out there, the customer service across the grid is really poor. To me, I don't believe in this number. When you talk to people this isn't their experience." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "All the DNOs strive not to be at the bottom of the performance structure but the problem us that someone has to be at the bottom and someone has to be at the top and often the performance levels are very similar." **Political - National Government**
- "I'd like to see something similar for Local Authorities and businesses." **Political - Local government**
- "Customer satisfaction can be achieved through resilience and the power cut they never had." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**

### Set and measure a new standard for customer service improving support through simpler, tailored services

- "This is likely to improve the customer experience." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "This is a great idea in principle, but I need to see what it looks like in practice." **Charity/third sector**
- "There's a clear metric in this area, and that probably will work. Lots of customer service places carry out these feedback surveys and they do drive better performance, I'm sure NGED is no different." **Supply chain**
- "I thought it was clear. Some of it is about setting the benchmarks at this stage. Talking about all customers is ambitious." **Political - Local government**
- "As an industrial customer, I just ring the control room and they keep me updated and it's brilliant. The engineers I work with are really good and you can't fault it really. So that's another endorsement for the different customer approach. It's a different level of service compared to my household for instance which is right and works well." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "The NGED new customer journey is really slick in terms of connections and in the development of new connections processes. I don't know how that could be improved from where it is at the moment." **Supply chain**
- "I found it a bit of a word salad. What does this even mean: 'Set and measure a new standard for customer service'? It's very corporate. The KPI was year on year improvement. What is that? It was very slick but very corporate and it meant nothing. That could have been Unilever or Tesco." **Charity/third sector**
- "What are the new customer satisfaction metrics, and how are they different to current ones? This seems contradictory and unclear." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "There is no detail behind what these are. I'm interested to know if this has come out of feedback from customers." **Academia**

- "Is every one customer equivalent to 'one' in that data? Or do some customers have more weight if they are large? We need to understand how these different customer satisfaction measures work for the different customer archetypes." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "A customer-centric method won't have a positive effect unless they act on it." **Supply chain**

### Keep customers proactively informed about outages, with clear, real-time communications

- "This will be really beneficial, as interacting and communicating with your customers is really important in order to get a feel for what they need, particularly the vulnerable ones." **Political - Local government**
- "We do get texted when there are planned outages... It's quite good, being told about planned outages." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "In a less planned outage, there is an effect on the emergency services. If they know it's coming from National grid, that allows them to concentrate on the emergency." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "If you are a large business or a manufacturer, you don't want to know about a planned outage two days before, you want to know at the beginning of the year." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "People don't know to phone 105 in case of an outage." **Political - Local government**
- "You'd have to opt in to share your details with the DNO, which creates a limitation for the types of communications that can be utilised." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution (Independent)**
- "I would like to know if this means that you know where all customers are connected. On a planned outage, are NGED able to get in touch with everyone in advance?" **Academia**
- "The focus on sending out notifications is very reassuring, but I would like to see texts for storm updates go out to more than just vulnerable customers. Everyone could really benefit from them." **Charity/third sector**
- "On the PSR it is brilliant. But most people are not on it. Why shouldn't every customer receive a message about the details of an outage?" **Supply chain**
- "We enrol people for the PSR. It would be great to add more than one other person to receive messages on someone else's behalf." **Community-based organisations (CBOs)**
- "It says increase the percentage of customers who can be successfully contacted in an outage. Increase it from what? It would be useful to know what the current percentage is." **Interest group - Environmental**
- "This feels unfinished and is definitely not particularly specific. The metric around increasing the percentage of customers contacted in an outage doesn't really say anything specific either... please drill down on the detail a bit so that I can feel more confident about what you're setting out to do." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "We need to know what the starting point is. Put some actual figures to this." **Interest group - Consumer**
- "With BT going fibre optics, when the power goes, my phone goes... When the power is off, you can't send anything." **Political - Local government**
- "From a customer's point of view, they can only assess this sort of information when the electricity has gone off, and it's cold and rainy, and they can't use their mobile phone. How do you get hold of National Grid simply?" **Political - National Government**
- "The Royal Academy report on the flooding in Lancashire in 2015 highlighted how challenging it is to make contact with people if the electricity is out. They were looking for pensioners who still had copper wires for their telephone lines and a rotating phone... So how do you get in touch with people?" **Political - Local government**
- "I personally like text updates or a fridge magnet with contact details for storm-outage events." **Political - Local government**
- "You do still get cards sent round in rural areas which I am in favour of." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution (Independent)**
- "I've heard of a solution where smart signals can bounce from house to house, so at least someone can get information in an emergency and share that information." **Political - Local government**

## Proactive, targeted support for vulnerable customers

- "I think it's quite commendable. You are looking at each case individually. It's very well said about digital inclusion." **Charity/third sector**
- "In the first meeting a digital first approach was made. So, I can see an improvement." **Supply chain**
- "I like the fact that you're enabling people to choose how they are communicated with. Especially for vulnerable people, I think that's really positive." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "I welcome the commitment to engage with customers in the channel of their choice, I know for those with dyslexia they are often becoming less engaged as the digital models take over, so it is good to see that choice here for all customers." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "It depends on if they're going to mark clients on a database what their preference is... My mum for example likes getting her bills on paper... if there's a language issue for example and in an emergency and that's used, that's great." **Charity/third sector**
- "It is positive that crisis packs will be available for customers who need them." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "The food provision stuff was really good to see." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "From my experience NGED are very good at putting their partners together." **Charity/third sector**
- "The plan relies on the assumption that vulnerable customers will make themselves known to NGED. You need to make sure you're proactively keeping up to date with who is vulnerable." **Charity/third sector**
- "Vulnerable people do not often identify themselves to organisations, they hide. Some may not even consider themselves vulnerable when they are. NGED need to work out a way to identify vulnerable customers themselves, not wait to be approached." **Political - Local government**
- "Great that you're looking at health data, what about income data, debt, Local authorities and HOAs. Bring those datasets together and hit with actual impact on area by area." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "There are whole segments of communities where languages are a problem and how do you cope with not being able to communicate in English." **Political - National Government**
- "NGED must make sure that the route from the digital system to a personal contact is clearly marked and easy for people to use." **Political - Local government**
- "I really dislike the term 'hard-to-reach customers', as it could be alienating and could seemingly blame these customers for not already being on the PSR. Could you consider rewording that slightly?" **Charity/third sector**
- "Missing the element of supporting them on the journey to decarbonisation." **Charity/third sector**
- "What is NGED doing to bring vulnerable people along on the journey of creating a more flexible grid?" **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "Other distribution system operators (DSOs) are forming partnerships to provide assets to fuel-poor and vulnerable households. For example, installing batteries or heat pumps in council homes." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "When talking about proactive support, you could include customers who have poor reliability with those who need proactive support. You could link it to resilience, and support them to build resilience." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "Why does customer service get lumped in vulnerable customers?... why is it not integrated into other parts of the plan and retrofit? It's part of the wider plan." **Political - Local government**

## Provide targeted support during named storms for vulnerable and medically dependent customers

- "The focus on vulnerable customers is improving all the time." **Political - Local government**
- "There are some really positive messages and a few things that stick out, and willing to train frontline workers and what that looks like in terms of delivering it in on a frontline basis, and working with the right partner... A few more tangible things to mention." **Charity/third sector**
- "The ambition that was described around the support that is going to be offered in person welfare checks, mutual aid with the British Red Cross, etc., that was really reassuring to hear." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "Based on how bad the storm is, that could be quite big. Should be able to reach these people but don't know how feasible it is." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**

- "What's the definition of 'prolonged'? For customers relying on the supply, the ability of mobilising partners on the ground is really important." **Charity/third sector**
- "We pay the same partners, but neither of us know what we pay them for. So how do we measure if they're doing better? They don't always have resources or capacity to deliver." **Political - Local government**
- "It says 'all known community hubs'. Not knowing about community hubs is quite a big problem." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I work a lot with Category 1 organisations, such as the emergency services, and we have a definition of a community emergency hub. Does NGED use the same definition or a different one?" **Political - Local Government**
- "If NGED is going to rely on volunteers then it won't help at all. There's been a collapse in volunteering numbers. The majority of volunteers are older people, and they can't fairly be relied upon." **Political - National Government**
- "There is a local energy plan which we work on with local authorities, and I think NGED can have a role in coordinating this." **Charity/third sector**
- "4 hours is far too long for people who are medically dependants on electricity to wait for assistance." **Political - National Government**
- "If I'm on dialysis and the electricity goes out, how long have I got to reconnect? Four hours may be too long. It needs to be done on an emergency basis. There's a spectrum of medical need. Those people on dialysis need to get priority." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "There should be some kind of published KPI on these matters where you look to contact vulnerable customers within a certain amount of time." **Supply chain**
- "NGED are perhaps looking too closely at historical stresses with named storms being the focus, rather than responding to the changes in the future. It's too narrow. NGED need to find other ways of defining extreme weather events. Heatwaves have definitions, for example, not just named storms." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "We have to set up cool spaces, which are very different to warm spaces. Many of these are council-run spaces and councillors are volunteers, they don't have the capacity for the work." **Political - National Government**
- "Providing back-up power sources to vulnerable customers during storm-related outages is a good thing, but make sure that you provide clean battery assets rather than dirty diesel-powered generators, and set that out clearly in your commitment. Even better would be a more permanent long-term back-up system." **Political - Local government**

## 2. Taken together, do you think our proposed commitments have the right level of ambition?

- "I think it has the right level of ambition. There are new targets and completely new things considered which is good. It's just the implementation of it that will need focus now." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "It's good to see new commitments on there, and I'm personally pleased to see that." **Interest group - Consumer**
- "Wow if she can deliver on all of that, that will be above and beyond, from a customer-service perspective. It seems like they are aiming to do more than the other DNOs. If I were in their area, I would be impressed. It's really ambitious... Whether it's realistic or not... I will be impressed if they achieve it." **Charity/third sector**
- "It is very ambitious, and needed as well... what is realistic and achievable? It does sound great. I guess it's about the word of the day: balance. It seems to be heading in the right direction. The prioritisation seems to be right." **Charity/third sector**
- "The kind of vulnerable support, additional resources, welfare checks, all of that is really reassuring from the points that most interest to me, I think it is ambitious and it's targeting in the right areas." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**
- "There is a high level of risk associated with this if these elements are not delivered. This is a big jump for any DNO to carry out, so there is a big risk of failure." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "It feels fairly ambitious but I think there's detail that is missing again. I'm not sure how we can make an informed decision against the points raised here when we don't know the baseline starting point." **Interest group - Consumer**
- "Setting yourself some published KPIs would be useful when you come to communicate these commitments." **Supply chain**

- "I think that there is scope to benchmark your commitments against companies from other industries and not just compare yourself against what other DNOs are doing. The utility sector has some of the lowest trust levels, so looking beyond it for inspiration could be really useful in landing at the right level of ambition." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "It feels like non-domestic and pre-payment customers are left out at the moment, and do need to come through strongly as well." **Supply chain**
- "We could talk more about business customers here too. That would be the right level of ambition." **Political - Local government**
- "There is a question around who is responsible for supporting vulnerable customers, whether it's the local authority, the individual themselves or the DNOs. I feel that we're putting too much responsibility on the DNOs for this when they're just the people who supply the cables to your home." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution (Independent)**
- "This is a key area where NGED should be going further than the minimum requirements that are set by Ofgem." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution (Independent)**
- "Personally, I think it's down to society as a whole to look after the most vulnerable people. It's great that every large company has a social commitment, and the DNOs shouldn't be any different." **Charity/third sector**
- "People used to say it's not National Grid's problem to help with fuel poverty. Fortunately, things have moved on... But that perspective still exists, very strongly felt by some people especially those whose focus is primarily on return on investment." **Interest group - Environmental**
- "The ambition is welcome, but if we're relying on volunteers and the NHS to deliver the plan then it's simply not enough." **Political - National Government**
- "4 hours is not an emergency response, there seems to be no urgency. That is not an ambitious timescale at all." **Supply chain**
- "The ambition needs to be continually planning for situations to get worse." **Political - Local government**
- "You might struggle with just one van per area. For example, in Devon and Cornwall during big storm incidents." **Political - Local government**

## 3. Is there anything missing?

- "To me, this feels more like an emergency-customer-experience package, rather commitments that would resonate with day-to-day customer experience... I would like to see something for customers with less acute needs." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Seem heavily focused on people with power outages. Already very low. Nothing about working with businesses for new substations. Quite disappointing to see." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "These commitments feel more geared towards domestic customers than business customers. The commercial market would require a different service and different information to address outages and storm events, and that isn't reflected here." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "This depends on what customers you're talking about. It's very one-sided here. I think this focuses too much on households and vulnerable households. What about your business customers and their customer service experiences? An outage could be absolutely existential for SMEs." **Political - Local government**
- "You need to expand the idea of 'vulnerable customers' beyond individuals with medical equipment and people in fuel poverty. Small and big businesses should be considered for inclusion in this category, as they can become vulnerable very quickly as a result of an outage." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "For me there's a big missing part of the customer segmentation. Five of the six groups have the same energy profile. The local businesses probably account for a third if not a half, if you include transport, of the energy demand... I think small businesses are being grouped with residential too easily." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "Manufacturers are used to dealing with human beings and business. They want to deal with NGED as a business." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "We never get any requests from NGED for feedback in terms of what we do. We're spending millions on electrical infrastructure and no one ever contacts us at the end of the process. We don't get a survey. You do it on domestic customers but not on commercial customers." **Major landowner**

- "When you invest millions in it, you sort of feel a bit like why not have that engagement at the end of the process and discuss lessons learnt... we're a good customer but we don't get treated that way." **Major landowner**
- "I would like more engagement with strategic stakeholders, such as local authorities." **Political - Local government**
- "Satisfaction measures missing for the energy transition." **Political - National Government**
- "If there is an aim for 1 million assets engaged for flexibility, there needs to be customer service measure for flexibility... customer experience of flexibility should be measured." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Great numbers in there about ED2 and supporting clients transitioning LCT, but the ED3 ones had no measures." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "Could NGED play more of a role in shaping the green-home-heating revolution in its customer offering? We all know that heat pumps will not work as intended in older housing without retrofitting. If NGED established community partnerships, local organisations could go into customers' homes to support this drive." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "If we're looking at assisting with the roll-out of green domestic technology, I would suggest introducing an approved-installer register." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The energy transition point and getting everyone engaged wasn't there. It felt like it was meeting the Ofgem requirements, it didn't feel like it was invested in the energy transition and taking everyone with us." **Charity/third sector**

# Session Five:
## Timely Connections



## Session Five:

**The fifth sessions were presented by Cuan Rowlands, Connections Strategy and Policy Manager at NGED. He began by affirming that the key driver for ED3 was to connect more customers, more quickly, and that stakeholders had told NGED they want these faster, simpler connections but also greater certainty and visibility. In order to do this in ED3 he explained that a proactive, simpler and tailored connections process would be delivered, with advancements such as a single, digital connections journey to remove friction and give customers greater visibility from pre-application to connection. He finished by showing stakeholders the proposed commitments to achieve these outcomes.**

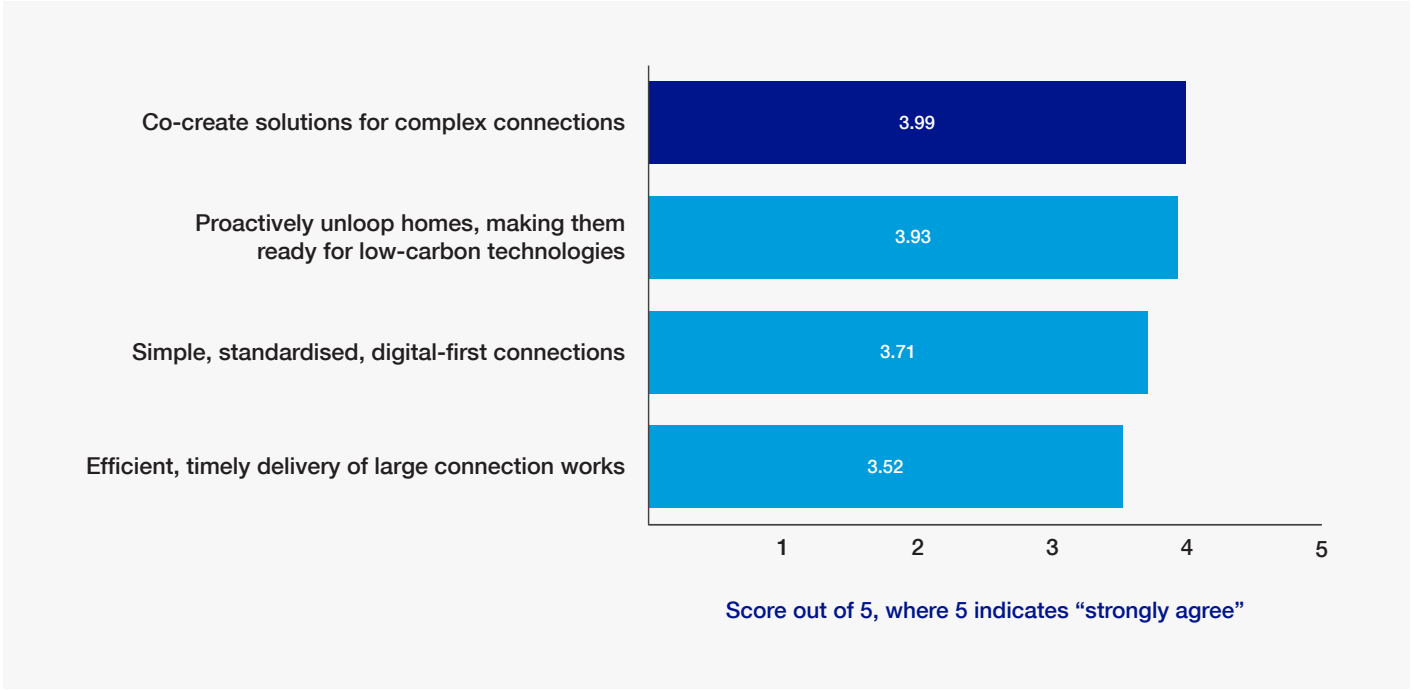
**Stakeholders were then invited to give their feedback on these commitments and vote on a number of questions using Slido.**

### Outcome: Improving the Connections Experience for Customers in ED3

Stakeholders were broadly positive about the direction of these commitments, with several describing them as exactly what they had been asking for. Pre-application engagement, co-created solutions and a single, joined-up connection journey were particularly welcomed. Some felt that, if implemented, the plan would represent a significant change from current experience. The move to simpler, digital-first processes was also supported, as was the retention of access to a human agent, and some noted that automating straightforward domestic connections could free up staff for complex industrial cases. However, support was almost universally conditional on delivery. Stakeholders pointed out that digital-first connections have been promised since ED2, with a clear gap described between the plan and their experience: “everything in this presentation is what we want, but the opposite of what we get”. They cited connection dates that repeatedly slip, agreed routes or connection points that change, slow feedback on quotes and costs, and a lack of dialogue that some attributed to NGED being under-resourced. Stakeholders consistently valued having a named contact who understands their project, but said such relationships are hard to secure.

A more fundamental critique was that the commitments improve the process without addressing the constraints that most affect connections outcomes. Several argued that a faster, slicker process will not help if it produces the wrong answer. They cited rigid designs that fail to account for sites combining generation, storage and demand, and highlighted SSEN’s more dynamic approach to active network management in constrained areas as best practice. Others warned that NGED could meet every commitment and still fail customers if limited network capacity at transmission or distribution level or the terms of grid access make projects uninvestable.

### Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver timely connections in ED3?



## Simple, standardised, digital-first connections

*Prepare a network that benefits everyday homes and small businesses*

At least 80% of eligible smaller connections handled through digital channels **[new function]**

Stakeholders strongly supported this commitment, and it received a score of 3.71 / 5 in the Slido voting, indicating a good level of confidence that implementation would improve the connections experience. Several reported that NGED already performs better than many other DNOs in this area, but further digitising simpler connections was welcomed both for its own sake and because it frees resource for more complex, bespoke applications. Stakeholders highlighted particular benefits from the ability to track progress online, including instant answers rather than instant acknowledgements, visibility of capacity before applying, and customer self-surveys guided by video, which reduces unnecessary site visits. Most considered the 80% target reasonable and achievable. However, several practical cautions emerged. Stakeholders asked how the new system will interact with existing connections portals, to avoid duplication across DNOs. Others stressed that installers and agents, who handle most domestic applications on customers' behalf, must be able to use the system easily, since many households never deal with NGED directly. Stakeholders also questioned the metric itself. Without a baseline, and with both "eligible" and "smaller connections" undefined, some felt the 80% could be met simply by narrowing eligibility. The second theme was inclusion. Several stakeholders were concerned that a digital-first approach risks excluding people, and asked NGED to make clear that a non-digital route remains available and to offer phone support proactively rather than on request. Some noted that people installing LCTs are already relatively advantaged, so digital convenience does little for those at risk of being left behind.

## Efficient, timely delivery of large connection works

*Track performance where we control delivery*

Complete and implement a connections delivery performance framework in year 1 of ED3 **[new measure]**

Annual progress reports throughout ED3 years 2-5, using year 1 as a baseline **[new measure]**

Stakeholders welcomed the spotlight on large connections, which several described as one of the most pressing issues in the sector. However, the commitment itself was widely seen as vague, and this perhaps goes some way to explain the more muted response in the Slido voting, where it received an average of 3.52, the lowest in this set.

Stakeholders asked what a "delivery performance framework" actually is, with the qualifier "where we control delivery" described as a convenient get-out clause. Because the commitment establishes a framework in year 1 and uses that year as its baseline, some felt it commits NGED to measuring performance rather than improving it, and advocated for investment and delivery outcomes to be measured directly. Stakeholders' experience underlined what is at stake. They described opaque processes, developers of new housing unable to get timely answers on whether capacity exists, and projects abandoned altogether. Several argued that the priority is to agree a clear programme with customers and stick to it. Others asked NGED to publish its forward reinforcement programme so customers can plan around it, and those representing supply chain raised concerns about offer prices remaining fixed when works are scheduled years ahead and costs rise. In a recurring theme, stakeholders stressed that the main constraints on large connections lie outside NGED's direct control. They identified NESO and transmission capacity, alongside planning permission for new overhead lines, as the biggest blockers, and urged NGED to work upstream to create a clean, end-to-end process that includes transmission.

## Co-create solutions for complex connections

100% of customers requesting pre-application engagement have the opportunity to receive it within 30 working days **[new ambition]**

All customers offered firm and non-firm connection solutions at pre-application and where relevant provide alternative connection solutions **[new ambition]**

Stakeholders widely favoured this commitment, and this was backed up by the Slido voting, where it received the highest average score in the set, 3.99 / 5. Local authorities cited the importance of connection surgeries and an account manager style of engagement, and stakeholders consistently valued having a single, dedicated point of contact. Early pre-application engagement was seen as particularly valuable because it allows customers to decide where to site a project before committing to it. Stakeholders also welcomed firm and non-firm options as a way to unlock connections sooner, and noted that timely, accurate information is valued even when the news is bad. Some also saw scope for collective solutions, such as grouping customers to share the cost of major upgrades that would be prohibitive for one, and virtual connections that aggregate household batteries across a substation area.

Stakeholders also asked for greater clarity on scope and process. Several noted that neither 'complex' nor 'co-creation' is defined, and called for approaches differentiated by customer type and scale. Some local authorities felt the commitment remains transactional when what they want is strategic co-creation of area-wide plans. Prioritisation was a major concern. Stakeholders described connections they believed were secured being lost to other projects, and asked how NGED will weigh competing demands against regional infrastructure needs and the transitional RESPs. Many urged NGED to publish the queue visually for local authorities, and to link capacity maps to the streets each substation serves. Planning was the other key interdependency. Stakeholders stressed that a connection offer, however complex, is worthless if planning permission is refused, and called for closer coordination with local planning teams, some of whom lack the expertise to judge complex connections.

## Proactively unloop homes, making them ready for low-carbon technologies

Deliver 85,000 proactively unlooped premises during ED3 **[stretch of 30% year on year growth through ED3]**

Stakeholders were positive about the unlooping commitment and it also scored highly in the Slido voting, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it would help deliver quicker connections. The shift from a reactive to a proactive approach was particularly welcomed by installers and suppliers, who reported that reactive unlooping could delay an LCT installation by weeks or months. Stakeholders also supported treating whole streets as a batch rather than unlooping properties one at a time, as a more efficient use of excavation. However, the 85,000 target prompted many questions. Stakeholders wanted to know what it would cost, how it would work in practice, and what proportion of NGED's looped properties it represents, noting that it could be a small fraction of the total. The most significant challenge concerned prioritisation. Several warned that anticipatory unlooping risks spending heavily on homes that will not adopt LCTs, such as older terraces that lack space for heat pumps or off-street charging. They urged NGED to target the homes that stand to benefit most rather than those that are easiest to unloop, and to consider linking the programme to vulnerable customers.

Stakeholders stressed that awareness and communication will determine the programme's success. Many were unfamiliar with the term "unlooping" and called for accessible, reassuring communication that makes clear unlooping is free of charge. Some suggested framing it as bringing homes up to the standard of their neighbours, and using trusted local voices such as community energy groups to explain the benefits. Several noted that the cost of LCTs remains a barrier for less affluent households, and argued that without complementary support, NGED risks "digging up a lot without delivering tangible benefit for all". Others asked why new homes are still being built on looped supplies, and urged NGED to press housebuilders to provide individual connections from the outset. Stakeholders also suggested coordinating street works with other utilities, and aligning unlooping with local authority retrofit programmes.

## Level of Ambition

Stakeholders broadly felt the commitments were heading in the right direction, and the Slido question assessing the level of ambition received the second highest average score across all categories, with 3.13 / 5. Several noted that all but one of the proposals are new ambitions or new functions, which they considered significant for an industry that "doesn't often move quickly", and that the four commitments fit well together. However, the familiar caveat about the devil in the detail applied. Many found ambition impossible to judge without baselines, a sense of the scale of the problem, or clarity on when targets will be met. Some argued the question itself needed reframing, and that NGED should set out ED2 and ED3 spending and the resulting change for customers so stakeholders could judge whether the extra ambition is worth paying for. Credibility also depended on resources: stakeholders asked NGED to stress-test the supply chain and workforce, citing bottlenecks in authorising trained staff to work on substations. A significant group argued ambition was too low given the stakes. They described connection constraints as "throttling demand in the wider economy" and a form of rationing that lacks urgency.

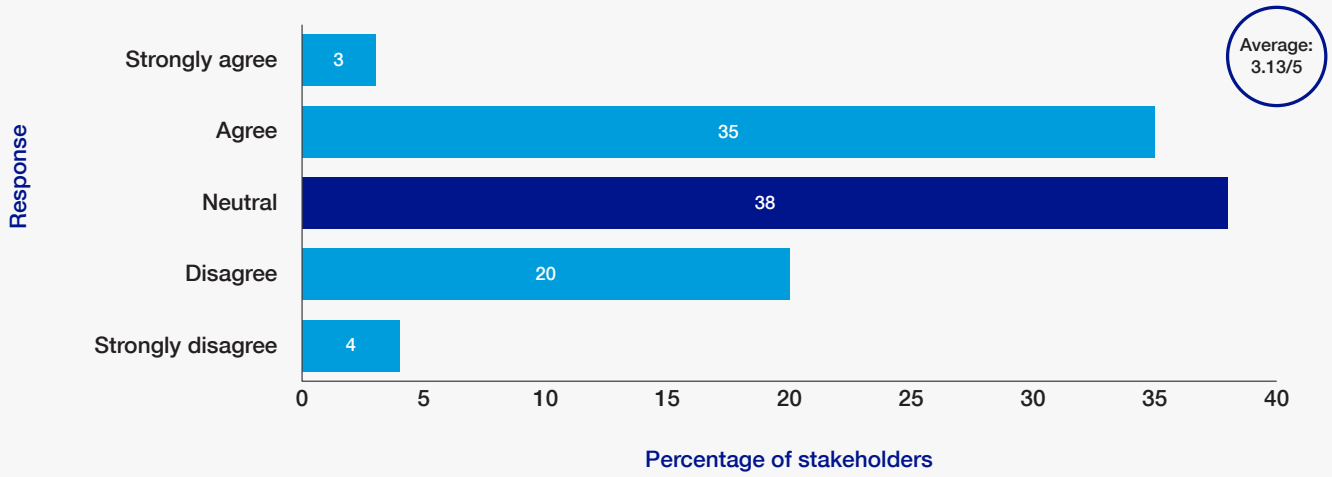
## Anything Missing?

For many stakeholders, the most persistent absence was accountability for delivery. They wanted to know what KPIs NGED will report against, what it will do if its new performance framework reveals poor performance, and why ED2 progress had not been shared. Developers and landowners stressed that what they need most is clarity at the outset on cost and timescale, even if the news is bad, so they can judge viability before committing finance. They suggested case management and application profiling, so customers are not left in the dark, and asked for a consistent experience across NGED teams, which they said currently varies by individual. Several called for pre-application education so potential customers understand the process before they start. They noted that community and local authority projects are often lost because backlogs push them beyond funding windows or because connection charges reach several times the original investment. Local authorities asked for visibility of which pending requests are taking up capacity at a given substation, and for confirmation that NGED will not charge them for advice.

Stakeholders also sought transparency on how capacity is prioritised, arguing that data centres should not take precedence over homes and smaller customers. Some raised concerns about the capacity of ageing low voltage cables to absorb clusters of EV chargers and heat pumps, and asked NGED to plan connections over a 20-year horizon rather than a single price control.

Stakeholders also identified gaps in how the connections system as a whole is addressed. Several noted that connections reform, NESO and strategic spatial planning were barely mentioned despite their decisive influence on timely connections. Some argued that NGED should plan for attrition in the reformed queue, reassess how curtailment risk is evaluated, and move away from first-come, first-served for distributed generation. Others called for integrated planning that links connections with asset management and replacement, and for far better coordination of streetworks with other utilities and local authorities to avoid repeatedly digging up the same roads.

**How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver timely connections is ambitious enough"?**




## 1. Do you think this plan will help improve the connections experience for our customers in ED3?

- "All of these things are things we have been asking for a while, so if they can be delivered then we would like to see all of them." **Political - Local government**
- "More pre-application engagement and that co-creation of options is exactly what we need." **Political - Local government**
- "The focus on a single journey of connectivity is a very good addition." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I think there's some fabulous stuff in there." **Charity/third sector**
- "It sounds really promising, we're getting down to meat on the bones now from a Local Authority perspective... the whole journey of finding out grid capacity has been a bit of a nightmare, so I really welcome the new process. I'm excited to see it rolled out." **Political - Local government**
- "I liked the commitment to continue speaking with a human agent." **Charity/third sector**
- "If the domestic side is relatively simple, then if it can be automated it'll free staff up to deal with major industrial operations." **Political - Local government**
- "If they can deliver, brilliant. The key thing with connections is all about delivery. From a client perspective as long as you can deliver, happy days." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Digital-first connection, they've been talking about it since ED2. It's something that's well proven in other industries. If they can do it, it's worth doing." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Everything in this presentation is what we want, but the opposite of what we get. There is no collaboration and no working with us to get what we want. We ask for things and they tell you that you can't have it. They say they can give you X when you asked for Y, and there's nothing you can do about it." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**

- "The lack of dialogue that takes place is alarming and that's the tragedy of it because we're all local and I get the feeling you're under-resourced and that it's so difficult for you because you don't have capacity to deal with the amount of connections." **Major landowner**
- "Once you've got through and you have someone you have a personal connection with, that's very helpful. But getting someone who is willing to help and communicate with you properly is very difficult." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "I didn't agree with the 'effortless' description. It sounds impressive, but is it the reality?" **Community-based organisations (CBOs)**
- "For me you can make processes faster and slicker but if it's the wrong process it won't matter. You need the local network look at the restraints and how do you manage these restraints. There's too much tick box stuff. This doesn't address the issue." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "Connections network system designers need to be better equipped to deal with sites seeking to deploy multiple technologies (generation, storage and demand)." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "SSE are better at doing this because they have a weak network. 90 MW windfarms have gone in in Inverness and elsewhere. They've had to get creative." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "It's all good, but it's not the full picture. You can achieve all of those and still fail. If the grid access profile makes it un-investible, people still won't be able to make projects viable." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "All the commitments are good, and I genuinely endorse the approach that's taken here, it's just the economics which sit behind it... some level of unavailability, it's incompatible with investment." **Interest group - Consultant**

## Simple, standardised, digital-first connections

- "This is relatively straightforward and if NGED can achieve it then it will be a significant step forward." **Political - Local government**
- "We've got several business units that sell LCTs and I've engaged with them and they always say the connections process is a blocker for consumers. Also, there's a disparity between geography and the DNOs in those geographies. Some are better than others. NGED are the better end of that." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "I am very supportive of using technology to make the connections process faster - digitisation of a chunk of the offers means that there is more time and resource to engage with developers on the more bespoke complex offers." **Infrastructure**
- "I think simplifying the process and being able to track progress is fantastic. I know from experience that's great. Previously, it was always hard to get hold of your engineer." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "Is this an instantaneous response or an instantaneous answer? If it's an instantaneous answer, that's a really good idea." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "Enabling customers to self-survey means operatives don't need to go to site which will seriously speed up the connections process." **Infrastructure**
- "I think the 80% ambition is about right. We have some customers who are up to 85% but they're London-based so that's easier to achieve than other areas... Most people who want to upgrade are savvy enough to use the internet, so I think going digitally makes absolute sense for that." **Infrastructure**
- "How will this interact with the ENA portal (Energy Networks Association)? You don't want to be duplicating work." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "On the digital journey for domestic customers, it's also important that people's agents, installers, can also work within those systems. You want the installer to take care of the job, rather than the customers doing the job of the installers... When I had my solar and battery put in, I didn't understand a lot of the process, even though I have a DNO background." **Charity/third sector**
- "It would be helpful to have the baseline statistics to help measure ambition." **Political - Local government**
- "80% feels like a number plucked out of thin air, and there should be more focus on doing it the right way." **Charity/third sector**
- "It's just a process. I look forward to seeing the detail." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Digital-first is a concern, and it doesn't feel very fair to the point of making sure that everyone can access and connect EVs. I did hear the gentleman say that they would communicate on the phone where needed, and I would like to see this done proactively. We're at risk of excluding people from this process." **Interest group - Consumer**

- "There should be clarification that there is an alternative to the digital process." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "My only criticism is that the transition is saying no one will be left behind, but people will be left behind. You can argue that anyone installing LCTs is already in a good position." **Energy industry - Community Energy**

### Efficient, timely delivery of large connections works

- "Quick delivery of large connections is one of the hot topics of the moment, so it's good to see this spotlighted here." **Supply chain**
- "I would endorse support for more timely connections for large projects." **Political - Local government**
- "The term 'delivery performance framework' is very vague. Can we clarify this terminology?" **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "The phrase 'within your control' is a good get-out clause." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "It is very difficult to engage with National Grid and the processes are very opaque." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "I have been shocked about some of the silly and long-winded processes that have been required to secure connections for domestic green technologies in my local area, so I do have concerns about how NGED will implement this commitment." **Innovator**
- "Within our parish, there's a guy who bought a 300 kW anaerobic digester last year for heat and power, but he sold it due to delay in getting a connection... How will ED3 make him reconsider, bearing in mind he's sold his generator?" **Political - National Government**
- "With most large connections, people know what they need in advance. It's about agreeing a programme with them and sticking to it, rather than a timeline." **Academia**
- "What's your programme for upgrading the network? There's a lot of reinforcement replacement of old switch gear. If we knew that and knew what your programme was we could look at that and say we can work with that." **Major landowner**
- "As a member of the supply chain, I have some concerns that the price of the offer remains the same even if the work happens far into the future as costs do rise." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "One area that I think that is missing around supporting these connections is more upstream coordination with the NESO and transmission networks. One of the biggest blockers at distribution level is capacity constraints on the transmission network, so please have conversations with these two organisations to find ways to overcome them." **Supply chain**
- "Two things slow you down when we apply for connections. Firstly, NESO and, secondly, planning permission. If there is anything NGED can do to address these factors that would be good." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "As an industry, we need to aim to get a nice, clean end-to-end process, even when we have to involve transmission in the connections journey." **Supply chain**

### Co-create solutions for complex connections

- "I'm pleased, because this is what I'm here for and didn't expect to see... It's exactly that: co-create solutions for complex connections." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "We have a lot of clients from housing-association properties who would benefit from this commitment. It's good to see a co-creation approach taken." **Charity/third sector**
- "Currently, there's a 10-day turnaround for quotes, but since we have so many connections, we do it as a surgery and NGED tell us what we can do. It's a better scheme. It's an 'account manager' approach, in a way." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "This has worked well at Bristol City Council at the past, with connections surgeries." **Political - Local government**
- "I would like, for example, a dedicated person who looks at all these connections, and I like to imagine that someone is dedicated so it's a more smooth process." **Community-based organisations (CBOs)**
- "It's also about having an idea for a project, and there's a few places you can have it. If they can speak to NGED earlier on, they can have the discussion about where they can put it." **Political - Local government**
- "I like that NGED is opening itself up to co-creating solutions with customers, as this could help to overcome some of the connection barriers identified. In particular, you could find interim options, such as non-firm or flexible connections. This would really open up a lot more opportunities for customers." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**

- "And that engagement, even if you give bad news, at least that bad news is correct." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "If we can get to a position where we know where the harmonic issues might be, some sort of multi-stage offer may be sufficient for us to reach the demand criteria." **Supply chain**
- "There could perhaps be some clauses put in where you still have your demand milestones, and the generation part can be submitted later before the full and final offer." **Supply chain**
- "The hardest solutions are the ones that are most significant, not just ones that are very complex. For example, going from a 33 MW to a 132 MW connection can be expensive, and if you're the only one it can be cost prohibitive, whereas if you're co-creating solutions with a group of customers, the solution could be more affordable." **Political - Local government**
- "We want to shift from individual connections to a virtual connection of a grid of households within a substation area, including batteries." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "It's unclear what constitutes a complex connection. The definitions seem undefined. Communication seems to be an issue here." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Co-creation is also a difficult term to understand." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I want to co-create strategically, but this is about a transactional interaction. I don't think we're in the strategic discussion here. There is a lack of differentiation." **Political - Local government**
- "Even being here today, I've heard of two situations where someone thought they were getting a connection and something else has come along and taken the capacity and the connection is not there... How are you going to do that prioritisation? If something else comes along and is ready to go, who you going to consider that against regional infrastructure." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "Publish the queue consultation with local authorities. It would be helpful for county council, district and borough councils to be able to see what's in the queue visually. If the current queue is clearly understood, councils can make housing plans based on that, which can then give certainty to NGED." **Interest group - Environmental**
- "Whilst the maps will tell you which substation has what degree of capacity left in it at any one time, I'm not sure it actually shows which area, which number of streets that substation serves... So, I've got half the information but I don't know the rest." **Political - Local government**
- "Planning-approval teams may not have sufficient knowledge about the complexities of a connection or why it is needed... You may have an approved connection from the DNO, but the project is scuppered by rejected planning permission on the local-authority side." **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "Developers need to know if they can get through planning." **Supply chain**

### Proactively unloop homes, making them ready for low-carbon technologies

- "Unlooping needs to be done and it's a massive task." **Political - National Government**
- "We can't have smart electricity meters because we have one cable that runs through the whole street. Yes please, unloop us and don't charge us for it." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "Glad to see this is proactive." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "One of the things that our business units really care about is the proactive Unlooping. That's a good target... When it was reactive it was weeks or maybe even months to connect an LCT... We are the supplier/installer, so we get the brunt of what the customer experiences, if this takes longer, we get the blame." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "At the moment, we're looking at batch work with unlooping. If one property requests to be unlooped, the entire street is considered for unlooping as a batch. It makes a lot more sense to do it like that." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "Is 85,000 big? What proportion of the looped properties does 85,000 represent? It's a big number to us, but there could be a million properties not looped. That's 1% of that and so you need to see things in context." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "It would be good to know where those 85,000 properties are." **Charity/third sector**
- "I imagine there's a high cost associated to unlooping though, and I guess if you don't know for sure those houses will install LCTs that might be a huge cost without the benefit." **Charity/third sector**
- "Proactivity sounds great but is there a cleverer way of doing this to make sure that the money is being spent on the right thing? Anticipatory investment sometimes doesn't make as much sense." **Supply chain**

- "If you unloop the easiest homes you can find, it won't necessarily have the most benefit. The ones who could benefit the most should be prioritised. If you unloop terraced houses somewhere where they aren't able to have heat pumps or EV chargers because they're easy to do, it's less meaningful." **Academia**
- "Are NGED linking unlooping to its vulnerable people targets? I am not sure how I would want this to work but I think it is something to consider." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "NGED once sent me a whole load of communications around unlooping my home which was difficult to understand, and I'm an energy professional. The language was terrifying. There's something around making those communications inclusive and accessible... It's easy to see how off-putting this could be for the layperson." **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "Making people aware that unlooping has no charge would also be important factor." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "It could be promoted on modernising and bringing you up to your neighbours' standard. Not feeling left behind is a big driver for behaviour change." **Political - Local government**
- "Community energy groups usually include motivated, educated passionate people but they are blocked by the costs and connections. If your innovation could come through them, then it's a win-win." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "Why do you need to do this in the first place? Houses should already be unlooped and be complete with solar panels and battery storage. You guys should be telling house builders to do this too." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "Councils are doing a lot of retrofit installations, that will be helpful for connections, good forward planning in terms of making sure there's capacity in the system." **Political - Local governmen**

## 2. Taken together, do you think our proposed commitments have the right level of ambition?

- "I think these commitments are ambitious enough, because all bar one are new ambitions or new functions. I think that's pretty ambitious, especially for a company in an industry that doesn't often move quickly." **Infrastructure**
- "I agree with the level of ambition and would fully support it. Putting it into action will be a learning curve and will require a lot of planning." **Political - Local government**
- "All the separate ambitions fit hand in hand. Which is good." **Supply chain**
- "It feels like it's moving in the right direction, but the devil is in the delivery." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "The proposed commitments have the right level of ambitions, but the devil is in the details." **Political - Local government**
- "When in ED3 are you talking about? It is quite vague. Test the ambition." **Supply chain**
- "I'm disappointed in the way the questions have been worded. You ask if the plans are ambitious enough, but if I say 'no' does that mean I want you to spend more money? I think you should have said how much you spent in ED2, how much you propose spending in ED3, and what the change will be to customers, so we can either say yes, we want the changes, or no, we're happy with what we've got." **Supply chain**
- "Ambition will help but it depends on whether the resources are there to implement it." **Political - Local government**
- "You need full engagement with the supply chain and to know if the supply chain can actually cope with it. Stress test it." **Supply chain**
- "You have bottlenecks while already-trained people are approved, by NGED, to work on substations. There's got to be some sort of fast-tracking system to make the process of getting these licences more streamlined." **Supply chain**
- "I wonder if National Grid understands that these connections issues are throttling demand in the wider economy. It feels a bit like rationing where you only receive crumbs from the table, and I don't see the urgency to fix bottlenecks where the problems are. The people on flexibility need to be moved over to connections to solve this problem." **Supply chain**
- "This is what we want to see but NGED needs to go further." **Political - Local government**
- "It would have been great to see the scale of ambition for each commitment. That would give us more confidence in terms of how well thought through the plan is." **Interest group - Consultant**

## 3. Is there anything missing?

- "How will they be measured, what are the KPIs they will be reporting against."? **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "There's something about tracking performance but what are you going to do it you identify poor performance?" **Political - Local government**
- "Some of the key things like simplifying the journey look good but I want to know what that looks like and how the current process looks." **Major landowner**
- "Communication, speed and clarity... There is no expectation for what application to connection stage looks like, when modelling the project. Even if it's bad news, at least we've not put finance in bad routes, would potentially pull out of the sale." **Interest group - Property and Land Management**
- "It can even vary within organisations, based on the person and the part of the business you are interacting with. Need standardisation and known expectations." **Interest group - Property and Land Management**
- "There is ambition for certain projects but they can't be realised at point of connection due to a huge backlog which puts it out of scope due to funding windows, or due to the massive charge, which could be four times the amount of their initial investment, so it's no longer viable... From what I've seen, it's that pre-education of what a potential customer will have to deal with during the process." **Academia**
- "We still aren't talking about ED2 tracking. I want to know what hasn't been done already." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "When we know a substation doesn't have capacity at the moment... it would be very useful to know what's taking up the capacity, in terms of a live connection request... just knowing you're all looking to put charge points in this small area, someone else is ahead of you on that one. Perhaps you might be better spending your time going somewhere else." **Political - Local government**
- "As a planning authority, are you going to charge stakeholders or local authorities for advice on these changes? If not, making people aware that you won't charge for this is important." **Political - National Government**
- "Understanding the priorities of the network capacity needs to be made clearer. For example, are data centres going to get a higher or equal priority to homes and smaller consumers? They should not." **Political - Local government**
- "Most of us had not heard of data centres a few years ago, but now there's this crazy push to incorporate them onto the grid by 2030. Without innovating together, I fear that connections for renewable generation may get swept aside due to political pressures." **Political - Local government**
- "There is no mention of connections reform, the National Energy System Operator (NESO) and strategic spatial connections. All of that has a massive bearing on your ability to provide timely connections to customers like me." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "How will you work with NESO on industrial connections and anything below the connections queue threshold?" **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "It's the way these projects are assessed, the level of curtailment they are likely to be exposed to needs to be reassessed." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "In order to get around some of the connection-queue bottlenecks, I would support moving away from a first-come-first-served approach to distributed-generation connections." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "An integrated planning piece is missing. How are connections interfacing with strategic planning and asset management and replacement? You could really optimise investment with more data analysis." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Is there more scope for greater coordination between different utility companies and local authorities around streetworks? Digging up the roads multiple times for different connections seems mad to me." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I want to look ahead 20 years and do every year right, but this room doesn't seem to be addressing that." **Political - Local government**

# Session Six:
## Societal Benefit



## Session Six:

**These sessions were presented by Laura Bartle, Head of Environment and Sustainability at NGED, and Chris Hayton, Director of Corporate Affairs at NGED.**

**Laura opened, by showing stakeholders how NGED's growing network was tied to a corresponding need to reduce its environmental impact. She outlined NGED's environmental action plan for ED3, with particular focus on decarbonisation, SF6 reduction, and fluid-filled cable removal.**

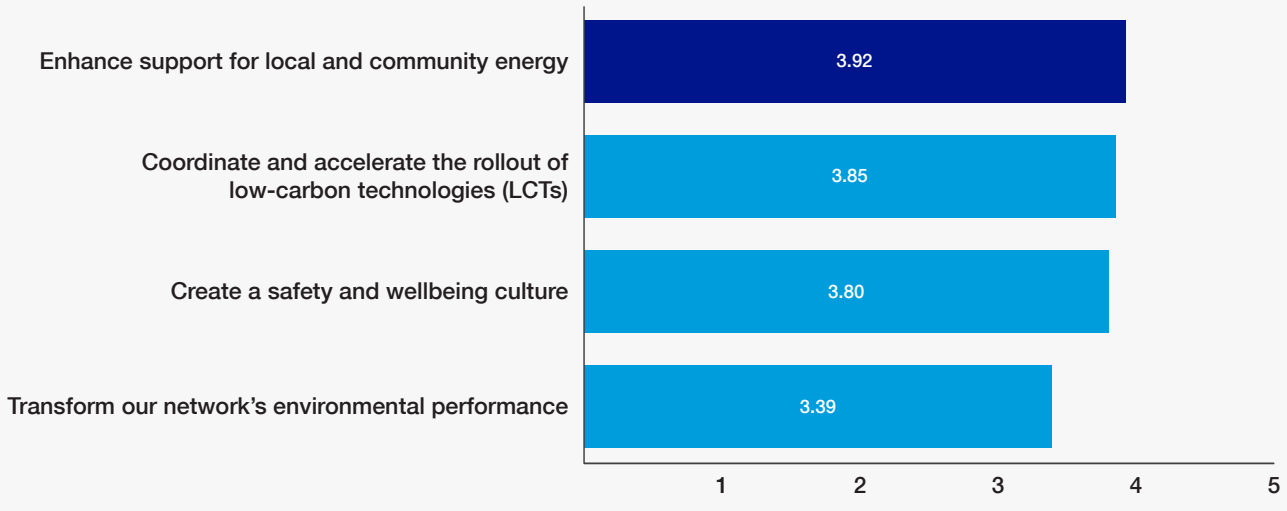
**Chris then took over, explaining that NGED's plan was to expand its social contract and continue to support its communities in ED3, with the ambition to ensure communities are given all the tools and support they need to take an active role in the energy transition. He demonstrated the plans to enact this, such as the Community Energy Accelerator to expand the viability and uptake of community energy. He concluded by walking stakeholders through the remaining commitments under societal benefit, which include safety and wellbeing, and the acceleration of the rollout of LCTs.**

**Stakeholders were then invited to give their feedback on these commitments and vote on a number of questions using Slido.**

### Outcome: Delivering Societal Benefit for Customers and Communities in ED3

Stakeholders responded to this set of commitments with broad goodwill, and most believed the plan was heading in the right direction and would deliver societal benefits. Several noted that the commitments on environmental performance, community energy and LCT rollout dovetail well, whereas the safety commitment felt like "a bit of an add-on" that is not clearly joined up with the rest of the plan. The recognition of community energy, and NGED's approach to assessing social value, were particularly welcomed, with some noting they had rarely heard DNOs discuss community benefit before. As elsewhere, the dominant reservation was a lack of specifics. Stakeholders described the targets as qualitative rather than quantitative while others emphasised that delivery will depend on coordination with local authorities, the Welsh and UK governments and NGET, whose targets they said are not aligned with NGED's despite similar themes.

### Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver societal benefits in ED3?



## Transform our network's environmental performance

*Accelerate decarbonisation, enhance biodiversity, and build a more sustainable future for the communities we serve*

**Decarbonisation**

Revalidate our 1.5 degree science based target to decarbonise by 2043 and continue to progress towards this objective **[stretch - to include a Scope 3 emissions target]**

**SF6**

Accelerate reduction in absolute SF6 emissions and reduce SF6 bank levels in ED3 **[stretch]**

Deploy SF6 transition plan with phased deployment of SF6-free alternatives by voltage class **[new ambition]**

**Fluid-filled cables**

Accelerate our target to remove all fluid-filled cables from 2060 to 2050 **[stretch to bring forward removal and be more pro-active in removing cables]**

Stakeholders held mixed views on this commitment, and this was borne out in the electronic voting, where it received the lowest average score of the set, with 3.39 / 5. 52% agreed or strongly agreed that delivering on it could amplify societal benefit, but 13% disagreed and 31% were neutral. SF6 dominated the discussion, and views on it were sharply divided. Many saw the proposed reduction as beneficial, even if most customers will never notice. However, a vocal group regarded the commitment as insufficiently ambitious and lacking transparency. They noted that SF6 is being banned in Europe, argued that continuing to rely on it sits uneasily with NGED's environmental claims, and described the absence of reduction figures as "woolly" or even a "purposeful omission". Some warned of reputational risk comparable to that faced by water companies. Others urged caution, pointing out that some SF6-free alternatives take up more space and carry their own carbon costs, that air-insulated equipment is hard to deploy where space is limited, and that a rushed transition could itself cause leaks. Several argued that DNOs should collaborate rather than compete on environmental performance, building on existing research and developing common solutions that send clearer signals to the supply chain. Fluid-filled cables split opinion in a similar way. Some saw removal as non-negotiable given the optics, while others noted that well-maintained cables rarely leak, that replacement is costly, and that the cables reach the end of their lives by 2050 anyway. On decarbonisation, stakeholders broadly supported a science-based approach, although some felt 2043 lacked ambition and asked about offsetting in the interim, fleet electrification, and the emissions associated with NGED's own use of AI.

The commitments around biodiversity drew criticism. Stakeholders were concerned that the 10% biodiversity net gain target simply matches the statutory planning requirement, and that limiting it to eligible projects looked small. They argued this undermined NGED's claim to go beyond Ofgem's expectations, with suggestions for a higher target elsewhere to compensate. Several saw untapped potential in NGED's landholdings. Suggestions included designing substations to support nature, creating green corridors and firebreaks, and using biodiversity enhancement to offset the local impact of new infrastructure on host communities. More broadly, stakeholders noted that ED3 has fewer numerical environmental targets than ED2, and that the commitment as a whole did not feel measurable. Some raised questions of cost and affordability, asking whether the financial implications of replacing SF6 and fluid-filled cables are fully understood, and what price NGED places on environmental benefit relative to customer bills.

## Enhance support for local and community energy

*Turn local ambition into action through clear pathway*

Establish a Community Energy Accelerator that turns local ambition into investment-ready projects **[new function]**

Enable an additional 25% of local renewable energy generation and storage through ED3 **[stretch of 25% from current levels]**

This commitment was very positively received, answering directly to a gap stakeholders had raised repeatedly throughout the workshops. This was backed up by the Slido voting, where it received the highest average score in its set, 3.92, indicating that stakeholders were confident it would deliver societal benefit. Several welcomed the shift from a reactive approach, in which NGED waited to be approached, to proactive outreach. Others were pleased by how far NGED's thinking had moved since earlier workshops. Stakeholders gave concrete examples of the value at stake, such as a community organisation now earning £16,000 a year from its solar installation and a rooftop scheme across 23 homes on an estate that now generates more value than it cost. However, enthusiasm was matched by a desire for detail. Stakeholders asked how the Accelerator will work, whether it will be run

in-house or subcontracted, and whether it will offer finance or only advice. They also asked whether NGED will reach out to communities or wait for them to come forward, and how many hubs and forums are planned, noting that other DNOs have published their funding commitments. Several questioned what the 25% target is measured against, and whether it conflates local energy with community energy. Others asked how "community" will be defined. Groups can vary widely in capacity and expertise, so stakeholders called for tailored support.

Stakeholders were really clear that the commitment should deliver tangible outcomes. Several community energy stakeholders warned that a connection alone does not make a viable project, since market changes have undermined the business case for many single-generator schemes. They argued that progress now depends on whole-substation-area approaches supported by better data. Others feared the Accelerator could become a talking shop without action, echoing earlier concerns about initiatives that funded feasibility studies but never saw projects through. Stakeholders also stressed inclusion. They observed that community energy tends to be driven by retired engineers in affluent areas, while those who could benefit most are often unaware of it. They urged NGED to work with less engaged communities and areas with challenging housing stock, and to support rural councils that lack the expertise to act.

## Coordinate and accelerate the rollout of low-carbon technologies (LCTs)

*Work together with local authorities and other organisations on their improvement*

Complete local reinforcement schemes in partnership with local authorities and housing associations **[new function]**

Stakeholders supported the intent of this commitment, and this was reflected in the Slido voting, where it received the second highest score in the set, 3.85. The dominant feeling was that the rollout must happen, and the word "accelerate" was seen as encouraging. Support for battery storage was welcomed, alongside calls to replace diesel generators with batteries, and some highlighted the potential of vehicle-to-grid to provide household resilience and support the wider network. However, the commitment was widely regarded as one of the least developed in the plan. Stakeholders described it as "not exactly a smart target", noted that it lacked specificity and asked what the local reinforcement schemes would involve and how many there would be. Some felt the commitment reads as an afterthought, arguing that enabling the low carbon transition should be central to NGED's purpose rather than a societal add-on.

The partnership model at the heart of the commitment drew a depth of practical suggestion and expertise. Stakeholders urged NGED to partner beyond local authorities and housing associations, drawing on organisations that can signpost relevant local partners and coordinating with devolved administrations such as the Welsh Government. Fuel poverty was identified as a natural area for collaboration. Local authorities noted that official data lags behind reality and asked for NGED's help in identifying households in need. Funding was a recurring constraint: several pointed out that rollout can only accelerate if someone pays, and noted that LCTs remain expensive for households.

## Create a safety and wellbeing culture

*Protect our workforce, contractors, customers and the public through proactive risk management and continuous improvement*

Achieve a proactive safety-culture maturity rating (Hudson Model) by FY2032 **[stretch from reactive compliance focus to proactive assurance led model]**

Set annual improvement targets across key safety metrics once the ED2 baseline is confirmed **[new measure]**

Stakeholders endorsed this commitment readily but had few strong views as many saw NGED as an exemplar already. Contractors described NGED as one of their better clients for prioritising safety, with KPIs that set the standards they must meet. A former engineer recalled NGED's standards dragging up those of other industries. Others argued that DNOs are in a privileged position to model what good looks like. Others felt NGED could, conversely, do more, and that it was a statement of something that "should have already been happening". Stakeholders asked for specifics and baseline data, and asked whether progress would be judged by NGED's own measure or by an independent one. Energy industry stakeholders gave the most distinctive contribution, arguing that the commitment's scope should extend beyond the workforce to the new public safety risks of the energy transition.

## Level of ambition

Stakeholders felt that overall the commitments addressed the right topics but did not yet demonstrate they were ambitious. This came through in the Slido voting, where 40% disagreed that the plan was ambitious enough, and 31% were neutral. Much of this stemmed from the view that some of the package reads as a statutory or reputational floor rather than a stretch. Stakeholders repeatedly pointed out that the biodiversity net gain target is what housebuilders must already

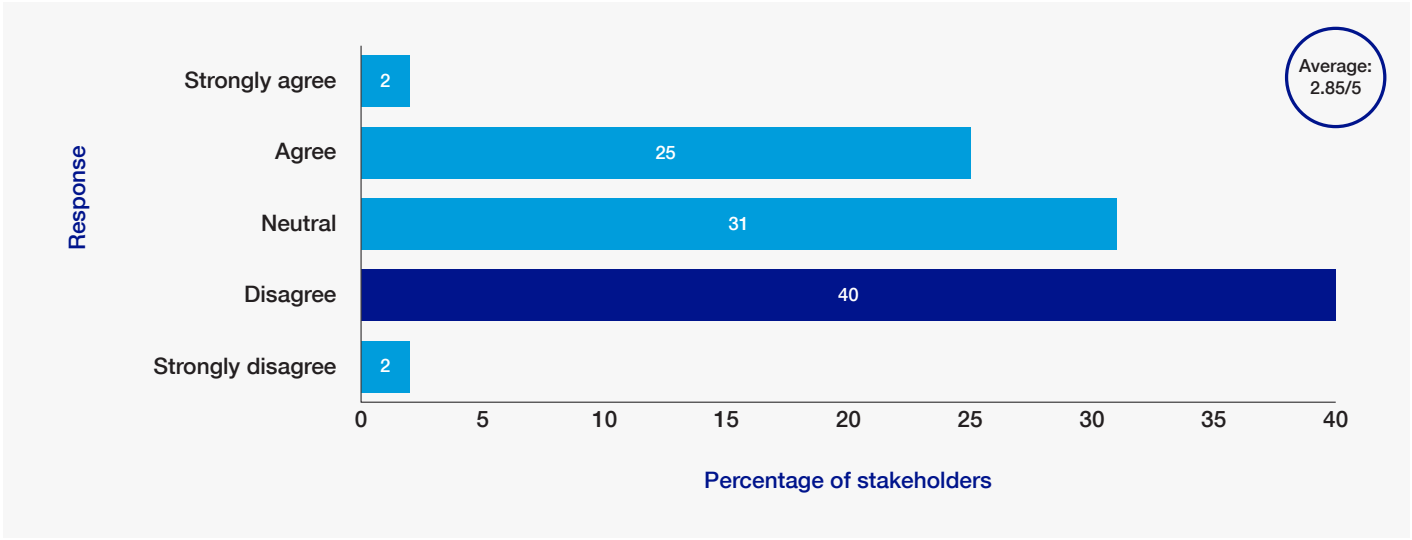
deliver, the 2043 decarbonisation date is unchanged and scope 3 emissions are excluded. A key comment overall was that there had been "a lot of commitments today that should have been bare minimum". The main barrier to confidence was the absence of numbers. Without a starting point, an ED2 baseline, a comparison with other DNOs or the budget behind each commitment, stakeholders could not assess the 25% additional local renewables and storage measure, the SF6 phase-out or the safety culture shift. Where figures were given, they invited scepticism. The solar for schools pot was described as less than 1% of the overall budget. The community energy target was described as "fantastically low" given its tiny share of UK renewables. Credibility was also at stake. Stakeholders recalled the ED2 promise of a Community Energy Advisor in each licence area, which was never delivered. Others questioned whether community energy support arrives too late, now that headroom has largely been allocated to the commercial queue.

## Anything missing?

Stakeholders wanted the plan to set out more clearly a tangible local value from NGED's investment. They wanted host communities to see a return from network and generation projects, through local jobs, apprenticeships, local manufacturing and the upskilling of residents. Several linked this to the skills pipeline. They called for a visible presence in schools and stronger STEM outreach, noting that interest in electrical engineering lags well behind mechanical engineering. Stakeholders also saw the environmental commitments as too narrowly drawn around SF6 and emissions targets. The most pointed omission was AI. Stakeholders called it a major oversight that the plan presents AI only as an efficiency tool while ignoring its energy, water and biodiversity footprint, and asked whether it would cancel out the environmental gains elsewhere. Others pointed to the asset lifecycle. Many wood poles are 40 to 60 years old, which creates a replacement cliff in about 20 years, and stakeholders suggested composite poles where longer life justifies their higher embodied carbon. Stakeholders also asked for explicit standards on materials, such as GM-free and palm oil-free biofuels, and for action on transformer oil leakage.

A second gap concerned leadership and narrative. Stakeholders felt NGED was not claiming its most important role, as the enabler of clean power and decarbonisation in its region. This comment put it plainly: "if you're going to lead, actually do it". Some saw a drift back towards KPI silos after more connected working in ED2. They proposed a director with explicit accountability for joined-up delivery, and a shift from an asset-led mindset towards working with third parties' assets and data. Stakeholders also asked NGED to make the plan legible to the public. They wanted fewer unexplained numbers, more case studies showing what was done and with what result, and interim ED3 milestones on the path to 2043.

**How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver societal benefit is ambitious enough"?**



## 1. Do you think this plan will help deliver societal benefit for our customers and communities in ED3?

- "I think the plan will deliver social benefits for a lot of people." **Supply chain**
- "All the work discussed today is really positive, you're heading in the right direction. I can't see any gaps." **Political - Local government**
- "You've got to put a flag in the sand and start somewhere. It's all about delivery and those KPIs that you set yourself. I think they're about right." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "They all dovetail each other. Safety and wellbeing doesn't dovetail as well as one, two and three, but the others dovetail really well." **Political - Local government**
- "This seems like a bit of an add-on to everything else and doesn't feel joined up to the rest of the plan." **Political - Local government**
- "I like the way they are assessing social value. I think that is a really positive shift, and it provides wider value like preventing hospital admissions." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "I've not heard much from DNOs about community benefits before." **Industry Association or Trade Body**
- "This is front and centre what I've been doing with the councils. It hits the nail on the head." **Interest group - Environmental**
- "These targets are qualitative not quantitative. I want to see more targets clearly defined." **Political - Local government**
- "Will there be a document that contains all the details? Because I haven't understood all the nitty gritty details. Being asked to vote on this now without all the details." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "You need to make sure you're working alongside all the other governing bodies, working together more collaboratively. The Welsh government has launched plans for a single Welsh energy company, so it's about making sure it's all being approached from the same place." **Political - Local government**

### Transform our network's environmental performance

- "The SF6 reduction is one of those that people will never realise is going on but it is beneficial. Most will not have heard of SF6, but it is crucial to put things in place to reduce these emissions." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "SF6 is banned in Europe, so are you not showing a whole lot of ambition by not phasing it out completely from your network?... I feel like you're misleading the public by championing your environmental credentials yet still leaving SF6 on your network." **Political - Local government**
- "The SF6 stuff came across a bit woolly to me. It would be interesting to see some targets, how they're selecting substations or sites where they want to deploy SF6-free technologies and what their commitments are there." **Energy industry - Innovator**
- "I don't think NGED is being honest about this. When we're doing so much to reduce carbon emissions and they have an asset that is thousands of times worse than anything else, they need to take action. I think it's a purposeful omission not to give the numbers, and I think it's naughty." **Political - Local government**
- "I know it's expensive to fix but, like with asbestos, it needs to be non-negotiable... It's also a potential PR disaster, like we've seen with water companies. NGED need to get on top of this from a damage limitation point of view." **Political - Local government**
- "You don't want to accelerate it so much it creates leaks. A small leak undoes a lot of good but I'm happy to trust it's done sensibly." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "The current national approach pits DNOs against each other to get them to try to improve their environmental performances, which is unhelpful when trying to deliver these kinds of commitments. Instead, DNOs should be encouraged to work together on innovative solutions that can be rolled out across all distribution networks." **Supply chain**
- "If you could devise one common solution, that would give clearer demand signals to your supply chains, which could then manufacture any components that you need to support this more effectively." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "If they are done properly, fluid-filled cables don't leak, maintenance is important." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The fluid-filled cables objective is quite ambitious. It's going to cost quite a lot of money replacing all that cable." **Supply chain**

- "Those cables will be out of their life by 2050 so they need to be replaced. And they will be overloaded, anyway. You've got to deliver that, there's no choice. It maybe could be more ambitious, actually." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "I do support decarbonisation in line with science-based targets, that seems a reasonable approach." **Political - Local government**
- "For me 2043 for decarbonisation is not ambitious enough. I probably want to compare it to other countries to know what they are doing before we can say if we agree, but it feels a bit low-key overall." **Political - Local government**
- "It is worth pinning down the environmental impact of moving from face-to-face customer contact to AI. Since AI uses energy and water, have you identified what the wider environmental impact of this plan will be?" **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "You're saying you want to go above and beyond Ofgem requirements, but 10% biodiversity net gain is a national requirement anyway. Your commitment therefore doesn't go above and beyond. It's disappointing that this is only set at 10%." **Political - Local government**
- "10% is not going to cut the amount of change that is needed. I'm very concerned about the 10%." **Regulator**
- "The fact it's just on eligible projects seems like a copout, maybe you should be doing 20% in other areas to make up for the non-eligible areas." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "NGED have environmental enhancement measures but that's just words. We need someone to deal with bigger issues such as green corridors and firebreaks." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "I feel biodiversity is the other side of the same coin... In the way I've heard some communities might be offered new community facilities if they accept pylons, extra work on biodiversity could be something taken to mitigate the negative impacts of extra infrastructure or the development of infrastructure in any one area." **Political - Local government**
- "Very few numerical targets on the whole. They were on ED2 but I can't see them on ED3." **Political - National Government**

### Enhance support for local and community energy

- "I really like the community energy accelerator idea. I would fully support anybody looking at community energy." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "This is probably the thing that stands out for me. We need a lot more focus on community renewable energy schemes and off giant ones. It's good to see NGED doing this." **Interest group - Environmental**
- "NGED previously took a reactive approach to community energy and waited for customers to approach it with ideas. It's now being proactive and going out into communities to advise them on potential opportunities, which is a really good idea." **Innovator**
- "It's good to hear the commitments here, I think they have moved a long way since April." **Charity/third sector**
- "After a long process we were able to install our solar panels and reach net zero as an organisation. We now earn £16k/year for doing nothing." **Community-based organisations (CBOs)**
- "With the Accelerator, I didn't quite understand whether NGED is planning to do that in-house or subcontract those steps." **Charity/third sector**
- "I would like to know whether this involves financial investment or support. There is a lot of local ambition but not enough local spaces for delivering this." **Charity/third sector**
- "Other DNOs are talking openly about how much funding is going to be available for CE, I would like to know the numbers... You mentioned dedicated forums for the community, it would be helpful to know the specifics." **Charity/third sector**
- "The support for local community energy is very welcome, but I want to know capacity and access specifics." **Political - Local government**
- "The only thing I don't see here is how would you define a community." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "It's not a level playing field. We didn't have the same level of assets, so it can't be the same service for everybody." **Political - Local government**
- "Different groups have different problems. So it is a learning curve. But that learning can be shared with other groups who are trying to crack the same problems. Different groups can swap capabilities and in that way gain scale." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "We represent a consortium of community energy groups so NGED does not need to go to every organisation individually and I do think that must be the way forward to make it easier for NGED." **Energy industry - Community Energy**

- "This doesn't feel high enough. The business case for many community energy groups has gone out the window. So just providing the connection is not going to be enough." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "With all the market changes it is not really feasible financially to do a single generator anymore, and so to move forward we need to look at a whole substation area approach and that is why we need that engagement and data for our more complex models." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "I'm worried what is proposed here is a lot of roundtables and workshops. So there will be a lot of talking and not a lot of action. Feels like a lot of work is being duplicated." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "There have been lots of initiatives in the past that can only take community projects so far, and then they fall apart." **Political - Combined Authority**
- "Typically, the people who are involved are retired engineers who have the time to invest into this, usually in well-off areas. But the consumers who could actually really benefit are not familiar with this concept... If we get CE out into the wider community, there's so much work to do on awareness." **Charity/third sector**
- "I work with local authorities that have a very challenging stock, but there are lots of people who want to do something. It's almost about starting with the most difficult housing stock first." **Charity/third sector**
- "As a rural council, we don't know how to do any of these things" **Political - National Government**

### Coordinate and accelerate the rollout of low-carbon technologies (LCTs)

- "It's good to see all of this. It has to happen. The word accelerate in there is encouraging. The LV grid isn't monitored and because of that people are scared about it and it's not that scary." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "It's great to see more work being done to support battery storage. Customers will really benefit if you can roll this out successfully. However, at the same time, from an environmental perspective, I would urge you to do all you can to shift away from diesel generators to battery storage." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The commitment 'Coordinate and accelerate the rollout of low carbon technologies' as opposed to what? NGED is there to help the entirety of society, households, business, everyone. Why is this not at the front. It should be a given to try and help the environment. It sounds like an afterthought." **Community-based organisations (CBOs)**
- "If you are fully electrified and go vehicle to grid the potential of that is massive. I've seen that in practice and it works really well... It gives you resilience in your home... In the round, it technically works well." **Major landowner**
- "This is not exactly a smart target. It all sounds good but I'm just not sure what it means. There's a lot of work going on nationally to try to do this, such as the Warm Homes Plan. I'm sure NGED are already aware of the number of heat pumps going in, so I don't think this means anything." **Political - Local government**
- "The aspirations are excellent, but I think National Grid are missing out on an opportunity to tie the aspirations to actual targets. I want to see actual targets which say that they will respond to community or bigger projects within a certain timeframe. No one regulates how long it takes them to engage with larger industry projects. There are no targets or measurements about engaging with people who aren't homeowners." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "It's all headed in the right direction, but you need to make sure you're working alongside all the other governing bodies, working together more collaboratively. The Welsh government has launched plans for a single Welsh energy company, so it's about making sure it's all being approached from the same place..." **Political - Local government**
- "I would welcome NGED's help with identifying people living in fuel poverty and helping with LCTs. 60% of the cost of installations is the panel, so it would be a huge win-win to work together." **Political - Local government**
- "They can only accelerate it if someone is funding." **Interest group - Consultant**

### Create a safety and wellbeing culture

- "Health and safety should be a top priority anyway." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Like National Grid, safety and wellbeing is fundamental to what we do. We need to protect our employees and members of the public. We have KPIs with National Grid which set what standards we have to meet." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "I think National Grid are one of our better clients for prioritising safety and wellbeing. Our work is very dangerous, working with circuits, cabling, and deep excavations. We sometimes work in the middle of the night when it's raining. So safety and wellbeing need to be at the front of everyone's mind." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**

- "Regarding safety and wellbeing culture, it's great to hear that it's being improved, although when I was an engineer, we would access your plant, and your safety standards were already so much higher than everyone else's, and it dragged the standards of other industries up too, so anything that sets higher safety standards is welcome in my view." **Political - Local government**
- "DNOs are in a privileged position to show what a good safety culture looks like." **Charity/third sector**
- "This priority is a bit woolly." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "This should have already been happening." **Political - Local government**
- "I really support the health and safety aspect, but I would like it to be more specific." **Political - Local government**
- "I approve of this but on whose measure will NGED achieve a proactive safety and wellbeing culture? By their own measure or by that of an independent organisation?..." **Political - National Government**
- "PV and batteries are wholly new types of equipment. It is not just a case of avoiding sticking your hands in a three-pronged socket." **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "You might need to guide consumers with safety notices on consumer units." **Energy industry - System Operator**
- "You might need to warn electricians and those working on new systems about new issues." **Energy industry - System Operator**

## 2. Taken together, do you think our proposed commitments have the right level of ambition?

- "The commitments seem really well thought out and well-planned." **Political - Local government**
- "It is positive to see a focus on community energy in the plan. I think it is a really ambitious step." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "Overall, the ambition is good as a response to network and societal needs, particularly around the community energy side. If you can deliver it, you should see increased local affordability and resilience." **Political - Local government**
- "There have been a lot of commitments today that should have been bare minimum." **Supply chain**
- "I don't think it's overly ambitious and they could go further in certain parts." **Energy industry - Electricity Distribution**
- "The 10% biodiversity regeneration target is what developers are required to do when building houses, so it doesn't feel very ambitious. I'm not sure how much difference it will make." **Political - Local government**
- "I'm not seeing much of a transformation. You seem to still be sticking to your 2043 targets. I am questioning the ambition here. This seems like the minimum..." **Political - Local government**
- "I think that the ambition of this commitment is a bit disappointing. Science-based targets are good and I appreciate that you're looking to reduce emissions for scopes 1 and 2, but it's a shame to see scope 3 not included..." **Political - Local government**
- "They feel a bit lightweight and need to be beefed up substantially, in my opinion." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "To create a safety and wellbeing culture suggests there isn't one at the moment." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "So little of it is numerical. Correct topics but impossible to tell." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "There is a bit of a lack of clarity and benchmarking around the 'enable an additional 25% of local renewable energy generation and storage' measure. Without the wider context being provided, I cannot say for sure whether the level of ambition is suitable or not." **Political - Local government**
- "Do you know what the ED2 baseline was for safety and wellbeing? It's very hard to know if it's ambitious without knowing what it was in ED2." **Supply chain**
- "You need to give us more context and more data in order for us to understand if this commitment is ambitious or not." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "One thing on SF6 is how much and by when. We need to know whether there is a measure of success and what that looks like." **Supply chain**
- "How are you benchmarking yourself vs other DNOs?" **Interest group - Environmental**

- "I'd like to know how the 2043 target stacks up against other DNOs. Some friendly competition with other DNOs could be productive." **Interest group - Consumer**
- "Looking at solar panels for schools, the budget for that appears to be less than 1% of your overall budget..." **Supply chain**
- "Community energy was 0.1% of renewable energy in the UK, so this target is miniscule. It is a fantastically low ambition." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The ambition to have a community energy accelerator is good, but there was a promise in ED2 that there would be a Community Energy Advisor who could be a conduit to change in each of the four areas. It was never established." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Each area needs a local individual who acts as a community energy advisor. NGED have not gone far enough in their ambitions so far, and I worry this will be the same going forward." **Political - Local government**
- "I am wondering whether this model comes too late, as a lot of the grid capacity is already gone and there remains a significant queue of commercial projects." **Political - Local government**

## 3. Is there anything missing?

- "There is an element of working with local communities that seems to be missing." **Political - Local government**
- "One thing I'd like to see here is how local communities can benefit from these projects. People will be impacted but what will be the return. Local jobs, local manufacturing, how people can benefit from those projects." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "Local people need to see some benefit, solar farms have to have apprenticeships, upskill local people. Investors can go in anywhere, but it's about how people can see a benefit." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "As a role model, thinking about careers, a presence in schools would be beneficial." **Political - Local government**
- "You need to organise knowledge transfer and do outreach for the next generation. The most common engineering is mechanical engineering, not electrical. The interest in electrical engineering is not as strong as it should be. You need to improve STEM outreach for electrical engineering." **Academia**
- "There is no reference to the potential environmental implications of AI and that is a major oversight. Instead, AI is being presented as a tool to achieve efficiencies, but NGED really shouldn't be using AI for the sake of it, in view of the damage caused by it. The societal-responsibility angle really needs to come through more prominently in the business plan." **Charity/third sector**
- "I think that the environmental piece could include something around sustainable replacement of poles. Some of your poles are 40-60 years old and you could have an acute issue coming down the track in 20 years around replacing them. It may be worth exploring composite replacements in some circumstances, as they will last longer than traditional poles, despite having a larger carbon footprint for manufacturing and installing them..." **Political - Local government**
- "I think that there is something missing about explicitly stating that you are using environmentally friendly materials in your network. For example, if you use biofuel as a back-up source, please ensure that it's GM-free and contains no palm oil, and then state that." **Political - Local government**
- "While I am happy with your commitments to improve environmental performance and accelerate the roll-out of LCTs, I think that a bigger and more overarching aspect is missing. NGED's single most important role in the energy picture is to be an enabler and leader in delivering clean power for society and in decarbonisation. You don't seem to be owning that mantle in this group of commitments, and it should come through really strongly." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "NGED said at the start they want to be leaders, take the leaders in at least one of the areas, didn't feel like leadership, if you're going to lead, actually do it." **Emergency management - First Responders and Directors**

- "...Really worked in ED2, but they're not doing it now. Feel like it's going back to KPI silos, so they should be using network principles... Needs to be a director responsible for connected thinking. They have people working in local communities, but it needs to happen at all levels..."
  **Interest group - Consultant**

- "...Does NGED know how their emissions break down, and if they use AI, will it skew that? They need to be more comprehensive in the narrative of decarbonising what they do."
  **Political - Local government**

# Session Seven:
## Assessing the Balance of the ED3 Plan



## Session Seven:

**The final presentation was delivered by Chris Hayton, Director of Corporate Affairs, in Birmingham and Julie Taylor, Director of ED3, in Bristol. They were transparent about the cost of the new business plan, showing that they estimate the investment to be £11 billion, which is a £3.1 billion increase from ED2. They emphasised that what was key was getting the balance right between ambition, action, and affordability, and asked stakeholders whether they thought the plan would deliver value for money for customers.**

**Stakeholders were invited to give their feedback on the overall balance of the plan and vote on a number of questions using Slido.**

### Is the Balance Right?

Most stakeholders concluded that the plan broadly strikes the right balance, but their endorsement was qualified and often provisional. This reservation was also witnessed in the Slido voting. When asked how far they agreed with the statement: Overall, NGED's plan represents good value for money, a slim majority, 56%, agreed or strongly agreed, but 34% remained neutral.

The headline increase of around £26 on the average annual bill by 2033, or 50p a week, was widely seen as modest for the scale of change involved. Stakeholders compared it favourably with a streaming subscription or a taxi ride, and with far larger increases in the water sector. Many accepted the underlying logic: an ageing network, accelerating electrification and rising demand make higher investment unavoidable. Several argued that deferring investment would only push larger costs onto future bill payers, and that the cost of not investing deserved more prominence. The allocation of spend was generally accepted, with reliability and connections seen as sensible priorities because they underpin economic growth. Some said they had seen more delivered over the day than they had expected, and that the plan looked like the work of a competent organisation. However, a substantial group felt unable to give a verdict, citing a lack of detail on delivery, baselines, cost-benefit ratios and the "how" behind high-level objectives.

There was more of a split when stakeholders voted on whether the plan will meet the needs of NGED's customers and communities, with 45% agreeing or strongly agreeing, but 17% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and 39% staying neutral. This was perhaps due to a difference of opinion over what communities need: is it the availability of clean power, capacity, or lower bills?

On the ambition side of the scale, a vocal contingent of representatives from supply chain and consultancy argued that a low bill impact reflected a lack of ambition. They felt the pace of change warrants investment closer to double ED2. They also felt the early talk of investment ahead of need had been wound back out of a fear of stranded assets. Stakeholders questioned whether network expansion, the unlooping target and new substations would keep pace with demand. Emerging pressures such as air conditioning in heatwaves, fleet electrification and constraints at bulk and primary supply points were also felt to be underplayed. Others questioned the composition of spend rather than its scale. Several saw the sliver of totex allocated to societal benefits as hard to reconcile with NGED's role as an enabler of decarbonisation and Clean Power 2030.

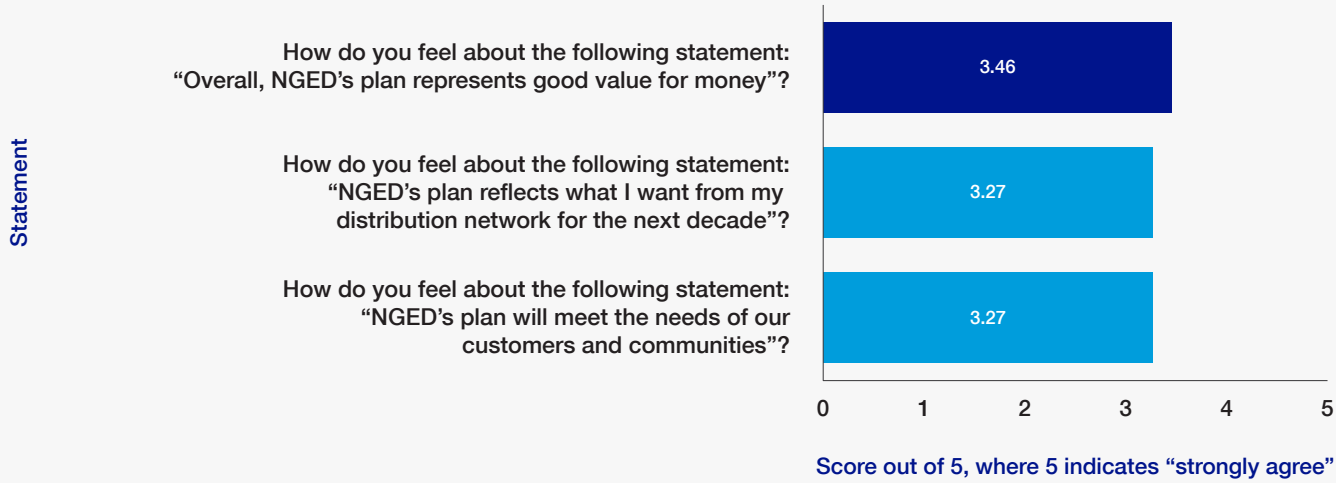
On the affordability side, stakeholders stressed that value for money is not the same as lower bills, and that the same increase lands very differently across society. For better-off households it is a "drop in the ocean" while for those already struggling it adds real strain. Many noted that customers expect bills to fall, having been told by politicians that electrification will make energy cheaper. They warned that a rise of around 25% would be a hard sell if reported in the media. Several questioned whether shareholders, rather than customers, should absorb more of the cost through lower profits and dividends. Others suggested that the fossil fuel industry or general taxation should carry part of the burden. This places a premium on communication. Stakeholders found it hard to explain to customers why half the increase is driven by regulatory finance mechanisms and the rising cost of financing rather than investment, and said NGED needs a clear answer, even if it lies with Ofgem. They also asked for the real-terms basis of the figures to be made plainer, and for clarity on what tangible outcomes customers will see in return. They asked NGED to explain early and plainly why bills are rising, what customers will get, and whether bills will plateau or fall once electrification and efficiency gains take hold.

Whether feeling the ambition was too low, or the spend too high, this feeling of dissent was also evident when stakeholders were asked whether NGED's plan reflects what they want from their distribution network for the next decade. In this vote, 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 51% agreed or strongly agreed, and 26% remained neutral.

For many stakeholders, any judgement on value for money was linked to accountability for delivery. They wanted to know whether NGED will

deliver its ED2 programme in full and on budget before asking customers to fund a larger ED3. They asked for quarterly or mid-period reporting against targets, and a "You said, we did" account of how workshop feedback has shaped the plan. Others argued that the more important balance is between the objectives themselves, not simply between objectives and cost. Local authorities and community energy stakeholders argued that the best route to value is collaboration rather than moremoney. They pointed to place-based working, earlier engagement with communities, shared tools such as land use mapping, and harnessing community resources, all strategies seen as costing little while improving outcomes for every pound spent.

## The Plan Overall




## 1. Does this plan deliver the right balance between investing in the network to meet the needs of our customers and communities, while staying cost-effective and delivering value for money?

- "It's only 50p a week, so the balance does seem to have been struck well." **Political - Local government**
- "...£26 doesn't seem that much compared to a Netflix subscription or a taxi ride. It seems like the right balance..." **Charity/third sector**
- "Much bigger jumps customer bills in other utilities such as water." **Infrastructure**
- "I'm always going to be an evangelist for the electrification of heat and transport. Therefore, it's good to see increased investment in assets in order to achieve this, in contrast to the ED2 approach of getting the most out of the existing network. We have an ageing electricity network, so we need to invest in it. We can't let the electricity industry go the same way as the water industry." **Supply chain**
- "Have NGED really recognised that 'maintaining' is actually a growth position? Just maintaining where they were 3 or 5 years ago actually represents a growth position because there's more demand for electricity. If you spend the same amount in this period to maintain the existing infrastructure, it won't go as far as it did in the last 5-year period because the assets are ageing." **Major Energy User/Large Load User**
- "It's quite hard to get your head around the trade-offs. Where are the impacts of not investing? There's a version of this where we don't invest, and we have to deal with the consequences. In Amsterdam, you can't connect solar because the network is at capacity. There's real value in investing early and getting ahead of the curb." **Charity/third sector**

- "Reliability and connections were the two biggest commitments, and that didn't seem like an unreasonable place to land." **Academia**
- "I think that there is more being delivered than we considered at the start of the day. I hadn't thought about the societal benefits..." **Political - Local government**
- "I'm confident that those who have put the plan together know what they are doing. I think it looks like the type of plan you'd expect from a competent organisation." **Political - National Government**
- "I'm encouraged by what I've seen... But the still unanswered question is the how. I would encourage round tables on the how. It needs consultation." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "I was surprised how little the cost is going to go up. I was surprised how low it was, which reflects the lack of ambition." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The balance isn't right. Given the pace of change, the scale of investment would be something that's double ED2. The level of investment doesn't sound right to me." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "There has not been anything about building to anticipate demand. Originally there was talk about work with no regrets. The business plan is wound back from that. There needs to be more upfront load related upfront investment." **Supply chain**
- "I'm personally worried this business plan won't meet the demand. The network expansion over the next five years won't be enough." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "For ED3, NGED is best characterised as a massive enabler of clean power and societal decarbonisation. On the basis of how timidly you are talking about this in the materials shown today and the small section in the pie chart for 'societal considerations', I feel like you are shying away from this privileged position. You should be more wholeheartedly embracing your position as an enabler for the government's CP2030 target." **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "While resilience is, of course, important, spending 50% of the budget on its feels excessive... It doesn't feel like that there has been a huge step up in the risks in this area since ED2, so, instead, I'm working under the assumption that this is being spent on BAU operations. If that is the case, 50% is way too much..." **Supply chain**
- "Whether the figures are reasonable depends who you are. Vulnerable customers might see it as a lot, but those that are middle earners would be more able to absorb such a cost." **Political - Local government**
- "I am in agreement with the interests of disadvantaged householders. In my mind it's hard to sign off any bill increase, and it'll have such differential impacts. It will be a drop in the ocean for some whereas for others it will be massive..." **Charity/third sector**
- "It's a slap round the face seeing how much extra money people will have to pay. We recently moved to a bigger house, and we've both got well-paid jobs but with the bills we're still really tight on money..." **Political - Local government**
- "I think customers expect bills to be going down, not up." **Interest group - Consultant**
- "The communications issue is wider than just NGED. We had Ed Miliband the other day telling people that energy will be £300 cheaper, but the price cap has just gone up... NGED is suffering from politicians only telling us the good stuff and not the bad stuff." **Political - Local government**
- "I think it's important to remember that National Grid are a business who make a lot of money. It's over a thousand million pounds profit. The dividends are significant. So, if you're looking at whether people need to pay more, or if National Grid could reduce their profit a bit, that is a question that bears asking..." **Energy industry - Infrastructure**
- "Thinking about this from a perspective of cost-effectiveness, it feels really unfair that all of the costs are being lumped on customers to deliver these decarbonisation solutions. The fossil-fuel industry has profited from damaging our planet and necessitating these solutions, and therefore should be made to contribute substantially for them." **Political - Local government**
- "It's a strange message to say your bill is going up by £26, but half of that you won't notice. That first £13 we can't articulate to the customer what it is. You need an answer for that, even if it's Ofgem's fault." **Energy industry - Community Energy**
- "On the issue of cost-effectiveness, it's £11 billion in ED3 compared to £7.1billion in ED2, I want to know if NGED are on track to invest and deliver fully the £7.1 billion by the end of ED2." **Political - Local government**

- "We can see that there is a 25% increase on the last period. To evaluate this, we need to know how you performed in the last period. Did you spend according to the plan or did you go over budget?"
  **Energy industry - Electricity Generation**
- "Maybe at the next event, say how they've taken the feedback on board. Have a You Say We Did. We're not saying you're not doing anything, it would just be good to see this."
  **Charity/third sector**
- "NGED should not just look at the balance between objectives and cost, but between the objectives themselves to make sure that they are pointing them in the right direction."
  **Political - Local government**
- "Cooperative development would be one thing that we are all pushing as a key commitment, and it does not in itself cost any more or less, but it does get the best outcome from the money being spent." **Political - Local government**
- "...How can NGED and other providers harness the energy in all sense of the communities it is working with. Not just money but enthusiasm and the resources contained within that. It is a lonely plan..." **Community-based organisations (CBOs)**

# Executive panel
## Q&A



**In Birmingham, the executive panel comprised Roisin Quinn, Cathy McClay (Managing Director of NGED DSO), Emma Pamplin, Shakeel Butt (Chief Technology Officer at NGED), Yasharn Smith (Director of Safety, Health & Environment & Operations Support at NGED) and Chris Hayton.**

**In Bristol, it was made up of Roisin Quinn, Julie Taylor, Emma Pamplin, Chris Hayton, Amy Webb (Chief Operating Officer), Paul Branston (Director of Regulation), Guy van Nieuwenhove (Director of Commercial and Asset Management) and Tim Polack (Director of Strategy and Transformation).**

**Both panels spoke to a range of pre-submitted questions from stakeholders, which are detailed below.**

**"We've talked a lot about and heard from the presenters today that we're approaching ED3 through the lens of customer needs. How has that changed the way you think about the business?"**

"We've always put the customer at the heart of the organisation. What's different is we've been more forensic about what they actually need from the network. We've translated what we think they need from a solid network into a business plan. It's been helped us make a transformational pivot for the business to think about customer need and deliver to that need, rather than having a network that happens to deliver to a customer." **Roisin Quinn**

"The DSO is only in year four of its formal existence. It was set up to be that voice of the customer, thinking about what we really need on the network. If you look at what we do in the price control now, we write a report every year saying what we've delivered for customers and stakeholders. The first year we weren't good at calculating benefit for customers for ED2. Now we have a report that looks at customer value and works strongly to do that, and that really helped us in devising that plan and delivering the outcomes customers and stakeholders really want." **Cathy McClay**

**"There are quite a lot of questions coming in about customer excellence. Who do you see as the leading customer brands at the moment, and what might NGED learn from them?"**

"This is a great question, because how we benchmark ourselves and how we compare ourselves with others is all about learning what brands from other industries do. If you look at John Lewis, for example, I would say that they're the best at customer trust and advocacy. In addition, Amazon are great at proactive communications and ease of use, Microsoft do well with self-service and digitalisation and Airbnb are strong with customer journeys. We can learn a lot from other DNOs across the sector too. What is most important is taking the learnings from different industries because they all come with different strengths, and that's how our customers judge us, as we are all interacting with these companies every day." **Emma Pamplin**

**"There's clearly a large reliance on AI to deliver future plans. Is there a risk usage becomes too expensive or doesn't deliver what we hope?"**

"It's a great question. There are a number of things we're doing to help mitigate those concerns that span people, process, technology and data. From a people perspective we have an in-house team of data scientists. They are there to drive and support ambitions from an AI perspective. From a technology lens, we built out our own internal machine learning and AI platform. We can train our own models and run those internally, which mitigates the risks of getting AI from bigger brands but allows us to choose either off the shelf capabilities or internal based on the use case. The third lens is process, it allows us to treat a business opportunity as a use case. We can start with a hypothesis, train a model to prove or disprove that hypothesis. We can then evaluate the benefit of using that AI in that case because it can't solve everything. Then data, we can maximise the quality of that data so we're not using AI to fill gaps in that data. We're working throughout all those pieces to build a trajectory going forward." **Shakeel Butt**

**"We've heard today about the work needed on the network, NGED's growing workforce and the commitment to safety. How are you approaching maintaining a strong safety culture in a high-growth environment?"**

"To start, I would say that all of the commitments discussed are fundamentally underpinned by our people. The most core of our values is our people being safe, but we don't want them to be just safe, and that is the shift for our organisation. We're now emphasising on them being safe and well within our strategy for the next five years and deep into ED3. To achieve this, we're building on the work from ED2 and looking to allow people to thrive in a psychologically safe environment. We want people to know that they can stop and speak up when something feels unsafe. Sometimes we take it for granted that that is something that does and should happen, but a lot of work needs to be done to unsure that this occurs every time. My main aim is ensuring that that is a key focus for us in ED3. We're also looking at our partners and our wider supply chain too in order to enable us to deliver the growth needed in ED3. My ambition is to achieve this without harming anyone and that includes our supply chain. Therefore, we have started out on a journey to get out supply chain much more closely

aligned with us in terms of the safety and the health and wellbeing expectations and standards that we want to set in ED3 in order to ensure that the entire wider workforce is continuously safe and well." **Yasharn Smith**

**"How important is it that NGED engages and collaborates with wider industry to deliver this plan in the most innovative way?"**

"Absolutely vital. This period is too big, too exciting, too opportunity filled to pretend any of us can do it alone. We need to create new partnerships and double down on those we already have. We have changed up how we've been innovating around that and we'll be following it up during the year. We want to work transparently, collaboratively, get it wrong in public transparently to ensure we get the best outcome from our customers." **Roisin Quinn**

"I don't actually consider the DSO to be a network business. It's a digital business. It's about managing data insights to drive innovative solutions. It's not just partnering with industry, it's also world class universities. This morning I was at Imperial College to meet post grads and explain the excitement you get in a DSO. It's all really exciting. There are new challenges for innovation. I chair the Innovation Group for challenge 5, which is can we use all our assets to autonomously balance the system and deliver efficiencies. That's important if we're to deliver the system of the future." **Cathy McClay**

**"How does ED3 take into account the assumptions of the NESO and the tRESP?"**

"Part of the DSO's role is planning the system for the future and needing to understand where the demand and new generation will be on it. We've been doing that work through our distributed future energy scenarios (DFES), but we've been limited by just looking at it from our perspective and not looking at the assumptions made about us by other utilities, such as the gas networks. The NESO RESP was established to give us that joined-up point of view. There wasn't time in the first iteration of our business plan to do the entire thing, so, instead, they've been focusing on key drivers: electric vehicles and heat pumps. We've been working closely with the NESO and we've been helping them to understand how we engage with our local authorities and how we find the information, really bringing them up to speed. The RESP will not give you a forecast of what is going to happen on the network, and instead gives you four pathways of how things could turn out. Three meet Net Zero by 2050 and meet the carbon budget at every step of the way, but one of them doesn't. So, we have the scenario to build to, which is a holistic transition and we are monitoring that right now. 96% of the EVs that we are told will be turning up in that scenario have indeed turned up, whereas, for heat pumps, it's only 16%. That got us questioning whether we should be building the network for all of that or should we go for a different balance. As a result, we've been working with Ofgem to emphasise the current balance is not very feasible at the moment due to the discrepancy between electricity and gas prices, but our RESP colleague says that we have to hit the carbon budget. This is why we've moved back from the holistic transition to a lower pathway for heat pumps while still ensuring that all of the big stuff is covered in the primary. Then when all the heat pumps come, we will be ready for those in the secondary. We've really emphasised on striking a balance rather than blindly following the pathway that we were given." **Cathy McClay**

**"We talked in the environment session about fleet and emissions. Is there a reason why we can't have the full fleet EV?"**

"One of our core roles is making sure we can turn up to where the need is at any time and in any weather conditions. In this country we get it all in one day. Being operationally flexible is crucial. Not all of the vehicle types we use today are available as EVs. We're working with different partners to ensure in future years we can have those available. Where they are available, we're making a commitment to be full EV." **Yasharn Smith**

"It's another opportunity for partnership and innovation, so it's an exciting space." **Chris Hayton**

**"Could you provide a bit more information about the bill impact of the proposed investments?"**

"I'd like to return to something that I said this morning: we really want your feedback, ideas and concerns, as we're building this plan with a needs-first approach, while striking a balance between ambition and affordability, between customer service and reliability and between unlocking growth and being disciplined. We have not built a pathway that we do not believe in. We have moderated and pulled back on it, but we're acutely aware that affordability is a very real concern. Every single pound matters, so we will continue to have this conversation about getting that balance right throughout the final stages of building the plan and then delivering it. That commitment to offering great value to our customers isn't going to stop when we get into ED3, so we will continue to chase value as well. To reiterate, we're making decisions that feel very real and don't have an obvious right answer, so that's why this balance is key and why we're grateful to people for taking the time to come this event to share your ideas so that we can keep finetuning. We expect to continue to have this same conversation with officials and Ofgem throughout this process." **Roisin Quinn**

"It just underscores the value of sessions like this. Lots of you have done this event multiple times and your feedback has had meaningful impact. Now you can see meaningful impact in how it has shaped the huge investment involved in this business plan, as we have understood your needs through sessions like these. It shows the value of stakeholder engagement, which will continue through the submission of the plan and beyond." **Chris Hayton**

**"There are two questions here about segmentation. One is the everyday homes category, why did we choose 'everyday homes' as our category title? Will the 'critical infrastructure' category take into account emergency services?"**

"Everyday homes, we had a lot of debates around finding the right terminology. We chose it because it reflects how customers see themselves. We use a lot of terminology around domestic, residential, but does it really reflect customers? What our customers want is their power on, good support when they need it, good communication. The aim of Everyday Homes was to reflect the customer outcomes we are driving." **Emma Pamplin**

"With critical infrastructure, yes, that segment includes any critical infrastructure including emergency services. Those services will be going through electrification. We'll include fleet, we'll look at operations but also making sure that when we look at our customer journeys across the segments to ensure we're designing them in the right way and identifying the specific needs of the segment times. For some areas you'll dial up, other's you dial down depending on their unique requirements." **Emma Pamplin**

**"If we're replacing bits of network on the grounds of resilience, does that simultaneously present an opportunity to increase capacity for growth?"**

"Yes. We have to manage load growth (which is all about the new EV chargers and similar technologies) and then we've got asset management and connections. Although we begin by looking at them separately, we then bring it together in a coordinated plan so that multiple works are aligned and performed on an asset all at the same time. We'd need to have an optimised plan so that we're doing the minimum number of interventions in order to manage that." **Cathy McClay**

"When we are doing upgrades for loads, we'll look at how to make assets climate-resilient and how we standardise our assets when replacing them. On both sides of the coin, you do a cross check, thinking about whether it is the right intervention and whether it does enough, and, if you're doing anything future-ready, you also consider whether it is future-proof." **Roisin Quinn**

**"There are a lot of questions and comments around ambition, making sure we're challenging ourselves, how will the business take what we've heard today and test that before submitting the plan in November?"**

"Some of the answers in the voting surprised me and some I think we need to work through. We will do that. We'll work through all the comments, all the questions, looking at where we need to shift the plan, where we need to explain the plan. That's why we're doing this now before we finish the plan, so we have time to read, sort, collate and changes were necessary. We'll walk that back through the stakeholder group, through assurance explaining how these comments are reflected what we've implemented and the changes we've made. You've given us really rich feedback that means we can improve the plan and see where there are things that are difficult and things that have support." **Roisin Quinn**

"We want this to be a two-way thing. We'll keep badgering you into November and next year." **Chris Hayton**

**"As a final question to the whole panel: what are you most excited about as an opportunity for ED3?"**

"It's the 'So, what?' of all of the investment and the foundational work that we are doing right now in ED2. It's a transformative change from an IT perspective in the business, and, while we have all of this capability landing in the business to drive capability and benefit now, it will only be in ED3 where all of this starts to accelerate. Technology and data weave through all of the different workstreams as an enabling capability. As a result, we will see how all of these different platforms come together as an ecosystem for end-to-end sharing across the business and the deployment of AI in a meaningful and helpful way to drive efficiencies and the right outcomes. What that means for the business and what the business will then become with that technological foundation is really exciting. It's not clear how that will come together right now, but ED3 is that jumping off point." **Shakeel Butt**

"For me, what really gets me excited is about how what we're doing unlocks all the opportunities for you guys in terms of what you're doing at home, in businesses, creating jobs. That's what keeps me coming in every day. It's about unlocking those opportunities in our communities." **Cathy McClay**

"For me, it's the opportunity to be truly customer-centric. I say this because I think that we have made this huge customer shift in ED3 in bringing in stakeholder and customer insight into the development of our plans and out investment cases. As a result, our plan truly reflects what our stakeholders and our customers have been asking us for, and those insights really allow us to be more customer-centric than ever." **Emma Pamplin**

"I think in a period where a lot of organisations are uncertain about their environmental and sustainability commitments, I'm excited we've taken the time to listen to stakeholders and put forward a robust plan. It excites me because it's about doing the right thing and reflecting customer and stakeholder needs as well." **Yasharn Smith**

"I would endorse what has just been said my colleagues on the stage. I would sum it up as having a plan that has been built customer first and being able to deliver the network will be able to deliver that resilience and unlock those opportunities in a way that is truly customer-centric and safe. That is truly exciting to me." **Roisin Quinn**

**"We've run a few of these events now, how have these helped change the plan?"**

"This process, which as Chris mentioned has gone on for over 2 years, I would say has influenced the plan in big and small ways. I couldn't enumerate them all but I'll choose three or four. I think the first thing we got from our largest events was the importance of resilience. It surprised us, the vehemence of feeling of that people flat about it. It's influenced how we thought about the plan and we're planning to improve our services for the worst served. Also, how much our stakeholders wanted us to err on the side of proactivity and not be a blocker. You've asked us to be more proactive about flexibility, we've added in a lot more flexibility expectations. Another change was that we had assumed we'd have a reasonably reactive role in ensuring people had the opportunity to electrify, but we heard from stakeholders that they wanted us to take a proactive approach and act as an enabler and coordinator. The other thing that was really important is that our regulator is a long way from our customers and stakeholder and they rely on us to collect this information." **Julie Taylor**

"The speed and rate of change has been incredible. Has industry kept up with that change? For the first time this year, EVs are cheaper than petrol and diesel cars and for the first time they outsold traditional vehicles. This has enabled us to say to regulators, this is how quickly things are changing and we need to make sure we're keeping up with that rage of change." **Paul Branston**

**"Can you tell us how approaching ED3 through the lens of customer need has changed how you think about the business plan?"**

"NGED care deeply about customers. But our focus and planning was focused around what network do we need for customers. We've flipped that to say what do customers need first and then look at what network do they need to deliver that. What are customer outcomes, and how does that inform the network?. We've been doing that while continuing to tap into the real pride we have for communities and how hard we work for them." **Roisin Quinn**

**"Who do we see as the leading customer brands and what might we learn from them?"**

"What's really important is that we benchmark ourselves beyond utilities. That's how our customer judge us and how we experience the daily world. I'd call out John Lewis for trust and advocacy. Amazon for proactive ease of journeys. First Direct for first contact resolution. Microsoft are excellent with their digitalisation. AirBnb have amazing customer journeys. Other DNOs are also leading in other parts of customer journeys. I think it's important we learn from each other as we all have different strengths but share common elements like easy of journeys, speed of resolution, tailoring to customer needs." **Emma Pamplin**

**"How can people get involved with the schools programme?"**

"Check with the team at the back." **Chris Hayton**

**"How important is it that NGED engages and collaborates with the wider industry?"**

"It's critical. We can't innovate effectively without partners. It's critical to what we want to deliver in ED3. You've given us your views on what you want us to do. We can't deliver those without innovation – new technologies, new infrastructure. There's also a massive opportunity to innovate. The pace of change in data, digital, AI, robotics, drones, monitoring has produced great opportunities to innovate and we can't innovate on our own. We have a new approach to innovation. We're anchoring it in customer outcomes. All our innovation must lean towards one of those customer outcomes. We've got new partnerships and we must collaborate and partner with those groups to deliver the scale of innovation we need and the impact we need to deliver to customers in ED3." **Tim Polack**

"It goes beyond delivery. There's also social impact and a lot of work are around partnerships there. They underpin everything we do." **Chris Hayton**

"We've heard about more work on the network. How are we maintaining a strong safety culture?"
"Today safety is at the heart of everything we do but we recognise the rising need for it. As demand grows, workforce grows. We have to do more to stay safe. It starts at the very beginning of the process. How we design and products we use and how we schedule our work. We use innovative tools for managing scheduling, bundling work but ensuring that workers have the right tools and capacity to do that safely in the right time. Our supply chain is also key. It's not once and done. We have a methodology where we continue to learn, continue to share and ensure we're safer and safer as we move forward." **Amy Webb**

**"Why is long-term planning and whole-system planning important?"**

"It's essential. We're entering a mega growth cycle which means everything is changing. Being able to anticipate where the growth comes from is critical. The biggest risk is blanket investment across regions that means we can't help customers develop what they need and connect with low carbon technologies. It also helps us enable growth alongside asset health investment to ensure we don't invest twice and the whole investment plan is more efficient. Finally, it helps us ensure where possible that we're anticipating where we can make those additional reinforcements, and the sequence of investment to be timed in such a way that overall it costs less. Where we do it, we minimise investment as a whole. We're investing in the right place at the right time." **Guy van Nieuwenhove**

**"We've committed to being transparent about the bill impacts of the plan. Is there anything more that needs to be added on this?"**

"We've covered it extensively, and this is why we ran a session on it. I would like to just reiterate that we are conscious of that balance between affordability and proactively preparing the network for the future and enjoy the benefits of the transition, such as domestic LCT connections or business growth and upskilling. That balance will be the key theme for the rest of the price control. However, affordability will continue to matter for the entire price control and will not fall off the radar after November. That focus on balance and affordability will continue right the way through deliver as well." **Roisin Quinn**

**"If NGED replaces parts of the network on the grounds of resilience, does that also pose an opportunity to increase capacity for growth?"**

"Yes, that is definitely the case. Most of our assets have a lifespan of 40 to 60 years, so anywhere we can anticipate growth accurately will enable us to not install a replacement asset of the wrong size on the grounds of resilience. We can also plan how we do that with our supply chain and our workforce, which also contributes to growth because we can make the right plans to produce it as locally as possible. Without plans, we have to respond quite tactically and rely on non-UK supplies."
**Guy van Nieuwenhove**

**"How is the business going to take the feedback about NGED's level of ambition today and test it prior to November?"**

"It's been incredibly valuable to be challenged on our level of ambition today, as that was the main purpose of the event today. There were definitely areas where stakeholders were saying loud and clear that we needed to be more ambitious and we'll have to explore if and how that could be delivered without further exacerbating the affordability challenge. If we come to the conclusion that stakeholders are right that ambition is lacking in an area, we will build that into the plan." **Julie Taylor**

**"What are the most challenging trade-offs that NGED is having to make in building the business plan?"**

"We have to trade off within the plan and we have been clear that we could reduce the cost further, but we may have remove things that really matter to people in order to do that. For example, an EV charger will save a customer £500 a year, as will heat pumps, so that's why we want to facilitate those kinds of connections. Therefore, that's why we've gone beyond what we can see and focus on the resulting benefits that matter to our consumers, and that's been a balancing act. There's no perfect answer, but we will take the feedback from today and finetune the trade-offs. Everything is interconnected within the business, so we need to have a balanced picture across the entire plan." **Julie Taylor**

**"What is the impact of data centres on the grid and what is NGED doing to ensure that that demand can be absorbed?"**

"Data centres, like any large loads, are very important to us and we're conscious of their potential economic benefits. We want to work in partnership with them, as well as other large loads (such as giga factories and other large industrial clusters), to understand their needs and connections desires, and then co-create solutions. We want to take a co-creation-led approach, looking into connections options, such as timing, capacity and potential curtailment, flexibility or on-site generation. We also want to be innovative in supporting these loads and have some pilots that we want to run to see whether it will get them onto the network faster." **Tim Polack**

"The economic growth opportunities are obvious, but it is underplayed that all customers do benefit when these large loads connect because the cost of our network is spread across a wider group. So, it's in our interest to get them all moving onto our network." **Julie Taylor**

"'Getting onto the network' is the key expression here. We to connect customers, not just contract them. Therefore, the process across Ofgem for the right industry process will be really key to ensuring that projects can connect when they're ready, as opposed to having more people contracted for a connection but can't move forward. Therefore, we will continue to focus on innovation and engagement across industry to get people connected and use the network to its fullest."
**Roisin Quinn**

"We're very proud that, here in Bristol, we've just connected the fourth biggest supercomputer in the world. The big question now is how many more of these and data centres will connect on our patch in ED3. We are ambitious, but the picture of how quickly all of this will move and where is still unknown. Data centres consume huge amounts of electricity and water, so careful planning will be critical." **Paul Branston**

### "Does NGED acknowledge its vital role as a delivery engine in the region?"

"In short, yes, absolutely. We're working to set up the organisation to ensure that it can play that role. Events like this one have been geared around understanding what really matters to customers and communities and what they need for their local areas. They help us to grasp where things are going so that we can anticipate, plan and build things in the right space and make the right trade-offs to keep affordability at the heart of the plan. We see it as a privilege to serve the communities of our patch and ED3 is a pivotal time, and you can't plan the energy sector in silo to other industries, such as housing and transport. Therefore, it's a vital and changing part of our role that we are embracing." **Roisin Quinn**

### "Has NGED got the balance right within the plan?"

"We have tried very hard to be clear about how we have made our trade-offs and how we have considered what should be in the plan and where. I think that we are close to confirming that we have struck the right balance, but we just want to confirm that we haven't missed anything, based on the feedback from today, which would require more tweaks. This conversation about trade-offs will run through the finalisation of the plan, delivery to Ofgem and all the stages that follow. We are confident in the balance of our plan, but some of the feedback has given us pause for thought, so we will check and refine the plan again." **Roisin Quinn**

### "What is the most exciting opportunity presented by ED3?"

"It relates to customer centricity. In ED3, we have made a huge shift in terms of involving stakeholders and customers. We have used the insights that we received to build them into our framework, our investment decisions and our proposals." **Emma Pamplin**

"On top of a customer focus, I would say that it is our role in enabling growth. ED3 will be a mega cycle of growth and I can't be more excited to be enabling connections and local growth. So many industries will benefit from what lies ahead." **Guy van Nieuwenhove**

"For me, it's the role of electrification in renewing the national economy, making energy affordable and secure, and reducing our carbon footprint. Getting electricity out to homes and businesses, connecting local generation and enabling all of our customers to move from fossil fuels to clean power is a vital part of this country's story, and it's just great to be involved in it." **Julie Taylor**

"For me, it's the opportunity to innovate. The pace of change in the world is huge, and we will be in a very different place in 2033, when ED3 ends. That's so exciting, as there are so many different things that we can do to harness new technologies to deliver better outcomes for our customers." **Tim Polack**

"The pace of change is a big one for me. 10 years ago, nobody had heard of distributed generation. Since then, we have connected over 15GW of strategic generation, which hadn't been envisaged at the start of ED1. Who know what the next 10 years will deliver? We know that electricity networks are a key enabler for that, but on demand and on generation. So, we have an exciting opportunity to build the right assets at the right time and in the right place." **Paul Branston**

"The co-creation opportunity is the big one for me. Leaning into co-creating with our customers and communities will provide an opportunity that we cannot truly fathom yet. It is vast, and that's really exciting." **Amy Webb**

"Electricity is fundamentally a force for good and it has changed every facet of our society. We have built this plan together and I am really excited about delivering this plan together. This will mean co-creation, innovation, customer-centricity and playing our part in the growth cycle, meaning that we are doing our part for our communities to deliver economic growth and giving people choice." **Roisin Quinn**

# Appendix 1
## Attendee list

**A total of 202 stakeholders attended the workshops, representing 173 organisations. The organisations represented are shown below:**

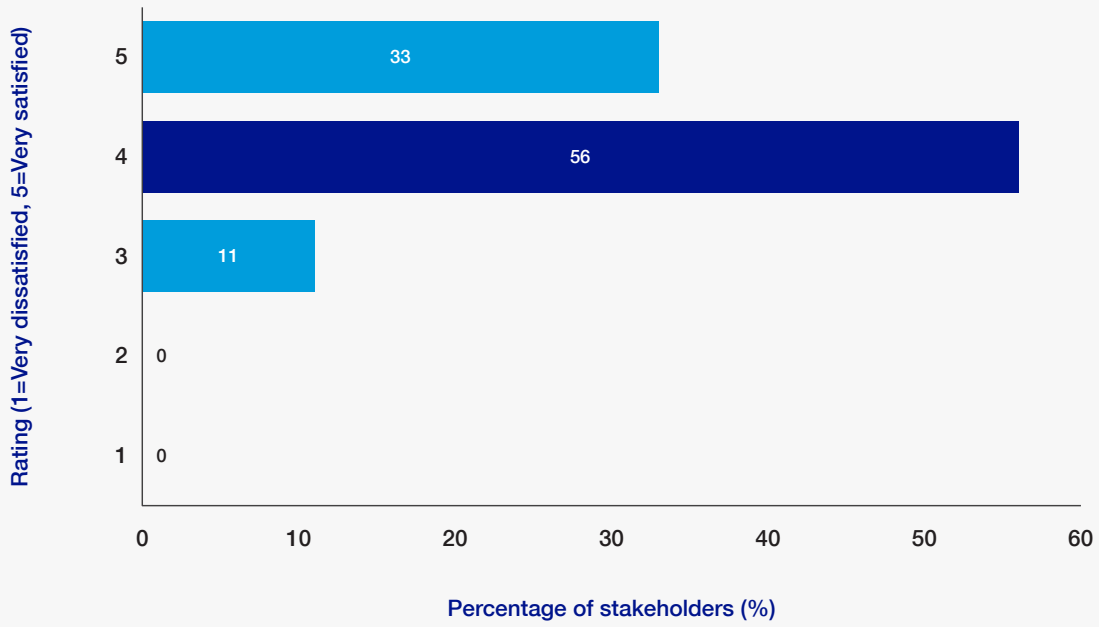
Amey
AMPYR Solar Europe
Anesco
Associated Utility Supplies
AtkinsRéalis
Avon and Somerset LRF
Avon Fire & Rescue Service
Balfour Beatty Power Transmission & Distribution
Baringa Partners
BasePower
Birmingham City Council
Black Country Industrial Cluster (BCIC West Midlands)
Bolsover District Council
Boston Borough Council
Bridgend County Borough Council
Bright Photon
Bristol City Council
British Red Cross
BRUSH Group
Camirus
Camlin Energy
Carbon Free Energy
Cardiff Council
Cast Metals Federation
Caterpillar UK Ltd
Centre for Energy Equality
Centre for Sustainable Energy
Citizens Advice
Citizens Advice Cornwall
Citizens Advice Coventry
Citizens Advice Mid Mercia
Colwich Parish Council
Combe Fields Parish Council
Convergence Technologies & Systems Ltd
Cornwall Council
Cornwall Housing
Cotswold Power
Coventry City Council
CPRE Devon
CPRE Leicestershire
Cwm Arian Renewable Energy
DACI Utilities Engineering Consultancy
Daqo Electric Europe
Devon County Council
Dorset Climate Action Network
DP Building Systems Ltd
EA Technology
East Staffordshire Borough Council
Ecotricity
EDF Energy
EDP Renewables
Electricity Efficiency
Energy Innovation Centre
Energy Saving Trust
Energy Systems Catapult
Era4
Erikson
Fair By Design
Flex Assure
Flotation Energy
Forestry Commission (Westonbirt)
Frazer-Nash Consultancy
Freedom Group
Gedling Borough Council
Gloucester City Council
Gloucestershire County Council
Green Switch Capital
Greenfields Energy Consultancy
Groundwork
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
Heat Pump Association UK
Herefordshire Council
Hermes Energy Services
High Peak Borough Council
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Hinton Blewett Parish Council
Hoare Lea
Hook Norton Low Carbon
Hope 4 U
IBECCS
IDCSL

IM Properties
Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) – NGET
IUK
Kempley Parish Council
Kidney Care UK
Kingswood Town Council
Landulph Parish Council
Lapworth Parish Council
Leicester City Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Low Carbon Alliance
LSTC Group Ltd
Lucy Electric
M Group Energy
Megger
Mid Devon District Council
Midlands Connect
National Energy Action
National Energy System Operator
National Grid DSO
National Trust
Natural Resources Wales
Neath Port Talbot Council
Net Zero Energy Systems
Net Zero Industry Wales
Network Rail
NHS Wales Performance & Improvement
Nortech Management
Nottingham Energy Partnership
Nottinghamshire Police and Derbyshire Police
NTT DATA
OCU Group
Ocular Integration
Ohme
Osborne Clarke
Ovo Energy
Plymouth City Council
Power for Good Co-op
Power On
Prysmian
Qair Renewables UK
Quantail
REG Power Management
Regen
Resilience Network CIC (ResNet)
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Richard Hosking Chartered Surveyor
Rock Power Connections
Rushcliffe Borough Council
Saudi Energy
Schneider Electric
Scope
Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN)
Severn Wye Energy Agency
SevernNet & Tamar Energy Community
Shropshire Climate Action
Shropshire Council
Siston Parish Council
Smarter Grid Solutions
SmartKlub
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Somerset Council (& Avalon Community Energy)
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Sport in Desford
Staffordshire Community Energy (& Chase Community Solar)
Staffordshire County Council
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Stantec
Sustainable Direction Ltd
Swansea Council
Syselek (UK) Ltd
The Clancy Group
The Schumacher Institute
TNEI
University College London
University of Bath
University of Exeter
University of Reading
University of Warwick
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Vine Management Consulting
Voltaria Ltd
Vyntelligence
Wales & West Utilities
Warm Welcome
Warwickshire County Council
Wessex Water
West Midlands Combined Authority
WSP
Wythall Parish Council
Yes Energy Solutions
Ynni Teg

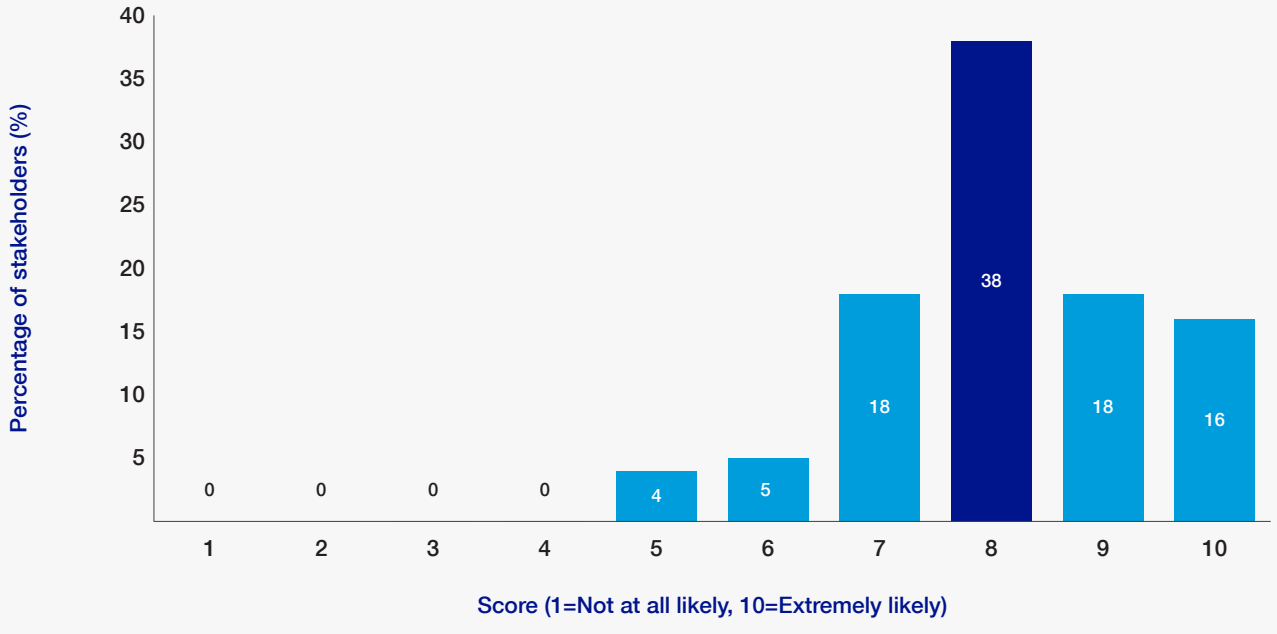
# Appendix 2
## Workshop feedback

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

### 1. Overall, how satisfied were you with today's event?



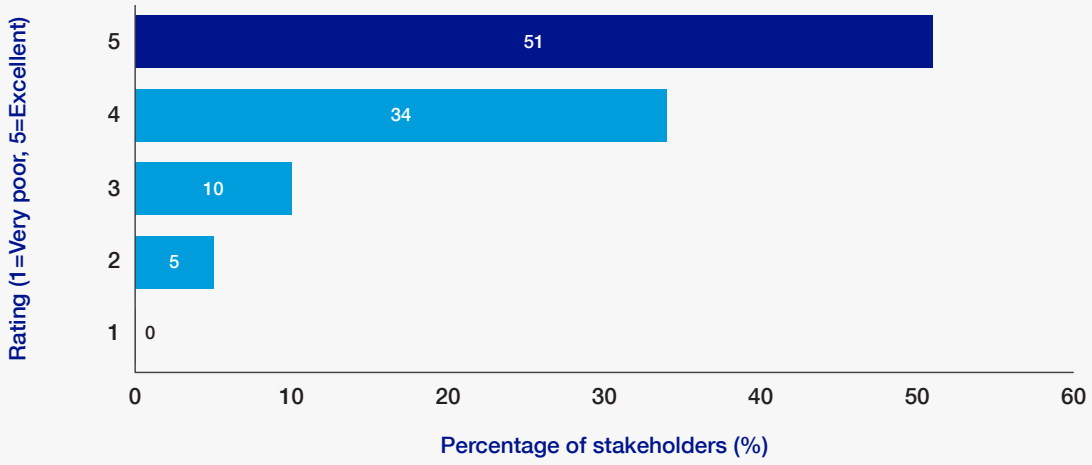

### 2. How likely are you to recommend this event?



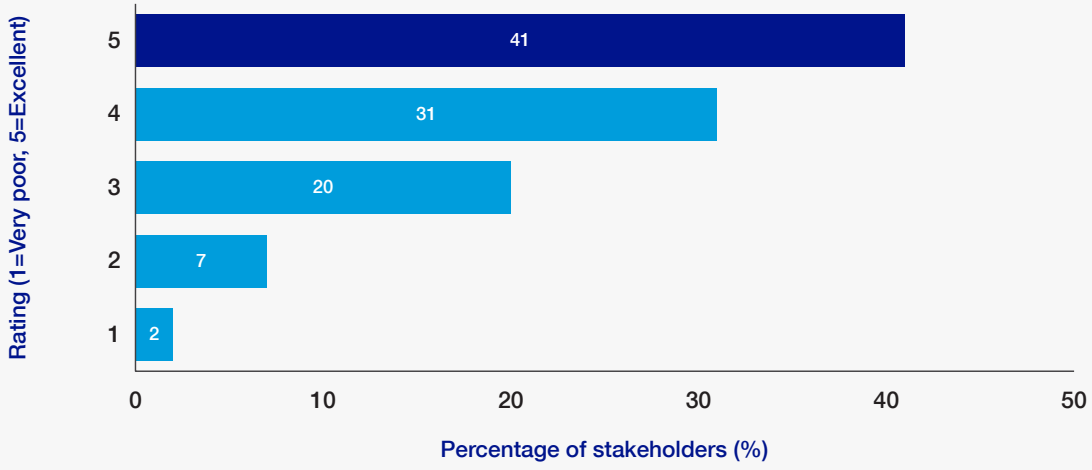
## 3. What did you find most useful during the event?

- "Clear categories for feedback with a standard approach to questions, led to efficient feedback opportunities."
- "Well split sessions, timed well. Facilitators were very good at driving engaging conversation."
- "Networking during breaks. Round table discussions were really well structured and useful. Sharing knowledge with those from very different industries."
- "Opportunity to feed in vulnerable customer perspective. Chance to learn & network."
- "Interactive opportunities. Brilliant group facilitation, clear presentations, welcoming input."
- "Trying to understand how we can support NGED during the delivery of NGED's priorities throughout ED3. Great in person for us to gather what matters to others in the room. Ensure our organisations are aligned."
- "The insight in the presentations felt like a sneak peek and I did feel valued to be able to see them and give my reflections."
- "Helpful opportunity to feed in and hear the insights from the Exec team during the closing Q&A."

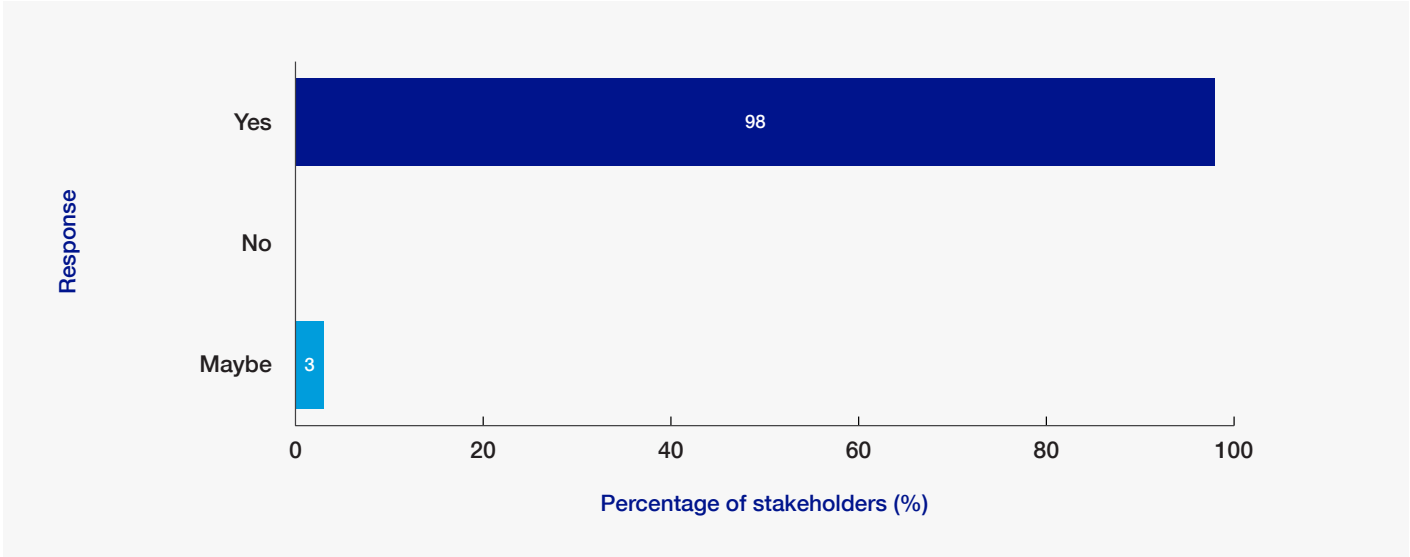
## 4. How would you rate the event venue?



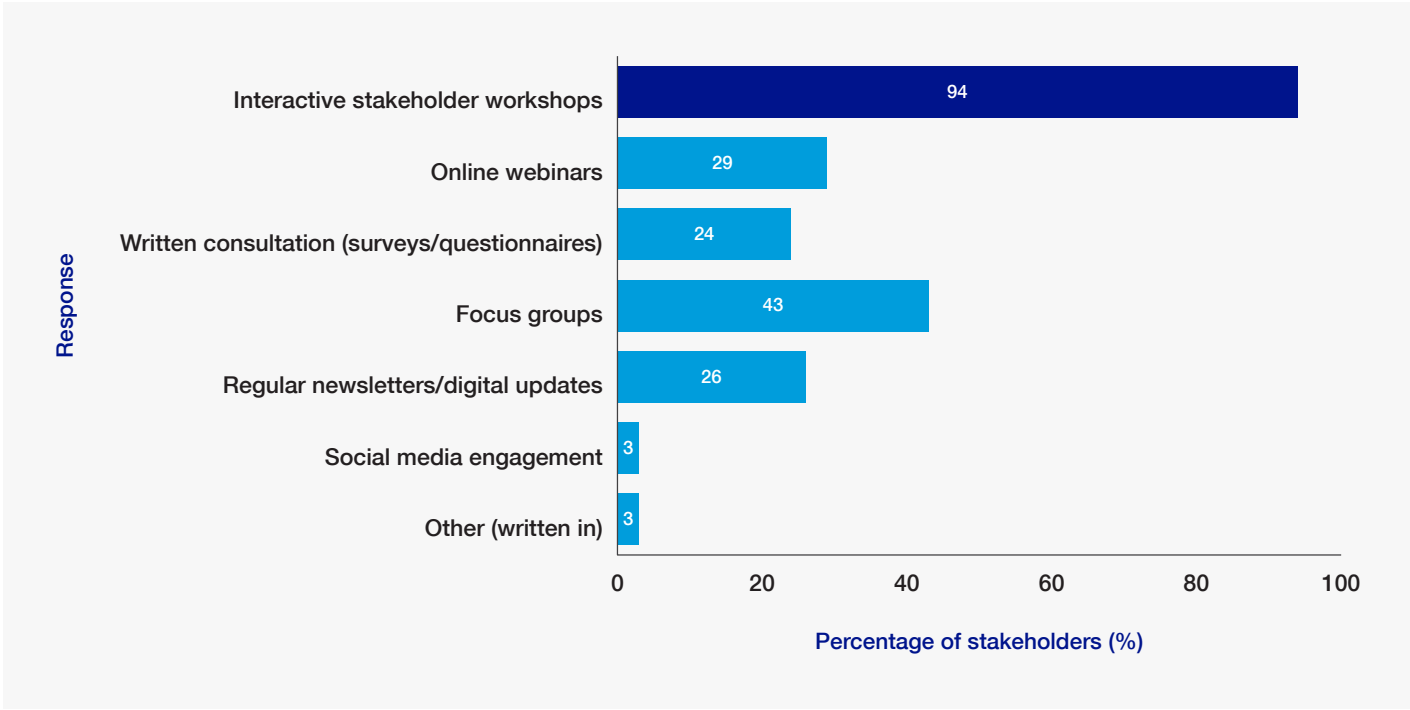

## 5. How would you rate the venue location?



## 6. Would you like to continue engaging with us as we deliver our ED3 Business Plan?




## 7. What format would you like future engagement to take?



## 8. What future topics would you like to engage with us on?

- "Better visibility of capacity, constraints + future investment. Partnership and collaboration work."
- "Short-, medium- & long-term milestones in geographical planning."
- "Large infrastructure upgrades in local areas (one of the constraints when we applied for solar)."
- "Make every contact count. Opportunities to support vulnerable customers to access advice & support. DNO's role in energy efficiency & supporting customers through transition."
- "How to accelerate community energy delivery – can we match opportunities with new connections for direct wire or virtual PPAs?"
- "How we, as Balfour Beatty, are able to support during ED3 and in particular the growth challenge against skill shortages."
- "Exercising power outage plans (multi-agency)."
- "Coordination and acceleration of place-based local energy transitions."

## 9. Do you have any additional comments?

- "Food was good, Slido worked well, facilitation was very good."
- "Great disability/accessibility provision – thank you."
- "Really good sessions today. Very thought provoking. Thank you!"
- "Great breakout sessions."
- "The ED3 events have provided a good insight into NGED plans – thank you, would hope that opportunities for engagement continue."
- "The EQ facilitator was fab though!"
- "Thank you for another very interesting day. It was nice to be present in person the first time I came along – online is second best but much better than not participating."
- "The comments from Exec team around co-creation of opportunities, right assets, right time, right place, etc, were very progressive and well aligned with [my organisation]'s position. The ED3 proposals are a positive step in that direction."

# Appendix 3
## Electronic voting data detail

| Statement | Score out of 5 | % Strongly disagree | % Disagree | % Neutral | % Agree | % Strongly Agree | Don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver value for money in ED3: "Turn proven innovation into customer value"? | 3.93 | 2% | 2% | 18% | 56% | 22% | 17 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver value for money in ED3: "Unlock capacity at the lowest cost for our customers"? | 3.87 | 4% | 2% | 15% | 60% | 19% | 19 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver value for money in ED3: "Grow our workforce to meet future needs"? | 3.78 | 5% | 5% | 21% | 43% | 25% | 11 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver value for money in ED3: "Reduce costs and improve efficiency in our supply chain"? | 3.74 | 4% | 11% | 17% | 45% | 24% | 9 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver value for money in ED3: "Use AI and innovation to drive efficiency"? | 3.53 | 3% | 10% | 31% | 40% | 15% | 13 |
| How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver value for money is ambitious enough"? | 2.89 | 6% | 28% | 40% | 23% | 3% | 22 |

| Statement | Score out of 5 | % Strongly disagree | % Disagree | % Neutral | % Agree | % Strongly Agree | Don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver engaged and confident customers in ED3: "Develop flexibility markets to meet local and national needs"? | 3.79 | 4% | 1% | 24% | 52% | 19% | 17 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver engaged and confident customers in ED3: "Provide access to better network data, to inform decisions"? | 3.77 | 4% | 9% | 13% | 56% | 19% | 7 |
| How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver engaged and confident customers is ambitious enough"? | 2.73 | 5% | 36% | 41% | 18% | 1% | 17 |

| Statement | Score out of 5 | % Strongly disagree | % Disagree | % Neutral | % Agree | % Strongly Agree | Don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a more reliable and resilient network in ED3: "Strengthen our cyber defences to protect customers and the network"? | **4.10** | 5% | 3% | 10% | 41% | 41% | 4 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a more reliable and resilient network in ED3: "Maintain exceptional average network reliability and improve performance for those who experience the most power cuts"? | **3.78** | 2% | 8% | 15% | 61% | 15% | 11 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a more reliable and resilient network in ED3: "Transform our network's resilience to a changing climate"? | **3.78** | 0% | 6% | 24% | 56% | 14% | 3 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a more reliable and resilient network in ED3: "Grow network capacity"? | **3.75** | 4% | 7% | 16% | 54% | 18% | 7 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a more reliable and resilient network in ED3: "Ensure customers can rely on a safe, resilient and high-performing network"? | **3.70** | 3% | 8% | 18% | 57% | 14% | 7 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a more reliable and resilient network in ED3: "Use data and AI for smarter decisions"? | **3.64** | 3% | 6% | 31% | 43% | 17% | 9 |
| How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver a reliable and resilient network is ambitious enough"? | **2.95** | 3% | 35% | 26% | 33% | 2% | 11 |

| Statement | Score out of 5 | % Strongly disagree | % Disagree | % Neutral | % Agree | % Strongly Agree | Don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a great customer experience in ED3: "Proactive, targeted support for vulnerable customers"? | **4.13** | 2% | 2% | 8% | 56% | 32% | 3 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a great customer experience in ED3: "Keep customers proactively informed about outages, with clear, real-time communications"? | **4.06** | 4% | 1% | 12% | 50% | 32% | 2 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a great customer experience in ED3: "Provide targeted support during named storms for vulnerable and medically dependent customers"? | **4.03** | 4% | 2% | 12% | 49% | 32% | 1 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver a great customer experience in ED3: "Set and measure a new standard for customer service improving support through simpler, tailored services"? | **3.67** | 2% | 7% | 27% | 51% | 13% | 7 |
| How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver a great customer experience is ambitious enough"? | **3.28** | 3% | 20% | 29% | 44% | 5% | 2 |

| Statement | Score out of 5 | % Strongly disagree | % Disagree | % Neutral | % Agree | % Strongly Agree | Don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver timely connections in ED3: "Co-create solutions for complex connections"? | 3.99 | 2% | 4% | 14% | 53% | 27% | 16 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver timely connections in ED3: "Proactively unloop homes, making them ready for low-carbon technologies"? | 3.93 | 3% | 7% | 10% | 54% | 26% | 11 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver timely connections in ED3: "Simple, standardised, digital-first connections"? | 3.71 | 2% | 8% | 18% | 63% | 9% | 8 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver timely connections in ED3: "Efficient, timely delivery of large connection works"? | 3.52 | 0% | 13% | 26% | 57% | 4% | 10 |
| How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver timely connections is ambitious enough"? | 3.13 | 4% | 20% | 38% | 35% | 3% | 12 |

| Statement | Score out of 5 | % Strongly disagree | % Disagree | % Neutral | % Agree | % Strongly Agree | Don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver societal benefits in ED3: "Enhance support for local and community energy"? | 3.92 | 3% | 5% | 13% | 55% | 24% | 2 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver societal benefits in ED3: "Coordinate and accelerate the rollout of low-carbon technologies (LCTs)"? | 3.85 | 2% | 7% | 14% | 59% | 18% | 3 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver societal benefits in ED3: "Create a safety and wellbeing culture"? | 3.80 | 3% | 4% | 24% | 51% | 19% | 8 |
| Do you feel that the following commitment will help deliver societal benefits in ED3: "Transform our network's environmental performance"? | 3.39 | 3% | 13% | 31% | 47% | 5% | 4 |
| How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan to deliver societal benefit is ambitious enough"? | 2.85 | 2% | 40% | 31% | 25% | 2% | 5 |

| Statement | Score out of 5 | % Strongly disagree | % Disagree | % Neutral | % Agree | % Strongly Agree | Don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How do you feel about the following statement: "Overall, NGED's plan represents good value for money"? | **3.46** | 4% | 7% | 34% | 51% | 5% | 11 |
| How do you feel about the following statement: "NGED's plan reflects what I want from my distribution network for the next decade"? | **3.27** | 3% | 20% | 26% | 49% | 2% | 6 |
| How do you feel about the following statement: "NGED's plan will meet the needs of our customers and communities"? | **3.27** | 2% | 15% | 39% | 44% | 1% | 8 |

National Grid plc
National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill
Warwick CV34 6DA
United Kingdom

**nationalgrid.com**

Oct 2026. ForgeCreative/JG