



Critical Friends' Panel

Bristol 28th June and Cardiff 3rd July

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Introduction

Wales & West Utilities is deeply committed to ensuring inclusive and proactive engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. The Critical Friends' Panel (CFP) plays a crucial role in the company's ongoing programme of engagement, providing a forum for key stakeholders to scrutinise and refine the company's business activities.

The CFP meets twice yearly, in June and December to discuss a range of topics, including, but not limited to: social obligations (helping customer in vulnerable situations and in fuel poverty); CO poisoning, prevention and awareness; the future of energy; connections; customer service; major incident planning; innovation; protecting the environment; smart metering; and theft of gas. In addition, stakeholders were asked to comment on the prioritisation of the above activities given at the wider stakeholder workshops, held earlier in the year.

EQ Communications (EQ) was appointed, as a specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, to support the Panel's facilitation and neutrally report back on the outputs.

This report summarises the discussions which took place at the Panel events held on June 28th and July 3rd, in Cardiff and Bristol, respectively.



Attendees

A total of nineteen stakeholders attended the events. Senior representatives of Wales & West Utilities were in attendance, including Chief Executive, Graham Edwards, and board Directors: Mark Oliver; Sarah Hopkins; and Steve Edwards. The full list of attendees at both events is shown below.

Wales & West Utilities Critical Friends Panel Cardiff 28 June 2017			
Title	First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Mr	Ian	David	Bridgend County Borough Council
Mr	Phil	Bowen	Cardiff University
Mr	Ian	Preston	Centre for Sustainable Energy
Mr	Charles	De Winton	Country Landowners Association
Mr	Ben	Rhodes	Devon and Cornwall Business Council
Mr	Mark	Harris	Home Builders Federation
Ms	Carole	Morgan-Jones	National Energy Action
Mr	Tomos	Davies	National Energy Action
Mr	Steve	Mayall	Natural Resources Wales
Mr	Andrew	Healy	RWCMD
Ms	Jayneann	Hamilton	Warm Wales
Mr	Steve	McElveen	SMS Plc
Mr	James	Garland	EQ Communications
Ms	Vicky	Houghton-Price	EQ Communications
Mr	Graham	Edwards	Wales & West Utilities
Mr	Mark	Oliver	Wales & West Utilities
Mr	Steve	Edwards	Wales & West Utilities
Ms	Elizabeth	Warwick	Wales & West Utilities
Mr	Reece	Emmitt	Wales & West Utilities
Ms	Nicola	Evans	Wales & West Utilities
Mr	Lee	Jefferies	Wales & West Utilities

Wales & West Utilities Critical Friends Panel Bristol 3 July 2017			
Title	First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Mr	William	Baker	Citizens Advice
Mr	Brett	Higham	Cornwall Housing
Mr	Graham	Ayling	Energy Saving Trust
Mr	Paul	Dyke	Gas Safe Register
Mr	Phil	Cameron	Gloucestershire County Council
Captain	Annette	Allen	Salvation Army
Mr	Jon	Maddy	University of South Wales
Mr	James	Garland	EQ Communications
Ms	Vicky	Houghton-Price	EQ Communications
Mr	Graham	Edwards	Wales & West Utilities
Ms	Sarah	Hopkins	Wales & West Utilities
Mr	Steve	Edwards	Wales & West Utilities
Ms	Elizabeth	Warwick	Wales & West Utilities
Mr	Reece	Emmitt	Wales & West Utilities

Executive summary

Both panels began with an introduction from Graham Edwards, Chief Executive of Wales & West Utilities. He explained to the panellists the work the company had been doing over the past year to meet and exceed its RIIO business performance targets.

The first discussion topic centred on the company's social obligations. This was introduced by Mark Oliver, Director of Business Services. The company's work to support **customers in vulnerable situations** was praised although panellists felt more could be done to collaborate with other utilities to share data. It was commented that **supporting the fuel poor** should remain a key priority, especially as many initiatives are under pressure from cuts to local authority funding. **CO poisoning prevention and awareness** remains Wales & West Utilities top priority according to stakeholders. Panellists suggested that monitors should be given to customers in line with the rollout of smart meters, although many felt that suppliers should be playing a more active role.

The next discussion session was introduced by Steve Edwards, Director of Regulation and Commercial. On the subject of the **future of energy** the panellists were of the view that too great an emphasis has been placed on the electrification of energy and that the Government ought to do more to promote and support alternative gas. The company's work to reduce delays and offer more compensation for missed **connections** targets was widely supported by the panellists. There was also praise for Wales & West Utilities' high levels of **customer service** and it was felt that these should be maintained. The point was made that **innovation** was important and that the company ought to do more to show customers how new technology is being used. The topic of **protecting the environment** was not discussed at the panels due to time constraints but it was agreed that this would be discussed in detail at the next panel.

Reece Emmit, Media and External Communications Officer, explained the work the company had recently undertaken in **major incident planning**. The need for greater collaboration with local authorities and the emergency services was emphasised by those in attendance. It was noted that there is a certain amount of apathy on the part of the public towards **smart metering** and that more ought to be done to explain the benefits to customers, especially if the 2020 target for the smart meter rollout is to be met. It was also pointed out that smart meters would make it easier for Wales & West Utilities to address the problem of **theft of gas**.

Panellists at both events were asked to give their views on the company's priorities for the coming year. The fact that social obligations priorities continued to be ranked so highly was praised and, although it was no surprise that smarter metering remained the lowest priority according to stakeholders, it was felt that this topic would rise in importance in the coming years.



Workshop 1:

Customers in Vulnerable situations

In this session, the panel members were asked to review the work that Wales & West Utilities had carried out over the previous year and to comment the feedback given by stakeholders at the locational workshops which took place in May. They were then talked through the company's plans for the future. The presentation given to the panel on this topic can be viewed by following the links below (slides 11 – 15).

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

All attendees were of the view that more collaboration between partners is a good thing but the point was made at the Cardiff workshop that ideas must be translated into tangible actions for customers in vulnerable situations.

In Bristol, Wales & West Utilities' work to reach out to people in vulnerable situations was praised and there were a number of suggestions as to how to ensure that they are made aware of the assistance that is available.

Discussion at both workshops led on to issues surrounding the sharing of PSR data and the need to make this easier. It was seen as positive that steps are being taken to overcome some of these issues as utilities are working to collaborate more. It was added greater standardisation and the avoidance of duplicating good work should be a priority for all utilities.

"Your plans in this area look good to me, and reflect what we've talked about when we've met before: the dementia awareness work, reaching people in doctors surgeries, churches, mosques etc. so that people know about the support, and warm packs. These are all things that have come up before, so well done."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"We held a workshop where all the south west utilities came...the general consensus was that if utilities all used the same vulnerable customer survey we'd have a far bigger pool of information. All these networks have done some vulnerability mapping, but people are overlapping and using different systems to measure the same thing – research should be a shared effort if you are all seeking the same information."

Housing Representative (Cardiff)

"We had a fantastic conference [the Stronger Together conference which took place in December 2016] with lots of different organisations represented - we've followed up following the conference because there were a lot of contributions not just from the platform but the floor – there was a lot of networking, and another conference would be great."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

"I believe my colleagues in the policy team are creating a PSR tool which merges information from different services – it is still on-going but it could be worth you talking with that team – it is across all regions and all kinds of utility companies - Jake Bevan is leading on this if you need someone to get in contact with."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"Everyone tends to think of doctors surgeries [as a way of reaching people in vulnerable situations] but there are lots of other health sector pathways that can be more fruitful. We've got lots of pathways that we use, e.g. for cold weather health issues, we've gone via respiratory nurses, and health sector pathways for different, more specific illnesses rather than always thinking of doctors' surgeries."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"The problem is that it takes a long time for conversations to turn into changes in practice. If Wales & West Utilities could encourage practical networking as much as possible that would be hugely positive."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

Supporting the Fuel Poor

Stakeholders were asked to review the work that Wales & West Utilities had carried out to support the fuel poor before commenting on the company's plans for the future. More information can be found on slides 17 – 20 of the below presentations.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

Stakeholders in Cardiff offered lots of examples of schemes which work well in this area, such as the Ecoflex fund. Concern was raised that the success of new schemes to support the fuel poor depends on both the expertise of local authority staff and the level of funding that local authority receives – which presents an obvious challenge in the current economic climate. At the Bristol workshop, stakeholders were keen to move onto the next topic for discussion: CO poisoning prevention and awareness.

"It's useful to use trusted organisations like housing associations to help implement new technologies. Average people don't know who Wales & West Utilities are. Organisations they are familiar with should lead in bringing these services to customers."

Local Authority Representative (Cardiff)

"In our 'Warm and Well' scheme we gave some money towards a white goods project, it might be good to talk with you."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

"Housing authorities have universal credit support schemes – such as the pilot scheme running in Plymouth – and everyone there is in arrears and there's a lot of work trying to help tenants with universal credit – and if you could work with that it would be good."

Business Representative (Cardiff)

"The hardship fund sounds amazing because you empower the people working directly with customers, you can tell stories that this engineer identified this issue and allowed the customer to access the hardship fund. In my experience old people read newspapers all the time and a lot of people at home alone read newspapers so any press you create about this – they will pick up, and it would be good for them to hear about what you do."

Academic Institution Representative (Cardiff)

"There is always going to be a problem with trusting the utilities, [customers] just see the bills from the utilities and there should be a separate understanding of who you are as a distributor, separate from the suppliers – but right now that isn't there."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

"With fuel poor hubs, you work with Cardiff and Flintshire which is local authority led. I have a word of caution, it might be a little more difficult to expand in Wales because most of the local authorities aren't up to the minute on affordable warm schemes, that's a big barrier we've found."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

"South west wise, when looking at local councils, if you want to know which councils have teams to actually work on this then there is an Ecoflex funding forum where councils have to set out intent – the councils who follow through with that have active people so may be good to talk to."

Energy Representative (Cardiff)

"Ecoflex is entirely up to the local authorities and how they want to do it. There is guidance about what people should do, but the administrative overhead attached to trying to prove that someone is low income/ high cost is huge."

Energy Representative (Cardiff)

CO Poisoning

In this discussion session, stakeholders were asked to review the work carried out to date in this area as well as proposals for future activities. These can be viewed by clicking on the links below and looking at slides 22 to 25.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

Stakeholders were impressed by what Wales & West Utilities have been doing in this area but it was commented that it is difficult to see how effective many of these initiatives actually are. It was added in Cardiff that suppliers should be doing more and may have a greater responsibility to do so than the distributors.

In Bristol, stakeholders suggested that the Smart Meter rollout may provide an opportunity to install CO monitors. However, it was noted that some people, particularly the less well off may be reluctant to install smart meters. The suggestion was also made that more engagement with local authorities, private landlords and the emergency services could only be a good thing.

"It would be good to see some stats on how successful the work you do is in actually reducing incidents."

Academic Institution Representative (Cardiff)

"It's all well and good to roll an education program out but how do you assess that this is being understood – how are you assessing that to see it's going in?"

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"I would imagine this is a particular problem in the private rented sector – could you publicise CO monitors in private landlord streams of communication (e.g. at the Bristol private landlords forum). It tends to be the more responsible landlords who attend those, but it is a good way of getting info out there."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"Your part of the bill is 15-16% - what you do in this area is fantastic, but what are the suppliers doing? It is more their responsibility than yours, and they are the ones with the relationship with customers."

Smart Meter Specialist (Cardiff)

"I'd like to flag up something with the installation of smart meters. A lot of technicians go in and find faulty equipment that they have to condemn, and people don't want to have to get new appliances so don't want these technicians to come. You might want to be careful once the smart meters roll out in earnest. Many appliances will be condemned and customers may stop people from coming over who will tell them they need to change their boilers."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"It is very heartening to hear that Wales & West Utilities are doing the right thing morally by taking a responsibility in these areas. From my perspective, it's really shaming that other utility companies are having to be dragged kicking and screaming to do something about it. If you publicised what you do a bit more and let the politicians know about it, you would probably get more support and put more of a spotlight on the companies who are doing absolutely nothing."

Local Authority Representative (Cardiff)

"I was going to suggest, you talk of partnership with fire and rescue. Could you not get them to install the alarms? Because I've spoken to a number of different services who can back this up who need the training."

Engineering Representative (Bristol)

"There's nothing in there about communicating with local authorities who have a lot of knowledge about vulnerable customers."

Local Authority Representative (Bristol)

Workshop 2:

Future of energy

The panel members were asked to review feedback received at the locational workshops as well as the actions that are already in train. In addition they were asked to comment on Wales & West Utilities' planned activities. This can be viewed on slides 29 – 32 by clicking on the links below.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

The focus for much of the discussion in Cardiff was on how much landowners and farmers are engaged with new technology relating to the future of gas. The response was mixed with a conclusion that things will only change when there is [Government] funding, and when people are pushed to make changes. There was a note of caution raised relating to the conflating of UK and Welsh Government activities in this area. It was noted that there are Wales specific efforts in this area that should be taken into consideration.

It was commented that the switch to renewables is happening far more quickly and at a higher cost than anticipated and that this places a greater reliance on the gas network. It was also commented that the electrification of energy as a standalone solution is not sufficient and that the Government should place a greater emphasis on alternative gas.

"In all our future of energy work we've been really open minded about the different views – but I've looked at stuff that says switching to renewables is happening a lot, lot faster than thought and that the Cost of Energy report is already far behind about cost projections."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"You should engage with Lesley Griffiths [Welsh Assembly Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs]. She is looking at new ways to make more green energy. Wales is always a bit different from England. One of the issues we have with the differences is that companies make Wales less competitive by focussing on developments in England, making it hard for Wales to catch up".

Housing Representative (Cardiff)

"I think that farmers are now mainly concerned with how Brexit is going to impact their businesses. Our members and landowners generally want to look at every opportunity and farm owners create a lot of muck, the new chicken houses emerging (due to the increased consumption of white meat) create, again, lots of gas – a economical use for this will of course be relevant to farmers."

Agricultural Representative (Cardiff)

"In Wales we run the local energy program for the Welsh Government and have a network of development officers working locally, we have a lot meetings that may be good for you to attend. If this is a new market it would be really interesting to see – it supports SSE's too to find farmers and communities who would be interested in that."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"There is a lot of potential here [in biogas] but, until people *have* to make changes - when change is actively pushed in their direction (which Brexit might do), and until there is funding from Government, nothing will happen. We need more Government money to help, then we might see some changes. This is what happened with wind and solar power."

Agriculture Representative (Cardiff)

"I've always felt the Government's electrification dream is a bit flawed and green gas is better – although I'm not convinced that hydrogen cities will work out due to storage safety."

Energy Representative (Cardiff)



Connections

Wales & West Utilities' current and future plans in this area can be viewed by clicking on the below links and viewing slides 34 – 37.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

Stakeholders were impressed by Wales & West Utilities' connections targets and personal experience was generally positive. However, there was agreement that the extra compensation for delayed connections was less important than reducing the delays in the first place.

"I remember a few years back the Government was producing a comprehensive heat strategy. I thought they were updating it – but I haven't heard the latest."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"It would appear that hydrogen plants etc. are important, but involve a lot of money, and farmers can't prioritise that."

Agriculture Representative (Cardiff)

"Within our industry we often talk about what's happening in the UK - Wales and England combined – but, in terms of future initiatives, you have to work with the Welsh Government directly as they have their own schemes, priorities and funding."

Housing Representative (Cardiff)

"In terms of the customer, was that approach (greater compensation for delayed connection) supported by them because often in the bigger picture, the penalty is nothing, its meeting the target that is more important."

Housing Representative (Cardiff)

"We use the connections service fairly regularly and we've never had any problem with it."

Engineering consultant (Cardiff)

"The public highway is going to be impacted by any gas connections – our customers are the same people as yours but our pressures are different - I think that we get blamed by utilities and customers for delaying that process but we do want to do the best we can, and I think that needs to be translated to your customers, because they are council tax payers, we are working for the same people."

Local Authority Representative (Bristol)

Customer service

For an overview of Wales & West Utilities' current performance and future proposed activities in this area, click on the links below and go to slides 39 – 42.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

Stakeholders were impressed by Wales & West Utilities' high scores in satisfaction surveys and they were pleased to hear that they are standardised, independent assessments.

There was consensus that Wales & West Utilities should continue to be as people facing and contactable as possible.

There was consensus that Wales & West Utilities' customer service is very good and that, so long as quality is maintained, not much needs to be done. It was, however noted that often the work undertaken by Wales & West Utilities impacts more people than those who may be identified in surveys as customers.

"Given that the supply companies don't exactly have a resounding reputation among customers – you must get tarred with the same brush."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"You care about that person you work for, the direct customer, but you don't care about the people who you pass when helping one customer when you dig up the roads to lay new pipes etc, you affect a wide group, all the cars who have to get diverted etc. – it's more than just the people who respond to your surveys."

Local Authority Representative (Bristol)

"It's not just the specific domestic customers (who take your surveys) who are affected by your engineering works – it affects highways, the general area etc."

Engineering Representative (Bristol)

"I suppose it's great to hear about you responding to tweets etc. but, when you go back to thinking about vulnerable customers, if you focus too much on social media – people will be missed. I find it harder and harder to find an actual phone number, with pretty much all companies these days."

Housing representative (Cardiff)

"Yes, I agree, just earlier a colleague commented that they were getting in contact with Welsh Water and for the first time in ages, you call and you're speaking to a real person."

Local Authority Representative (Cardiff)

"I think the important thing is we've got to work together, and it is very rare that my team blame the utility company, but we do face a lot of your complaints."

Local Authority Representative (Bristol)

"It's not just the specific domestic customers (who take your surveys) who are affected by your engineering works – it affects highways, the general area etc."

Engineering Representative (Bristol)

Innovation

To review Wales & West Utilities' work in innovation and the company's planned activities, please click on the links below and view slides 43 – 47.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

This topic wasn't discussed at length in Cardiff but was brought up later on as an area that, given more time, stakeholders would like to have discussed in more detail.

It was commented in Bristol that Wales & West Utilities should communicate more with customers about their use of innovative new technology.

"I'd like to see Wales & West Utilities' stand out on their own and collaborate less with some of the other distributors who are less good in terms of engineering quality. What I'm seeing is a 'race to the bottom' where the standards are very low across distributors and quality is being compromised. If the utilities work too much as a group then the overall quality comes down. Collaboration is great but I think the innovation that Wales & West Utilities have always done on their own is a better place to focus."

Local Authority Representative (Cardiff)

"I think that the live gas mains insertions that you do are really clever. If you can show people that someone is trying to do something that is a bit different, people may be more understanding of the disruption it causes. I think what you are doing is good, but not everyone can see that."

Local Authority Representative (Bristol)



Protecting the environment:

Wales and West Utilities' work in this area can be seen by clicking on the links below and viewing slides 47 – 49.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

Discussion on this subject was limited at both workshops as stakeholders were keen to learn more about major incident planning.



Workshop 3:

Major incident planning

Wales & West Utilities' current and proposed activities in this area can be seen on slides 54 – 56 of the presentation. Please follow the links below.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

Smooth collaboration between all services supporting major incidents was discussed at length at both panels. It was noted that while collaboration between local authorities, and other organisations is a good thing, sometimes too much collaboration can confuse responses to major incidents – and a more streamlined response is preferential.

The importance of communicating effectively with the public at times of crisis was emphasised, especially through the use of social media. The point was also made that in times of major incidents, those dealing with it should be mindful of the fact that not all customers will have English as their first language.

"I think collaboration with emergency services and local authorities is crucial, but the question is, how far do you have to go to establish that mobilising process, because once one party starts getting calls, all other parties get calls. Partnerships and the way they communicate together and to customers is very important and a proper strategy needs to all be in place."

Local Authority Representative (Cardiff)

"If a property is damaged in a major incident situation you would need to liaise with the local council. If you think of the floods of 2007, Severn Trent weren't in control of that situation so it was left to us and the armed forces, as we had systems in place already."

Local Authority Representative (Bristol)

"I think its difficult because you can create partnerships but in the case of an actual incident you need everyone to mobilise quickly, which can be difficult when there are lots of people involved."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

"I think most of the help you need [in case of a major incident] is already there. We [as a local authority] already have a network set up to deal with these issues not just in our own patch but with adjacent authorities. We are all part of a resilience forum and I think you need to be part of these as it's something that will probably help your process."

Local Authority Representative (Cardiff)

"The message seems to be from recent Grenfell Tower tragedy that people appreciate being told things by people on the ground, even if it's just saying we don't know anything yet. Silence is the problem."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

"I think in the social media age, you can actually communicate what you are doing which makes it a much calmer situation for everyone."

Engineering Representative (Bristol)

"You mentioned your app earlier – following on from engaging with vulnerable customers, there are many apps now where you can translate info straight away for the huge number of multicultural customers in your area. You should look at using these"

Engineering Representative (Bristol)



Smart metering

Slides 57 – 59 detail the work Wales & West Utilities is currently undertaking in this area, as well as the company's proposed activities. Click on the links below to view these.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

It was commented that there is still a considerable amount of apathy or even suspicion towards smart meters on the part of the public and it was widely felt that more should be done to explain the benefits for customers. Because of the current lack of uptake, it was felt that the 2020 deadline for the full rollout of smart meters was unlikely to be met.

Stakeholders made the point that smart meters could be of benefit for some customers, particularly those in vulnerable situations. However, conversely, it was noted that they could negatively impact fuel poor customers.

"It's creating a huge amount of pressure to put in as many smart meters as possible. At some point they are going to have to say 2020 is impossible – that deadline is a meter a minute or something stupid."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"We know the benefit of smart meters, but people haven't bought into them"

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"It's probably in our mission to educate people on smart meters but we are not funded by the Government with that responsibility anymore, we run a government advice program, which smart meters could come under, but we have no statutory responsibility."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"I think installation provides a golden opportunity to provide energy efficiency advice and give customers a better understanding of how they are using energy – but it does require good advice and that advice to be repeated and followed up with."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

[Re installation] "I don't see it is your issue as Wales & West, it is the suppliers issue and they should be rolling it out as soon as possible."

Local Authority Representative (Bristol)

"If you are fuel poor and have a meter, putting a kettle on and having a meter flashing a red light for them isn't very helpful – also, if you struggle with bills you don't want a supplier coming round your house at all."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)





"Local feedback shows suspicion and confusion and we've had people stop using their heating after getting the feedback from meters sending them into panic – and not really understanding what it's telling them. The installers are meant to spend 2 hours providing energy awareness, but that doesn't seem to be happening."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"There's lots of potential to support vulnerable customers with the meters – for example, you would know who stopped using their system during the winter, and flag them up."

Charity Representative

"There is a benefit of smart meters for work around dementia customers - there are a number of people looking at safeguarding systems that pick up motion in the house around people with dementia still in the home who don't need in depth care. There is potential for services around smart meters that are quite enabling for healthcare and families. For example, if you break a hip and are sedentary, you can identify earlier on that people aren't moving once they've fallen – e.g. when did they last boil the kettle, use the shower etc."

Energy Representative (Cardiff)

"We have a Government advice program to release certain customers smart meter data so that people can give them advice on the basis of that data. It could be a really nice complement to the advice that you give when installing the meter – you can give bespoke advice based on their actual usage."

Charity Representative (Bristol)



Theft of gas

Wales & West Utilities' work to address the issue of theft of gas can be viewed by clicking on the links below and scrolling to slides 60 – 62.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

Theft of gas was mainly a concern for attendees from a safety perspective, although discussion ended with an understanding that ultimately, this affects customer's bills. Smart Meters were suggested as a mechanism to monitor theft of gas.

"I think the safety is by far the most important message though, the compensation is less important."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"It [gas theft] might not directly affect your bill, but it will impact on bills generally because companies have to cover the cost of the gas one way or another."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

"I would imagine that smart metering should help with this issue, and it will help you find out where the incidents are."

Engineering representative (Cardiff)

"One thing to think about is that sometimes it is not always the customers who is the guilty party. In the past, companies would take the customer to court straight away and it could be a builder etc. or it could just be an accident."

Local Authority Representative

Discussion of priorities set by stakeholders

The panellists were asked to review how stakeholders had ranked Wales & West Utilities' priorities at the stakeholder workshops which took place in May. These can be viewed by clicking on the links below and scrolling to slide 64. Whilst some were surprised that, for example, customers in vulnerable situations, as a priority, was so high up the list, most felt that this was really positive.

- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2465/critical-friends-panel-slides-july-2017-bristol-wwu-final.pdf>
- <http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/media/2466/critical-friends-panel-slides-june-2017-cardiff-wwu-final.pdf>

Summary of feedback

"I think in light of the Grenfell fire that major incident planning will rise."

Local Authority Representative (Bristol)

"I wasn't able to attend the workshops, but I am surprised the customers in vulnerable situations topic has moved up the list of priorities so much."

Charity Representative (Cardiff)

"I'm not surprised smart metering is so far down your list of priorities - but I'm sure it will go up."

Charity Representative (Bristol)

"It is great to see customers in vulnerable situations and fuel poor being so high up your list of priorities."

Charity representative (Bristol)



