



Our ambition

Trusted to expertly serve customers and communities with safe, reliable and affordable energy services today, while investing wisely to create a sustainable, greener future.

Our ambition is supported by our priorities





We never compromise on the safety, wellbeing and health of our colleagues and customers, always raising the bar and improving standards.

Driving outstanding service



We strive to exceed customer expectations by offering fair, inclusive, quality services for all, whilst looking after those most in need.

Delivering value for money



We always spend and invest money wisely; working smarter to offer affordable, value for money services.

Doing all we can to provide sustainable energy

We're future proofing to deliver reliable, greener energy for heat, power and transport, and reducing our environmental impact to achieve net zero targets.

Designing our future



We're building a skilled, resilient and diverse team to work in partnership with our stakeholders. Together, helping our communities and society thrive.

At Wales & West Utilities, we look after the pipes that keep the gas flowing to heat homes and power businesses across Wales and south west England.

You can trust us to respond to gas emergencies and keep communities safe, connect new homes and businesses, and upgrade the gas network so it stays safe today and is ready to transport green energy in the future. We work together with a range of stakeholders and communities to develop sustainable, innovative and affordable energy solutions. We believe our role is to contribute positively to the quality of life and wellbeing of our customers and the communities we serve. That's why we work around the clock and invest in our gas network, so we can continue to successfully deliver gas to homes and businesses, offering the very best service for our customers, both now and for generations to come.

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Introduction

by Graham Edwards OBE Chief Executive

With energy prices increasing and a cost-of-living crisis, the wellbeing of our colleagues and customers is one of our key priorities, as we strive to play our role in delivering a decarbonised energy future.

Listening to our customers and other stakeholders to better understand their needs and wants is crucial in helping us to take the most appropriate actions to continue to keep people safe, warm and deliver a sustainable business.

This report sets out to show our stakeholders examples of our intention taken into practice.

Graham Edwards OBE



Designing our future



Understanding the current and future needs of all our stakeholders through genuine two-way engagement is a key focus for us. To support this, we are also working hard to attract and retain a sustainable workforce that has appropriate skills and reflects the communities we serve.

CASE STUDY

Citizens' Panel helps us understand customers' needs

Following a successful trial in 2021, we set up a Citizens' Panel to understand the needs, hopes and concerns of our customers. Comprised of people aged 16 and over with different demographic characteristics from across our region, the group provides valuable insight to help inform our plans and decision making.

Over the past year, we explored the topic of 'decarbonisation of heat' with the panel. Members were able to talk to different industry representatives such as the Energy Saving Trust and the Climate Change Commission – this helped to make sure they could form unbiased views.

We discussed with panel members how they would make choices about changing to low-carbon heat, their attitudes towards hydrogen and how they feel about the possibility of using hydrogen in their home.

Key findings from our Citizens' Pone

PANEL MEMBERS:

- identified cost as the biggest concern and a key decision making factor in the transition to low-carbon heating
- wanted to see disruption minimised, from a well-planned rollout to the presence of trained professionals to install and maintain low-carbon technologies
- wanted clear, accessible, high-quality information and technical support and valued doing their own research
- liked the potential lower installation cost of hydrogen relative to some alternatives but need clarity around running costs – they were concerned about scalability and that technology would become obsolete and want reassurances about safety.

CASE STUDY

A supportive and inclusive workforce

We marked International Women's Day 2022 by launching our Women's Inclusion Network.

The network connects colleagues from across the business on a professional and personal level to share life experiences and gain advice and support. It also seeks to improve companywide gender balance and inspire more women to pursue a career in the gas industry.

Wales & West Utilities' Louise Alfaresi is a member of the network. In her day job, she is part of the team that repairs gas leaks, connects new homes and businesses, and upgrades the gas network so it's ready for a green future. At the launch, Louise commented:

"I'm personally looking forward to seeing how it can help to inspire future generations of female gas engineers and industry leaders.

"I have had a fantastic career in this industry so far and hope that, by creating a safe place for women to share their life experiences and support one another personally and professionally, we can help other women to achieve their full potential."



Some of the great women we're proud to say are part of our team

CASE STUDY

Inspiring the future

Colleagues from our newly launched Women's Inclusion Network spoke to more than 30 Year 9 pupils to raise awareness of the diverse career paths available locally and within the energy sector, while encouraging young women to challenge stereotypes.

Through our relationship with Careers Wales, we've been a partner of The John Frost School in Newport since 2014, holding activities such as careers advice, support with interview and job applications, and exploring climate change and the important role of decarbonisation.

At the event, Capex & Investments Manager Iffut Mohammed and Careers Development Manager Rachel Jones spoke about the skills and values which helped them navigate their own journeys into their relevant roles, and how they've overcome particular stereotypes.

Iffut Mohammed, Capex & Investments Manager at Wales & West Utilities, says: "We were delighted to build on our relationship with the school and this femalespecific event was a fantastic opportunity to talk directly to local pupils about their hopes for the future and how they can play their part in challenging stereotypes.

"We know that when people think about a



Inspiring the future

career in the gas industry, people typically think the only jobs are male dominated engineering-led roles. This event was a great way to open minds about the breadth of jobs that are available."

Louise Ogilvie, Year 9 Progress Co-ordinator at The John Frost School, comments: "It was great to hear first-hand from Wales & West Utilities colleagues who talked

openly about their own journeys into the world of work.

"Our Year 9 pupils were all very open, and the event prompted a detailed discussion. We will now build on this in future lessons and hope that our pupils will be inspired knowing that their dreams are there for the taking."

Driving outstanding service



Our work takes us into the heart of the communities we serve, so making sure we understand the needs of those communities, particularly customers living in vulnerable situations, is especially important.

Using funds wisely to support those most in need

When our engineers must isolate an appliance due to leakage or safety concerns, they sometimes come across customers that are living in especially vulnerable situations, where there is a potential risk that the customer will self-disconnect their energy supply. Using the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide (VCMA) (see right), we have partnered with National Energy Action (NEA) so that our engineers can refer customers with broken or faulty appliances to them for support.

NEA engages with referred customers to agree the best way forward in each situation. Where there is an urgent need for energy to prepare meals, the NEA team can employ a Gas Safe Registered (GSR) engineer to visit the customer's home. The engineer will carry out an inspection and advise if it is a low-cost repair, or if the fault is more complex and uneconomic to repair due to the age of the appliance. Where the customer can manage without gas for a short period, applications will be made for Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding (Nest in Wales) and any other eligible funding streams. If the customer's need for heating is urgent, then a new boiler installation will be authorised.

CASE STUDY

Proactive help for families

Our engineers visited a property following a reported gas leak in north Devon and found the gas meter unprotected and leaking. The meter boxes were secured to an external wall which was on the point of collapse. In addition, the area was covered with rubbish accumulated over years and dog excrement. We were able to fund a clear-up of the area and rebuild of the wall through our hardship fund.

It then became apparent there were multiple issues in the property and the householders were experiencina some difficulties.

FACTFILE: Vulnerability Allowance

The Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) from Ofgem gives us £7 million to spend on projects between April 2021 to March 2026 which can support consumers in vulnerable situations or raise the awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide.

The wife was receiving a course of chemotherapy, the husband had disabilities as a result of a stroke and their adult son was autistic. The inside of the house was in a similar state to the area outside, their gas boiler had been broken for a number of months and the cooker had only one working gas ring. Following an assessment by NEA and conversations with the householders, we:

- moved the family to temporary accommodation
- funded a clean-up of the house to enable access to the gas appliances and radiators
- replaced the gas boiler
- replaced the cooker.

We helped the family register on the Priority Services Register and then passed the case to Warm Wales to assess if any additional benefits could be claimed.

Understanding and meeting customer needs in the cost of living crisis

We support customers who struggle to pay their energy bills as well as dealing with the cost of living crisis. With NEA predicting that one in three UK households will be in fuel poverty from October 2022, our scheme in partnership with Warm Wales, NEA and Consumer Energy Systems (CES) is key.

The scheme plans to support 1,000 homes per annum. Partners review the customer's situation through telephone calls and face-to-face engagement where required to agree an action plan. The Warm

Wales, NEA and CES teams help customers through the necessary paperwork and discussions with various agencies to reach positive outcomes, including:

- · recovering unclaimed benefits
- reducing energy debt and bills
- accessing funding for energy efficiency measures such as insulations and replacement boilers or cookers
- offering energy saving and usage advice
- accessing home adaption grants
- Priority Services registration.

HOMES SUPPORTED THROUGH WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Project year to date (July 2021 – March 2022)	Savings	Homes helped	Average saving per household
South Wales	£246,658	256	£964
North Wales	£52,433	105	£499
Cornwall	£65,956	131	£503
South west	£83,270	153	£544
Total	£448,317	645	£695

Understanding rural vulnerability

We know that a person's local area can have a big impact on the vulnerabilities they experience and rural living is an example of this. People living in rural areas report feeling isolated and rural homes are often older and more costly to heat and insulate than urban homes.

To better understand the issues faced by rural vulnerable customers and their carers, we co-sponsored a study with Cadent, Green Energy, Southern Water and Western Power Distribution alongside Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs). The study looked at whether the common issues affecting rural customers were due to rurality or to other life factors, the extent to which rurality is a cause of issues and whether these issues have implications for utility companies.

Colloborotive projects

At least 25% of the VCMA fund is allocated for us to work on collaborative projects with the other gas networks in England and Scotland – Cadent, Northern Gas Networks and SGN. This has allowed us to share best practice with each other, benefiting all customers nationally.

These projects often involve impactful relationships with key organisations such as Citizens' Advice, Fuel Bank Foundation and disability charity Scope.

Take a look at some of the projects that are making a difference throughout the country in the first annual <u>collaborative report</u>.

The report found that there was considerable resilience and capacity to cope with a disruption to utilities.

What we are doing:

- The Priority Services Register (PSR) was seen as effective, but it is important to keep reminding customers about it. We promote the PSR at every opportunity and have identified that we could be more effective in building awareness and trust of the PSR in communities by working with trusted local organisations.
- We have already invested in customer support officers who work in communities alongside our teams undertaking planned work or attending incidents.
- We are developing more self-serve options for customers who want to get updates on work and incidents.
- We will look at how, through local partners, we can offer clear referral pathways to those who need help in getting support. This builds on our partnerships with organisations to support households through phone advice and in-person advice on claiming benefits, energy tariffs, accessing energy efficiency funding, gas safety and carbon monoxide awareness.
- We are creating high-level advice for homes to help them decide on the options they have to heat their homes.

More details can be found at Exploring Rural Vulnerability from a Public Utilities' Perspective – Rural England.



Demanding safety always



Safety is a top priority for our customers and stakeholders and is a key focus for us across our business.

We are once again proud to have been awarded our ninth consecutive RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Gold Medal Health and Safety award, an internationally recognised award for demonstrating industry leading health and safety performance and commitment. This reflects our efforts to make sure our day-to-day working practices are safe for both colleagues, customers and communities alike.



CASE STUDY

Safety steps campaign for colleagues

We know that safety is our customers' number one priority and this is reflected in our approach to colleague safety. Every year, we run an internal campaign to remind colleagues of the importance of safe working practices in winter. The campaign encourages colleagues in Operations and the wider business to take personal responsibility for their health and safety, using our simple '7 steps to winter wellbeing' tips. From staying safe on the roads to avoiding fatigue and being Covid-19 secure, the tips are shared through practical guides and videos featuring senior colleagues.

Working together to improve outcomes

An important aspect of our work is protecting those most in need. Through a fund called the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA), we can individually and collaboratively support projects that help our customers stay safe from carbon monoxide (CO).

Young people can be at particular risk of harm from CO and these projects illustrate some of the collaborative work that we are doing to support this group.

CASE STUDY

Promoting safety for young people

We are co-developing CO awareness activities for Scout Association groups across all its age ranges, working together with SGN, Northern Gas Networks, Cadent and the Scouts Association specialists. These activities contribute to the achievement of Scout badges.

We have also sponsored and helped co-design





an updated Home Safety Badge for Cubs. The badge design includes a CO alarm, which has

become the overarching logo for our collaborative partnership and activities.

To support this, we developed training materials to equip leaders with all the information they need to educate young people about CO safety.

Beyond the activity programme, we're also raising CO awareness through the Scouts website and communications channels. By sharing information about CO safety while camping, we've expanded the reach of our awareness raising to educate non-members such as leaders, parents and carers.

KEY PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS

- Awarding 2,646 CO Partnership sponsored Cub Home Safety badges
- Educating 35,696 young people about the dangers of carbon monoxide
- Engaged more than 140,000 adult volunteers on the dangers of CO and promotion of scouting activities linked to CO safety
- Targeted social media engagement reaching more than 17,000 people.

CASE STUDY



Carbon monoxide (CO) exposure can be especially dangerous for pregnant women and their unborn babies. Understanding the risks and impacts of CO for such a crucial stage of life is the key objective of our CO in pregnancy collaborative VCMA funded project.

Together with other gas distribution networks, we are working to deliver the project in partnership with stakeholders including Improving Performance in Practice (IPIP), national Fire & Rescue services and NHS maternity units.

The project will provide gas distribution networks with a rich understanding of the attitudes, understanding and behaviours of an especially vulnerable group towards CO and this in turn will help us to improve the effectiveness of future CO safety initiatives.

There are approximately 650,000 live births in England each year, with 4,700 perinatal deaths. Of this figure, 1,500 deaths are unexplained, with the possibility that some may be the result of CO poisoning. Lower-level exposure to CO can also have a detrimental effect on the health of the mother and foetus.

Historically, research has centred around the prevalence and risk of exposure to CO in the general population, but the level of CO awareness and specific health risks for pregnant women is still relatively unknown. The project also aims to address the industry's knowledge gap on environmental CO. Many of the medical symptoms of CO poisoning (eg fatigue, nausea) are also associated with pregnancy, increasing the difficulty for health professionals to correctly identify the presence of CO.

The value of the project will stretch much wider as awareness on the signs, symptoms and dangers of CO is disseminated across health professionals on a national scale.

This project is ongoing with final results due in 2023, yet we are already seeing its benefits in action. It has increased communication and collaborative working between NHS midwife services and Fire & Rescue services, with midwives referring patients to the Fire & Rescue services for Safe & Warm home safety checks.



Delivering value for money

Innovation is at the forefront of our efforts to introduce greener gas into the network, achieve our ambitious net zero targets, provide better, cost-effective services to our customers and keep the gas running more efficiently and sustainably. Our colleagues take part in national programmes including research and trials of hydrogen, alongside more localised projects.

CASE STUDY

Consumer Vulnerability Impact Assessment Tool

We were asked to assess how innovation projects might affect customers in vulnerable situations, but, until now, there was no simple way of doing so. Recognising the importance of carrying out these assessments at the outset, we led a project to develop a simple tool that would identify the potential technical, financial and wellbeing related impacts of innovation projects.

Working together with other gas and electricity distribution and transmission networks, along with our project partner Sirio Strategies, we developed a tool that allows us to deliver better outcomes for customers in vulnerable situations in the transition to net zero, while identifying any barriers to success at an early stage.



The tool uses a decision tree that produces a clear heatmap of the impact of each project on customers affected by a wide range of situations based on those responses. Designed to be easy to use, the tool requires no specialist training and can be used quickly and efficiently to report consistently measured results.

Doing all we can to provide sustainable

Playing our role alongside our stakeholders in the drive to net zero is of key importance and we are involved in numerous collaborative projects to support this ambition. Some of our main priority areas are outlined below.

Hydrogen

We are exploring the role of hydrogen at blended and 100% levels of gas supply and have been actively engaged in research, evidence building and supporting practical development, for example through our partnership with Northern Gas Networks in the Redcar Hydrogen Community, a proposal to create the UK's first hydrogen village.

In 2021/22, we were the first network to secure an exemption from the Health & Safety Executive allowing us to inject gas containing up to 1% hydrogen into our network in Swindon. This reduces carbon emissions by up to 5,000 tonnes for almost 2,500 local homes immediately, without impacting customers or their appliances. This builds on our commitment to prepare the network to transport green gases.

CASE STUDY

Collaboration key in hydrogen consortium

Collaboration is key to a net zero future, which is why we're part of a new consortium that has

been launched to bring the benefits of hydrogen to south west England.

The Hydrogen South West consortium aims to drive the development of a hydrogen infrastructure ecosystem to decarbonise transport, commerce and power, as well as encouraging sustainable growth, upskilling the region and creating new job opportunities. We're working together with easyJet, Airbus, Hynamics (EDF), GKN Aerospace, Costain, Wood, Bristol Port and Bristol Airport.

The consortium creates links between supply and demand centres in the region and enables cross-sector partnerships to produce, use, capture, store and transport hydrogen across the south west and beyond.

One of a number of pilot projects includes a study into configuring a Hydrogen Hub at Bristol Port to accept hydrogen or ammonia by ship, power landside vehicles with hydrogen and establish a hydrogen production facility. This involves developing a local pipeline network and supporting Airbus' hydrogen powered aircraft of the future.

The collaboration is a major step to support the UK's target to generate 10GW of hydrogen capacity by 2030.

Data and modelling

Our Energy Systems Pathfinder simulator model continues to play an important role in helping local authorities and community energy groups to understand the cost and impact of different heat, energy and transport decarbonisation options.

We have also been working with partners to look at regional decarbonisation modelling (see – case study below).

CASE STUDY

Regional Decarbonisation Pathways

Achieving net zero emissions targets by 2050 in the UK means we must dramatically change the way we transport, store, convert and use energy. While there have been high-level studies into how that will happen, until recently there has been little research into what it means at the local level. Our Regional Decarbonisation Pathways modelling looked into how we might decarbonise our gas network at a regional and sub-regional level.

Low-carbon solutions across our gas network and power generation will be needed, along with hydrogen, to deliver a fully decarbonised network for the UK. To support this, we need a robust, independent investigation into the future of the gas network and a roadmap for how we get there. Working with project partners Energy Systems Catapult (ESC) and Costain, we undertook two studies to develop plans for the decarbonisation of our gas network. This consisted of whole system modelling and an assessment of network implications, exploring three pathways to net zero by 2050:

- a high use of hydrogen scenario
- a high use of electrification scenario
- a balanced use of hydrogen and electrification scenario, lying midway between these.

In all three, hydrogen and the gas networks have a significant role to play. In the scenarios, natural gas was largely removed, with industrial and heating demand being met by hydrogen, although some use, alongside carbon capture and storage, by industry was modelled in all three scenarios.

This project has helped provide the data and analysis needed to support planning and policy advice.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Hydrogen has an important role in energy system designs that cost-effectively meet carbon budgets and net zero goals.
- Adopting hybrid heating systems offers significant value to the energy system.
- Hydrogen can completely replace liquid fossil fuel use in industry.

- The decisions made by industry will have a large impact on the scale of hydrogen production.
- A transition to hydrogen can be achieved by developing a dedicated hydrogen infrastructure.

Alongside these results, the project also demonstrated how Wales could become a net exporter of hydrogen in future thanks to the potential for production in the South Wales Industrial Cluster.

Biomethane

We connected an additional biomethane site to our network, taking the total number of sites to 20, delivering enough green gas into our network to heat more than 156,000 homes.

We are on track to connect the first BioSNG plant in Swindon this year which will be our 21st entry connection; this site will produce synthetic natural gas from a feedstock of residual household waste.

We are working with developers to connect and commission a further five sites that have booked capacity with us over the next few years.

Consumer heating solutions

CASE STUDY

Innovative heating technology

Low-carbon technologies which can flexibly use more than one fuel source are increasingly valuable. And, as the cost-of-living crisis continues, low-carbon technologies which can also deliver cost savings will become important for cash-strapped households.

The HyCompact project demonstrated how one innovative heating technology, a compact hybrid heating system (CHHS), could work with both the power and gas networks to provide low-carbon heating, balancing lowest cost with reductions in carbon emissions and delivering flexibility benefits.

During the one-year project to March 2022, we collaborated with UK Power Networks (UKPN) and Passiv UK to deliver a trial of a CHHS with intelligent controls. The project was funded by Ofgem's Network Innovation Allowance, and tested Sime-manufactured CHHS technology in real life domestic settings, providing detailed analysis of the operational performance of CHHSs.

The field data gathered has supported a number of significant insights including:

how systems can deliver carbon savings

- potential savings on running costs
- enabling effective system planning and supporting future pathways
- an understanding of user experience
- installation benefits, including gas-safe installation.

CASE STUDY

Heating system is a world first

We were part of a trial which demonstrated how hybrid heating systems can offer an affordable and practical way to decarbonise heating.

The world's first smart hydrogen hybrid heating system was unveiled in Pembrokeshire, proving technology that could help the UK get to net zero. The demonstration was held in a commercial building at the Port of Milford Haven, the UK's largest energy port. It combined a hydrogen fuelled boiler with an electric air-source heat pump, alongside smart control technology. This enables the system to flexibly switch between using renewable electricity when available, and green gases like hydrogen at other times.

We collaborated with a number of partners as part of the UK Research and Innovation funded Milford Haven: Energy Kingdom project, including Port of Milford Haven, Passiv UK, Kiwa UK, Worcester Bosch, Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult and Pembrokeshire County Council.

What is a hybrid heating system?

Hybrid heating systems use a gas boiler and an electric air source heat pump along with smart control software. The system switches flexibly between using renewable electricity when it is available and green gas at other times – with switching driven by cost and carbon.

With research suggesting that a large number of UK properties are not suitable for standalone heat pumps, this joined-up solution:

- avoids the need for significant disruptive changes in the home that would typically be needed for electric only solutions
- is cost effective
- avoids the need to overinvest in changes to the building, generation or electricity networks.

Transport

We're focused on understanding and exploring the role of gas in transport, investigating fuel choices to provide consumer choice and fuel solution options, particularly around hydrogen. This also extends to our own fleet – we are committed to moving 75% of company cars to hybrid or Ultra Low Emission vehicles by 2026, as well as exploring green alternatives for our commercial fleet.

Our aim is to achieve a zero-emissions fleet by 2035, which is facilitated by installing additional charging points at our premises.

Environment

In 2019, we produced our Environmental Action Plan, and building on this, we published our first Annual Environmental Report in 2022. You can find out more here.

CASE STUDY

Modern depots with biodiversity in mind

As part of our property strategy, we set out to invest in modern fit-for-purpose depots to support operational effectiveness and efficiency. Our new depots in Redruth and Bristol, and planned for in Cullompton and Plymouth, incorporate the latest building standards with high energy efficiency.

Bristol depot, completed in 2022, replaced previous temporary, single-glazed and insufficiently insulated buildings spread out

across the site into a single, energy efficient building. It has double-glazing and high-energy-rated insulation, minimising energy loss and maximising the efficiency of the building as well as the wellbeing and comfort of our colleagues. We also installed 12 electric vehicle chargers and an integrated solar system.

Considering local biodiversity and environmental site requirements, we set aside an area for long-term enhancement. After extensive work with local ecologists, we installed a pond to promote wildlife and flowers, removed overgrown areas to encourage native regrowth and wildlife repopulation, and preserved the on-site badger runs.



Contact us

If you'd like to keep up to date with our stakeholder e-newsletter *Let's Connect*, you can register at www.wwutilities.co.uk/about-us/our-company/stakeholder-engagement/

If you'd like to get in touch with our Stakeholder team, you can email engagement@wwutiities.co.uk.
Your views are important to us – and we look forward to hearing from you.

If you have a new idea for a product, service or research that might be relevant to what we do, our Innovation team would be delighted to hear from you – please email innovation@wwwtilities.co.uk.

Our challenges are on our website at innovation/

If you are interested in joining our team, our latest job vacancies are on our website at www.wwutilities.co.uk/about-us/our-company/careers.



Remember, if you smell gas, call us free on 0800 111 999

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