

Annual  
stakeholder  
report  
2016/17

A productive year  
yields positive results



# Find out more and keep in touch

**W**ould you like to find out more about what we do? Or, more importantly, what we can do for you?

Customers sometimes need extra help for a variety of reasons. It could be because their gas supply is interrupted, or there's a new baby or very young children in the home. Perhaps someone has developed a long-term health condition, or is helping to take care of an older relative. Whatever the reason, our message is to get in touch and we'll tell you how we can help.

If you'd like to take part in one of our stakeholder and customer panels – to give us your views and help shape the services we provide – please see the contact details below. We'll help you to discover more about what we do: delivering a gas supply to more than two million homes and businesses across the south west of England and Wales. Our job is to keep all our customers safe and warm.



You can get in touch with our Stakeholder team by calling us on **02920 278546** or email [engagement@wwutilities.co.uk](mailto:engagement@wwutilities.co.uk). We look forward to hearing from you. Your views are important to us.



You can visit our website at [www.wwutilities.co.uk](http://www.wwutilities.co.uk) to find out more about us.



Check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com/wwutilities](https://facebook.com/wwutilities). You can contact us here at any time, and we'll post general news updates about what we are doing.



Follow us on Twitter [@wwutilities](https://twitter.com/wwutilities) to see our news – and please contact us here about anything you'd like to know or tell us about.



Contact our Innovation team if you have a new idea for a product or research that might be relevant to what we do. Call Lucy Mason on **02920 278958** or email [innovation@wwutilities.co.uk](mailto:innovation@wwutilities.co.uk). To see what our challenges are visit [www.wwutilities.co.uk/innovation](http://www.wwutilities.co.uk/innovation)



Our Warm Home Assistance scheme can provide financial help with new connections to our gas network. You can find out more by emailing [fuelpoor@wwutilities.co.uk](mailto:fuelpoor@wwutilities.co.uk) or calling Stuart Neill on **02920 278713**.



People interested in joining our team can see the latest job vacancies on our website. Contact us by emailing [recruitment@wwutilities.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@wwutilities.co.uk) or calling Nicola Allen on **02920 278958**.

## Contents

A bit about us

04

Engaging with our stakeholders

05

Our main achievements

06

Our performance across regulated output categories

09

Delivering for our customers

10

Looking to the future

16

# Welcome

from our Chief Executive

# Graham Edwards

Doing our best for all customers and other stakeholders is at the heart of our business strategy. Our strong focus on engagement helps us to gain opinions and information that shapes our policies and plans. We want people to know that what they tell us makes a positive difference. It can improve the services we provide to our 7.5 million customers.

We are a values-driven company. Safety is our key priority and people are at the core of everything we do. That means we always aim to achieve the best for colleagues, customers and a variety of stakeholders.

This report details what we did during 2016/17, which was the mid-point of our current eight-year price-control period set by our regulator Ofgem. Our strong performance during the year has once again seen us win a Distinction rating from the Institute of Customer Service.

Our focus on delivering top quality service for all our customers, including the most vulnerable, has also enabled us to become the first gas network to gain British Standard 18477 for Inclusive Service Provision. This recognises our work to make sure all colleagues are aware of the help we can offer to people in vulnerable situations.

During 2016/17 we increased the opportunities for stakeholders to engage with us and comment on our performance and plans. It helped us to be confident that we focused on what our customers wanted us to do. Stakeholders have said that they trust us and know that what they tell us is listened to and acted upon. Our commitment is that in the years ahead we will continue to build on our successes to deliver the ever-improving standards of service our customers deserve.



**Graham Edwards**



Our leadership team

# A bit about us

**W**e deliver gas through our extensive network of pipes to homes, businesses and other organisations in Wales and the south west of England.

Our job is to make sure that our 7.5 million customers are kept safe, warm, and receive a level of service they can trust. We don't sell gas, we operate the gas pipe network through which people receive gas from their supplier (the company they pay their gas bill to).

Safety is a key priority. We respond swiftly to gas emergencies and invest heavily to improve the quality of our network. Every day our skilled colleagues are replacing old metal pipes with new plastic ones – improving the reliability and safety of our gas network for many years to come.

In winter, as much as 80% of the heat and power needed by homes and businesses comes from the gas network. We are making sure that we can meet that demand for the long term, providing a reliable, affordable and increasingly sustainable service.



# Engaging with our stakeholders

Stakeholder engagement is a vital activity for us, and we base it on an “inside-out” strategy. That means we have developed a culture that always puts people first: both within our company and among the communities and organisations we serve.

We greatly value our skilled workforce, which has embraced our determination to do our very best for customers and other stakeholders.

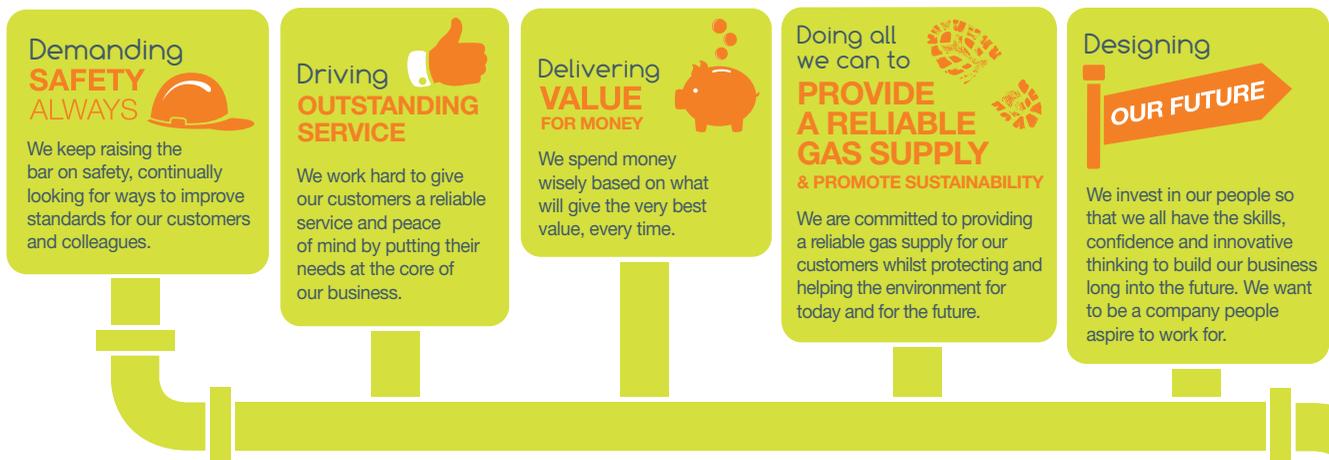
We’ve continued to increase the number of stakeholders we consult with – listening to what they say about how we are doing and how we could improve. This growing amount of feedback greatly helps us to shape our operations and strategies.

## Our ambition, priorities and values

### OUR AMBITION

To deliver outstanding levels of gas safety, reliability and customer service so that we are trusted and valued by the millions of people we serve every day.

### PRIORITIES



### VALUES



# Our main achievements

over the first four years of an eight-year price-control period, which began in April 2013:



## Important achievements for 2016/17:



**We were named Responsible Business of the Year** by Business in the Community Wales. This was for our success in embedding responsible business practices throughout our operations in Wales.



**The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents** gave us Gold Award Status for the fourth year in a row. We are the first gas network operator to achieve this. As a company which prizes our excellent safety performance, we were delighted to receive this accolade.



**The British Standards Institute** awarded us BS18477 for Inclusive Service Provision. This was for our work to identify customers' needs and adapt services for people who are disadvantaged or in vulnerable situations. We were greatly helped by the feedback we were given by stakeholders and partner organisations.



**We received the Institute of Customer Service's Servicemark** during the year. We gained this honour at Distinction Level for achieving a customer satisfaction score far above the utility company average. It's a testament to our commitment to engage with stakeholders, communicate effectively, and use feedback to pursue continuous improvement.



**Our annual colleague engagement survey** was carried out in conjunction with Investors in People. This was our first attempt to be measured against its standard and we were pleased to receive Silver Level accreditation.

We have achieved all of this against a background of continuing to provide good value for our customers and stakeholders. The average cost to our customers for 2016/2017, excluding inflation, was £128, which is less than the cost at the start of the current price-control period – £145. This reflects the efficiencies we are delivering.

We are also on target for outputs measured across the eight-year price-control period to 2021. After consulting our stakeholders, we are committed to delivering extra value in the areas they said were most important to them. Over the rest of the eight-year period to 2021, we will deliver:

- funding for 20% more connections for customers in

fuel poverty than originally allowed for (fuel poverty is where people are left with an income below the official poverty line after paying their fuel costs)

- more targeted support to customers in vulnerable situations
- greater reductions in emissions by 2021 than originally planned
- further reductions in costs we can control, such as our facilities costs.

We continue to deliver against our commitments and thank our customers and stakeholders for their continuing support during the course of the year and over the rest of the price-control period.

## Collaboration with other gas networks

We actively collaborate with the other gas networks across the UK, to deliver valuable outcomes for our stakeholders.

Our collaboration and joint commitment is focused on:

- supporting and protecting the communities we live and work in, and minimising our wider impact on the environment
- going beyond what is expected of us, exceeding both our social and moral responsibilities, extending collaboration to work with expert organisations and other sectors.

## Our collaboration highlights

Helped secure **£25m** for local authorities to support house measures, resulting in **4,000** new heating installations.

Joint winners of the **Heating & Ventilation News Safety Initiative of the Year Award** for 2016 with CO-Gas Safety.

**Launched the CO Charity Fund, offering grants of up to £2,000.**

**535** additional customers referred to the **Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme** since May 2015.

**674** entries in 2015/16 to the CO schools poster competition.

Current connected capacity of **biomethane** has the ability to power **more than 277,000 homes.**

# Overview of our achievements

in the 2016/17 regulatory year

(1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017)

81%

OF COMPLAINTS  
RESOLVED IN 24 HOURS

5,496  
CO ALARMS  
DISTRIBUTED

90,000 homes

could be powered with green gas

24 APPRENTICES RECRUITED

1,250

Priority Customers  
Awareness Training  
to colleagues

ZERO OMBUDSMAN RULINGS

123 free-of-charge  
meter alterations

4,600 Warm Packs issued

433km

OF MAIN  
replaced

1,596 Warm Home Assistance connections

More than

2,100  
customers

added to PSR

83,758

gas emergency call-outs

98.5%

Gas emergency call-outs  
attended within 1 hour

Compliance to licence obligations 100%

CO AWARENESS  
INCREASE 40%

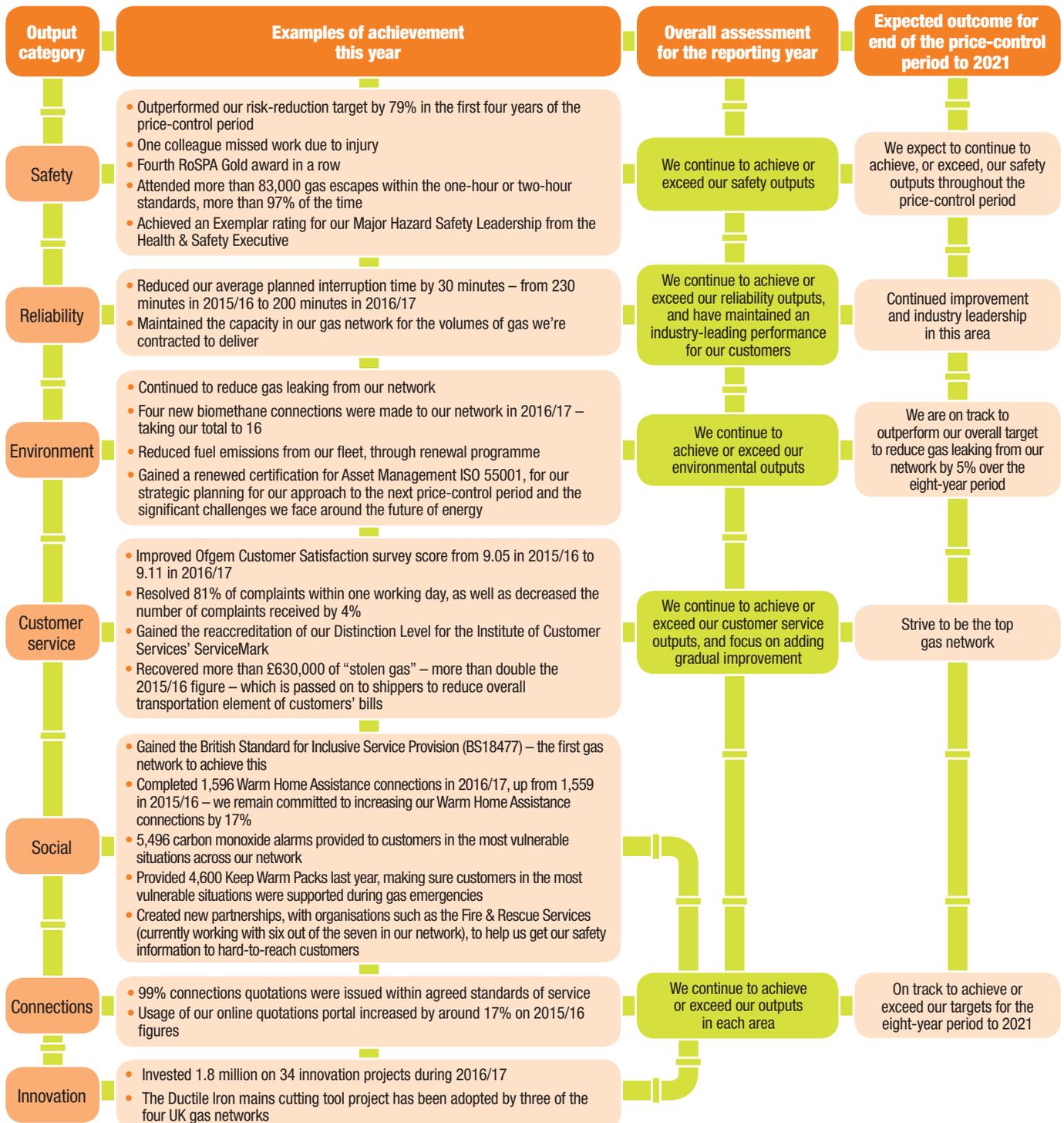
99.1% CO likelihood  
to take further action

377 colleagues  
upskilled

11,933 new  
connections

# Performance

## across regulated output categories



# Delivering for our customers

We engaged with a wide range of stakeholders during the year. What we learned from discussions and feedback was of great value to us.

We have a dedicated team of engagement professionals who manage our relationships with stakeholders. During the year we made organisational changes to increase their resources and support. As a values-driven business we make sure that engagement is seen as a part of everyone's job in our company. We run workshops and colleague roadshows to promote the message that we all have a role to play.

In all our dealings with others we will listen and respond. It has helped us to develop services that have delivered added benefits.

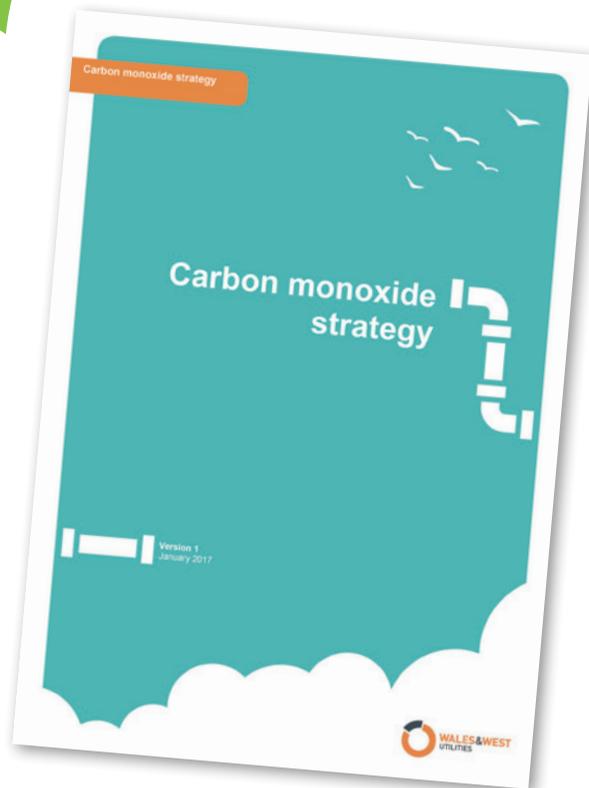
## Helping customers in vulnerable situations

We want to do all we can for customers who are in vulnerable situations. Stakeholders have told us they support:

- focusing on those who need most help
- making information easily accessible
- building relationships with partners who can promote our services
- achieving a British Standard for the quality of our work.

## REVISED CARBON MONOXIDE STRATEGY

A key outcome of the advice we received was a revision of our carbon monoxide (CO) strategy – to focus on those most at risk. This includes people who are:



- under 14 and over 65
- in vulnerable situations for various reasons
- living in CO “hotspots”– places with higher than average CO-related emergency call-outs.

As part of this strategy, we created partnerships with four more Fire & Rescue Services in our area, taking our total to six out of seven. They meet people in vulnerable situations during their Home Safety Visits and can now provide them with CO alarms and information on our other support measures.

We were also able to identify relevant customers by targeting people who receive Free of Charge meter alterations and those who sign up to our Priority Services Register. We provide them with free CO alarms.

## CO SCHOOLS SAFETY COMPETITION

We revitalised our approach to this industry-wide competition and greatly increased its impact. The competition is aimed at 5-11 year olds, a group which is particularly vulnerable to CO danger. They are challenged to produce a relevant poster, film, poem or song on CO danger.

We promoted the competition by integrating news releases, a celebrity endorsement, social media activity and direct contact with 2,500 schools. The outcome was 317 entries – a more than four-fold increase over the previous year and more than any of the other gas networks. We also had a national winner.



## THE CODEBREAKERS

Stakeholders at our locational workshops, as well as members of our Critical Friends' Panel and Vulnerable Customers Forum, all told us that CO safety must be a top priority. In response we sought a new way to spread the safety message.

We created an online game called "Crack the COde", with two cartoon "superheroes" called Chloe and Ben. The game challenges users to answer CO safety questions to reveal letters that make up a code. Those who succeed are encouraged to spread the word on social media and they also receive a CO-related gift.

User feedback indicated a 25% increase in awareness of CO danger and a 79% increase in commitment to take preventative action.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Stakeholders told us they supported the development of new relationships with emergency services and charities, in order to engage with more hard-to-reach customers. We now have partnerships with six Fire & Rescue Services and work closely with several other organisations, including Wales Council for the Blind and Age Cymru.

We created a Partners' Pack containing easy to understand information about safety awareness and the various support measures we offer. The packs are used to make sure consistent information is given to relevant customers, and we receive partners' feedback that helps us to identify more people who may be in vulnerable situations. CO safety information is also placed in charity magazines and event programmes.



# Delivering for our customers

## STRONGER TOGETHER CONFERENCE

Stakeholders at our Vulnerable Customers Forum told us that they'd like to see increased collaboration with other utility companies to help people in need.

With the support of our fuel poor partner Warm Wales we initiated the first multi-utility conference to focus on this topic. It brought us together with Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and electricity network operator Western Power Distribution. The 104 delegates who attended also represented housing associations, local authorities and charities.

The key outcomes were agreement to:

- collaborate more
- influence Government and industry regulators to create a unified Priority Services Register (PSR)
- work with other organisations to engage with more hard-to-reach customers in vulnerable situations.

We are making progress to achieve these goals.



## INCLUSIVE PROVISION STANDARD BS18477

We believe that we do our best to look after customers in vulnerable situations – but we wanted the assurance of achieving a

quality standard. We chose to strive for BS18477 as validation that our services are accessible to all.

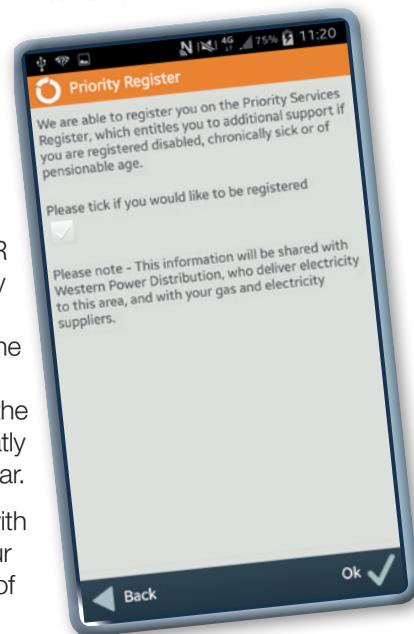
In formulating our policies we have benefited from the advice received from our Vulnerable Customers Forum. And, following an extensive BSI audit, we became the first gas network operator to gain this standard.

We make information about our services accessible through various activities and measures.

## PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTER

A trial of a phone app to allow colleagues to sign up customers easily to the PSR was a great success. In July 2016 we equipped all customer-facing staff with the app. This led to 2,100 referrals to the PSR during the year, and we expect to greatly increase the number this year.

We share this information with other utility companies in our area, for the further benefit of customers.



## COLLEAGUE TRAINING

In 2016/17 Priority Customers Awareness Training was given to 1,250 colleagues. This required 100 training sessions at 19 locations.

We also gave Dementia Friends training to 108 colleagues, helping them to identify the signs of dementia and adapt accordingly the services we provide.

## WARM PACKS

Following advice from stakeholders, we redesigned the Warm Packs that we issue to customers in vulnerable situations during a loss of gas supply. We made our contact number much more visible, to assist visually impaired people.

We also listened to stakeholders who told us we should provide meal vouchers to such customers who choose not to use the heating and cooking appliances we provide. They now receive a £10 daily meal voucher for use in local shops if their gas supply is off.



## FREE OF CHARGE METER ALTERATIONS

If people in vulnerable situations have gas meters that are hard for them to reach if they need to switch off the supply, we will, where possible, move the meter free of charge. We repositioned 123 meters during 2016/17 at a cost to Wales & West Utilities of £68,000.

## EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND COMMUNICATIONS

The information we provide must be accessible and easy to understand for people with a wide range of disabilities. That's why we worked hard to achieve the BS18477 standard.

Our website is Shaw Trust accredited for ease of accessibility, and information leaflets follow the Plain English Campaign's guidelines. We also use large fonts, Braille, films with sign language, and can provide information in several languages.



## FUEL POOR HUBS

Following feedback from stakeholders we trialled Fuel Poor Hubs in Cardiff and Flintshire.

We provided £45,000 for this initiative so the charitable organisation Care & Repair could give energy and financial advice to the public. We helped 226 customers and plan to roll-out this initiative in other parts of our network.

## PROMOTING WARM HOME ASSISTANCE

We can provide free gas connections for people living in areas defined as being in fuel poverty. It benefits them as gas is typically cheaper than other fuels for heating.

Stakeholders at our Vulnerable Customers Forum encouraged us to do more to raise awareness of our scheme.

Our research showed that some people who applied, and who would have been eligible for free work, were deterred by our system that quoted the cost of connection. We therefore made changes so that we identified applicants' postcodes in fuel poor areas, and work was quoted to them as free of charge. There has been an increase in eligible customers completing their applications.

We promoted our scheme at 17 events last year and also further simplified information about it.

# Delivering for our customers

## Customer service

We want to give outstanding service to customers at all times, so we listen to what they say and take action. Key messages from stakeholders were to:

- make sure customers can contact us in the ways they choose
- improve communication during disruptive work.

Stakeholder engagement and advice received resulted in 84 outputs including:

- new and easy-to-understand literature on the services we provide
- more resources for our social media team
- initiating knowledge-sharing best practice events.

## PERCEPTION RESEARCH

During the year we engaged a company to assess the perception of our company by more than a thousand customers. It found that 37% of those who had received services from us were unfamiliar with our brand, rising to 39% among those we'd had no contact with.

Among other things, this led to a rebranding of our vehicles, with explicit information about what we do and our role as the gas emergency service. During the year 48 vehicles were rebranded and the process continues.

## NEW COMMUNICATIONS

In 2015/16 we carried out a “walk in our customers’ shoes” exercise. This aimed to give us the perspective of the people we serve. We reviewed all aspects of contact



and communication, to seek improvements – particularly during gas main replacement work.

With stakeholder support, this has resulted in stronger branding and simplified information in letters and leaflets. All have the Crystal Mark for Plain English.

We hold “drop-in” public information sessions before beginning schemes that have local impact. They enable people to ask questions and get all the information they want.



## CONNECTIONS

Stakeholders told us our connection application forms and associated information could be better. We’ve rebranded and improved them, with 97% of customers later saying they’re easy to complete. Customers are invited to give us feedback to help achieve further improvements.

## CUSTOMER SUPPORT OFFICERS

Customer satisfaction analysis told us that communication during gas main replacement work could be improved. We therefore trialled a “door knocking” exercise to communicate face-to-face with people who would be affected by our work. It was very successful and resulted in no complaints. We’ve therefore created four new roles of Customer Support Officers, to communicate directly with people where we work.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



Customers increasingly use social media channels to communicate with us, so we’ve expanded our social media team. By working closely with colleagues elsewhere in the company the team can respond to customers on Twitter and Facebook for 24 hours a day. We monitor a customer enquiry mailbox around the clock.

We’ve also created a complaints dashboard, giving real time information on what we are doing, to keep customers fully informed.

## Emergency response

Responding swiftly and efficiently to loss of supply and gas emergencies is a vital duty for our company. Stakeholders have told us to:

- know more about the locations of customers in vulnerable situations, so they can be prioritised in emergencies
- share best practice with other gas networks
- always be prepared for major incidents affecting large numbers of customers.

As a result we:

- held a “Sharing Best Practice” event
- revised our major incident team and processes
- improved our customer contact channels.

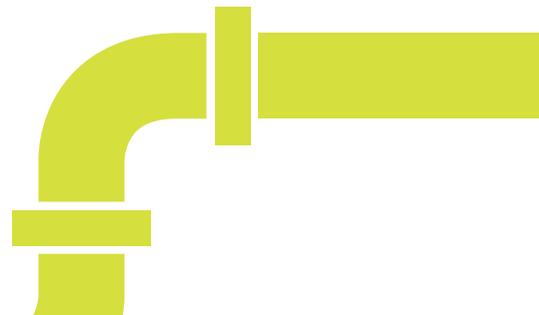
## IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS

We’ve made sure our call centre can cope with the high levels of contacts expected during a major incident. We can handle 120 calls at the same time – with a capacity to increase to 600. A major incident response page can immediately be added to our website, to keep customers informed.

During a major incident customers may be required to turn their gas supply off and then back on again. We’ve created a simple “how to” leaflet which is posted through doors in affected areas.

## SHARING BEST PRACTICE

We already co-operate with other gas networks and are now working with the Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers to develop an industry standard for managing major incidents. We’ve shared our major incident planning with other gas network operators and also learned from their experiences. Development of this standard is ongoing.



# Looking to the future

## Colleagues

Our stakeholders have said that they expect us to plan to meet a future of rising customer expectations and excellent environmental performance. Planning for the years to come is very much a present day focus.

### GRADUATE/APPRENTICE RECRUITMENT

Last year we recruited 24 apprentices and two graduates – our engineers of the future, as part of a total recruitment of 127 new colleagues.

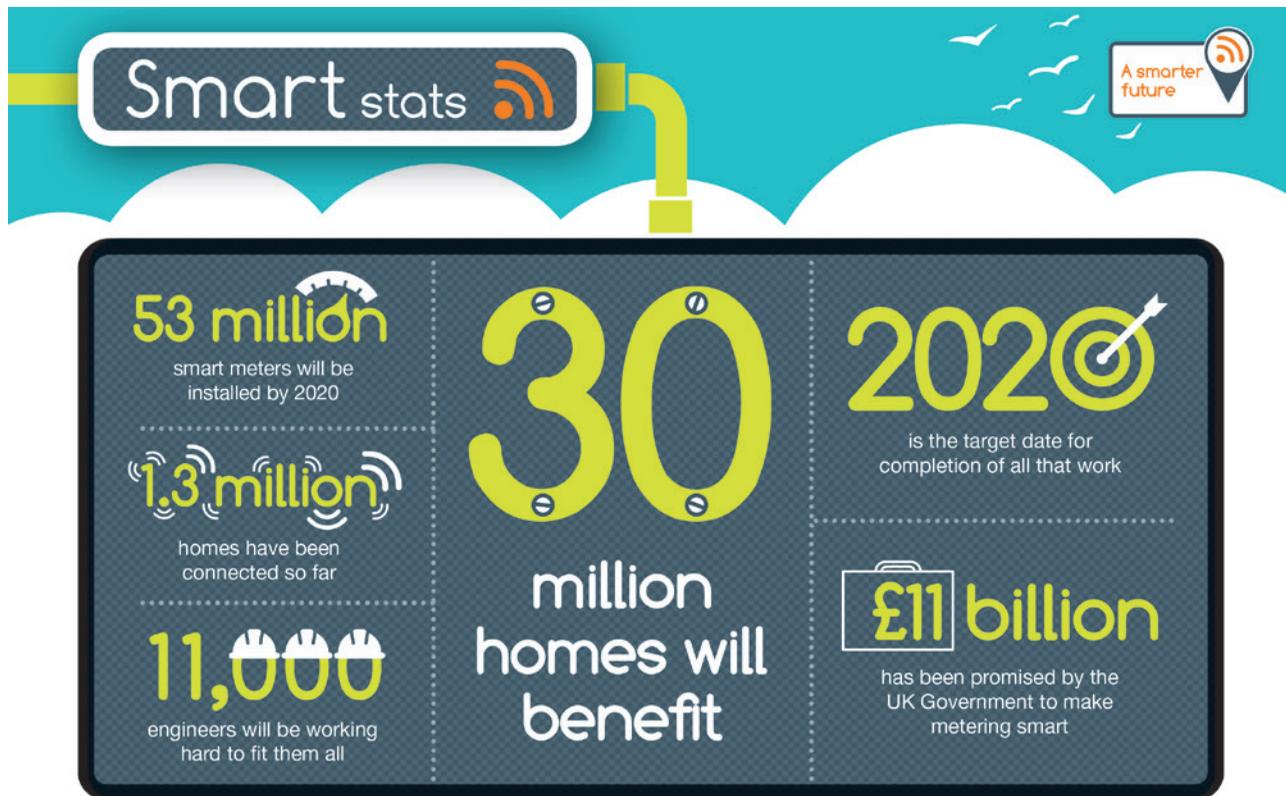
### PATHWAYS COACHES

We offer an internal coaching programme, where 24 colleagues, who have been trained as coaches, pass on

their experience to other colleagues. This helps future-proof colleagues' skill-sets, while developing people to their full potential.

### SMART METER CAMPAIGN

It's planned that all UK homes will be offered smart energy meters by 2020. However, stakeholders at our locational workshops tell us that a barrier to their roll-out is customer confusion and a lack of understanding of the potential benefits. To help address this we want to be sure that our own colleagues, who interact with the public in many ways, are well-informed. We created "A Smarter Future" campaign so they know key details of the smart meter programme. As a result, colleagues' awareness of smart meters increased by 57%.



# Sustainable future

We always look for ways to improve the services we deliver and minimise our impact on the environment.

Stakeholders have told us to:

- raise awareness of “green gas” – particularly among farmers and landowners who can provide it
- continue to minimise our impact on the environment
- do more to promote the benefits of sustainable gas supply.

This resulted in:

- holding an Alternative Gas Workshop
- attending and speaking at conferences about our “future of energy” work

- hosting a visit by the Government’s Business Energy & Industrial Strategy Heat Team to discuss the environmental work we are doing.

## THE ROLE OF THE GAS NETWORK

The increasing use of renewable energy is bringing together the traditionally separate electricity and gas industries. We are co-operating to create a dynamic, flexible and integrated energy system that will support a greener UK.

We work together to share information on the technologies that will help to meet the environmental

challenges we face. Injecting “green gas” into our network, such as gas produced from farm waste, is a cost-effective step towards sustainability.

## ALTERNATIVE GAS WORKSHOP

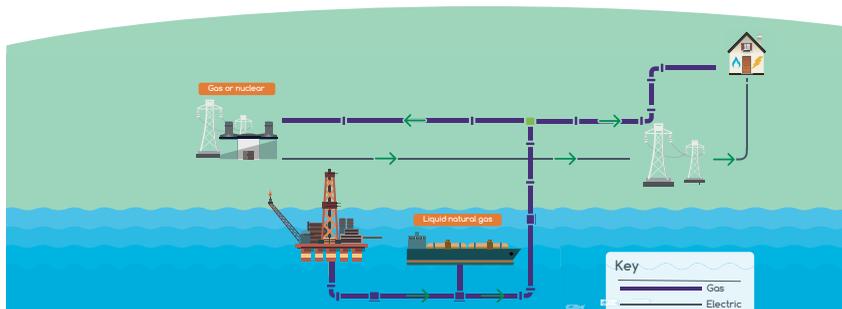
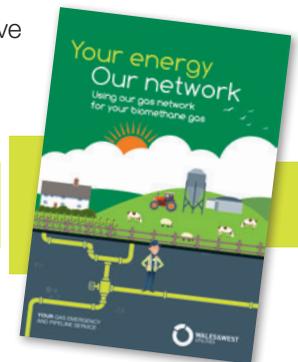
Stakeholders at our locational workshops encouraged us to raise awareness of sustainable gas supply. We therefore hosted an industry-first Alternative Gas Workshop. It attracted attendees from 64 organisations, as well as farmers, landowners, developers and academics. Feedback forms told us that 100% of attendees found the event “interesting” or “very interesting”.

## IMPROVING OUR IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

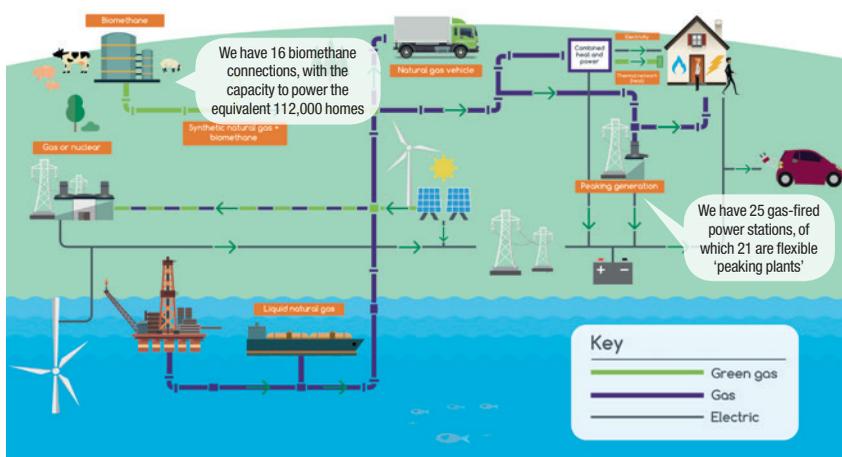
We enhance our environmental performance through our mains replacement programme. Last year we invested £64 million to replace 433 km of gas mains. This has helped us continue to reduce gas leaking from our network.

## PUBLICATIONS

We have created a “green gas” booklet to help people who want to connect their renewable gas supply to our network. Stakeholders have been asked to comment on it for review.



The past – separate gas and electricity network



The future – an integrated gas/electricity energy network

# Looking to the future

## Innovation

We are always looking for new and innovative ways to improve the services we provide to our customers and other stakeholders.

Stakeholders have told us to:

- promote innovation in the gas industry more
- collaborate more with other networks
- look at partnerships to renew the workforce.

This resulted in:

- sharing innovative ideas at events
- collaborating with other networks on a number of projects
- creating a partnership to make sure we have a workforce long into the future.

## WORKING WITH OTHERS

We co-operate with various organisations on future energy system projects. In 2016/17 we took part in 34 innovation schemes. One was the development of a tool that cuts a “window” in iron gas mains, enabling easier and faster replacement by durable plastic pipes. Another

was the adoption of a new excavation drill that greatly reduces vibration to the users.

Our company is on the advisory panel of Flexis – a £25 million European-funded Welsh project that examines the development of smart energy distribution systems.

We jointly lead the FREEDOM project, a £5 million scheme that’s addressing market barriers to the adoption of low carbon heating.

In partnership with others, we developed an “energy simulator” to model future energy supply and demand requirements in specific locations.

## ENERGY & UTILITY SKILLS PARTNERSHIP

Stakeholders at our locational workshops suggested that we work with partners to be sure that we continue to have a skilled workforce in the years ahead.

In partnership with the Energy & Utility Skills organisation and others, we’ve created a Workforce Renewal and Skills Strategy. It focuses on meeting our industry’s needs for a smart and sustainable future.



# Notes

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