

# Environment workshop



9<sup>th</sup> November 2020

*together*  
we are  
the network

# Thank you

Thank you again to those of you who joined us for our Environment Workshop on 22nd September. We got a great deal out of the session and we hope you did too.

## Overview of key themes from workshop

In September's workshop we dedicated some time to confirming the content of our Environmental Action Plan (EAP) for the period 2021 to 2026 and asked three questions to help us shape our future environmental activities:

### Question 1

Have your environmental priorities changed during 2020 and which three focus areas from our Environment Strategy are most important to you?

Your Feedback:

- There was an approximately even split between whether stakeholder's environmental priorities have changed during 2020.
- Some stakeholders now place greater priority on environmental issues due to greater awareness arising during the COVID-19 lockdown or due to increasing client demands for reduced environmental impact.
- Taking action against climate change remains the most important focus area of NGN's Environment Strategy for our stakeholders with enhancing life on land to encourage biodiversity becoming relatively more important during 2020 compared to previous research.

### Question 2

What is the next big environmental issue for you and your business?

Your Feedback:

- Biodiversity – 80% of pre-workshop survey responses said that they now place more value on open spaces and wildlife compared to before 2020. This increased priority is linked to increasing awareness of the biodiversity crisis in the UK and greater appreciation of the health and wellbeing benefits that natural environments can provide.
- Climate change – the need to reduce carbon emissions and the role that green energy, including gas, can play in this transition.
- Circular economy – opportunities to reduce waste and material consumption.

### Question 3

How important is the issue of single use plastics to you and your business, and have your views changed during 2020?

Your feedback:

- Most people have not changed their attitudes to the issues surrounding single use plastics.
- Single use plastics remain important to businesses and individuals, ranking 7.5 out of 10 in terms of importance.
- Stakeholders continue to want NGN to prioritise taking actions to remove single use plastics from their offices and depots.

A detailed account of the workshop discussions and feedback is provided later in this document.

You provided some invaluable feedback and insight regarding your environmental priorities which we will use in determining how we deliver our Environmental Action Plan commitments during 2021 to 2026. We were very pleased to hear that you would welcome more regular engagement with us on environmental issues and we are now working hard to develop an agenda for another workshop in December 2020.

Best wishes,

#### Hannah Jewison

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#### Neil Whalley

Environment and Sustainability Manager  
Northern Gas Networks

# Purpose of the workshop

The purpose of the workshop was to confirm the final content of our EAP for our next regulatory period (RIIO-GD2, 2021 to 2026), understand whether stakeholder environmental priorities have changed during 2020, including with regards to single plastics, and identify arising significant environmental issues. The workshop included a pre-event survey, in addition to live voting and interactive information capture via a word cloud during the session.

The agenda for the workshop was as follows:

- Summary of our business, regulatory setting and EAP commitments
- Discussion of pre-event survey regarding whether environmental priorities have changed during 2020
- Stakeholder prioritisation of NGN's five EAP focus areas
- Horizon scanning – what is the next big environment issue for you and your business?
- Single use plastics:
  - How important is the issue of single use plastics to you and your business?
  - Have your views changed during 2020?
  - Should NGN continue to prioritise action to eliminate SUPs from our offices and depots?

## Feedback received:

"The workshop was very well led and facilitated, there was an excellent mix of people which led to some very interesting discussions and points."

"It was a really good opportunity to join a conversation with some very knowledgeable and passionate people on key issues that will be driving business decisions over the coming years."

"Well run and engaging."

"For an online event it was excellent, what is always missing is the opportunity to chat to other participants outside the formal meeting."

12

delegates

9.14

overall satisfaction with the event (out of 10)

# Acting on your feedback – our commitments

The feedback you gave us during this workshop is helping to shape the way we work both now and in the future.

You Said	So we will
We've heard about Carbon Literacy and think it's a great idea	Collaborate with our stakeholders from the workshop to co-create a Carbon Literacy programme to offer to our colleagues across the business.
Single use plastics are still really important to us (rating them 7.5 out of 10 for importance)	Prioritise eradicating them from our depots and offices.
We're interested in talking to you again about a range of topics, including biodiversity.	Set-up regular stakeholder engagement sessions to discuss the topics of interest, aiming for three to four events per year.
It would be good to include a broader range of stakeholders for future events	Take this into consideration in the design of future events
We would appreciate more opportunities to network at further sessions	
It would be good to know more about other attendees in advance for further sessions	

# Key themes emerging from this workshop

## Environmental Priorities

We wanted to understand whether stakeholder's environmental priorities have changed during 2020, for example due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our pre-workshop survey identified an approximately even split between yes and no.

Some of the interesting feedback that we received from those that answered 'yes' included:

*"Companies should be more flexible on homeworking in the future as we have proven it can work... Even with the sharp decline in emissions because of COVID it isn't enough, we need to sustain that and drive it even further down."*

*"Lockdown has forced me to confront, and think more about the levels of pollution we are inflicting on our world. In the process I had more first hand experience of the levels of plastic pollution in our streets, cities, rivers and seas. Also the noticeable improvement in air quality when the road traffic levels dropped during lockdown demonstrated the damage to air quality by the huge amount of transport on the countries roads."*

*"Our environmental priorities have changed based on the acquisition of new works containing environmental targets."*

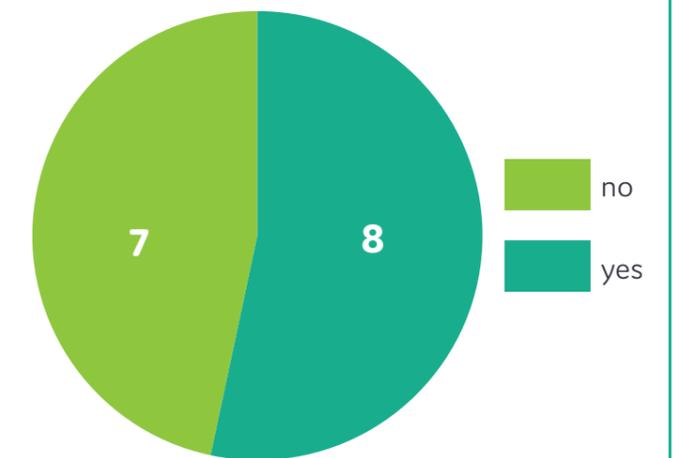
*"Carbon has gone down the agenda, the biodiversity crisis is now a more pressing issue."*

## Our Environment Strategy includes five key focus areas. During the workshop we asked the attendees to choose the three focus areas that are of the greatest priority to them.

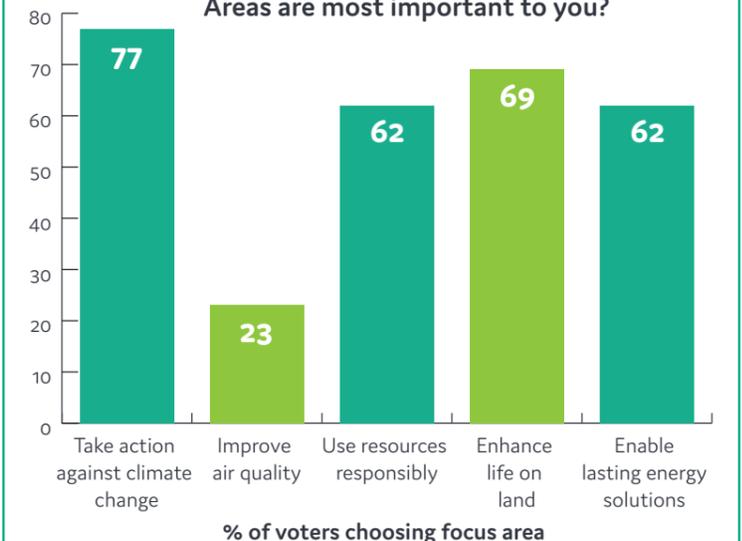
The findings show that stakeholders placed similar prioritisations across all focus areas except improving local air quality, with enhancing life on land to encourage biodiversity becoming relatively more important to stakeholders during 2020 compared to previous research.

Stakeholders identified that this does not mean that improving air quality has reduced in priority, in fact stakeholders commented that they had become more aware of air quality during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown. Stakeholders identified that for NGN they consider that reducing our air quality impact is intrinsically linked to taking action against climate change by decarbonising our vehicle fleet and thus the high prioritisation of taking action against climate change also reflects prioritisation of improving air quality.

Have your environmental priorities changed throughout 2020? (n=15)



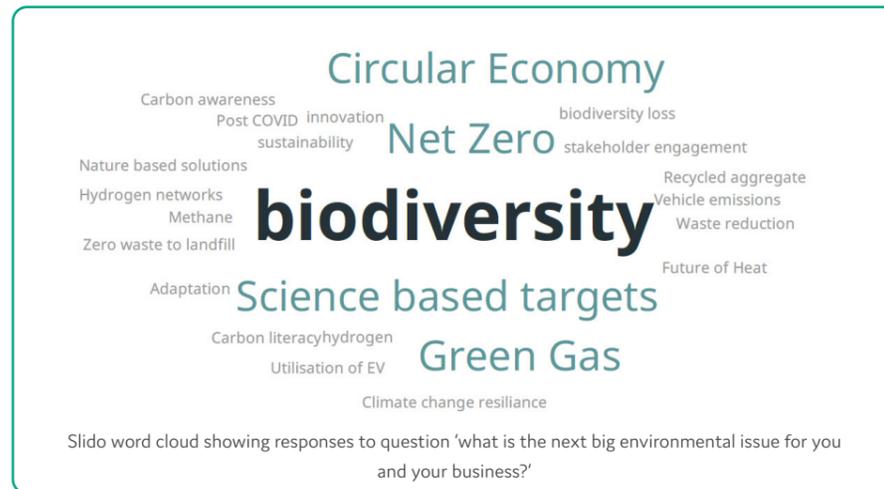
Which of NGN's Environment Strategy Focus Areas are most important to you?



# Key themes emerging from this workshop

## Horizon scanning – what's the next big environmental issue for stakeholders?

To keep our Environment Strategy relevant and up to date we need awareness of newly arising environmental issues that our stakeholders are facing. We asked stakeholders at the workshop for the next big environmental issues facing them and their businesses by means of an online poll which resulted in creation of a word cloud.



The clear issues emerging from this exercise were:

- Biodiversity – 80% of pre-workshop survey responses said that they now place more value on open spaces and wildlife compared to before 2020. Comments identified that this priority is linked to increasing awareness of the biodiversity crisis in the UK and the need to reduce human impacts on the natural world. Also, the COVID-19 lockdown provided greater awareness of the health and wellbeing benefits that natural environments can provide.
- Climate change – the need to reduce carbon emissions and the role that green energy, including gas, can play in this transition. Improving carbon literacy amongst colleagues and stakeholders has a potentially large role to play in this transition and is an area for potential collaboration.
- Circular economy – opportunities to reduce waste and material consumption.

Stakeholders also identified interest in opportunities to:

- reduce environmental impacts by the application of nature-based solutions, such as soil enhancement/restoration to deliver biodiversity improvements and carbon storage; and re-purpose towns and cities post-COVID-19 to provide more sustainable communities with lower environmental impact, and how the pandemic may result in an opportunity or requirement to accelerate existing decarbonisation plans.

## Single use plastics

Stakeholders have previously told us that the issue of single use plastics (SUPs) is important to them and that they expect us to reduce our consumption of SUPs. Based on this, in our RIIO-2 EAP we committed to eliminating SUPs from our offices and depots. We were conscious that stakeholder's attitudes to SUPs might have changed during 2020 as a result of the pandemic, for example due to increased usage of disposable personal protective equipment. Our pre-workshop survey identified that opinions to SUPs typically have not changed during 2020. Stakeholders still place a high importance on the issue of SUPs in businesses and homes, rating it as 7.5 out of 10.

**7.5 out of 10: how important is the issue of single use plastics to you and your business? (n=15)**

**Have your views on single use plastics changed during 2020? 73% answered no. (n=15).**

The workshop included breakout discussions on this topic, with the clear themes emerging being:

- It is important to be clear about what defines a SUP and what this means for our EAP commitment.
- Some SUPs are delivering clear benefits during the pandemic but that is anticipated to be relatively short term.
- Remobilisation after this period of pandemic provides a good opportunity to improve by embedding 'at home behaviour at work'.
- There was consensus to focus on eliminating relatively simple or 'quick fix' items first, such as domestic type materials (plates, cups, cutlery etc) whilst technology advances to replace more specialist items, such as packaging for specialist engineering materials.
- Embedding behavioural change within colleagues and supply chain is key as identifying and making physical changes can only go so far. Focussing on behavioural changes may embed the environmental culture to deliver multiple EAP commitments, not just the SUP commitment.
- Clients like NGN have a role in driving changes in their supply chains but need to recognise that the rate of change may not always be as fast as desired due to other external factors, such as availability of alternative packaging material types.

## Next Steps:

**We want to keep the conversation going.** Zoom worked well and we will continue to use this platform. However, we are still looking at how we can interact better by providing more details about the attendees and greater networking opportunities. Aside from the planned engagement activities, we welcome your ideas on any aspects of our business and the work that we are doing together.

**Feedback on this session.** Have you had further thoughts on some issues raised during this session? Or a great idea of things we should be doing in response to your feedback? We'd love to know. Please contact us directly on [stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk](mailto:stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk)

# Event Evaluation and Future Engagement

7 responses out of 12 attendees feedback

Summary:	Environment Workshop	Tuesday 22nd September 2020
<b>Event Evaluation</b>		
Q1	Choose 2 words from this list below to describe this event	Insightful, interesting, (Also - enjoyable, useful, collaborative, challenging and forward looking)
Q2	Overall, how satisfied were you with the event?	9.14 (overall)
Q3	How would you rate the discussions?	9.00
Q4	How would you rate the event contact and speakers?	9.29
Q5	How would you rate the event contact and speakers?	9.27
Q6	Is there anything you think could be improved / changes for future workshops?	<p><b>Key themes -</b> Delegates commented that they would appreciate a wider range of stakeholders to attend events and be provided with further details/biography of their fellow attendees. They would appreciate more breakout sessions as they facilitate the opportunity to develop solutions. Provision of 'you said, we did' type feedback in subsequent sessions would also be useful.</p>
Q7	Is there anything else you would like to tell us?	<p><b>Key themes -</b></p> <p>"Happy to join further workshops."</p> <p>"The workshop was very well led and facilitated, there was an excellent mix of people which led to some very interesting discussions and points."</p> <p>"For an online event it was excellent, what is always missing is the opportunity to chat to other participants outside the formal meeting."</p> <p>"It was a really good opportunity to join a conversation with some very knowledgeable and passionate people on key issues that will be driving business decisions."</p>



Q8	Thinking of yourself as a stakeholder of NGN, how satisfied are you with the relationship that you have with NGN	9.00
Q9	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	9.13
		No of respondents answering with the following options
	NGN keeps me up to date on their business plans	Strongly agree – 2 Agree – 5
	NGN provided me with clear information about their business performance	Strongly agree – 2 Agree – 4 Somewhat agree – 1
	NGN provided me with opportunities to give feedback on the topics that interest me	Strongly agree – 3 Agree – 2 Somewhat agree – 2
	NGN allows me to give feedback through my preferred method	Strongly agree – 3 Agree – 2 Somewhat agree – 2
	NGN makes it clear how they have used feedback to change	Strongly agree – 2 Agree – 3 Somewhat agree – 2

Future Engagement		
Q1	How else would you like to engage with NGN in future?	<p>"Happy with current arrangements."</p> <p>"From my own perspective, I would like to continue the discussions around reducing plastic as there are definitely opportunities to share learning and case studies."</p> <p>"Workshops were very useful to understand what goes on behind the scenes. Perhaps more of these."</p> <p>"To engage with different stakeholders twitter and social media can be useful."</p> <p>"To engage with different stakeholders twitter and social media can be useful."</p>

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# Tell us what you think

Thank you for reading this report. We welcome any further feedback, thoughts or ideas you have. Please drop us a line at [stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk](mailto:stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk)

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