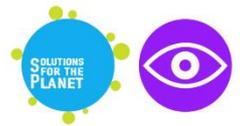


Northern Gas Networks Young Innovators Council



End of Year Report 2021

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Purpose and objectives of Northern Gas Networks' Young Innovators Council

Northern Gas Networks' Young Innovators Council (YIC) is the voice of young people at Northern Gas Networks. It provides young people's perspectives and Northern Gas Networks ensure these young people's thoughts and opinions are put at the heart of the business' decision making. Each session agenda is co-created by S4TP, Northern Gas Networks and the Young Innovators Council, leading to meaningful and relevant engagement which provide a real opportunity to influence decision-making. Innovation, skills, future energy (sustainability) and stakeholder (including community) engagement are important to Northern Gas Networks as is diversity, both in its workforce and wider network. Northern Gas Networks were keen to bring a wider range of voices and perspectives into the business and approached Solutions for the Planet to explore how these voices can be brought together in the form of a youth panel.

Value of youth panel to Northern Gas Networks:

- Bringing in diverse young voices to their decision making
- Meaningful engagement with key stakeholders and future customers
- Providing opportunities to upskill future talent
- Enhancing links with community and school partners

Value to young people:

- Experience of informing key business agendas and strategies
- An increased knowledge of the workings of a major utility company, and networking opportunities
- Skills development including teamwork, confidence, negotiation, critical thinking, and communication
- Certificates of participation and formal references

Recruitment

35 young people were recruited at the start of the year all of whom had full parent/carer consent to participate.

At the end of YIC 2021, the Council is made up of 29 young people aged 14–18 who are based across the footprint of Northern Gas Networks. The group's membership is reflective of the demographic make-up of Northern Gas Networks' area of coverage, based on census data in respect of gender, ethnicity, geographic spread, and disability.

2. ENGAGEMENT METHODS

A variety of engagement mechanisms were used to inform and engage the Young Innovators Council, which have been tailored to meet the needs of young people, allowing different and broad perspectives to be heard.

The sessions involved written, online and offline opportunities for participants to express their views. This helps people with different accessibility needs to make an equal contribution. By using different techniques, it is believed that we enabled sustained engagement over the period of the Council.

S4TP also recognise that young people prefer to engage in less formal settings and in activities that are more dynamic and high energy. The session format was particularly effective as it allowed a level of flexibility for young people to explore subjects that were of interest to them. Having this level of flexibility meant that young people were more interested and therefore offered more insight and had higher levels of engagement.

Subject areas covered by Young Innovators Council

The Young Innovators Council is quite a large group and therefore many of the sessions included small group work in breakout rooms which were facilitated by S4TP and Northern Gas Networks staff. Both an initial training session and subsequent facilitator run throughs were held throughout the process. The young people on the Young Innovators Council expressed their appreciation of both external and internal Northern Gas Networks witnesses giving information during the session. This ensured that the Council received useful and a balanced input of information. Both S4TP and Northern Gas Networks sourced the witnesses and S4TP provided a written witness brief and held a witness briefing call prior to sessions.

Northern Gas Networks' Young Innovators Council
Meet up session
Session 1: Education and skills
Session 2: Hydrogen house
Session 3: CO safety
Session 4: Sustainability Strategy
Session 5: Hydrogen Community Pilot (Extra Session)
Facilitator training x 1
Facilitator briefings x 3
Witness briefings x 3

Table 1: YIC 2021 session titles

3. FEEDBACK METHODS USED BY NORTHERN GAS NETWORKS

Insights and recommendations from the Council were identified in a ‘Now, Wow, How’ format, classifying them as:

- Now: actions easy to implement straight away,
- Wow: original ideas possible to implement that would bring about big change, or
- How: original ideas that are much more difficult to implement.

6. Key recommendations (priorities)

At the end of their second breakout session, each group was asked to prioritise their ideas into a list of actions, using the NOW/WOW/HOW framework.

What would you like to do / hear/ see on a visit?

- directly compare the original natural gas appliances with the hydrogen ones
 - create a guessing game to demonstrate these **NOW**
 - open boilers and cookers/false fronts on appliances/transparent pipes with coloured hydrogen so that visitors have visuals **WOW**
- harness the use of a mobile app before, during and after visits to the house - games/activities/maps/quizzes/learning **HOW?**
- scavenger hunts leading the learning around the house, to help understand the processes involved in hydrogen extraction, use and distribution **WOW**
- puzzles and real-life scenario uses of hydrogen **NOW**
- cooking demos for schools, where they bring and cook their own food and have a meal there **NOW**
- escape rooms with hydrogen related tasks to complete and solve **HOW?**
- comparative images of what the environment will look like with/without the switch from natural gas to frame/influence the decision making of visitors **WOW**
- attention to detail = utensils in the kitchen, milk in the fridge **NOW**
- wearing a wetsuit and going into the shower! **HOW?**

Figure 1: Example of YIC 2021 recommendations; YIC Session 2

In turn, Northern Gas Networks fed back the business’ response to the YIC recommendations using a ‘You said – we did’ method. The young people on the Council also received copies of all the session reports.



Figure 2: Example of Northern Gas Networks' feedback to YIC from multiple sessions

4. HOW HAVE THE YOUNG INNOVATORS COUNCIL'S THOUGHTS BEEN PUT AT THE HEART OF NORTHERN GAS NETWORKS' DECISION MAKING?

SESSION 1: EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Objectives:

- A. To identify why young people think Northern Gas Networks should deliver an Education and Skills strategy.
- B. To understand what the objectives should be for Northern Gas Networks' Education and Skills strategy.
- C. To understand what the impactful things are that Northern Gas Networks can do to support young people through education work.

Witnesses: Eileen Brown, Customer Experience Director at Northern Gas Networks

At the time of the first Young Innovators Council, Northern Gas Networks were developing a new Education and Skills strategy. Northern Gas Networks set out to understand why young people think such a strategy is important and work with the Council to develop impactful, useful, and creative ways that this could be delivered as part of Northern Gas Networks' education, skills and careers support.

Prior to the session S4TP took the approach that during young people's time in education they faced several crossroads where key decisions around their future careers were made:

1. When choosing subject options
2. Work experience decisions
3. University/college or apprenticeship

The YIC was split into three groups (based on age), with each group being asked to research one of the below:

TASK: We'd like you have a think about the careers outreach that happens in your school, and research the questions:

Group 1: Outreach in schools

- What different activities are good for different age groups in school?
- Which companies go into your school, and what do they offer?

Group 2: Work experience placements

- What do you think of when someone says work experience?
- Research 3 different work experience placements

Group 3: Apprenticeships and recruitment

- What are your perceptions of jobs at Northern Gas Networks?
- Research 3 different jobs and/or apprenticeships at Northern Gas Networks

During the session a slide deck was presented with information regarding the skills gap, new ways of working post-pandemic, and how the three working groups has been created with regards to educational crossroads. To introduce the topic and gain a view of the YIC’s existing understanding and perceptions, an interactive whiteboard was used to gather their views on the benefits of having an Education and Skills strategy, both for Northern Gas Networks and for young people. The following insights were shared:

Benefits to Northern Gas Networks	Benefits to young people
To establish a constant workforce by engaging young people in interesting jobs	To learn about new jobs
Create a positive brand image	To learn a trade
Encourage young people to look at jobs and companies that they had not considered before	To gain an insight into Northern Gas Networks and the energy sector
To save money on training	To get young people interested in STEM careers by linking engineering, science, and the environment
To help to create happy stakeholders	To have the opportunity to get a high skilled, secure job
To understand the future workforce	An opportunity for young people to have their say
To increase understanding of the energy industry	To get a head start in the jobs market
To support local young people	To learn skills not taught in school
To establish and enhance Northern Gas Networks as a community-based company	To have an opportunity to learn about future energy and future jobs
To develop future workforce	To gain industry relevant knowledge
To help to attract applications from a diverse range of candidates	To learn about all the different types of jobs within the gas industry e.g., marketing etc.
To help young people gain the right skills for future employment	To develop essential social skills needed in a workspace
To gain new ideas and insights	
To attract the most talented individuals	
To help to create a wider recruitment pool	
An opportunity to educate about future energy and future green jobs	
So that people from all backgrounds have access to the same opportunities	

Table 2: Responses; "Why should Northern Gas Networks have an Education and Skills Strategy?"; YIC Session 1

Young Innovators Council's key recommendations

The Young Innovators Council was split into breakout rooms respective of their current crossroad. Groups were asked to 'brain sprint' their ideas, discuss the topic further and then prioritise their suggestions. The Council's thoughts and ideas were organised into key recommendations, and Northern Gas Networks responded to these recommendations at the start of the next session:

Suggestions and actions	Response
Make sure all activities in schools' outreach are interactive.	Northern Gas Networks plan to increase their focus on delivering school sessions as challenge sessions where they run more workshop sessions with groups of pupils to solve problems. Northern Gas Networks also intend to grow their ambassador programme and recruit more colleagues to be STEM ambassadors and work with secondary schools across the region.
Include the future of gas and innovative technologies in content, especially Northern Gas Networks' role within this.	Northern Gas Networks will ensure that the careers and education strategy clearly aligns with our social mobility pledge and that any educational work undertaken provides an opportunity to educate young people about future energy and future green jobs.
Work experience placements should provide a realistic lived experience of professional environments.	A key objective when Northern Gas Networks are designing their education programme is now to provide young people with the skills to help them be "job ready".
Revisit the length and breadth of work experience placements, perhaps varying this based on crossroad and department.	<i>"One of the challenges we had was lack of awareness regarding how schools operate and how the curriculum has changed. The way that students learn is very different today, which means that this needs to be considered in the sessions. In addition, the curriculum is very different with work experience for example being moved to a requirement for 16+. This meant that we have made assumptions on the ages to target in the sessions and got it wrong, but this is an important learning curve and has fed directly into the Education Strategy". [Asset Risk and Investment Manager, Northern Gas Networks]</i>
Create a graduate programme.	Whilst Northern Gas Networks already have a good apprenticeship programme in place, it has focused so far on levels two and three. Northern Gas Networks will now embark upon an exercise to gather a better understanding of how this programme can be expanded and offer higher levels of apprenticeships and what graduate placement programmes they can offer.

Table 3: Young Innovators Council's suggested actions and responses from Northern Gas Networks; YIC Session 1

Young Innovators Council’s feedback on Session 1: Education and Skills

Both during the main session and the breakout rooms it became clear that the young people had many questions for Northern Gas Networks, in particular around the apprenticeship programme and the possibilities of a graduate programme. This interest came from across the whole age range of the Council. A possible response or action to this could be a Q&A session from Northern Gas Networks around apprenticeships with staff and current apprentices.

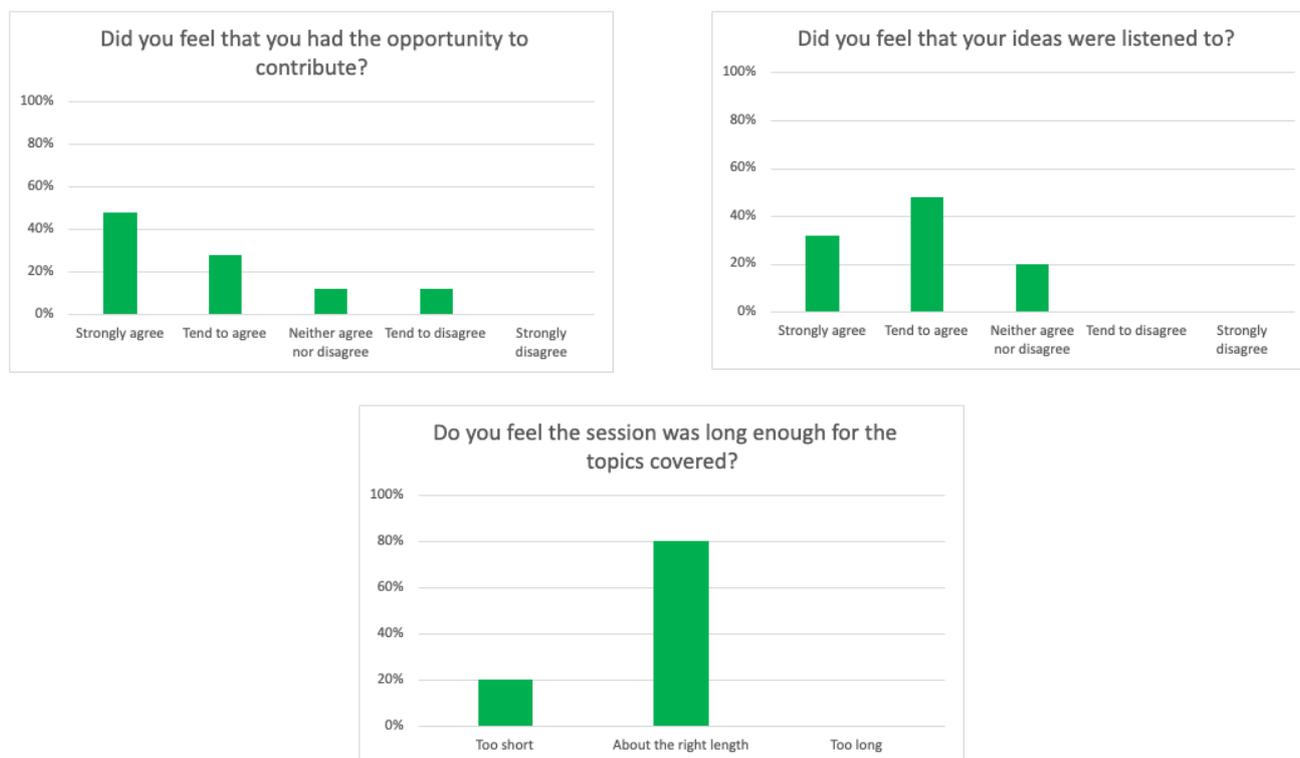


Figure 3: Graph extraction of Council feedback forms; YIC Session 1

Conclusion

The Young Innovators Council found it beneficial to ‘deep dive’ into one specific key question as opposed to several related questions, and this was addressed in the subsequent sessions. Overall, the objectives were met and the Young Innovators Council gave valuable insights that informed and drove Northern Gas Networks’ Education and Skills strategy.

Because the education and skills strategy was in the process of being developed the Council had a meaningful and direct impact on the direction that the strategy was developed. It was noted that the educational landscape is rapidly changing and the points when opportunities for Northern Gas Networks to have the greatest impact were different than what had been previously assumed. These insights will mean that when Northern Gas Networks deploys resources around its support for education and skills they will have a more directed and valuable impact.

Objectives:

- A. To understand what would make young people want to visit the hydrogen house on an educational visit?
- B. To understand what young people would like to do / hear / see on a visit?
 - i. What information would young people want to learn if you went to the hydrogen house? Could there be a difference for 14-19-year-olds and for younger children?
 - ii. What's the most engaging way to present this information in a visit?
- C. To understand what young people would need to see at the house to make them excited about a future career in STEM, e.g., would it be part of a general visit, or would it be a specific career focused school event?

Witnesses:

Elaine Richmond, Communities and Events Manager at the National Science and Media Museum
 Alex Brightman, Hydrogen Home Liaison Officer at Northern Gas Networks

Prior to the session the young people were asked to undertake a short task to focus their thoughts on educational trips and begin to imagine what an engaging trip might look like for their age group: "For this session, we would like each of you to have a think about any excellent educational visits you have had outside of school - to museums, learning centres, discovery zones, aquariums, farms, orienteering trips... the list is endless! We will ask each of you to contribute anything you can remember (funny stories always welcome!), and we will feedback about these memories at the very beginning of Session 2, to get our brains whirring! Have a think about:

- a. Why was that trip engaging?
- b. What did you particularly enjoy?
- c. What activities or experiences made it memorable or successful for you?"

During the session, Elaine Richmond, Communities and Events Manager at the National Science and Media Museum gave a short presentation based around the 'Hook, Inform, Enable & Extend' framework of engagement. The Council also heard a presentation from Alex Brightman, Hydrogen Home Liaison Officer at Northern Gas Networks, on the logistics of the hydrogen house and a [video](#) of the building of the house.

A Slido word cloud was also used to gather feedback in real time. Council members were asked to write two words that describe an excellent educational visit. Each word differs in size based on the frequency it was used. This method set the scene for the session and visualized their responses, helping to warm up the YIC before they delved further into the subject

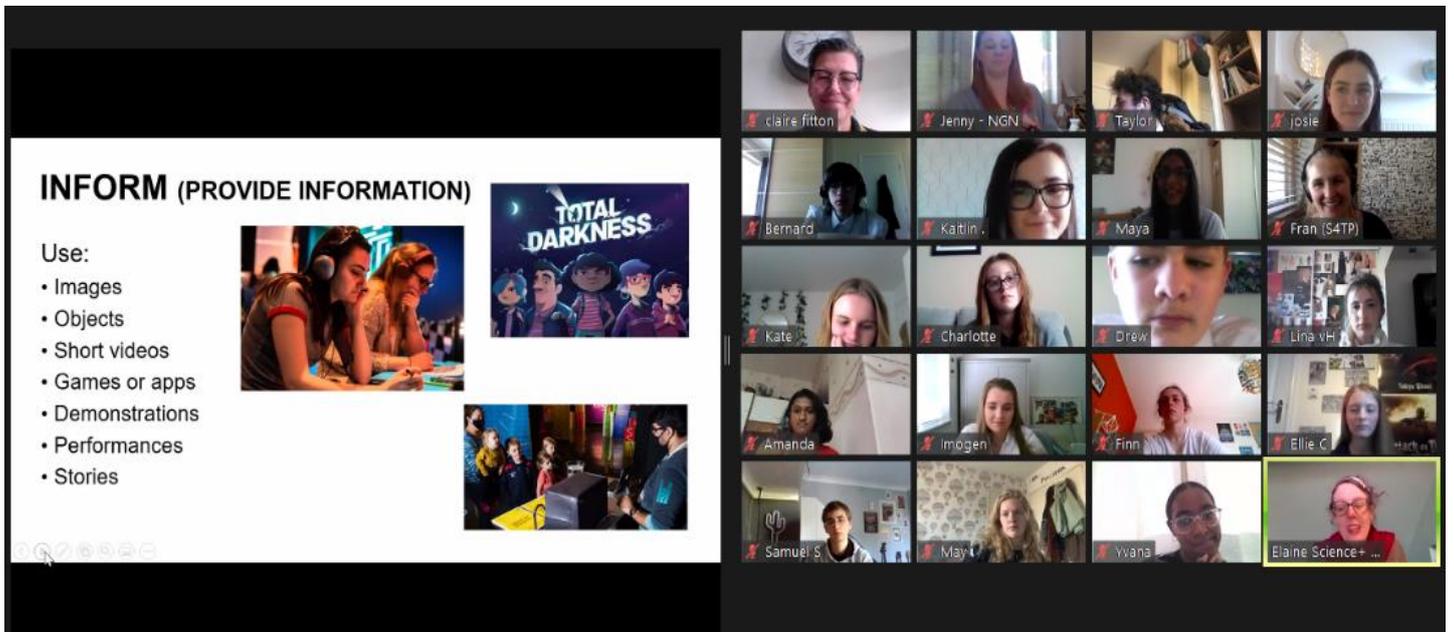


Figure 4: Screenshot of Elaine Richmond's presentation to the Council; YIC Session 2



Figure 5: Word cloud produced from Council's research task; YIC Session 2

Young Innovators Council's key recommendations

Suggestions and actions	Response
Market it as a future home, not just a science experiment & freedom to be able to roam around and explore.	Northern Gas Networks have built the house to look and feel like a current-day home and are fitting the interior with recycled and preloved furniture, fixtures and fittings as much as we possibly can. The house will be designed to encourage independent learning and discovery supported by guided tours to provide information where it's needed.
Learning about the science behind the hydrogen house and how it works practically is vital. Include a gaming station that looks like it belongs to the people who live in the house, but that has the interactive learning games for visitors.	Northern Gas Networks have a limited budget available, however they liked the ideas suggested and will embark upon an exercise to understand how these could be incorporated into the house as part of educational visits. They are already planning to include interactive dashboards as part of the visitor experience.
Ensure there is an emphasis on future jobs and 'green careers'.	Northern Gas Networks will ensure that they align the hydrogen house and school visits with their wider education and skills strategy to explore how they can offer the best advice and build out an effective action plan to focus on future jobs and careers, including green apprenticeships. Northern Gas Networks are keen to ensure they do as much as possible to excite and encourage people into a future STEM career.
Include competitions, challenges, puzzles and activities for schools and groups.	The purpose of the home is to demonstrate and bring hydrogen technologies to life and show how they fit and work in a domestic setting as part of a hydrogen future. Northern Gas Networks will ensure that where they can, they will build interactive STEM based challenges and puzzles into the school visit programme, using the five criteria identified at the start of the session.
Be able to relate a visit to the hydrogen house to an in-school topic. This will help school visits understand what Northern Gas Networks is doing and why they are doing it.	Northern Gas Networks will look at ways they can work with teachers and educational experts to make sure that where they can, they support the school curriculum to ensure visits provide added value and real-life benefits from any visits.

Table 4: Young Innovators Council's suggested actions and responses from Northern Gas Networks; YIC Session 2

Young Innovators Council’s feedback on Session 2: The Hydrogen House

The YIC came up with a plethora of ideas of how the hydrogen house could be made engaging for their peers. Having a witness who was comfortable presenting to young people worked well and the Council appreciated an external visitor attending the meeting. The post session feedback from the Council members was very positive.

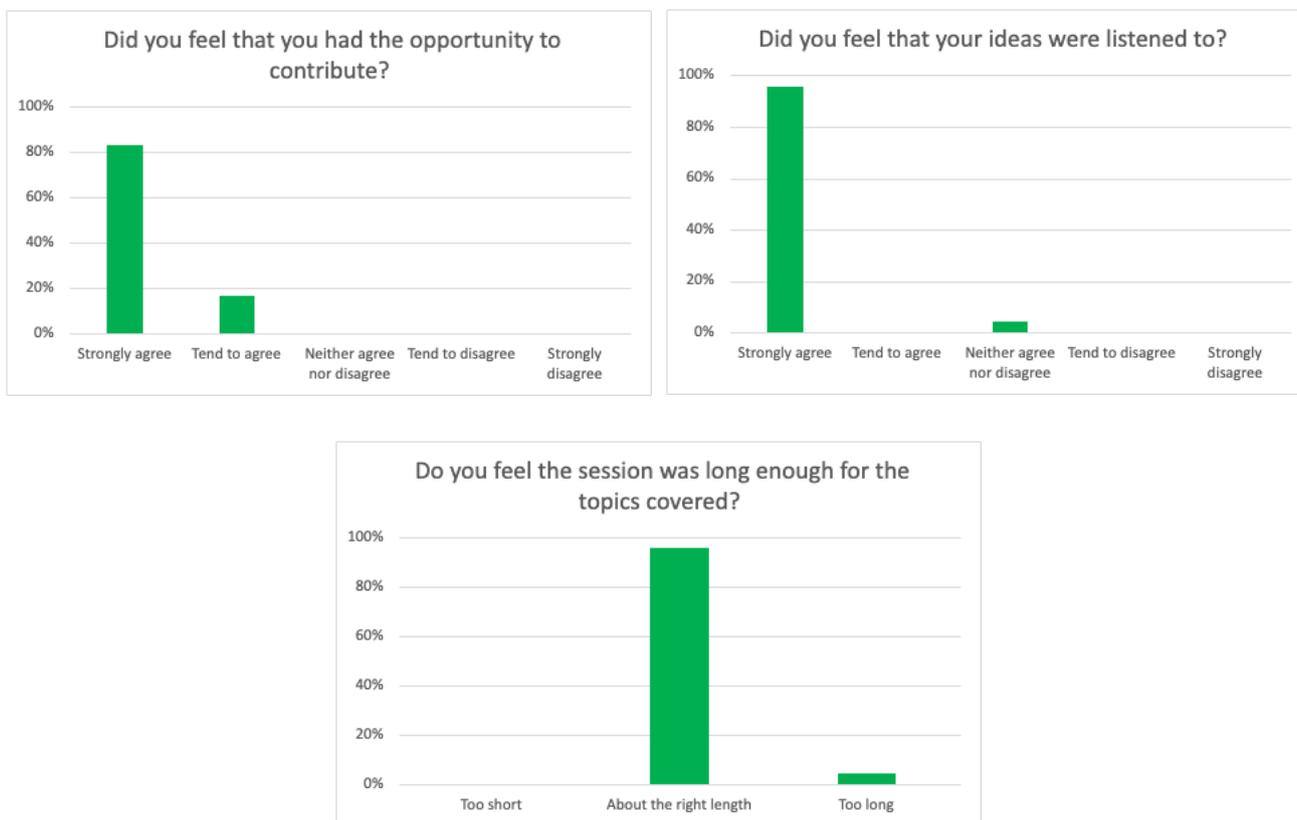


Figure 6: Graph extraction of Council feedback forms; YIC Session 2

Conclusion

A different format for the session worked well, and the YIC came up with a plethora of ideas of how the hydrogen house could be made engaging for their peers. Having a witness who was comfortable presenting to young people worked well and the Council appreciated an external visitor attending the meeting. The post session feedback from the Council members was very positive. The visit to the house was welcomed by those that attended and proved to be positive feedback for their suggestions.

Additional activities relating to the Hydrogen House

Six members of Northern Gas Networks’ Young Innovators Council have taken part in a panel discussion with industry leaders, at an event held by the Decarbonised Gas Alliance in the run up to the COP26 conference. The panel discussion, which was held at Northern Gas Networks’ Low Thornley site, focused on the possible career opportunities which will be created as the country transitions to using cleaner energy. The panel comprised young people aged from 15-18 years old, alongside Tim Harwood and Melanie Taylor from Northern Gas Networks, BP’s Stuart Walker, Ivan Jepson from Gateshead College, and Chris Barron representing the Decarbonised Gas Alliance. The panel discussed a range of topics including the new jobs which will be created through a Net Zero

transition and how these jobs can be made appealing to young people. The panel explored the particular opportunities which may arise in the North East and how the region can be at the forefront of the Government's proposed Green Industrial Revolution.

In addition to taking part in the panel discussion, the panel took a tour of the UK's first Hydrogen Homes which are based at the site. The homes, which were built by Northern Gas Networks in partnership with fellow gas distributor Cadent and the Government, demonstrate 100% hydrogen appliances including cookers, hobs, boilers and fires.

'Through the Young Innovators Council it has been amazing to see how hydrogen may be the future of our homes in Britain. It has been absolutely fascinating learning about what Northern Gas is doing, but simply seeing the hydrogen house in person made me realise that it isn't just a concept but in fact the future of energy lies in hydrogen, across not only the UK but possibly the entire globe. To see the hydrogen home in action along with being the first members of the public to cook on hydrogen appliances was truly inspiring. Being able to see the Hydrogen Home in person truly does give me hope that in the near future, we will tackle climate change, once and for all'.

Josh, Young Innovators Council Member, Hexham



Figure 7: YIC members at hydrogen house site visit; October 2021

Objectives:

- A. To establish what Council members know about carbon monoxide and carbon monoxide poisoning– both the symptoms and dangers.
- B. To identify what some of the impactful and creative things we can do to deliver important safety messages to teenagers about the dangers of CO.

Witnesses:

Simon Kilshaw , Green Doctor Manager at Groundwork

Steve Dacre, Vulnerability Innovation lead at Northern Gas Networks

Prior to the session Council members were asked to read three articles concerning CO safety and cases of accidental CO poisoning. This ensured that the Council members had a clear context for the session.

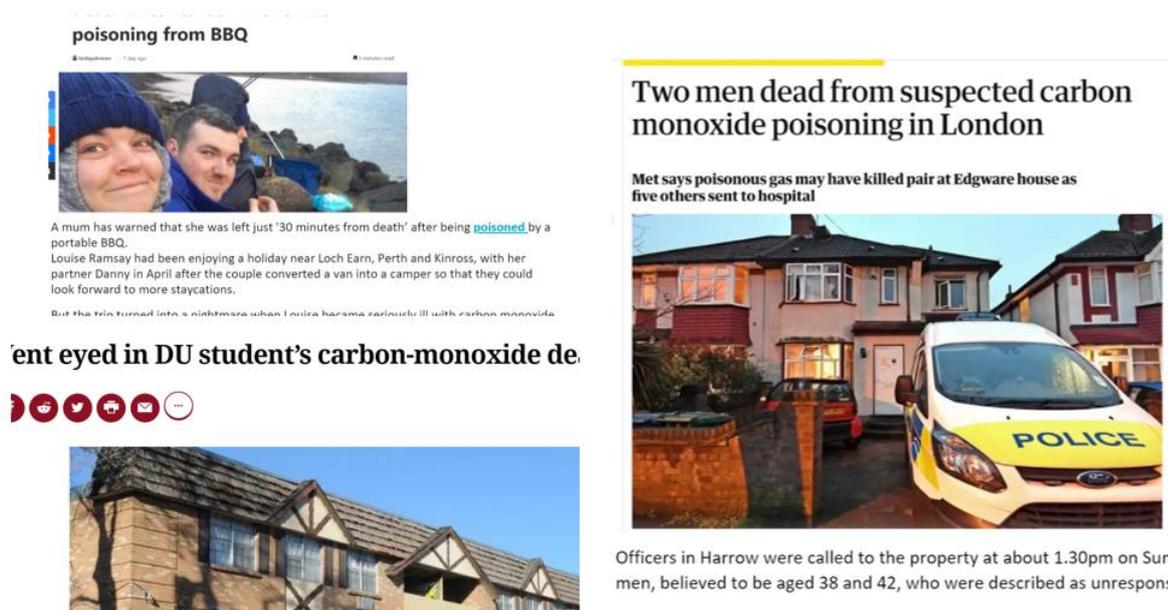


Figure 8: Screenshot of newspaper articles sent to YIC; YIC Session 3

During the session, the YIC heard a witness presentation from Simon Kilshaw, Green Doctor Manager at Groundwork. The witness covered areas including:

- The causes of CO poisoning including from barbecues, wood fires, household appliances.
- The symptoms of CO poisoning
- Prevention of CO poisoning

The Council also heard a presentation from Steve Dacre, Vulnerability Innovation lead at Northern Gas Networks. This presentation covered what Northern Gas Networks are obligated to do in terms of CO education and safety, what they are currently doing in this arena and why they needed the YIC’s input into their campaigns. A live Slido quiz was again used to gather information about the

YIC's existing knowledge of CO, with the results being relayed into the 'meeting room' as they came in. Council members were asked to answer a series of multiple-choice questions. This method set the scene for the session and visualized their responses, helping to warm up the YIC before they delved further into the subject.

	Quiz question	% Correct
1	Carbon monoxide smells like....	93
2	Which of these is a symptom of carbon monoxide poisoning?	100
3	Who is responsible for having gas appliances serviced in a rented house?	100
4	Which fuel sources can release carbon monoxide when burnt ?	63
5	How often should you get your heating appliances serviced?	72
6	How often should you test your carbon monoxide alarm	58
7	How many carbon monoxide alarms should you have?	58

Table 5: Slido CO quiz and results; YIC Session 3

The whiteboard contains several handwritten notes and drawings:

- Top Left:** "Tiktok - Quick video with obvious indications of CO" (blue text). Next to it is a green arrow pointing to the word "MUSIC" written in green.
- Top Center:** "scare people - it will hit home more, because it makes them picture themselves" (orange text).
- Top Right:** "augmented reality/filters ofr insta and snapchat" (pink text).
- Middle Left:** "symptoms made visual (like headaches and dizzines)" (blue text).
- Middle Center:** "Are you safe? Notice it, check it, prevent it, save a life" (blue text).
- Middle Right:** "main message should appear early on, as attention fades in long videos" (pink text).
- Bottom Left:** "Shocking imagery - personal stories" (blue text).
- Bottom Center:** "real life has more of an effect, it shows reality" (blue text).
- Bottom Right:** "shock factor" (pink text) and "orange flame point was really important - as sometimes the symptoms might be considered generic, so starting with them might not always work" (pink text) with a green checkmark.
- Bottom Center (Lower):** "This is not a hangover: symptoms of CO poisoning" (blue text).
- Bottom Left (Lower):** "People care about themselves, make it seem like they're at risk" (blue text).
- Bottom Center (Lower):** "Simple drawings of symptoms to make easy to see" (purple text) with a green checkmark.
- Bottom Left (Lower):** "'Make it noisy'- as a play on 'silent killer'" (blue text).
- Bottom Right (Lower):** "do you have: if so, it could be CO poisoning" (orange text).
- Bottom Center (Lower):** "real life - important" (pink text) and "people care about themselves, so how do you centre them?" (pink text).

Figure 9: Screenshot of example breakout room whiteboard; raising awareness of CO safety; YIC Session 3

Young Innovators Council's key recommendations

Suggestions and actions	Response
<p>The YIC had a good baseline knowledge of the symptoms of CO poisoning and the types of products that could cause carbon monoxide. However, they were less confident in their knowledge around prevention and detection with only just over half the Council members aware of when to test carbon monoxide alarms and where they should be placed.</p>	<p>The safe use of alarms will be a focus of Northern Gas Networks' safety briefings and within campaign messaging. They will also look at triangulating this with the broader research data from their CO and PSR awareness feedback to understand if this is something they should focus on more heavily in campaigns.</p>
<p>To make messages resonate with young adults they needed to be short, snappy, and visible and focus on communicating simple safety messages and symptoms. It was also pointed out that shock tactics stay with you. It was identified that the orange flame messaging and skull and bones imagery as a sign of danger were powerful.</p>	<p>These points will be fed into future messaging and campaign work Northern Gas Networks undertake around carbon monoxide.</p>
<p>During conversation about how to share CO messaging, it was clear that the YIC felt that it would be made more impactful by developing partnerships with key organisations, such as universities, landlords, camping sites and festival organisers as well as bus and train travel operators.</p>	<p>Northern Gas Networks are already working with Northern Rail on projects so will look at opportunities to work together to communicate CO safety messaging. Northern Gas Networks will also share these insights with their gas CO safety industry working group to explore how this could fit into a wider partnership programme or trial projects to explore effectiveness of specific partnerships.</p>
<p>The importance of social media channels, such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube as effective channels to share information with young adults was apparent throughout the discussions. However, it was clear that content posted through Northern Gas Networks' own channels wouldn't be as effective as more disruptive content, including forced adverts, sponsorship, hashtags, augmented reality and filters.</p>	<p>The use of augmented reality and innovation to improve CO awareness and detection is something that Northern Gas Networks are keen to explore further using the new Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance for RIIO-2. They will review the ideas that have come from the group and use these insights to build new communication campaigns.</p>

Table 6: Young Innovators Council's suggested actions and responses from Northern Gas Networks; YIC Session 3

Young Innovators Council’s feedback on Session 3: CO Safety

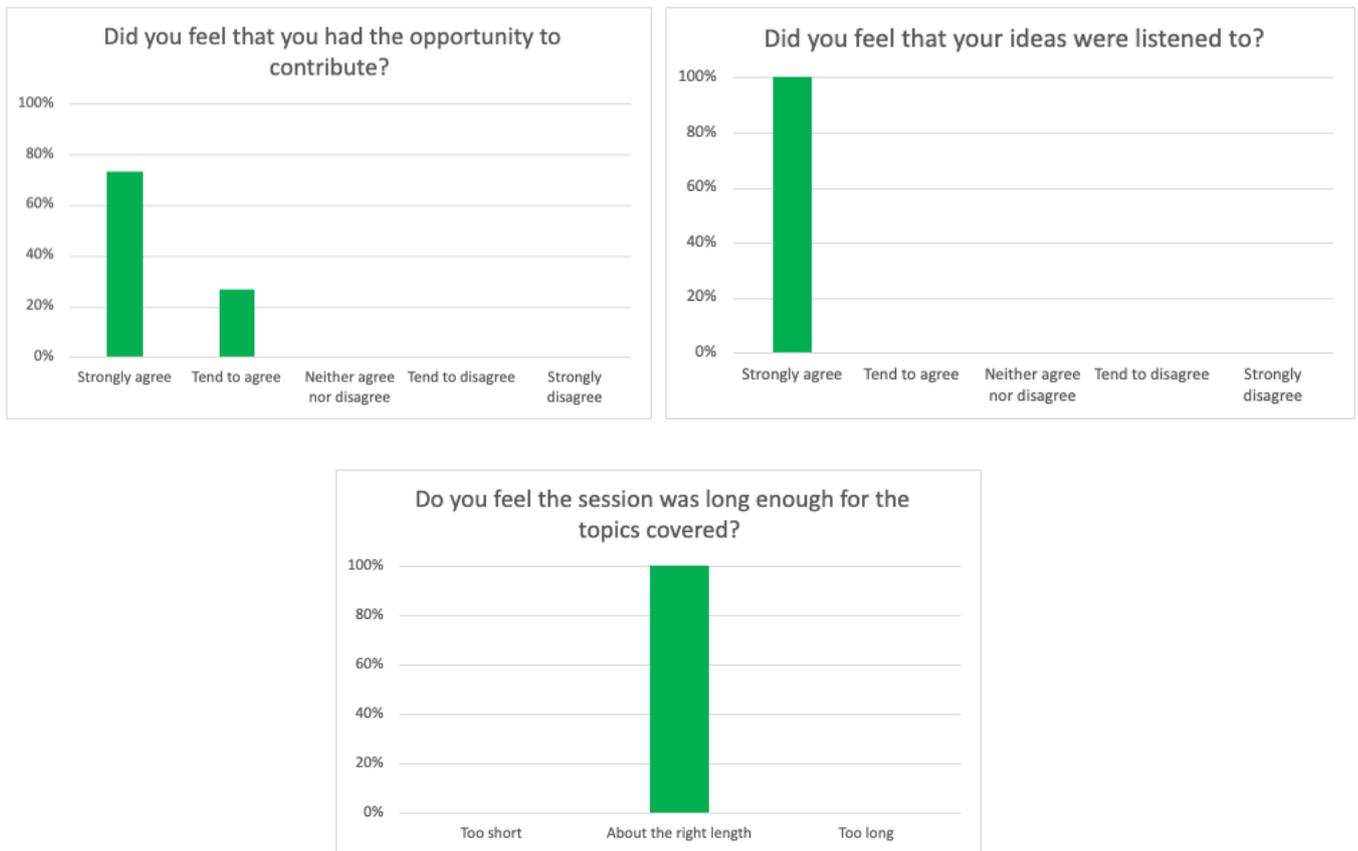


Figure 10: Graph extraction of Council feedback forms; YIC Session 3

Conclusion:

A high level of satisfaction was shown in the feedback from the Council members for this session. Given the ‘dry’ nature of the subject matter this is particularly gratifying. Using techniques such as quizzing and pre-work ensured that the session was both lively and informative.



Figure 11: Screenshot of the Young Innovators Council members and staff from S4TP and Northern Gas Networks; YIC Session 3

Objectives:

- A. To understand what sustainability means to young people.
- B. To identify what future customers expect a company to be doing when it comes to being sustainable.
- C. To identify if NORTHERN GAS NETWORKS's sustainability strategy meets Young People's expectations – specifically:
 - Does it cover everything that's important to young people?
 - Is it ambitious enough?
 - What's missing, or anything included that is unnecessary?
 - Is the language right, i.e., does net-zero mean something to you? Are the targets clear and understandable?
- D. To identify what commitments young people think Northern Gas Networks should prioritise delivery of.

Witnesses:

Simon Pringle, Project Rome

Hannah Jewison, Northern Gas Networks Sustainability Lead

Prior to session, the Young Innovators Council members were asked to research companies that they felt had a good sustainability record and note any innovations that had an impact on sustainability.

TASK: Before next week's meeting, we'd like you to have a think about the following:

- Do a little bit of research into companies that you think have a good track record when it comes to sustainability.
 - Which companies pop into your head because they have a great sustainability reputation
 - What do you know about this already, what are they promoting publicly, what else have you found out about?
 - What makes them a success because of the kinds of things they have done?
- Any examples you can tell us about would be brilliant to hear
- Please watch this [video](#) to help contextualise some of the language we are going to be looking at next week - the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Young Innovators Council's key recommendations

Suggestions and actions	Response
<p>During discussion about what the YIC's expectations were for a sustainable business, 27 initiatives or approaches that they felt embodied good behaviours and practice across both areas of people and planet were identified.</p>	<p>Northern Gas Networks will review these expectations and map them against their own strategy to understand where they are meeting them, where they have a commitment to meet them, and where they might need to consider further input.</p>
<p>Through a word cloud exercise, it was clear that "future", "future generations", "renewable" and "green" were the key meaningful terms young people associated with sustainability.</p>	<p>These key phrases have been really helpful in framing the strategy and informing the rationale behind it, using the 'future' focus to develop a mission statement of what the strategy is about and what it means for the business when talking to colleagues: <i>Sustainability at Northern Gas Networks means being able to tackle the challenges facing our business, our society and our planet, today and in the future.</i></p>
<p>The YIC said they were largely comfortable that Northern Gas Networks' commitments covered everything that was important to young people. However, they were keen to see more targets against the commitments and also raised the challenge of how Northern Gas Networks would be accountable for delivery and communicate progress and performance.</p>	<p>Northern Gas Networks have put targets in place against most of their planet commitments but recognise and welcome the feedback that they need to be more specific with these and build out clear detail and targets behind each commitment. They also appreciate the benefit and importance of regularly sharing their progress against their commitments.</p>
<p>During conversation about the 2050 net zero target, it was clear that that timescale was too far in the future for Council members, and many felt we should have a bigger sense of urgency.</p>	<p>Whilst Northern Gas Networks appreciate the sense of urgency to bring their targets forwards, in reality they will not be able to achieve net zero as a business before then until there is a policy decision on hydrogen. They could however be net zero operationally much sooner so will look to set themselves a stringent net zero operational target as part of the commitments.</p>
<p>YIC felt some choice language might act as blockers or barriers. Suggestions to counter this included personalising the strategy to reflect the people, communities and society Northern Gas Networks work in, being more specific in the language used and removing jargon and corporate phrasing. In particular YIC raised a clear challenge on being clearer about what is meant by 'ethical.'</p>	<p>Northern Gas Networks have renamed the strategy to be our people and planet strategy. The corporate language has been reduced and reworded. The challenge about what is meant by 'ethical' was also really help and they have reworded the commitment to be clearer that they will spend and invest responsibly.</p>
<p>Ensure that all purchases, including supply chains and pensions are responsibly sourced.</p>	<p>Northern Gas Networks' focus over the coming months is on developing a sustainable finance framework to support spending and investing responsibly.</p>

Table 7: Young Innovators Council's suggested actions and responses from Northern Gas Networks; YIC Session 4

Young Innovators Council's feedback on Session 4: Sustainability Strategy

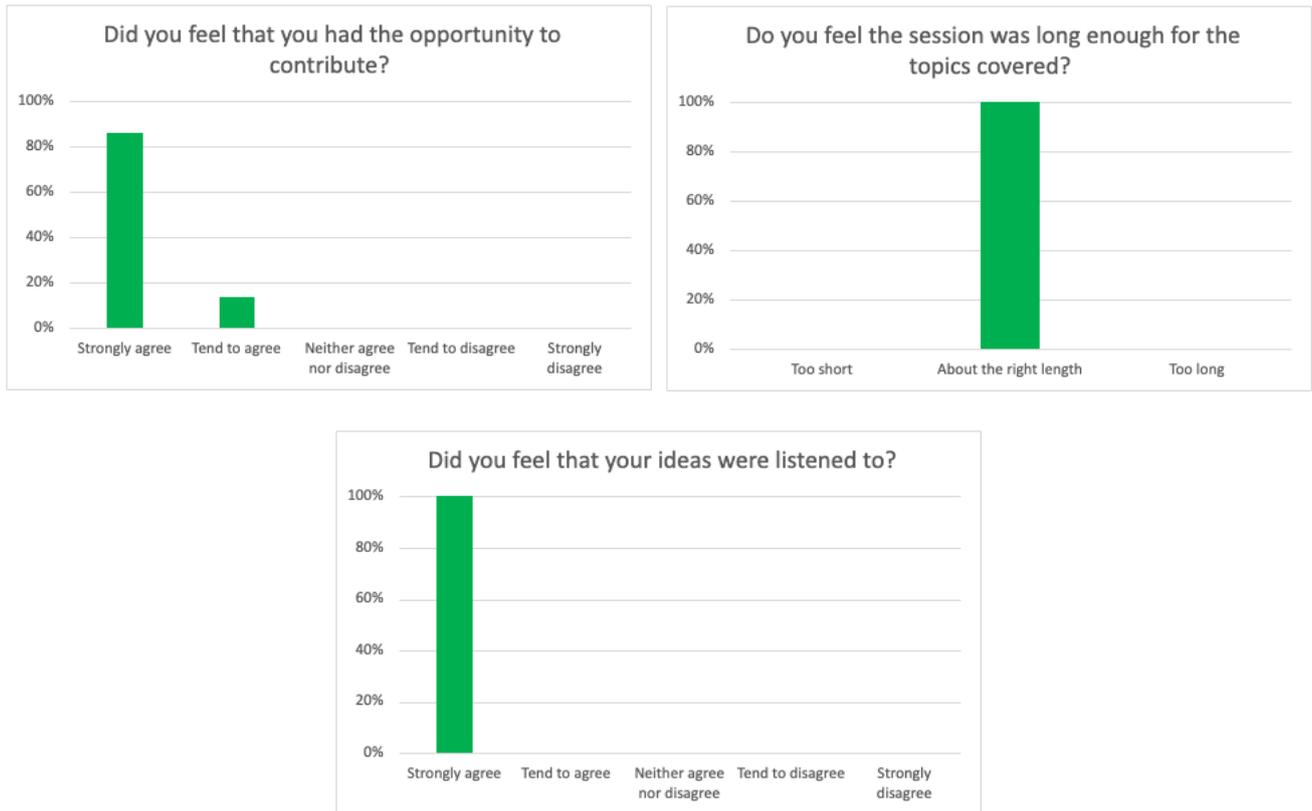


Figure 14: Graph extraction of Council feedback forms; YIC Session 4

Conclusion:

A high level of satisfaction was shown in the feedback from the Council members for this session. Given the importance of the subject matter this is not unexpected. Using techniques such as word cloud and pre-work ensured that the session was both lively and informative and it is recommended that using such techniques in future sessions will help to keep the Council members connected, informed, and inspired.

5. DOES THE YOUNG INNOVATORS COUNCIL GIVE REAL VALUE TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE TAKING PART?

1. Experience of informing key business agendas and strategies:

- “The whole process was positive. From being able to debate and hold conversations with other young people from around the UK to being able to make an impact and have our voice heard by Northern Gas Networks.”
- “We were able to discuss bigger issues. Northern Gas Networks gave us young people a voice and a chance to start changing and mitigating towards our planet and it was honestly an amazing and extremely proud moment.”
- “It was really interesting to hear directly from Northern Gas Networks employees about the projects.”
- “I always come away from the sessions with new information and topics I wasn’t previously aware of. Really feels as if we are part of the projects.”

2. Networking:

- “I really felt part of a team.”
- “I have loved meeting new people and it has been interesting to hear what other people my age think about issues we are equally concerned about!”
- “I really loved working in smaller breakout rooms! It made everything so much easier, and I felt as if there were more opportunities to share ideas.”
- “There are so many brilliant people here and ever more connected we can do far more!”

3. Skills development including teamwork, confidence, negotiation, communication:

- “For the first time, I experienced expressing my ideas and opinions in front of a large group of people on a topic that I am passionate about: the environment.”
- “Thinking of new solutions to real life problems has stretched my critical thinking skills and applying it to a real-life scenario.”
- “Gaining confidence discussing matters about sustainability and carbon emissions.”
- “Collaborating with new people which has upped my confidence.”

Extracted from session feedback forms; YIC 2021

6. DID THE YOUNG INNOVATORS COUNCIL MEET EXPECTATIONS?

- “Yes, I believe a number of initiatives have been directly and positively affected by feedback from the Council.”
- “Yes, and more! One person from the Council has asked for work experience and we're currently exploring an internship with them. Additionally, they have helped to shape the work that Northern Gas Networks are doing especially with regards to changing the focus of the education strategy and specification for the Hydrogen Homes visit.”
- “I 1million% think it has been achieved!”
- “I believe it has on four of the five areas we've engaged with them on”
- “I didn't expect the Council members to be as well informed about Northern Gas Networks and our operations as they were. This often led to some pretty difficult questions, sometimes of a technical nature. All of which is a good thing in my opinion.”
- “The number of fresh ideas was definitely a big benefit. I think I was expecting a few really great nuggets of information and creative ideas, but there was so much creativity in the sessions, and it gave us a large number of ideas to work with that we had never thought of before.”
- “My expectations were to have a session with a well engaged and challenging group of young people - for me that is exactly what happened.”

Extracted from YIC stakeholder questionnaires; YIC 2021

7. CONCLUSION

The Young Innovators Council has met the expectations of Northern Gas Networks and has had a valuable impact on several strategies including the education and skills and sustainability strategy.

Feedback has been excellent from Council members, Northern Gas Network staff and external witnesses. There has been significant ‘buy in’ from various departments within Northern Gas Networks leading to additional activities including a visit to the hydrogen house by Council members and an extra session being developed in order to gain the Council's input into a critical future strategy.

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Continuation of Council members into year two has been over half of the Council members with those who are not continuing citing attending University or moving up into an exam year as their reasons for non-continuation. Overall, the engagement of the Council has been positive and a strong foundation to build on in 2021.

“Thank you for having me, it's been a great journey... I am very proud to say I was a member of the Young Innovators Council.” [YIC member]

APPENDIX TWO: CREATING A NAME FOR THE GROUP:

We split the councilors into randomly allocated breakout rooms, where they were asked to discuss the possibilities for the name of the Council. The top two names from each group were placed on a whiteboard and voted for using 'dotmocracy'. Dotmocracy is an established facilitation method used to ascribe votes with dot stickers or marks. The shortlisted names were then available for votes in the feedback questionnaire. The young people decided on the name Young Innovators Council and Northern Gas Networks' communications team designed a logo for the Council.

Northern Gas Networks' Young Innovators Council
Innovating Minds
Future Solutions Youth Council
Innovating Leaders of the Future
Youth Innovation Council
Young Persons' Council

Table 8: Shortlisted names for the Council; YIC Meet Up Session

- The icon captures 'younger generation growing ideas'.
- The use of greens represents the future of energy and the future generation.
- Lozenge shape is part of Northern Gas Networks' wider identity.



Figure 16: Young Innovators Council logo