



NGN Citizens' Panel July 2023; Findings Report



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1. Executive summary

The fourteenth meeting of the NGN Citizens' Panel was held on Saturday 15th of July 2023, and was attended online by 49 members.

The morning session focused on NGN's People and Planet strategy. Members discussed each of the People and Planet commitments, gave their views on the merits and challenges of each, and held a vote to create a priority order. The tables below show the ranking followed by a summary of members' thoughts on each.

Commitment ranking

1st - Eliminate emissions

2nd - Provide Access to Affordable Energy Solutions

3rd - Enable affordable, decarbonized heat, power and transport solutions

4th - Spend and invest responsibly for the planet

5th - Produce less waste and recycle all of it

6th - Managing Land for the benefit of the environment

7th - To spend and invest responsibly for people

8th - Eradicate inequality

9th - Improve access to fair employment

10th - Support colleagues wellbeing

11th - Ensure our assets are resilient

12th - Reflect the diversity of our communities

Summary of members thoughts on each of the People & Planet commitments		
1	Reflect the diversity of our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surprise that the gender pay gap is still an issue, with many members feel that the 2050 target is too far away. Others ask if the time frames are long enough to achieve such goals.• Members ask for visibility of data on the diversity of the current workforce. Especially, diversity of senior management, and overall percentage of women in the organisation
2	Eradicate Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NGN should reflect the public by having a diverse workplace, and a representative senior leadership team.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members highlight the need for reducing discrimination in recruitment with more imaginative recruitment processes that enable people from a range of social and educational backgrounds.
3	Provide access to affordable energy solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members support this as an admirable commitment but believe that this is nowhere near enough financial support for such a large area. Members highlight that vulnerability is not just about affordability but also is reflected in housing conditions and other needs. Members suggest that NGN should inform people about alternatives to hydrogen as well as about grants, appliances, in various forms.
4	Improve access to fair employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprenticeships should be across the board and target areas where more jobs are needed. Members ask for more data about current apprentice numbers, the number that lead to permanent jobs and about green apprenticeships. NGN should do more to ensure that fair and equal opportunities for all in the workplace becomes a given.
5	Support colleagues' wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some members are very supportive of these targets, saying that safety and wellbeing are much more important than other commitments. Many members are surprised that mental health awareness training is not already in place. Members observe that there is an interdependency, in that the planet priorities are not achievable without the people.
6	Spend and invest responsibly for people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members expect responsible investment as standard working practice from NGN. Members who supported the supplier code of conduct ask how deeply this goes into the NGN business plan, if there is support for suppliers to meet this, and who decides the content of the Code.
7	Eliminate emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many members support the targets, but feel that they are too slow. Members support the targets to stop leakage on efficiency and safety grounds. Costs to customers are a concern.
8	Enable affordable, decarbonised heat, power and transport solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members say 2050 is far too late, this should be brought forward. Members ask that NGN provide transparency as to what the transition means financially for customers. Members feel that so much of the energy transition appears to be reliant on hydrogen and worry that if the government doesn't support it then the targets will be unachievable.
9	Ensure our assets are resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members sight safety as a main reason for prioritising this commitment over others. Some members say that it should be industry standard to adapt to climate change, and therefore this doesn't need to be a commitment. Members believe that ensuring resilience would help to reduce overall waste.

10	Produce less waste and recycle all of it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members highlight the need for government action. Members would like to have more data and information available on current performance. Members highlight the link between waste and efficiency and encourage NGN to avoid waste production at the source to reduce compounding the environmental impacts by transporting this waste.
11	Manage our land to benefit the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What exactly are homes for nature? There is significant confusion amongst members as to what homes for nature means. What does the 'decontamination' process look like? Some members feel that the timeframes for this commitment are too long, but say that they need more information about specific actions to understand if this is the case.
12	Spend and invest responsibly for planet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members believe that this is an important goal and are hopeful that NGN will invest in communities. Members refer to the situation with Thames Water and ask about how much investors take out of the business. Members ask what metrics are being used to measure sustainability and who is doing the measuring?

The afternoon session looked at NGN's Carbon reduction targets and how NGN can hold themselves accountable to these targets. Members deliberated on each approach and provided their critique and alternative suggestions. Members then had discussions in small breakout groups.

Five approaches were presented to members for discussion. Members deliberated on the benefits and pitfalls of different options and then voted on their preference. Members thoughts on each of the approaches are below.

Approach 1: Do nothing

- Members want NGN to be transparent on targets and whether or not they are met. They highlight that doing nothing doesn't help the issue and just appears complacent.
- Some members prefer outside regulation to self-regulation on these targets, with many members mentioning the current water industry issues as an influence for the need for more robust oversight of the sector.
- No members thought that this this was an option NGN should take.
- Members feel that transparency is important and that doing nothing would create a lack of trust in any of NGN's other objectives.
- Members feel that to do nothing in response to missed voluntary targets shows that shareholders are prioritised over customers.

Approach 2: Report performance and communicate mitigating actions

- Members support this approach highlighting that being upfront about any challenges is better than things coming out retrospectively, noting that this gives NGN a chance to explain why they have or have not done what they planned.
- They think that if NGN takes this approach then they won't be hiding any failures, which makes them publicly accountable, and that this is a good thing.

- Members are very clear in their feeling that NGN must also be independently regulated.
- Members say that reporting to the public on these matters may give public confidence and note that this may also have an influence on other companies.

Approach 3: Issue a public apology and communicate mitigating actions

Overall members felt that NGN should outline where they have missed targets and be accountable, and also outline where they would aim to do better next time and how they would do this. In other words, be clear and transparent and show they are trustworthy. Members felt that this is more helpful than just an apology.

Approach 4: Carbon offsets

- Members believe that the 'threat' of being penalised may make a large organisation feel more accountable, and that penalties should be calculated so that they are effective, such as linking it to income. Some members believe that penalties should be back by Ofgem.
- Several members suggest that mandatory funds for offsets are punitive, and that these funds could be better used funding solutions to the issues causing the missed targets. Members also highlight the time for forests to mature and ask what NGN will do to ensure offsetting is working.
- Some members want to know how offsetting will lead to reduced bills for customers, and several members suggest that funding could instead help people to insulate properties, to lower carbon emissions but also have a more direct impact on the population.

Approach 5: Offsetting the cost of excess emissions through charitable donations

- Some members agree with this proposed approach, they suggest that NGN should be supporting a cause helping to combat climate change, or improve the environment by creating spaces for wildlife, so that the money is used to undo the harm caused.
- Other members believe that money should be used to support vulnerable customers with financial help for new equipment, for example for hydrogen.
- Several members suggest the need for independent monitoring or regulation.
- Some members question if this approach is a 'get out of jail free card' and suggest NGN should only do this in addition to option 2 above.
- Some members believe that this approach avoids acknowledging or solving the problem. These members would prefer that NGN invest this money in upgrading systems, finding solutions to emissions problems, investing in technology, green suppliers.

2. Overview of the day

The fourteenth meeting of the NGN Citizens' Panel was held on Saturday 15th of July 2023, and was attended online by 49 members. NGN and Involve colleagues worked as impartial group facilitators with small groups of 4-6 members.

The morning session ran from 10:30 - 13:15, beginning with a presentation on the People and Planet strategy from NGN and followed by small group discussions of each of the 12 commitments. Members gave their thoughts around each commitment and then finished the discussion by prioritising the 12 commitments from most to least important.

10:30	Welcome and introduction to the day
10:40	People & Planet strategy presentation - introducing the 12 commitments
11:00	Members reflected on each of the 12 commitments and discussed how they might prioritise them
12:25	Members prioritise commitments and discuss why they have chosen this order.
13:15	End of the morning session

The afternoon session ran from 14:05 pm – 15:30 and looked at NGN's carbon reduction targets and how NGN can hold themselves accountable to these targets. This session consisted of a presentation about some of the different approaches that NGN could take followed by facilitated discussions in small breakout groups. NGN staff were available throughout the discussions, to answer questions. The outline programme for the afternoon session was as follows:

14:05	Presentation: Introducing carbon reduction targets, the purpose, and the potential accountability options for when NGN misses these targets.
14:20	Discussion: In small groups, members discuss the trade-offs of each accountability option and then take a vote.
15:05	Members reflect on any suggestions for other accountability options
15:20	Summary of what next and reflections on the day
15:30	Meeting ends.

Records of the facilitated discussions from both sessions were captured via Jamboard notes written directly by members and facilitators.

All members who took part were given a thank-you gift of £75 for their participation in the meeting.

3. People and Planet priorities

During 2018 to 2022 NGN engaged with 14,000 stakeholders to help them establish a set of sustainability priorities. During 2021-22 NGN then asked what sustainability means to people, and people said *"It's about balancing long term thinking whilst delivering positive impacts for our planet, our communities, our economy and wider society."*

After listening to stakeholders and incorporating the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), NGN defined what sustainability means for the organisation: *"Being able to tackle the challenges facing our business, our society and our planet, today and in the future."*

NGN used this engagement and definition of sustainability to develop their People and Planet Strategy which was launched in June 2022 and goes up to 2050. NGN has made 12 commitments and multiple goals for 2026, 2030 and 2050. All are equal in importance to NGN, but without infinite resources of people and money, NGN needs help in understanding which are the most important to tackle first.



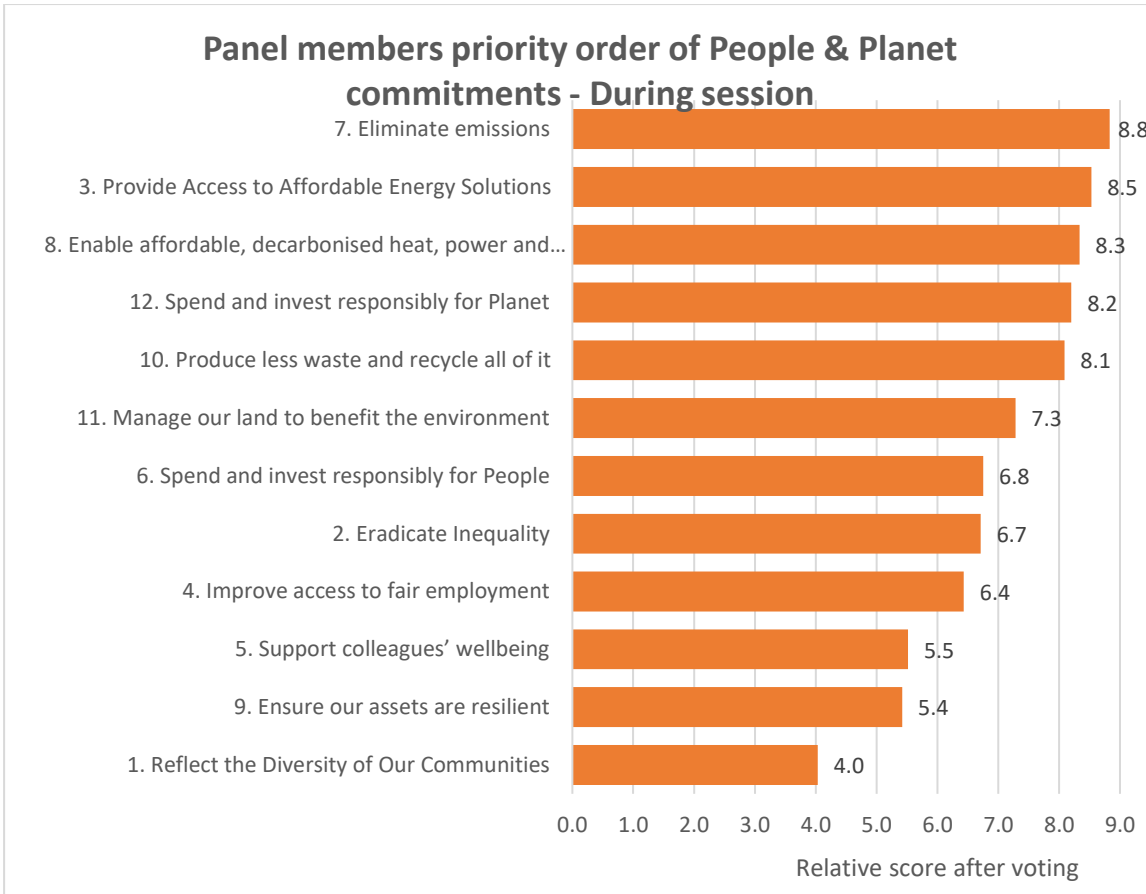
Members of the NGN panel were given cards like the one just below, outlining each of the 12 commitments along with examples of short, medium and long-term targets. After time for reading and discussing views, in small groups, on each of these commitments, there was a Q&A session to answer any questions that members might have.

1. Commitment to People - Reflect the Diversity of Our Communities	
Objective	Ensure our workforce is representative of the communities which we serve
Short Term Target (2026)	Work with our colleagues to gather data about our workforce diversity.
Medium Term Target (2030)	40% of senior management to be female
Long Term Target (2050)	Eradicate inequality within our organisation at all levels and for all minority groups via achieving a gender balance at all levels in our business and closing the gender pay gap, and ensuring we are representative of the communities we serve.

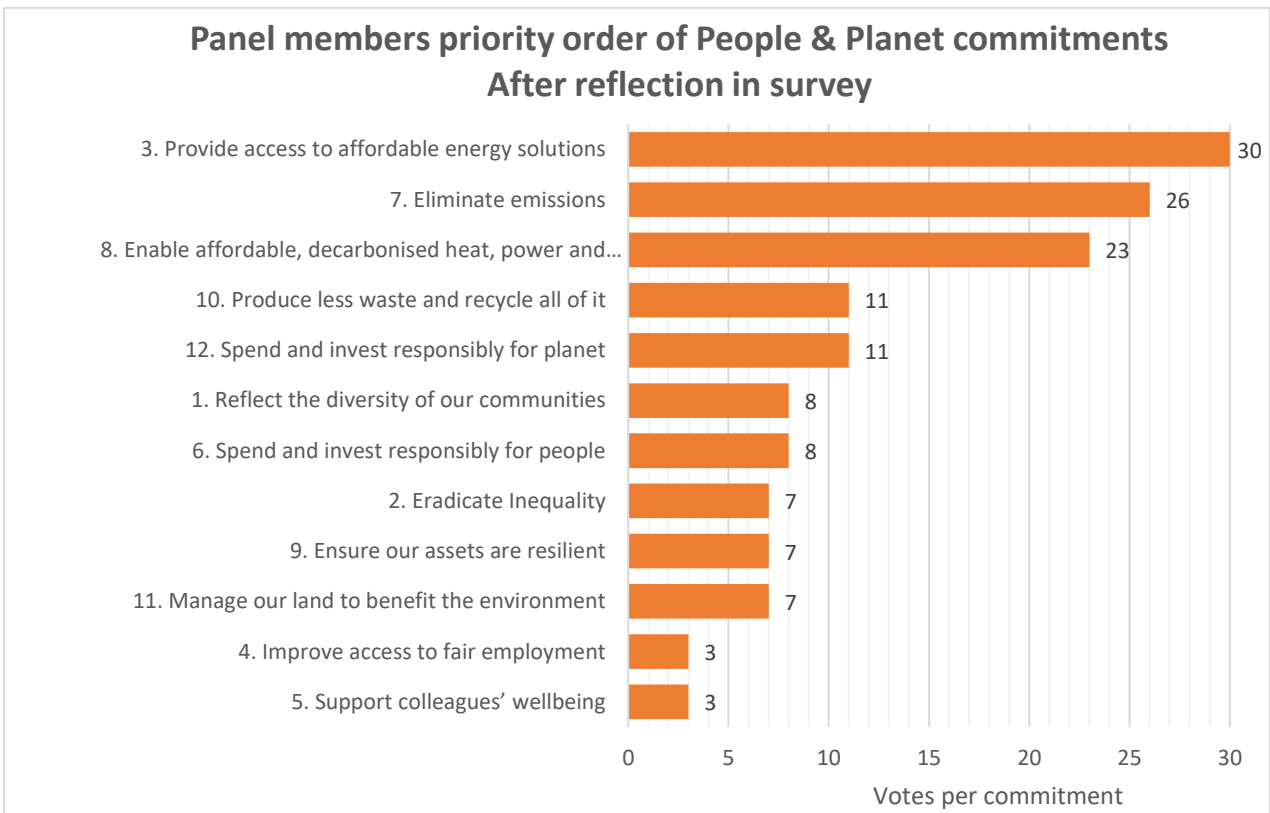
Members were given two opportunities to prioritise the commitments. During the session, members used mentimeter to rank them from 1-12, and following this they had an opportunity to discuss why they ranked the commitments this way. Graph 1 shows the results of this first ranking, and members reflections on the relative importance of each commitment can be seen in the table below each commitment in the chapter below.

After the session, and once members had time to process and reflect on their discussions, they were sent a survey and asked to prioritise the commitments by picking their top three. Graph 2 below presents the results of this second ranking. Although many of the rankings are the same or nearly the same in Graph 2, the first two priorities have swapped, and the last priority has moved up to 6th place. It is worth noting that the two ranking methods were different and therefore although the order can be compared the relative strength of feeling should not, as members did not pick an order for all 12 commitments in the second ranking, and this widens the gaps between each position.

Graph 1 – Ranking during session



Graph 2 – Ranking in post session survey



Note for reader: due to time constraints, each group of 4-6 members looked at 2 commitments, so the views expressed for each commitment below are from a maximum 8-10 members and do not represent the views of the whole panel.

3.1. Commitment 1 – Reflect the diversity of our communities

Surprise that the gender pay gap is still an issue

Members expressed surprise that there is still a gender pay gap at NGN and feel that equal pay for equal work should be standard practice.

Many members feel that the 2050 target is too far away, suggesting that this should be a short-term priority and shouldn't be a difficult thing to achieve. In contrast, other members ask if the time frames are long enough to achieve such goals.

Diversity beyond male/female balance

Members add that ensuring all minorities are represented will ensure a broad range of voices and opinions at NGN. According to members, this should include vulnerable people with disabilities, people with learning difficulties and those over 50, people of all different genders, applicants from deprived areas and those who have less experience. Some members agree with the targets and want to ensure that NGN can hold itself to account for meeting these. A few others disagree that these specific targets are needed, as they highlight the many different diversities that need to be included and feel that specific targets may impact nuanced decisions that involve multiple factors such as who has the right skills for the job and which diversities need more representation in certain parts of the company.

Show us the figures - members ask for:

- Visibility of data on the diversity of the current workforce. Especially; diversity of senior management, and overall percentage of women in the organisation
- Data about where NGN is now, and how close they are to reaching the set targets.

Diversity in recruitment - members want to understand:

- How are NGN encouraging diversity at the job application stage?
- How they propose to ensure diversity (for example, female only roles)
- Do diversity targets discriminate against male applicants?
- How will NGN avoid bias in data?
- How will NGN hold themselves accountable for the targets?

What are the potential negative effects of focusing on diversity?

Some members question if and why NGN is focusing on male/female diversity and pay, expressing their view that it is more important to demonstrate that NGN have appointed the right person for the right job rather than appointing to meet a self-imposed target.

Members suggest that capability should be a priority saying that there should be *"diversity among equally qualified people"* and that *"people should be given jobs according to ability not gender"*. Some

members question if the workforce will be high quality if NGN is employing based on race, gender etc.

Member suggestions:

Open days, apprenticeship schemes, investment in local facilities and open areas for communities. Members also suggest that to enable diversity NGN should be aware of and adjust language to reflect diversity.

Ranking – 12th

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	Reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Some members feel like the focus should be on hiring people on merit and experience and ability to do a job, rather than taking account of diversity metrics or categories.</p> <p>Other members say that its important to treat everyone inclusively and on merit, to look at their abilities and skills and not their race, gender, age, etc.</p> <p>Members again suggest that CVs and hiring practice be as 'blind' as possible to matters of race, gender, age, etc</p> <p>Members are generally content that it is ranked 12th</p>	<p>Members again ask how diversity is defined and understood? They also feel that the eradication of inequality (2050 target) should be achieved much more quickly.</p>

3.2. Commitment 2 – Eradicate Inequality

“Why is it so difficult to pay women the same as men?”

Similarly to commitment 1, many members express **concern and surprise that unequal pay is still an issue 50 years after the equal pay act**, and say that the gender pay gap should be addressed immediately. Members say that the time frames are too long. In addition, some members asked for clarification about the terms gender and gender pay gap.

“you will only get 50% female applicants if you show that you value them equally to men, and the attitude to the gender pay gap doesn’t show this”

“Probably an easy answer I’m missing but why is it so difficult to pay women the same as men?”

Some members highlight the need for a balance between diversity and the “right person for the right job” - concerns about specific targets and the need for data transparency

Some members say that it is important to get the right person for the job, and that it is **important that NGN reflects the public by having a diverse workplace, and a representative senior leadership team**. Some members also believe that paternity rights have a role in reducing inequality.

Members highlight the need for **reducing discrimination in recruitment**, for example, by:

- Omitting identifying details from applications
- Having more imaginative recruitment processes that support people from a range of backgrounds (such as apprenticeships)
- Count soft skills such as communication, and not just formal education.

Data visibility, integrity and purposefulness

Members would like to know more about NGN plans to achieve this commitment, and how analysis of short-term goals will take place. Members also ask for more data visibility on the statutory information reported by NGN. Members highlight the need for reporting on a like for like basis to avoid reporting distortions.

Ranking - 8th

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	Reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Members did not have comments specifically on why this commitment is meaningful. However, members did have some general reflections about the commitment.</p> <p>Members highlight that diversity monitoring relies on people giving information, which they may not give, so NGN may not have a true reflection of the current makeup of staff.</p> <p>Members feel that NGN needs to find out why certain groups of people aren't going for the roles posted, and suggest that NGN run some focus groups on this.</p>	<p>Members rank this commitment lower because they feel that although NGN has a part to play, it will never completely eradicate inequality and therefore other commitments should take priority.</p>

3.3. Commitment 3 – Provide access to affordable energy solutions.

“An admirable commitment” and “nowhere near enough for such a large area”

Many members feel that this is an admirable commitment and there is broad support for this funding. These members also say that £1.4 million is nowhere near enough for such a large area, and although this may go some way to providing safety advice it is not enough to support vulnerable customers.

- Members express concern that the government will not repeat similar support as last year and ask how many vulnerable customers this 1.4 million will support in practice, and how NGN plans to distribute funds.
- Members want to understand where this money is coming from, with some believing that it is their money coming from bills.
- Members ask “Why 1.4 million, why this amount specifically?” What is the future commitment?

“What is the gas safety advice about? Is it for 10,000 vulnerable customers or 10,000 customers? 10,000 out of how many total?”

Vulnerability is not just about affordability

Members highlight that vulnerability is not just about affordability but also is **reflected in housing conditions and other needs**, and that this is different for different people. Members suggest that any support needs to be targeted for the most vulnerable so that it has the highest impact.

Members ask if there is a way for vulnerable people to register for support.

“Do more, sooner” “not just spend, but spend very wisely”

“Support the vulnerable customers and ensure that these are prioritised over less vulnerable people”

Worries about the future of NGN - Some members ask shareholders to be clear about how NGN will deal with company debt.

Potential energy solutions - members suggest that NGN should:

- Inform people about alternatives to hydrogen.
- Share information about: safety grants, new boilers, insulation, draft proof measures
- Provide information in various forms, as well as support from informed individuals.

Ranking – 2nd

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	Reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
Members believe that this is the core business of NGN as affordable energy is important to all.	Members believe that we all have a responsibility to consider how the less affluent manage. Also stating that it is important to provide a competitor to electricity. Members ask why we are paying so much for energy bills when the companies are making so much profit?



3.4. Commitment 4 – Improve access to fair employment.

Apprenticeships should be across the board and target areas where more are needed

- Members feel that apprenticeships are really important, especially for young people and those who are looking for a career change.
- Some members support the targets set by NGN, believing that this is good future planning and will ensure continuity of service for customers.
- Some members believe that apprenticeships should lead to guaranteed jobs.

Some members are surprised that apprenticeships are not already a big thing at NGN. Some members say that targets are too low and too slow.

“60 apprentices is not many, my firm has over 200 every year and we’re not as big as you.”

“Apprentice costs can be reclaimed from the levy and so won’t cost NGN very much”

Members ask for more data:

- What is the current number of apprentices and other trainee opportunities? How many of these apprentices are new recruits and how many are current staff doing an apprenticeship qualification?
- What are green apprenticeships, will they lead to permanent jobs? Why not start them now?
- Will there be apprenticeships for older people?

Some members highlight that *“just hiring apprentices doesn’t ensure fair and equal opportunities”*, and say that NGN should do more to ensure that fair and equal opportunities for all in the workplace becomes a given.

Ranking – 9th

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	Reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Members prioritise this commitment lower because they feel that as customers they are thinking more about cost. Some members feel guilty about ranking it lower but say:</p> <p>“it does not have a direct effect on us - cost of energy bills is a higher priority. Would expect that NGN would do this anyway as a large responsible organisation so may not touch us personally”</p> <p>“just because it’s ranked lower doesn’t mean it’s not important”</p> <p>Some members feel that NGN has bigger priorities within the business - and can’t solve issues for staff if bigger business issues aren’t resolved first.</p>	<p>Members feel that this is a basic legal requirement that NGN would be doing this already, and therefore it seems less of a priority to have this as an additional commitment.</p> <p>Members again highlight that the Equality Act has been in place since 1970, and ask why this target is for 2050 and why this is such a hard thing to achieve?</p>

<p>Other members feel that staff's mental health is important - and hope that there is someone to turn to to support with this, such as a personnel officer.</p> <p>Members again ask if people will get a full time job at the end of the apprenticeship? Saying that - if not then how is this positive?</p>	<p>Members agree with the idea of comparing with other countries.</p>
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3.5. Commitment 5 – Support colleagues' wellbeing.

"Your people are your business! If staff are supported in all aspects of what they do then what you do will also be better"

On mental health awareness and support

Some members are very supportive of these targets, saying that **safety and wellbeing are much more important than other commitments**, and commending NGN's ambition in supporting the mental health of members of staff. They ask what methods are being used to help mental health.

Many members are surprised that mental health awareness training is not already in place - expressing concern for those working at NGN, and asking *"how bad is it currently?"*. They say that it should not take 3 years to take action on this, especially for a big organisation.

"Why so much time to get to gold standard?"

Members question the aim of achieving the 'Britain's Healthiest Workplace' award, citing previous experience of companies doing this for image purposes, and ask for more detail on what the award means in practice. Members also say that as long as the award is earned legitimately this is a good thing. Members suggest the importance of having other ways of measuring improvement as well as self-reported wellness.

Members ask:

- What workplace status is NGN at now? Is gold achievable?
- Is there an appraisal scheme to support this?
- Are all line managers trained now?

This commitment in relation to other commitments

Some members observe that there is an interdependency, in that the planet priorities are not achievable without the people. They say that the people commitments have probably been prioritised in the lower 6 objectives because people expect this to be happening anyway. Members also note that this panel is more about the environment and therefore this is at the forefront of people's minds, and if the focus was different then results would differ.

Ranking – 10th

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	Reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
Members see people at the heart of the NGN business, so prioritise this as low because they expect NGN to be doing this already. Some members note that all of the other 6 priorities are dependent upon the people i.e. not achievable without the people so think that maybe this should be given higher priority.	Some members think that this panel is probably more focused on the environmental issues and as such colleague wellbeing is not at the forefront of people's minds.

3.6. Commitment 6 – Spend and invest responsibly for people

Members expect this as standard working practice from NGN

- Some members expect this from NGN and feel that this should not be a 'commitment', as it is a normal part of being a successful company and would be an expectation of shareholders.
- Members acknowledge that sustainability needs to figure in the process but recognise that the overall costs passed on from suppliers need to be considered.
- Members suggest that these commitments should happen more quickly and not over 20-30 years.

Questions from members:

- Members ask for more details about what spending and investing responsibly means in practice.
- Some members question how the exploitation of a natural resource can ever be sustainable.
- Some members who supported the supplier code of conduct asked:
 - How deeply does this go into the NGN business?
 - Is there support for suppliers to help them meet this?
 - Who gets a say on the content of the Code of Conduct?
 - Is it challenging to get small suppliers and contractors to take Net-Zero seriously and sign up to agreed standards?

Ranking – 7th

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Members feel that this is ranked appropriately - as it's in the middle between environmental commitments (which they believe should be first) and employment commitments which they believe should be last)</p> <p>For some members the employment commitments seem 'run of the mill' and hardly worth including.</p> <p>Members also highlight the Thames Water situation and believe that investment should not simply be for profit it should consider more wide-reaching principles.</p>	<p>Some members think that this commitment should perhaps be a higher priority, because they believe that investing carefully and using resources responsibly is important. They say that this keeps the company viable and able to continue serving customers.</p>

3.7. Commitment 7 – Eliminate emissions.

Many members support the targets, and feel that they are too slow

"I think the green commitment sounds ambitious but it would send a loud message if a traditionally fossil based company was 100% green"

"Long term target not ambitious enough, if you can do something sooner you should"

"2050 seems a long time away to be aiming for zero emissions"

"Is it a question of money that stops this being more ambitious?"

Members recognise how important zero emissions are for the world today, and comment that these targets seem pretty standard, and fall in line with other companies' pledges. Members feel that this target should take priority over others, but some question how realistic zero emissions are.

Members support the targets to stop leakage on efficiency and safety grounds. However, some members question the target's efficacy given the fundamental business model of selling fossil fuel.

Costs to customers are a concern - Some members are worried that leakage costs are carried by customer bills and ask how we can stop gas leaks without higher customer costs.

More detail needed on the exact leakage figures

"How bad is the gas leakage compared to competitors and what percentage is actually leaked?"

Many members found the percentages confusing, they want to understand:

- How much gas is currently leaking and what that equates to, for example, 1000 homes annual use?

- Where NGN currently stands in terms of emissions targets.
- What percentage of CO₂ emissions and methane are from leakage?
- How has the introduction of PTFE piping affected the leaks?

Ranking – 1st

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Members place this as high importance because they worry about gas leakage and say that stopping emissions is important to everyone.</p> <p>Members highlight the importance of internal targets being externally enforced to make them meaningful, saying that accountability is important, alongside an element of self-regulation i.e. setting own targets.</p> <p>Having clear targets and percentages is useful as it's measurable and time specific- but members need more information on current positions.</p>	<p>Members believe it is a priority to reduce leakage and tackle root causes of emissions before setting long term targets.</p> <p>Some members comment that the "other commitments are sub-commitments to this as it is about how safe are we now."</p> <p>Members ask that NGN complete these targets more quickly and that these targets are "just doing enough not doing more".</p>

3.8. Commitment 8 – Enable affordable, decarbonised heat, power and transport solutions.

2050 is far too late

Many members feel that the long term target of 2050 seems to be too far away and should be brought forward.

"we need as a population to bring pressure on the government to move faster, I can't see a future for my grandchildren"

Transparency for customers

Members acknowledge that the transition will cost everyone more money, but ask that NGN provide transparency as to what it means for customers.

"who will pay for this target"

"what are the current greenhouse gas emissions?"

Hydrogen transition decisions

- Members recognise that the transition to Hydrogen largely depends on central government decisions, and some believe the transition needs to happen more quickly.
- Some members believe that the decision on blending the network should be sooner than 2026 so that we can start making progress. Others believe that Hydrogen should be thoroughly tested before use and are happy to wait.

- Members feel that so much of the energy transition appears to be reliant on hydrogen and worry that if the government doesn't support it then the targets will be unachievable.

Cost worries about hydrogen

- Members recognise the huge investment needed for the hydrogen transition and worry that the cost of innovations will be passed to customers through higher bills.
- Members are also concerned about the cost of equipment, as well as if hydrogen will be cost effective compared with natural gas.

"How much of an impact will this switch over have on the consumers?"

"[they say hydrogen] is affordable, but to who, and how affordable [compared to current gas], or are we paying the same?"

Questions about Hydrogen

- What happens if the government decides not to go with hydrogen? Are NGN confident that the government will listen? What backing is the government giving this?
- Is the aim for every vehicle to be run on hydrogen? or something else?
- Where is the Hydrogen (on the scale of the North Sea pipelines) going to come from?
- What size (GWh / day) is this network expected to be?
- What happens if we learn in the future that hydrogen is unsustainable?
- Can we have more information about the village trial. Virtual tours, feedback about hydrogen homes, and feedback from people in those homes.

Ranking – 3rd

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Members believe that this commitment is meaningful because greenhouse gases are a major issue which people are now more aware of, and that it is an issue that we need to move faster on.</p> <p>Members also feel that finding new affordable heat and power is almost at the top of everyone's agenda.</p> <p>Some members are becoming impatient because they want decisions to be made.</p> <p>Members believe that people should be put first, asking how are NGN going to help enable affordability?</p> <p>Members also request figures to be published about what enabling affordable solutions means for people.</p>	<p>Some members feel that 2030 is too far away for a decision on hydrogen and as why decisions are not being made more quickly.</p> <p>Members feel that they have been talking about cleaner and greener at NGN, and want to see when this is happening as a top priority.</p> <p>"Everyone is waiting for the next best thing [in heating], it seems to be taking time and we want to see it happening"</p> <p>Members highlight a need to make the general public more aware of the possibilities that hydrogen is likely to offer, and that gas companies should do more to make the conversation about hydrogen mainstream. They believe that otherwise people are more likely to move towards electric options.</p>

	<p>“We are experiencing a high crisis now [referring to the cost of living], in 2050 what are the prices going to be!”</p> <p>Members suggest that it should say ‘safe’ in the title of the commitment, [‘safe’, affordable....]”</p>
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3.9. Commitment 9 – Ensure our assets are resilient

Note: *In the session there was an error with Jamboards and this commitment was given a very small amount of detail, therefore members found it difficult to prioritise. Following the session, an email was sent to all members to capture views, these are included below however it was not possible to repeat the ranking exercise as not all members responded to the further request for feedback.*

Members believe that this commitment is very important, with some saying that it should be higher up the list than 11th but others saying that it shouldn't even be a commitment as it should be industry standard to adapt to climate change.

Members believe that ensuring resilience would help to reduce overall waste, as pipes, substations would be kept in use for a much longer time. Some members believe that maintenance will save money in the long run rather than neglecting infrastructure and waiting for much larger repairs.

Members ask about the sourcing of materials used for the pipeline and if they are imported or if everything is possible to make in the UK. These members highlight the importance of high quality materials made in the most environmentally way including transportation and recycling of old materials. Even if costs are higher, these members prefer long term sustainability.

“This commitment should be prioritised because it affects all the other commitments and consequently the company's ability to ensure compliance with its short, medium-term targets.”

Members questioned why the target deadlines are so long and asked if it is possible to move these forwards and achieve climate resilience sooner.

Members also ask if the NGN infrastructure will be able to accommodate the continued supply of energy, in whatever form through its network, for example hydrogen.

Ranking - 11th (**note** this was before members reflected on new information, and with this reflection some members would have placed this higher, between 3-7th, other members would have left it where it is)

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Some members believe that this commitment is very important as they say it affects all the other commitments and consequently the company's ability to ensure continued service and compliance with other targets.</p> <p>Other members feel that this should be standard practice and so a lower priority.</p> <p>"It is simply in NGNs best interests to do as a baseline</p> <p>"What are they doing to make hydrogen zero leakage?"</p> <p>"Makes you think they haven't been doing it so far"</p>	<p>Members believe that this commitment is very important, with some saying that it should be higher up the list than 11th but others saying that it shouldn't even be a commitment as it should be industry standard to adapt to climate change.</p>

3.10. Commitment 10 – Produce less waste and recycle all of it

Members believe that recycling is all of our responsibility and that big businesses should lead the way. Members support this commitment, in particular the idea of zero waste to landfill. Members express slight concern about the methods of processing and recycling the waste generated and highlight that this process needs to avoid creating other environmental issues.

Some members believe that the targets to net zero waste are too slow and that NGN should be doing more than meeting government targets.

"zero waste to landfill should not take 30 years"

Other members question how realistic these targets are, saying that it's hard to know if these targets are even achievable but that they should be completed as soon as possible.

Members highlight the need for government action, for example on plastic production, to ensure that it is recyclable. They also point to the need for local councils to focus more on recycling.

Members would like to have more data and information available on current performance, including; what goes to landfill currently, what is in place to reduce waste production at offices, and what particular actions NGN are taking in working towards the targets of reducing waste.

Members note that excavation spoil and other waste products are a necessary evil. However, these members also highlight **the link between waste and efficiency** and encourage NGN to avoid waste production at the source to reduce compounding the environmental impacts by transporting this waste. Members support reusing aggregate from repair sites, although believed that NGN would already be doing this.

Members questions and suggestions:

- If not using landfill, where does waste go?

- Is there an opportunity to link the types of waste to community projects? For example, if much of the waste is soil from digging holes could this be sent to a community garden as top soil?
- How does NGN effectively manage their recycling process?

Ranking – 5th

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
Members' highest priorities are around affordability which is at the forefront of people's minds right now. However, this commitment also sits with members' priorities of looking after the planet.	Members feel that it is everyone's responsibility to save the planet including individuals and all companies

3.11. Commitment 11 – Manage our land to benefit the environment.

What exactly are homes for nature?

There was significant confusion amongst members as to what homes for nature means. Members questioned the terms 'home', 'nature' and asked for more specific details on the content, size and scale of the project.

"Will the new homes be affordable?"

"Who will get to live in these 250 homes?"

"Where are these homes? Is this different from the Hydrogen village?"

"What size will these homes for nature be ? e.g. size of a garden or acres and how will they be connected to other wildlife areas?"

"Is this 250 homes for nature and not houses ? i.e. what exactly are these?"

What does the 'decontamination' process look like?

Members are broadly supportive of the commitment to remove all gas holders, but ask where the gas will go, and also whether or not decontaminating land that gas holders are on will generate waste and negatively impact on commitment 10.

Some members feel that the timeframes for this commitment are too long, but say that they need more information about specific actions to understand if this is the case.

Ranking – 6th

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Members feel that this is a good idea, easy to do, and not too expensive.</p> <p>Members feel that this needs to be done anyway and might help save money, noting that more investment in regenerations increases capital assets e.g. land which can be sold off, which may in turn reduce customer bills.</p> <p>“It is the one with the least work involved”</p>	<p>Members feel targets and commitments that support people are a more important priority at the moment.</p> <p>“[this is] in people’s minds but not the most important factor”</p> <p>The group that discussed this commitment placed cost of living and supporting customers, particularly vulnerable customers, from higher bills, as their top priority. Members felt some cynicism towards more esoteric planet targets- ‘it’s eat or heat at the moment’</p> <p>“Price and value are most important to people”</p>

3.12. Commitment 12 – Spend and invest responsibly for planet

Members believe that this is an important goal and are hopeful that NGN will invest in communities. They believe that investment will lead to broad-ranging efficiencies and improvements in safety and reliability for everyone. Some members believe that NGN should already be investing in sustainability. Other members say that this seems like a good idea, but **seems vague and a bit like management speak.**

Members want to know if consideration has been given to **how NGN will protect its estate against the worst effects of climate change.**

Members refer to the situation with Thames Water and ask about how much investors take out of the business. **Members suggest that if customers are going to have to pay more, then surely investors should take less.** Members ask about the level of debt that NGN currently has and what plans there are to this debt?

Questions from members:

- What is exactly being invested into to help customers?
- What does ‘a range of sustainable aspects’ mean in practice?
- What metrics are being used to measure sustainability and who is doing the measuring?
- How is the short-term target being measured?
- Should the medium- and long-term targets be tagged on to the short term, and is this then an evolving objective based on technology?

Ranking - 4th

Why is this commitment meaningful to people/why not?	What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?
<p>Members want to leave the planet a better place than when they found it. Members highlight that this is very topical and that public concern is increasing towards the environment.</p> <p>“It’s our kids and grandkids who will suffer or benefit depending on what we do now.”</p> <p>Members believe that thinking about the future and creating a sustainable planet for generations to come, will result in the best outcomes for all, including saving costs for people and NGN. Members highlight that continual measurement is needed to achieve goals.</p>	<p>Some members felt that recycling was more important than this commitment. Members question what happens to recycling after it leaves people’s homes, whether it goes to landfill or actually gets recycled, and say that it is important that businesses do their bit.</p> <p>Members feel that this commitment needs to be more of a joined-up response to ensure its effectiveness.</p>

4. Carbon reduction targets

NGN recognise the societal impacts of greenhouse gases and have specific deliverables in their 5 year Environmental Action Plan to reduce Carbon Dioxide and other pollutants. These measures include; a leakage reduction programme (leakage makes up 91.5% of NGN's annual emissions), replacing their vehicle fleet with EVs, hydrogen and new diesels, on-site renewable energy production, purchasing renewable energy, and engaging their supply chain to also reduce their emissions.

As part of their business plan NGN is accountable for its emissions in several ways:

- Emissions are reported publicly in an Annual Environmental Report
- Leakage targets are subject to performance related financial penalty / incentivisation
- Setting reduction targets for the other 8.5% of emissions (due to vehicles, offices etc) which are voluntary and reputational only – there is currently no financial penalty or incentive

NGN knows that stakeholders value responsibility and accountability, in particular with regards to environmental performance. However, other than reporting leakage emissions, NGN cannot be penalised for not achieving emissions targets.

This part of the day explores if that is sufficient? Should a responsible company have something more than targets? What should NGN do if it doesn't achieve these targets?

NGN are talking to Ofgem about alternative approaches to monitoring and reporting performance. Therefore, NGN wants to understand members' views on what it should do if it misses a voluntary, non-incentivised emissions target.

Five approaches were presented to members for discussion. Members deliberated on the benefits and pitfalls of different options and then voted on their preference. Members thoughts on each of the approaches are below.

Members were given two opportunities to prioritise the approaches. During the session, members used mentimeter to rank them from 1-5, and following this they had an opportunity to discuss why they ranked the approaches in this way and what was meaningful about each. Graph 3 shows the results of this first ranking, and members reflections on the relative importance of each commitment can be seen in the chapter below.

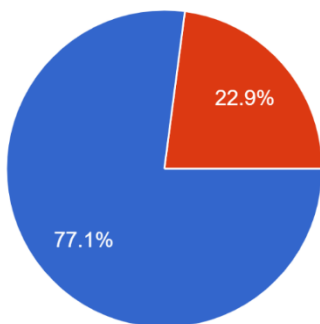
After the session, and once members had time to process and reflect on their discussions, they were sent a survey and asked if they still felt that NGN need to have an approach to make themselves more accountable to delivering their voluntary carbon reduction targets. Members were also asked to prioritise the approaches after reflecting. The results of these two votes are shown in graphs 4 and 5 below. The majority of members still believe that NGN should act to hold themselves accountable. Members also ranked the approaches in the same order as during the session, but with approach 4 slightly ahead compared to the session. It should be noted that the ranking vote had 39 responses as opposed to the 49 in the session.

Voting on the proposed approaches



Graph 3: Ranking by 49 members during the session. Members ranked approaches 2, 4 and 5 very closely, with approach 3 closely behind. Almost all members ranked approach 1 as their least preferred.

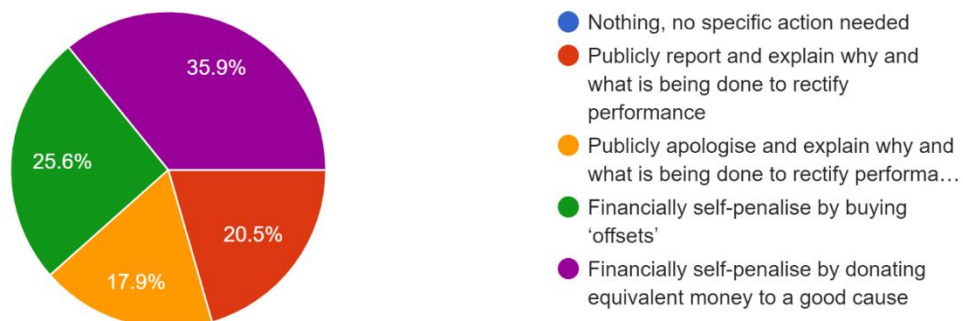
Do you think NGN need to introduce anything to make them more accountable to delivering their voluntary carbon reduction targets?



Graph 4: (responses from 48 members in the follow up survey show that the majority of members believe that NGN should introduce an approach to make them more accountable to delivering their voluntary carbon reduction targets.

If you answered 'yes' above, which of the five options that we discussed in the panel is your preferred method: (select one)

39 responses



Graph 5: Ranking by 39 members in the post session survey. Members ranked approach 5 as their most preferred follow by 4, then 2 then 3. No members preferred approach 1.

4.1. Approach 1: Do nothing

Do nothing, no specific action needed

Why is this priority meaningful to people/why not?

- Members want NGN to be transparent on targets and whether or not they are met. They highlight that doing nothing doesn't help the issue and just appears complacent.
- Some members prefer outside regulation to self-regulation on these targets, with many members mentioning the current water industry issues as an influence for the need for more robust oversight of the sector.
- No members thought that this this was an option NGN should take

What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?

Members feel that transparency is important and that doing nothing would create a lack of trust in any of NGN's other objectives.

"When voluntary targets are made but not met then this erodes trust for customers. Therefore to do nothing after making commitments is worse than doing nothing at all."

"Why is the government not making [targets] mandatory anyway? [This] should be in law"

Members feel that to do nothing in response to missed voluntary targets shows that shareholders are prioritised over customers.

4.2. Approach 2: Report performance and communicate mitigating actions

Report performance in the public domain, and clearly identify where targets have been missed, why, and what we are doing about it.

Why is this priority meaningful to people/why not?

Members support this approach highlighting that companies should always be held accountable when talking about the planet. They think that if NGN takes this approach then they won't be hiding any failures, which makes them publicly accountable, and that this is a good thing.

On being a monopoly

- Members note that being a monopoly NGN should have a duty to report, but it must also be independently audited.
- In particular members say that reporting to the public on these matters may give public confidence. Members note that this may also have an influence on other companies.
- Members ask if this is about self-regulation and ask how a monopoly can self-regulate?
- Members repeat their feeling that external regulation is needed.

Members believe that **being upfront about any challenges is better than things coming out retrospectively**, noting that this gives NGN a chance to explain why they have or have not done what they planned.

What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?

Members feel this should be prioritised because “without making NGN accountable then you could report whatever you want, but it will be meaningless”

Some members feel that there are potential downsides to reporting performance. For example, members highlight that NGN perhaps needs to be aware that some negative reporting of poor performance could cause alarm in the public.

Member questions:

- Where would this report be published?
- What audience would see it?
- Without a consequence, what will it mean?

4.3. Approach 3: Issue a public apology and communicate mitigating actions

Issue a public apology for missing targets and say what we are going to do to rectify it.

Why is this priority meaningful to people/why not?

Overall members felt that NGN should outline where they have missed targets and be accountable, and also outline where they would aim to do better next time and how they would do this. In other words, be clear and transparent and show they are trustworthy. Members felt that this is more helpful than just an apology.

“May have aimed high and given impossible task”

“If you allow [NGN] to get away with things early on they may push it”

“If they are grossly away from targets then there should be an inquiry”

“Hear of many who are not meeting things, they should be open about performance, have honest discussions”

What are the reasons for prioritising or de-prioritising this commitment?

Some members feel that NGN don't need to publicly apologise and that they should keep positive and keep working on the problems. Others suggest that NGN could report on progress at earlier intervals and work towards improving.

“They may be trying to do the best they can, so shouldn't apologise”

"A public apology is not good but should be clear and transparent and explain the cause and why/what learnt"

Other members expressed apprehension about apologising and asked if doing so might cause issues. They suggest that more publicity on hydrogen and NGN works and offerings could help avoid this backlash.

"Would this cause issues from protest groups and cause more issues that then causes disruption for people and causes ructions like the save oil stuff at the minute"

"No need to publicly apologise once it's recertified as it gives room for people cast doubts/question the business"

4.4. Approach 4: Carbon offsets

Penalise ourselves by buying carbon offsets (from shareholder funds) to compensate for excess emissions (sub question – if so, offsets equal to our excess emissions, 10x our excess emissions, 100x?)

Why is this priority meaningful to people/why not?

The size of the fine

Members believe that the 'threat' of being penalised may make a large organisation feel more accountable, and that having the penalty equivalent to several times the infraction could help to reinforce this.

Some members say that the 100x multiplier should be used. Other members suggest that a model where penalties are linked to income, like in Finland, would be more effective.

Some members believe that penalties should be back by Ofgem, and that any self-imposed penalties should be meaningful and should fund significant carbon projects or multiple projects.

Thoughts on offsetting

Members discussed ideas of offsetting against CO₂ emissions and want more tangible targets around how offsetting will lead to reduced bills for customers. Several members suggest that funding could instead help people to insulate properties, which they say would lower carbon emissions but also have a more direct impact on the population.

Members highlight that it takes many years for a forest to mature, and ask what NGN will do to follow up on this to ensure it is having the desired outcome?

Why offset, fund improvement instead

In general members feel that there should be a financial consequence for missing targets. However, several members suggest that mandatory funds for offsets are punitive, and that these funds could be better used funding solutions to the issues causing the missed targets.

4.5. Approach 5: Offsetting the cost of excess emissions through charitable donations

Greenhouse gases have a monetary social value – NGN should penalise itself by donating money to a good cause equivalent in value to the excess emissions. Which causes do members suggest?

Why is this priority meaningful to people/why not?

Approval for donations

- Some members agree with this proposed approach, they suggest that NGN should be supporting a cause helping to combat climate change, or improve the environment by creating spaces for wildlife, so that the money is used to undo the harm caused.
- Other members believe that money should be used to support vulnerable customers with financial help for new equipment, for example, for hydrogen.

Accountability & regulation

- Several members highlight the need for NGN to be honest and transparent about implementation of this approach, for example how to set the level of monetary social value, suggesting that maybe an independent monitor or outside regulator is needed.
- Some members question if this approach is a 'get out of jail free card' and suggest NGN should only do this in addition to option 2 above.

Invest in solving the problem

Some members believe that this approach avoids acknowledging or solving the problem. These members would prefer that NGN invest this money in upgrading systems, conducting more research into the problems and finding solutions, invest in technology, and spend on green suppliers.

4.6. Other potential approaches

Members were asked to think about other approaches for accountability around carbon emissions targets. Suggested approaches are below:

- 1. Mandated targeted improvement** - Members suggest mandated investment into failing areas based on examination of infrastructures e.g. causes of leaks. They believe that this will address the root causes of emissions more effectively than spending on non-related areas.
- 2. NGN staff pay** - Some members suggest that staff should have pay cuts or not get bonuses if targets are not met. Others suggest that staff should get bigger bonus if targets are met.
- 3. Compare NGN with other utility companies across the UK** - Members suggest that there should be transparency across the UK about different utility companies, with a league table

of the different networks and their statistics on emissions targets. Members suggest that there should also be opportunities to share best practice.

- 4. Real time tracking** - Some members suggest real time statistics and real time information so that anyone can track data live online.

4.7. Reflections on Carbon reduction targets post session

After the session members shared some additional thoughts in the post session survey. These reflections came under two main themes:

Action and transparent communication

Some members feel that NGN should consider supporting vulnerable customers with assistance, for example for better home insulation.

Some members ask for clear information about performance, displayed in real time if possible, citing examples of train and national grid companies sharing information online. Other members suggested that a quarterly brochure would be useful to tell the public what progress has been made. Some members suggest that backing up any apologies with an action plan is a must.

Independent oversight

Some members feel that any accountability approaches should be assessed or measured independently. A few members are not keen on the idea of self-regulation, and some of these members suggest that at the size of NGN an impartial third party is needed to maintain public trust.

5. What happens next

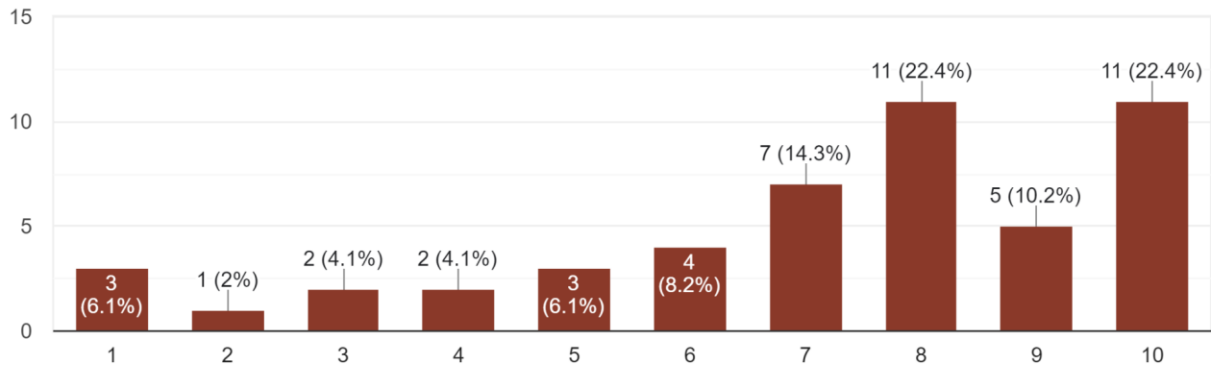
NGN will consider members views above and use them to inform the delivery of the People and Planet Strategy.

Members views will feed into an action plan and inform NGN's approach to CO2 commitments as the organisation begins to think about its environmental commitments for the next business plan period.

The draft business plan will be produced in June 2024. NGN will work with the Citizen's Panel between now and then to understand what the contents and commitments within that plan should be from a customer perspective.

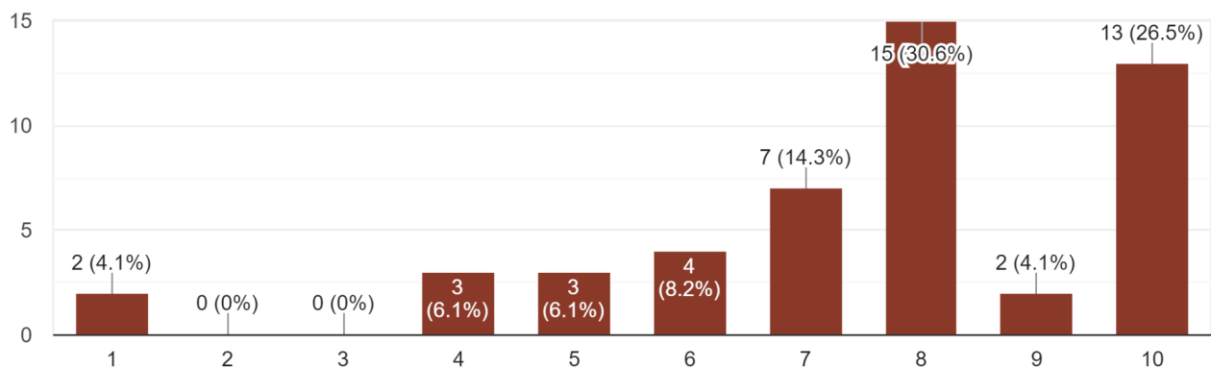
Overall, how satisfied were you with the workshop?

49 responses



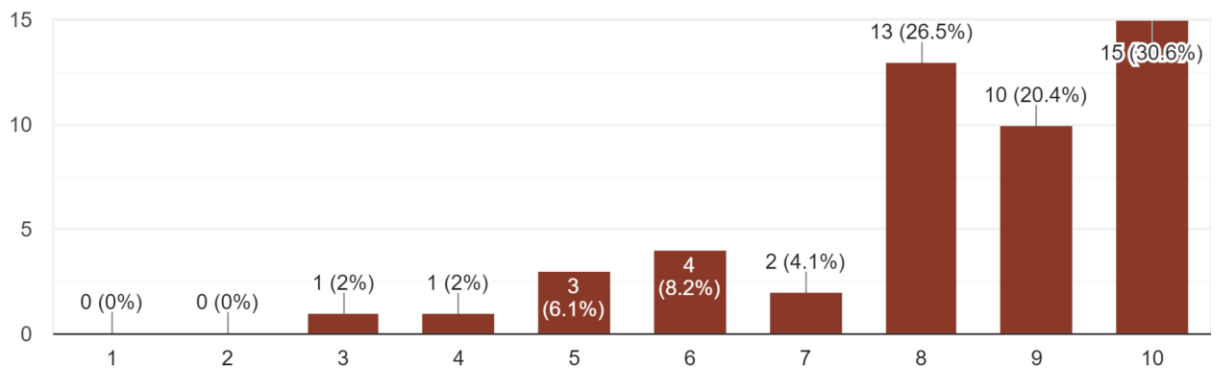
How would you rate the discussions?

49 responses



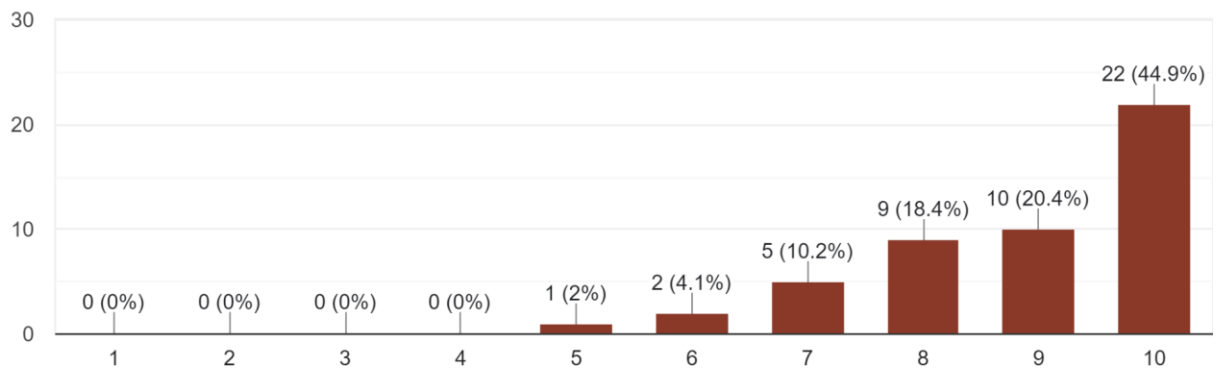
How would you rate the speakers / content?

49 responses



How would you rate the group facilitator?

49 responses



Was there anything that could be improved or changed?

Structure and process

- Members enjoyed the day, but prefer in person sessions (quite a few people made this comment)
- Some members would like to swap groups, others would like to stay the same.
- 'Have more time for conversation' was a point made by quite a few members. Post it notes were OK but members felt there was less no interaction with this format, and too much time spent typing up thoughts.
- Maybe have some people in group for a couple of times perhaps
- Technology knowledge check up and support for people. This slowed us down a bit today
- £75 isn't enough based on local prices for goods, this needs reviewing, suggestion £120.
- Keep the same groups on zoom for a few times.
- Think the Jamboards works better with facilitator writing down replies, certainly quicker
- Morning session was so long, there needs to be a break or a shorter session, then a longer session after lunch, but it was good to finish earlier in the afternoon.

Topics

- There was little to no conversation in our group and the topics were boring.
- More detailed information e.g. what does half of 1% relate to in actual numbers
- The core subject matter/questions could be a little more diverse and a little more time left for completing questions.
- Maybe have less slides and more speakers as I personally didn't find the slides engaging