

Northern Gas Networks

Young Innovators Council



Session 4: Setting New Planet Targets in the Sustainability Strategy July 2025

Facilitated and written by Solutions for the Planet

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1. Executive Summary

Northern Gas Networks' (NGN) Young Innovators Council (YIC) met online on Wednesday 9th July for the fourth session of 2025. The YIC were joined by members of NGN's Sustainability team, who are looking at setting **new interim targets for the Planet elements of their People and Planet Strategy**.

In advance of the session, the YIC were asked to research what they considered to be best practice in other businesses when it comes to environmental sustainability. The YIC were asked to read NGN's 2024 Sustainability Report and were specifically directed to the pages that provided detail on the current short, medium and long terms targets for the Planet elements of the People and Planet Strategy.

The session began with a discussion on setting new interim targets between 2030 and 2050. The YIC were asked to consider how many milestones should be introduced and when. The group agreed that there should be three milestones, set at 2035, 2040, and 2045. They felt this struck the right balance—providing enough time to make meaningful progress, while ensuring regular checkpoints to maintain accountability.

After hearing from Hannah Jewison, Business Sustainability Lead, on the four planet-focused areas of NGN's strategy, the YIC split into breakout groups to explore each in detail. They reflected on current targets—such as questioning the feasibility of achieving a 100% electric fleet by 2030—and proposed new ideas, including the introduction of an audit process to verify that suppliers are meeting the sustainability standards they claim to uphold.

A key theme that emerged during the session was the balance between setting realistic and ambitious targets. YIC members acknowledged the importance of ambition in driving innovation and maintaining momentum but also stressed the need for targets to be achievable and evidence-based to maintain credibility. The overall consensus leaned towards setting ambitious goals where feasible, while applying a more realistic approach in areas with greater uncertainty or external dependencies.

2. Overview of session

Background to the Young Innovators Council

2025 marks the fifth consecutive year of Northern Gas Networks' Young Innovators Council (YIC). The YIC continue to be the voice of young people at Northern Gas Networks, and the business ensures that these young people's thoughts and opinions are put at the heart of decision making.

At the end of 2024, Northern Gas Networks published its 5-year business plan for 2026-2031. It is clear from this plan that the business has taken the YIC's contributions into consideration, with multiple references to the importance of their unique, youth perspective.

14 members of this year's YIC were also part of the programme last year, with one member entering her fifth year on the YIC. This demonstrates the value that young people are also finding from their experience.

Background to the Session

Northern Gas Networks has worked closely with the Young Innovators Council to shape and refine their sustainability strategy, targets, and commitments. In particular, the YIC have provided valuable insights into the business's approach to established environmental commitments.

The YIC began exploring sustainability with NGN in 2021, offering insight into what future customers might expect from a sustainable business. Their suggestions included prioritising waste reduction over recycling and using alternative fuels like hydrogen or electricity. In 2023, the Council examined NGN's carbon reduction reporting in more depth, particularly how the company should respond when targets are missed. Their message was clear: NGN should publicly report on performance, explain any missed targets, and outline the next steps. In 2024, the Council focused on how environmental information is communicated, recommending the use of real-world examples and infographics to engage a wider audience. Most recently, in early 2025, the YIC reviewed NGN's business priorities and reaffirmed that sustainability remains a key focus—especially in terms of eliminating air pollutant emissions and achieving net zero by 2050.

NGN currently has short-term targets set for 2026, medium-term targets for 2030, and long-term goals for 2050. As the 2030 targets become the new short-term focus, the business sought the YIC's input on whether interim milestones were needed between 2030 and 2050—and, if so, how many would provide the right balance of ambition, accountability, and achievability.

YIC 2025 Session 4: Setting New Planet Targets in the Sustainability Strategy

Total length: 1 hour 45 minutes

People involved: 2 S4TP facilitators, 4 NGN Facilitators, 4 NGN Witnesses (Sustainability Team), 1 ISG Observer

Date and time: Wednesday 9th July 2025, 5.15pm – 7.00pm

Panel attendance: 19

Apologies: 5

Objectives:

- For the YIC to propose new interim target date(s) for NGN's Planet Commitments
- With the proposed interim target date(s) in mind, for the YIC to put forward new targets for existing commitments and present new target areas where relevant
- For the YIC to create priority action plans for four key environmental areas
- For the YIC to understand how their input will shape NGN's wider sustainability strategy

Prior to the session the YIC were asked to read and complete the following tasks:

- Choose a company that they think does Environmental Sustainability well and find an example of what they are doing. Why do they think it is working?
- Read the latest NGN Sustainability Report, focus on the sections related to the four Planet Commitments: <https://www.northerngasnetworks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Sustainability-Report-2024.pdf>

Agenda

Time	Activity
5.15	Welcome, objectives, You said...so we..., Pre-work
5.25	NGN Presentation – Setting a Strategy
5.30	Group Discussion and Vote – New Milestones
5.40	NGN Presentation – Overview of Commitments
5.50	Breakout Challenge – “Blueprint for the Planet”
6.25	Feedback
6.40	Plenary – Group Reflections
6.55	Next Steps and Close
7.00	End

3. Attendees

Young Innovators Council

Amiee	Joe
Daniel	Maryam
Danielle	Nora
Divya	Olivia
Ebunife	Orla
Ellie	Ralph
Fran	Ronan
Grace	Thomas
Hassan	Zinedine
James	

Solutions for the Planet

Claire Fitton
Lauren Gupta

Youth Insights Programme Manager
Youth Insights Coordinator / Interim Comms Lead

Northern Gas Networks

Alex Brightman
Hannah Jewison
Emma Holman
Jarrod Knott
Jenny Wilkinson
Neil Whalley

Energy Futures and Net Zero Educator
Business Sustainability Manager
Sustainability Reporting Lead
Project Manager – Energy Futures
Stakeholder Engagement Lead
Head of Environment and Sustainability

Tom Keighley

Land Remediation Manager

Observers

Brian Matthews

Independent Stakeholder Group Member

4. Key discussion points

You said...so we...

The panel heard from Jenny Wilkinson, Stakeholder Engagement Lead, who shared feedback from the previous session on 'Building a Truly Inclusive Workplace'.

Inclusive work placements



You said...

One of the main priority areas should be launching inclusive work placements schemes to attract diverse future talent

So we have ...

We have built this element into our work experience trials that you are testing for us and aligned it to feed into our recruitment activity. Let us know if we get this right.



Measuring inclusivity



You said...

One of our priorities should be seeking accreditation to measure inclusive performance – such as Best Place to Work

So we ...

We've begun discussions with our sister water company to understand more about the process and work involved in this.



You said...

Allyship is active, not passive and is essential to build inclusive workplaces **Visible leadership around allyship matters and leading from the top is essential.**

So we have ...

Started raising visibility through our senior leadership through internal comms and embedded allyship as a key principle into our draft DEI strategy



Inclusion and belonging Strategy

You said...

You identified a number of potential blockers for various groups and protected characteristics that we should think about

So we have ...

We've created a draft strategy and are now engaging with colleagues and stakeholders on this in order to finalise it.



Pre-work Reflections

The YIC were asked to share their pre-work research on best practice in sustainability. Reflections were shared both verbally and in the chat. These have been summarised by the themes below.

- Rewilding land, tree-planting and supporting wildlife**
Royal Mail: No-mow May, installing birdboxes, planting meadows
Sportshoes: Sponsoring the planting of trees or other greenery
NGN: planting 20,000 tree saplings
Electricity companies: contracting smaller businesses to rewild land that the electricity company isn't using so that it can breathe again
- Thoughtfully producing products that can be reused, repaired or recycled**
Patagonia: using sustainable materials and reducing waste
IKEA: using sustainable sourced wood and providing spare parts so that products can be repaired. They aim to have 100% of products being repairable or recyclable by 2030.

Apple: designing products so that they can be repaired more easily and last longer

- **Rethinking products used internally by the business**

Royal Mail: uniforms made with recycled materials

Google: more focus on repairing and reusing electrical items used by employees

- **Travel, electrifying fleets and innovation in fuel technology**

Airbus: producing hydrogen-powered aircraft through their ZEROe project

Royal Mail: have 7,000 EVs in their fleet and 50% of deliveries are done on foot, they have also halved their domestic flight usage

Porsche: innovation in an e-fuel that might help to overcome the challenge of lower range in electric vehicle options

- **Targeting net zero and investing in renewable energy**

OVO Energy: encouraging their own customers to reduce energy usage

NGN: clear aim to reach net zero by 2050

IKEA: investing in renewable energy

Orsted (Danish energy company): have flipped their business from being 85% fossil fuels to being 85% renewables, despite push back from government. They have sold off gas assets and have invested heavily in renewable energy and are seeing the financial rewards already

- **Supplier leaderboards**

Food industry: Ranking suppliers based on a set of criteria and rewarding those with higher rankings. So, a larger company is using its position to incentivise smaller companies to improve their practices.

Witnesses: Hannah Jewison (Business Sustainability Manager)

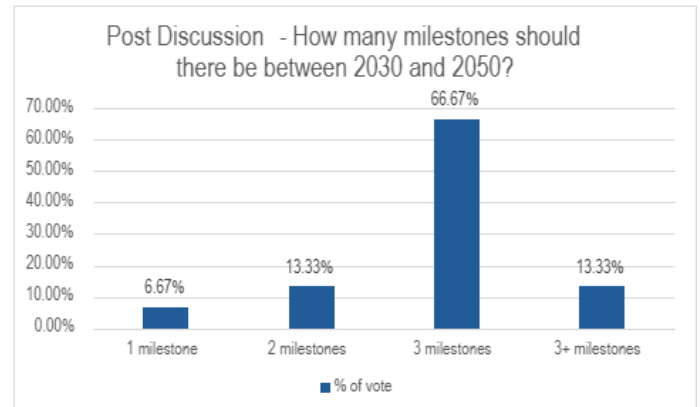
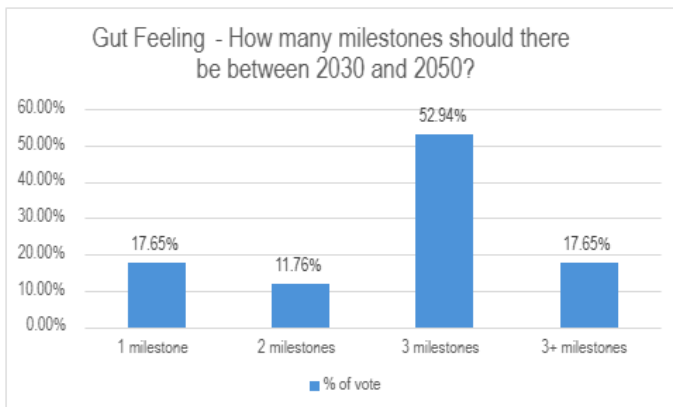
The YIC heard from NGN about setting targets within their People and Planet Strategy. Hannah talked about the importance of having clear goals, she highlighted the process of consultation with stakeholders, including the YIC, since 2018, and finished by asking a question to be discussed in the first breakout room of the session:

- Right now, we have short-term targets set for 2026 (the end of GD2 period)
- We have medium-term goals for 2030 (end of GD3 period)
- We have long-term goals for 2050
- As 2026 gets closer, our 2030 goals will become our new short-term focus
- That leaves a big question: **What comes next between 2030 and 2050**

Discussion 1: How many milestones should there be between 2030 and 2050, and when should they be?

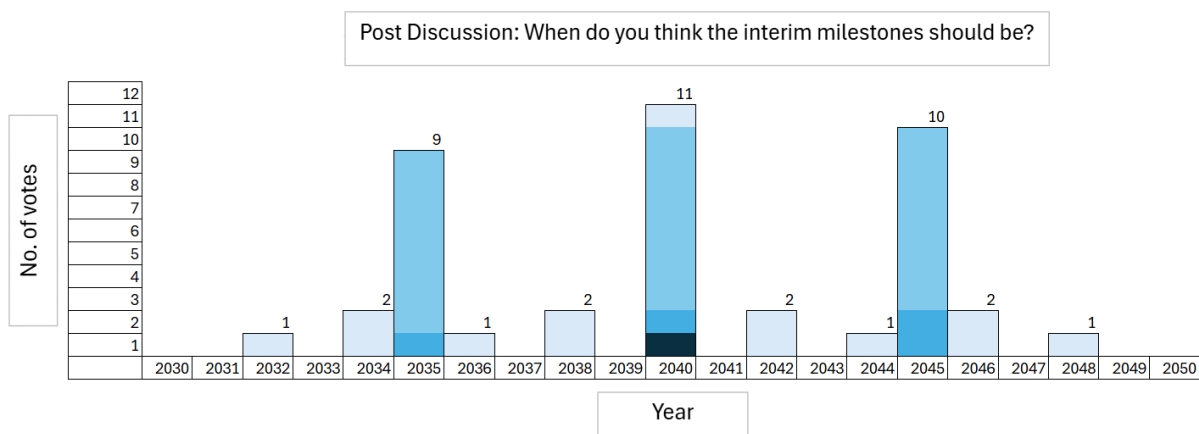
The YIC were asked to immediately complete a 'gut-feeling' vote based on their initial thoughts. They then joined breakout rooms for 5-minutes to discuss some of the pros and cons of different options, before rejoining the main room and completing a 'post-discussion' vote.

The graphs below show that there was a **clear preference for three milestones** (or more) both in the gut-feeling vote and in the post-discussion vote.



The graph below reflects the dominant consensus that three milestones should be evenly spread between 2030 and 2050, with the majority of the YIC opting for 2035, 2040 and 2045. For those who thought that more than three milestones should be set, they suggested either every 4 years or every 2 years, as shown by the lighter blue colour in the graph.

Key	
	Voted for 3+ milestones
	Voted for 3 milestones
	Voted for 2 milestones
	Voted for 1 milestone



Breakout room quotes below provide insight into the rationale behind voting preferences.

Preference for 2 milestones	<i>2 milestones give you time to work on achieving the targets.</i>
Preference for 3 milestones	<i>If it's kept at 5-year increments, it's more organised and people know exactly when. If it's 3 years after the short-term target, then not so much will be done. So, I would opt for 2035, 2040,</i>

	<i>2045. And then when you get to 2050 you can still be working on anything that's longer term.</i>
Preference for more than 3 milestones	<i>5 years is a long time, so you don't want to be reaching 2047 and realising that you haven't done anything and won't reach your 2050 goal. So, I like the idea of 3 big ones, but I also think smaller ones to keep you on track would be good.</i>
	<i>More milestones so we are checking in more regularly on progress.</i>

Witnesses: Hannah Jewison (Business Sustainability Manager)

Next, Hannah presented to the YIC about the four areas of the Planet strategy that NGN want support with. For each target area, she talked about what NGN have achieved so far, what the 2030 (now short-term) and 2050 (long-term) targets are, and any key future milestones that might impact work towards that area.

The slides below show the context for each specific target area, and these were then used as prompts for the breakout room discussions that followed Hannah's presentation.

Existing Targets

Produce less waste and recycle it all

What have we achieved so far?
On track to achieve our 2030 targets. Also, prior to 2030 we'll have eradicated avoidable single use plastics from depots and offices

2030

- Produce 50% less waste from our offices and send no waste to landfill
- 99% of the aggregate we use is made from recycled materials
- Use 75% less paper

2050

- Produce 95% less waste
- Go totally paperless

Key future milestones:
Mains replacement is our main source of waste generation (>80%) and resource use (pipe and backfill materials). This will end in 2032.

Existing Targets

Partner responsibility and hold suppliers to sustainability standards

What have we achieved so far?
Supplier Code launched in 2022 and currently have approx. 85% of our suppliers declaring themselves compliant.

2030

All contracted suppliers signed Supplier Code.

2050

Maintain 2030 position

Key future milestones:
Mains replacement is our main source of company expenditure (c.50%). This will end in 2032.

Existing Targets

Manage our land to benefit the environment

What have we achieved so far?
Prior to 2026 we will:

- Improve habitats for nature on minimum 250 NGN sites,
- Plant at least 40,000 trees to improve local environments in our communities
- Continue with our programme to clean up our sites, including upgrading or removing old gas infrastructure and contamination

2030

Create a baseline for natural capital and then enhance natural capital value.

2050

Manage our landscape to be environmentally net positive

Key future milestones:
Potential biodiversity net gain increases for development in future?

Potential legal requirement to publish our biodiversity related business risks and opportunities by end of decade?

Existing Targets

Eliminate air pollutant emissions

What have we achieved so far?

- 10 electric vans out of 600 in fleet
- Company cars all EV or hybrid (~30)
- 100% purchased renewable electricity since 2021
- Solar panels on all offices/depots
- 100% green gas purchased since May 2025

2030

100% zero emission fleet
All facilities use 100% renewable electricity and/or 100% green gas

2050

Net zero emissions from our direct business operations

Key future milestones:
2030 – only clean electricity generation in UK (only); ban on new diesel and petrol vehicles.
2032 – completion of mains replacement programme. Less gas leaks to deal with?
2035 – potential new gas boiler purchase ban

Breakout Activity: Blueprint for the Planet

The panel moved to breakout rooms to discuss each of the target areas in more detail. With the most commonly proposed next interim target date in mind, 2035, they were asked to consider:

1. New medium-term targets based on the existing short-term and long-term targets for their target area.
2. Any brand-new targets that they believe Northern Gas Networks should be targeting.

Produce less waste and recycle it all	
New medium-term targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have a list of any currently non-recyclable items and then come up with ideas on how to replace them. - Ensure that employees are using reusable bags, water bottles, coffee cups and utensils instead of disposable version. - Implement a robust recycling programme that includes clearly labelled bins throughout workplaces and education for employees about proper waste sorting. - Encourage digital practices to minimize paper waste e.g., online billing and online document storage. However, this should not be the default option, as some customers will not have the resources or skills to do this. - Encourage people to reuse items, NGN could introduce some kind of incentive scheme so that they take care of reusable items, bring them back, and use them.
Brand-new targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with recycling companies and explore options for recycling construction and demolition waste to ensure that materials are diverted from landfill. - Aim to source reusable items for the workplace from local businesses in order to support the local economy. - Look at a reusable or non-damaging version of the spoil boards that are used to protect soil / green space damage when working (in the meeting, NGN confirmed that plastic sheets are currently used a maximum of 3 times and then thrown away).
Other thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Northern Gas Networks already seems to have achieved a lot in this area, particularly on the corporate side (rather than the operational side). - On the operational side, it seems that a lot of the waste is unavoidable e.g., the aggregates that are dug up in the process of doing their work.

Partner responsibility and hold suppliers to sustainability standards	
New medium-targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do random inspections to ensure that suppliers are complying with these standards (in the meeting, NGN confirmed that suppliers self-declare and there is currently no auditing process) - Companies should do more than just say they are compliant. NGN should look for companies that are documenting their efforts publicly. - Standards like fair pay and anti-slavery are a must. Some of the other areas, such as Net Zero, might be a big thing to ask, especially for small businesses. For example, it might not be possible for them to purchase a fleet of electric vehicles. So, show some leeway on some of the more difficult targets. - If the 2030 target is that all suppliers are signed up, then the 2035 target should be around the documentation or inspections mentioned above. It's one thing to say you are doing something, but to prove you are doing it is another.
Brand-new targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider how to ensure that non-contracted and sub-contracted suppliers are compliant or at least meet some minimum standards. - One idea for this would be to create some form of league table of suppliers, whereby NGN would have a preference for working with suppliers higher up the league table and NGN could also identify which organisations might need support. - To build on that point, can NGN use its position to share expertise or even finances to support organisations in improving their sustainability standards?
Other thoughts	
Manage our land to benefit the environment	
New medium-targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In order to effectively manage the land, NGN needs to understand the natural capital currently on that land and figure out what could be done to manage the land in the most useful way, e.g., land in flood prone areas should be managed to reduce the risk of flooding. - (In the meeting, NGN shared that a lot of their land is in small pockets rather than large areas). Depending on where these pockets are located, they can act as islands

	<p>and corridors for biodiversity to move around more safely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGN should be sure of the financial commitment required for such environmental projects to be undertaken. It needs to be affordable and something that the local area / community can manage. - Initiatives such as tree-planting can also be used as engagement activities for employees or local communities so that people can learn about these issues and ways of solving them. - With activities like tree-planting, NGN needs to be sure that they are planting the right species in the right place, otherwise this can actually be more damaging. Many companies just jumped on the trend of planting trees without considering what is the best thing.
Brand-new targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As well as thinking about the land, could NGN consider green roofs as another way to create biodiverse spaces? This could create more habitats, and you could also collect rainwater for e.g., watering plants or flushing toilets. - NGN should consider expanding the amount of land that they have and then managing that land purely for the benefit of the environment. This will support the company morals and demonstrate its dedication.
Other thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The current targets are too broad. 'Understand' and 'improve' isn't enough and there is far more nuance to getting these targets right. - This relates back to a YIC session from a few years ago, where NGN was struggling to find good external schemes for carbon off-setting. By engaging in more of their own pro-environmental activities, they can carbon offset some of the areas that are more difficult right now e.g., electrifying the vehicle fleet.
Eliminate air pollutant emissions	
New medium-targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rethink whether 100% electric fleet by 2030 is realistic. The innovation required, e.g., in the range of vehicles, isn't sufficient for what NGN require and therefore setting this target isn't realistic. - In the meantime, ensure that emissions are offset fully and responsibly. - And consider partnering with companies that are working on the required innovations in electric vehicles such as VW and Ford. NGN can support those companies in innovating what is needed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Even simple measures such as making sure that any journeys made by vehicles are the most direct route, and that any stop-offs required are planned to be the most efficient so that pollutants are reduced. - Ensure that all NGN offices / buildings use heat pumps rather than gas boilers. -
Brand-new targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the workforce's travel requirements and contracts to reduce unnecessary emissions. It was observed that some employees regularly travel long distances—which may not always be necessary. The YIC suggested that reviewing remote working arrangements could help reduce unnecessary travel and associated emissions. - For projects that are off-site, NGN could look at using some kind of off-site air emission monitoring system. So that the emissions generated from one project – from start to finish – could be tracked e.g., driving to site, whilst on site, machinery used. - An on-site Smart Meter monitoring system could also be implemented for buildings and offices. So that NGN knows what each building is emitting. It may be costly, but it will be beneficial in the long run. - Partner with local councils who are implementing low emission zones. Working with the councils to show the emissions coming from that zone could help to enhance reputation.
Other thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at what other companies are doing rather than only focusing internally. For example, Innocent Smoothies have carbon neutral offices. - Keep in mind the risk of green washing when talking about these activities. Innocent Smoothies have also been caught up in green-washing scandals. - NGN can look to OVO as an example of an energy company that has a sustainable / green reputation. They are showing that both things are possible.

Feedback and Plenary

The YIC returned from their breakout groups and presented back the points from their discussion. This gave the other YIC members a chance to hear about the insights generated for the other Planet targets.

This then opened the floor for a wider plenary discussion, where the YIC were invited to reflect on what stood out to them, what was missing, how the targets might interlink one

another or even contradict each other. The table below summarises the points made during this plenary activity:

Fran mentioned that, in her breakout room, someone had raised the idea of buying land for environmental development. This reminded her of a previous YIC session where the difficulty in electrifying NGN's fleet meant that searching for offsetting alternatives might be needed, but that there weren't many options on this. Buying land could be part of NGN's own internal offsetting plan. So, this links to the reducing air pollutant target.
Amiee thought that there is only so much a gas company can do to benefit biodiversity. However, NGN could provide grants to smaller organisations who are improving biodiversity e.g., Wild CIC who work with young people to improve the environment in local areas. This would have a social benefit as well.
Daniel suggested setting up some kind of approval that NGN could give to companies or businesses that it works with who meet high sustainability standards. This could be something quite sought after that would incentivise positive action in this area.
Zinedine also talked about incentives but suggested that financial incentives would be a good way to encourage partner companies to meet sustainability targets. This would have benefits across all the planet targets discussed in the session.

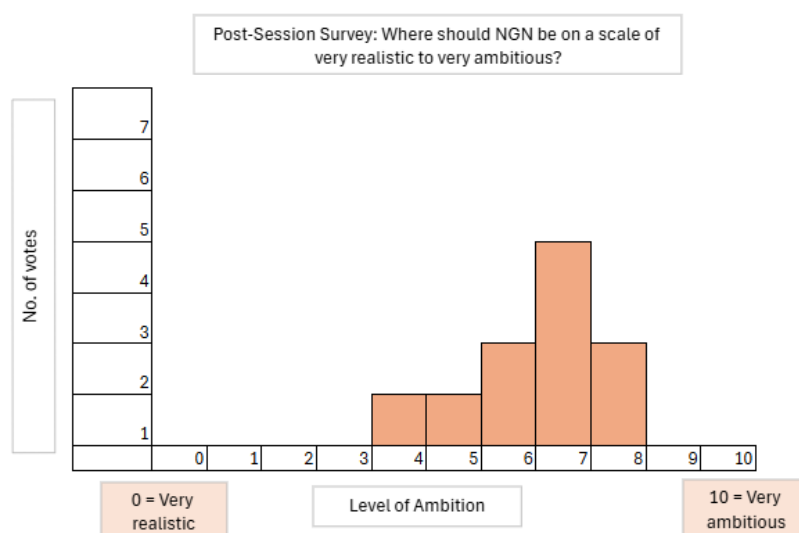
At the start of the plenary, Neil Whalley – Head of Environment and Sustainability – asked the YIC what their thoughts were on having realistic versus ambitious targets. This was something that had been mentioned during the earlier milestone discussion as well as in individual breakout rooms. This prompted a separate topic of reflection during the plenary activity, which is summarised here:

REALISTIC	AMBITIOUS
<i>Set targets that seem realistic at the time of setting them. Even if they end up being unrealistic or impossible later. And, if that is the case, don't remove them, but be accountable and update them.</i>	<i>It's important to be ambitious. You don't want to set impossible goals, but ambition drives change. If it's easily attainable then it might cause people to relax. If there's a worry you might not achieve it, then it will drive you.</i>
<i>A target should be as realistic as possible. NGN shouldn't be aiming for an overly ambitious target since it could break momentum. What does science say?</i>	<i>Ambition drives the company to strive and be better.</i>
<i>Being realistic shows customers that you are serious and genuine about what you are trying to achieve, and this can help to build reputation.</i>	<i>If a target is too easily attainable it won't force people to act and move forward. If you can reach a target easily, it might cause people to put off the work and say, 'oh we don't need to do that yet'. Ambition keeps it a priority.</i>
<i>For things that are more difficult and unknown, set more realistic targets.</i>	<i>For things that you know you can have an impact on, be ambitious.</i>
<i>Targets should be realistic enough to be deliverable, avoid green washing and stay</i>	<i>Targets should be ambitious enough to drive real change, align with national goals,</i>

<i>measurable e.g., eliminating 100% of pollutants by 2030 would be unrealistic so it would be better to aim for a phased reduction such as 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2040.</i>	<i>and show leadership e.g., electrifying around 75% of fleet by 2035 is ambitious but achievable with the right planning and investment.</i>
<i>When we talk about targets for electric cars and green transport, realistic goals are useful like increasing the number of charging stations in towns or encouraging people to try more electric vehicles through incentives. These steps are practical and build the foundation for bigger changes.</i>	<i>But ambitious targets are the big-picture goals, like having 100% of new cars sold be electric within the next decade or completely phasing out petrol and diesel vehicles nationwide. These goals push innovation, infrastructure upgrades, and major policy shifts, which take time, money and collaboration.</i>

Post-Session

Given the interest in the realistic versus ambitious question, NGN and S4TP decided to add an additional question to the post-session survey, asking the YIC where they thought NGN should sit on a scale of 0 (very realistic) to 10 (very ambitious).



The survey results show that the YIC would encourage NGN to lean into more ambitious goals, but with a balance of realism. This is consistent with the qualitative comments recorded in the plenary activity.

5. Key Reflections for Northern Gas Networks

The business should refer to the summary tables in the previous section of the report to reflect on all the insights from the YIC. Below, are some key points from the milestone discussion, each of the target areas, and regarding realistic versus ambitious targets.

Key reflections for Northern Gas Networks for deciding interim milestones

1. **Three milestones between 2030 and 2050 at 2035, 2040 and 2045** was a clear preference from the majority of the YIC. The thinking behind this centred around; having sufficient time to achieve the targets that are set, having enough milestone to monitor progress, and having dates that are logical and easy to remember.

Key reflections for Northern Gas Networks for the ‘reduce less waste and recycle it all’ target

2. **The YIC recognised that NGN have made good progress in this area already** but noted that it seemed to focus on corporate / office waste rather than operational activities.
3. To be thorough, **compile a list of all items that are used and find reusable or recyclable options to replace them with where possible**. Additionally, aim to use **local suppliers** when sourcing reusable and recyclable items to support the local economy.
4. **Ensure that there is a robust recycling programme at the business**. Introduce an **incentive scheme** to encourage employees to recycle.
5. Specifically, it was noted that the **spoil boards used to protect grassy areas during operational work are currently plastic** sheets that are re-used a maximum of 3 times. **An alternative to these items should be found**.

Key reflections for Northern Gas Networks for the ‘partner responsibility and hold suppliers to sustainability standards’ target

6. **Standards around fair pay and slavery should be non-negotiable, but some standards might be harder for a small or new business to meet**. For example, net zero targets or electrifying a vehicle fleet would be costly for such businesses.
7. **Some form of auditing needs to be in place, rather than a self-declare checklist**. The YIC suggested asking suppliers to provide documentation of their practices or doing random inspections to ensure that partners are doing what they say they are doing. Having all suppliers signed up could remain the 2030 target, and then ensuring they have the documentation could be for 2035.
8. **Consider how to ensure that non-contracted supplier or sub-contractors are compliant with the standards**. Whilst the YIC recognised that this might be more difficult due to the lack of oversight, they suggested compiling some kind of league table of possible suppliers.
9. Following on from the idea of a league table, the YIC suggested using such a table to **also identify businesses that could benefit from NGN’s support**, whether that be through expertise-sharing or financial support.

Key reflections for Northern Gas Networks for the ‘manage our land to benefit the environment’ target

10. NGN should ensure that they have a **solid understanding of the natural capital currently on their land and of the needs of a particular area**, so that they can plan appropriately. For example, land in urban areas should be managed so that it provides effective temperature regulation.
11. **Small pockets of land** can be very useful as habitat islands or corridors for nature. So, NGN should not neglect even those small areas.

12. NGN could consider **creating green roofs on their buildings** since this could create more green space for nature to thrive.
13. **Consider expanding the land owned and managed by NGN so that more land is being prioritised for nature.** This would demonstrate the business's dedication to this target.
14. **Environmental and nature targets need to be more nuanced.** The YIC specifically referenced that fact that when planting trees, for example, you need to be sure that you are planning the right species in the right place and at the right time, otherwise the effect can be more negative than positive.
15. **The social side of managing land to benefit the environment should be considered.** Colleagues can take part in activities such as tree-planting as a form of engagement and wellbeing. **NGN could also partner with expert organisations**, such as Wild CIC, and provide grants for them to do work in the environment on behalf of NGN.

Key reflections for Northern Gas Networks for the 'eliminate air pollutant emissions' target

16. **The target around having 100% electric fleet by 2030 should be reconsidered.** The YIC did not feel that this was a realistic target given the technological developments. The date should be changed and **short-term targets around partnering with companies innovating in this area** e.g., VW and Ford should be prioritised.
17. In the meantime, **efforts should be made to offset any emissions that cannot currently be avoided.**
18. NGN should **think about the travel requirements of their workforce.** This includes ensuring that the shortest and most efficient routes are taken when driving, as well as reviewing the in-the-office requirements for staff who live further away from the nearest office.
19. One YIC member suggested using some kind of **monitoring system to track emissions both in offices and off-site.** This would not only show accountability but also help the business to identify areas for development.

Key reflections for Northern Gas Networks on setting realistic versus ambitious targets

20. The consensus of the YIC was **that the business should largely be ambitious in its target setting to motivate and push for innovation.** At the same time, **where there is more uncertainty or factors out of NGN's control**, such as electrification of their fleet, **more realistic targets should be set.**

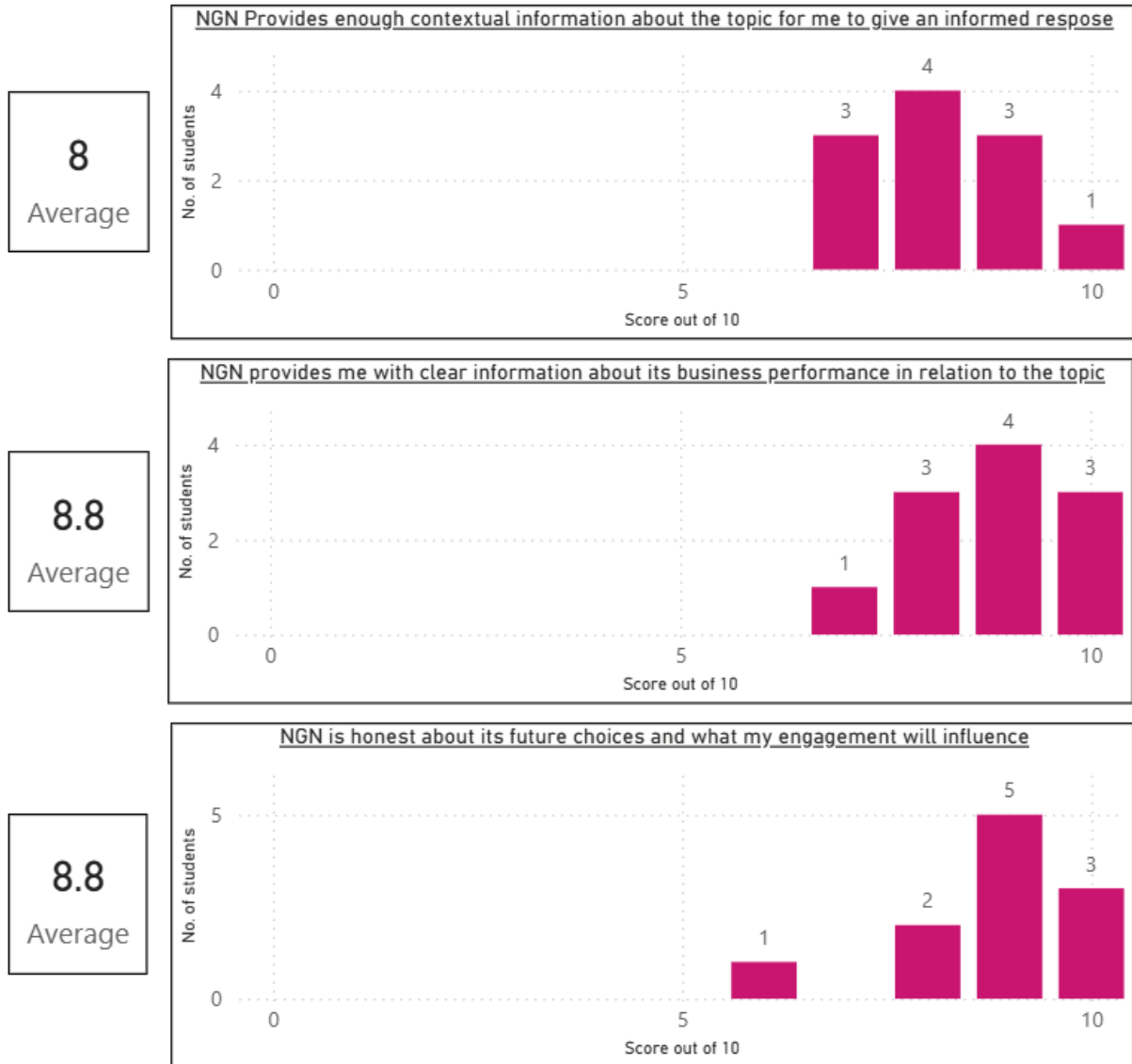
6. Conclusion

Session 4 provided a structured opportunity for the Young Innovators Council to engage critically with Northern Gas Networks' environmental targets and priorities. Through a combination of pre-work, discussion, and breakout activities, the Council explored the feasibility of existing goals and identified areas for further development. Their recommendations covered both refinements to current targets and the introduction of new measures—highlighting the importance of interim milestones, supplier accountability, land management, and emissions tracking.

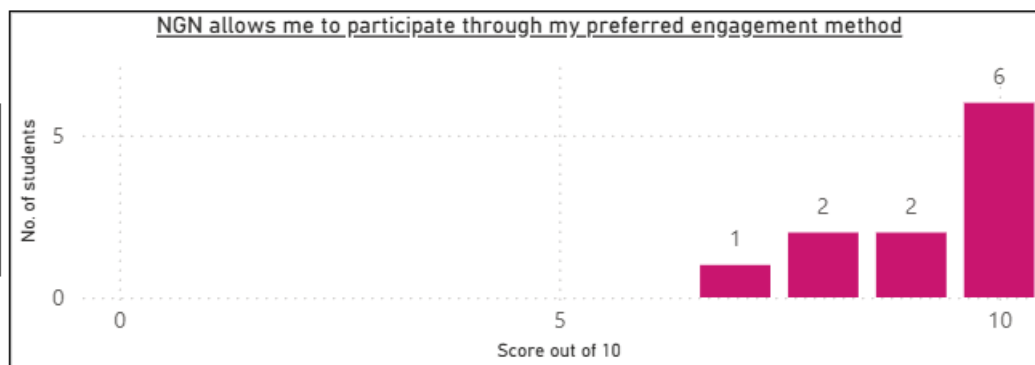
The session also surfaced useful reflections on the balance between ambition and realism in sustainability planning. The outputs from this session offer NGN a valuable evidence base for reviewing and shaping its Planet commitments between 2030 and 2050, ensuring they remain both credible and forward-looking.

Appendices

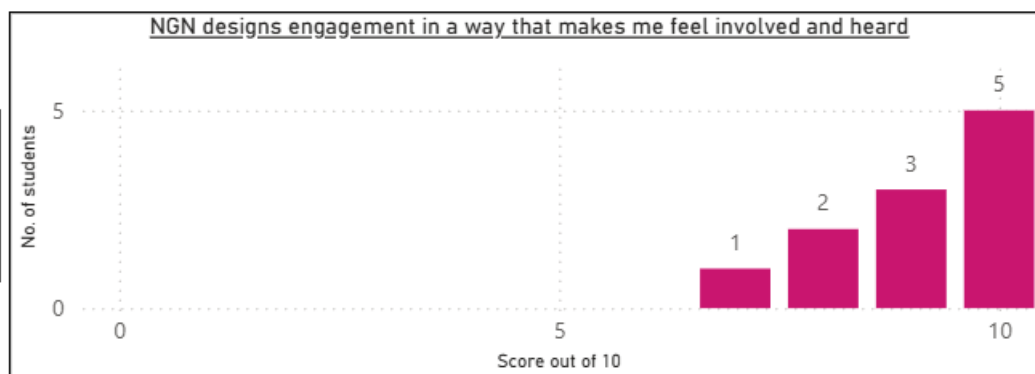
Appendix 1: Post Session Survey Feedback on NGN Engagement. As of 28/07/2025 11 of those who attended have completed the survey.



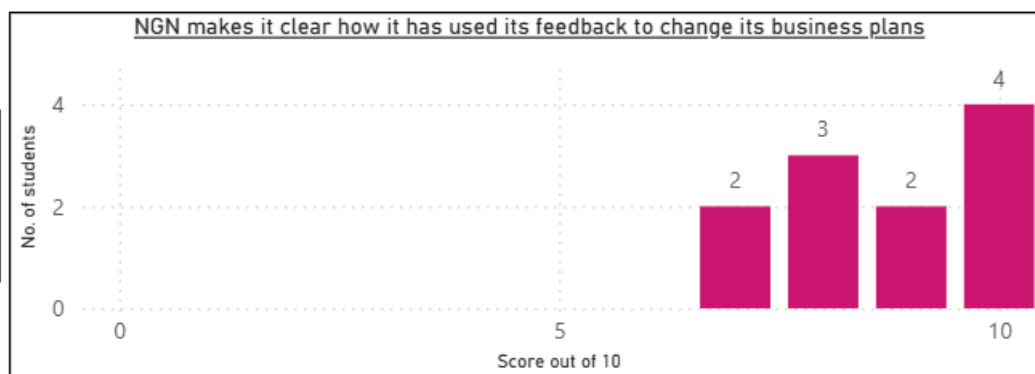
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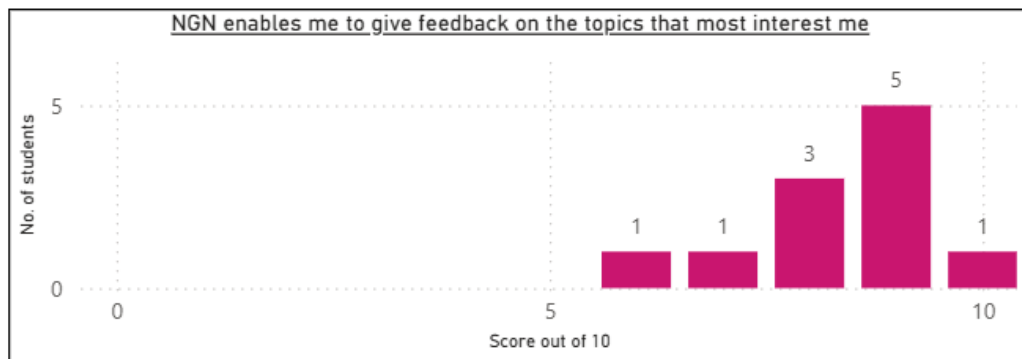
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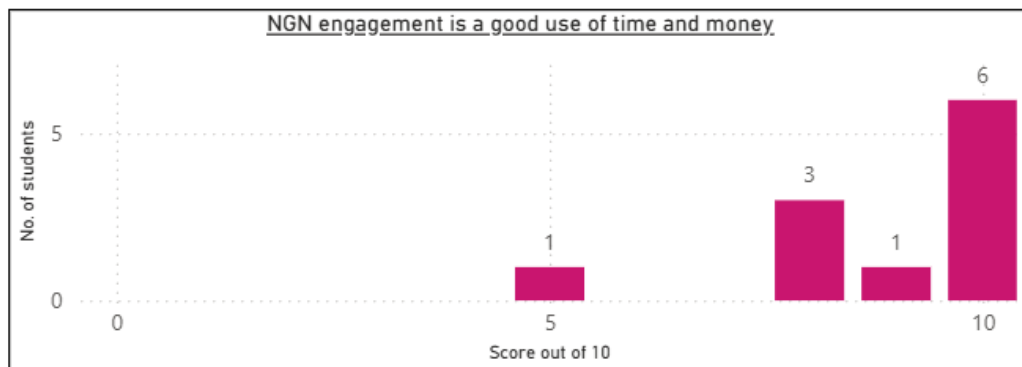
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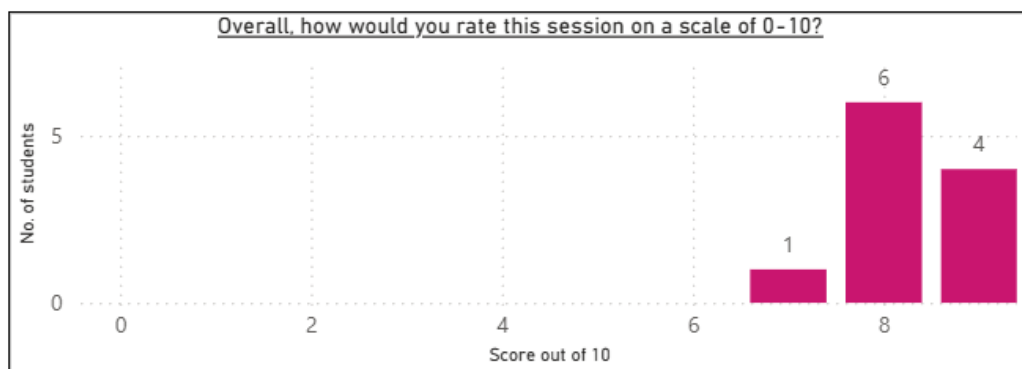
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Appendix 2: Additional comments about the topic captured in the Survey

For resources, finding more locally sourced and smaller businesses to support.

I understand how people voted for 5-year intervals in targets. However, while I still think that every 5 years is good for a public target, internally, the target should realistically be every year. It's unheard of for most businesses, and every 5 years is just an easy answer, as it rounds nicely. Rounding nicely isn't the objective of these targets; having it every year keeps it relevant and constantly in the mind of the company as a priority. It gives you enough time to make any reasonable adjustments. If you give a company or individual a certain long time to do something, they will procrastinate that thing and then end up in a place of pushing back targets more and more.

Appendix 3: Sample of work provided via email by those who could not attend

Ethan, Mubashir and Sophie provided their thoughts on the topic via email after the session. Below is a summary of their insights:

- There should be 3 milestones between 2030 and 2050, although this depends on what the targets are and how much time might be needed to achieve them.
- For reducing waste, have % reduction targets spread out between 2030 and 2050 so there are more check-in points for reviewing progress e.g., 2036 produce 65% less waste and 2042 produce 75% less waste. This will help to reach the long-term target by 2050.
- Use disposable containers, packaging, and PPE.
- Use NGN's position in the industry to advocate for other companies to meet sustainability standards since this will make a big difference in society.
- Replacing NGN's fleet of vans with electric vans is a good start, and you should aim to reduce all non-essential travel to other sites and opt for Zoom meetings instead.
- Many positive environmental actions happened during COVID out of necessity and they had hugely positive impacts on the planet, as well as reducing costs to the business, so this mindset should be considered again.
- Many companies seem to be rowing back on their environmental goals. They claim to have it as a priority, but customers know it is more nuanced than that and therefore NGN should keep in mind about being realistic and being transparent about progress.