Northern Gas Networks

Young Innovators Council

Session 2: East Coast Hydrogen community engagement

March 2026

Facilitated and written by Solutions for the Planet

Contents:

1. Executive Summary

Session 2 of NGN's Young Innovators Council 2026 brought the young people together to explore how Northern Gas Networks (NGN) should engage communities - especially younger generations - around long-term energy infrastructure projects such as the East Coast Hydrogen (ECH) proposal. The discussion focused on timing, trust, communication methods, and the specific concerns and motivations young people have when faced with major infrastructure change.

The session opened by revisiting the priorities that the panellists had identified in their 'getting to know you' Session 1: safety, affordability, and sustainable opportunities for communities. They had consistently emphasised safety as the number one non-negotiable, alongside keeping costs low for everybody. These values shaped the conversation about hydrogen for industry, industrial decarbonisation, and the role of NGN in supporting a fair transition.

NGN's expert witnesses introduced the East Coast Hydrogen project, explaining its purpose, timelines, and uncertainties. They clarified that the project is currently in the Front-End Engineering Design (FEED) phase, with no guarantee of construction. Young people were particularly attentive to this uncertainty, noting that early communication must avoid false expectation that it's definitely going to happen.

Across breakout rooms, participants explored when and how they would want to be consulted. Between the four breakout rooms there was a 50-50 split of early versus late consultation. Those who favoured early consultation acknowledged they'd want it even with limited information, because it allows communities to prepare, influence decisions, and avoid feeling blindsided. Those who preferred later consultation wanted to avoid confusion, stress, or constant changes that make people agitated. Many suggested a hybrid model: early awareness, followed by continuous, transparent updates as plans evolve.

The YIC also discussed whether they would personally care about a project that may not materialise for 10–15 years. Many said they would care because of future job opportunities, environmental impacts, and the effect on their families and local areas. Others noted that they weren't particularly interested at this moment in time, but that interest may grow as they approach adulthood, employment, and bill-paying responsibilities. Several emphasised that even if they cannot influence decisions directly, being informed still matters.

It is worth noting that on hydrogen specifically, participants raised safety questions, concerns about explosiveness, and curiosity about how hydrogen differs from natural gas, which points to a continuing knowledge-gap in this particular group of stakeholders. They also highlighted the need for clear, accessible education, especially for older residents and those unfamiliar with energy systems.

Across the session, young people consistently asked for communication that is honest, simple, and tailored to them, including short videos, school outreach, grouped information for different types of stakeholders, and clear explanations of benefits, risks, and trade-offs. They stressed that trust depends on transparency, responsiveness, and visible evidence that NGN has listened to community feedback. Overall, the session demonstrated that young people are thoughtful, pragmatic, and deeply invested in how major infrastructure decisions shape their futures. They want to be engaged early, continuously and meaningfully, and they expect NGN to communicate with clarity throughout the life of long-term projects.

2. Overview of session

Background to the Young Innovators Council

2026 is the sixth 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.

This year starts with 42 YIC panellists, 15 of whom are continuing from last year and the remaining 27 are new to the YIC. This balance of retention and renewal is positive, as a number of long-standing members from previous years have outgrown the age group for this panel. It ensures sustained engagement with youth voice and relevance to the current climate and their unique perceptions.

Background to the Session

NGN wanted to look at their East Coast Hydrogen project, and in particular explore information needs and develop principles for future engagement and consultation on the project.
While the project itself is focused on industrial customers and using hydrogen for power for big industry, the infrastructure (new and old) will have an impact on communities.
This project will ensure viability of industry to decarbonise and still operate here and ensure future jobs and skills.

YIC 2026 Session 2: East Coast Hydrogen community engagement

Date and time: Wednesday 11th March, 5:15 - 7:00pm
People involved: 2 S4TP facilitators, 6 NGN facilitators, 2 NGN witnesses, 2 observers
Panel attendance: 29
Apologies: 7

Objectives:

- Understand young people's views on climate change and energy, including net zero and whether gas still has a role in the UK's future.
- Build understanding of the East Coast Hydrogen project, including what it involves, why it is being explored, and the possible benefits and risks.
- Explore what messaging resonates with customers and makes a compelling case for the project, such as climate action, energy security, protecting jobs, or other reasons.
- Identify what information and involvement communities would expect at this early stage (FEED stage) of the project.
- Develop clear principles for how NGN should engage and consult communities, including:
    - How much information is appropriate and when.
    - How people prefer to receive information.
    - What makes consultation feel meaningful and trustworthy.

Pre-work

- **Watch** the short East Coast Hydrogen explainer from its launch in 2024: https://www.eastcoasthydrogen.co.uk/
- **Watch:** https://youtu.be/4WYpRQP_0Lo?si=xYsrbtKqL15WSmlO
- **Read**: Industry - Hydrogen UK
- **Research** a big infrastructure project local or nationally. A large infrastructure project is a big, long-term development that helps the country function; e.g., things that provide energy, transport, water or communication. For example, HS2, Hinkley Point C. Because they are so big, they can have a real impact on communities, both positive and negative. They usually:
  - Cost a lot of money.
  - Take years to plan and build.
  - Affect large areas or lots of people.
  - Need special government approval.
  - Create jobs.

Agenda

5:15	Arrival
5:20	Welcome, "You said... so we...", session framing
5:26	Rapid response Zoom polls to discover your first thoughts Group discussion
5:37	NGN expert witness presentations Q&A
5:51	Zoom whiteboard timeline activity: what do you want to know, and when do you want to know it? Group discussion
6:09	Breakout rooms: deep dive into access to information around big infrastructure projects
6:35	Feedback from the breakout rooms
6:48	Plenary:
7:00	Wrap up, feedback form and finish.

3. Attendees

Young Innovators Council

Aaliyah
Aarshiya
Akorede
Akshat
Alice
Anna
Ashford
Divya
Dylan
Ellie
Florence
Grace Elvis
Ifza
Isabelle
Jamari
Joe
Josie
Kat
Liam
Louis
Maryam
Mojisola
Mubashir
Nora
Orla
Toby
Vallerie
William
Zinedine

Solutions for the Planet

Claire Fitton	Youth Insights Programme Manager
Fran Isherwood	Youth Insights Programme Coordinator (Maternity)

Northern Gas Networks

Amy Craven	Energy Futures Communications Lead
Jane Herbert	East Coast Hydrogen Communications Manager
Emma Holman	Sustainability Reporting Lead
Jarred Knot	Project Manager – Energy Futures
Alex Lawson	Net Zero Educator
Hollie Scott	Engagement Coordinator
Kati Sexton	Customer Care Officer
Jenny Wilkinson	Stakeholder Lead

Observers

Lizzie Briggs	NGN's Independent Stakeholder Group
Brian Matthews	NGN's Independent Stakeholder Group

4. Key Discussion Points

You said... so we're...

To begin with, the YIC heard feedback from Jenny Wilkinson, Stakeholder Lead at NGN, about their discussions and rankings of what matters most to young consumers, from NGN's list of business and sustainability priorities. Three priorities came through really strongly:

- Safety.
- Creating sustainable opportunities for communities (especially through jobs and skills).
- Keeping energy bills affordable.

When looking specifically at sustainability, they YIC had emphasised:

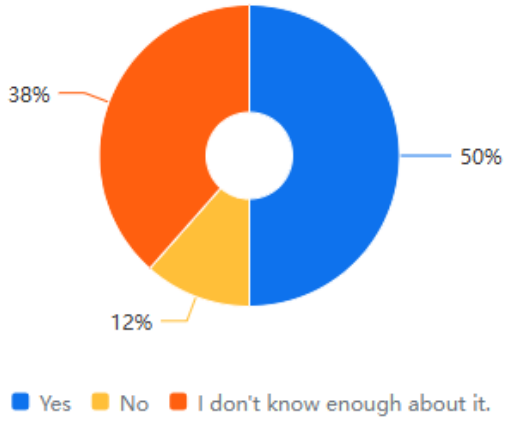
- Affordable, low-carbon energy.
- Fair access to information and education about decarbonised energy.

Jenny explained that NGN will pair the panellists' insights with the same research they're running with adult customers. This will then guide how NGN shapes the actions, campaigns, and planning for the new business year starting April 1st. [Appendix 1]

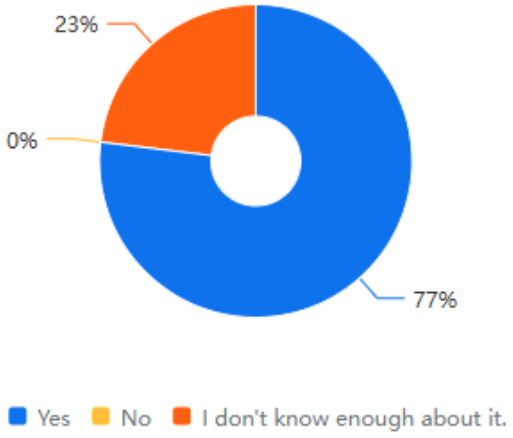
Rapid response poll: first thoughts on large infrastructure and hydrogen

In order to gather a baseline for the YIC's current level of trust around nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) and of their grasp of hydrogen for energy, a very quick poll was run of responses to the following statements:

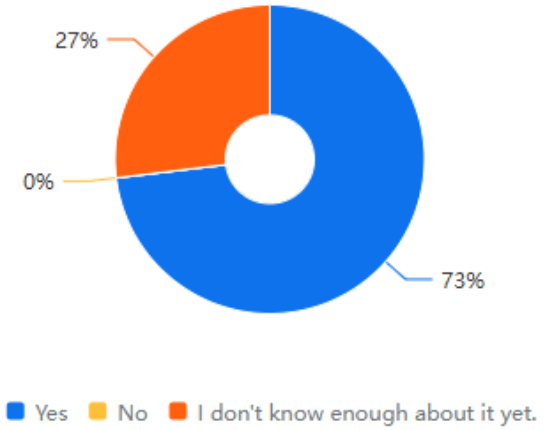
1. 👥 I trust large infrastructure projects to benefit communities.



2. 🏭 The UK should invest in hydrogen for industry.



3. Hydrogen is a realistic part of the UK's net zero pathway.



The poll results suggest that most of the YIC are positive about hydrogen: a strong majority agreed that the UK should invest in hydrogen for industry and that it could play a role in the net zero pathway. Trust in large infrastructure projects was more mixed, with a noticeable group saying they didn't know enough to judge. This fed into the next question the young people were asked, which was **"What usually makes people object to big projects locally?"**

The young people think people typically object to big local projects because they fear disruption, cost, and a lack of honesty or clarity. Many mentioned noise, traffic and general disturbance, whilst others focused on trust and transparency. Environmental and social impacts also came through strongly, as did fears about cost and uncertainty about how changes will affect them or whether the project will work as promised.

Zoom whiteboard timeline activity: what do you want to know, and when do you want to know it?

The YIC then heard from NGN's expert witnesses, Amy Craven - Energy Futures Communications Lead, and Jane Herbert - East Coast Hydrogen Communications Manager. They covered:

- What is East Coast Hydrogen?
- Who it is for (industry not homes).
- Timeline for the project; what NSIP/DCO means.
- Where are we know; what FEED means.
- What community impact might look like.

This introduction to the project was very important context for the young people to answer questions around **what** they would want to know and **at which stage** of a large infrastructure project like ECH they would want to know it. They were invited to label a basic timeline of the project, defining the information they would expect to receive from a business at:

1. Design
2. Approval
3. Build

At the design stage, I want to know...
How the technology works.
What are the largest challenges companies face when designing a hydrogen system?
How will this affect the local area?
What the companies' priorities are when designing.
All the changes that will happen.
How large the infrastructure will be and how intrusive the building will be?
Who is the priority in terms of who gets what?
Which areas and communities will be affected by the proposals?
How much area will be covered by the upgrades?
How will it affect locals.
What would be done to local communities or businesses using natural gas to convert to using hydrogen?
Will certain communities benefit from economic viability?
What's being considered and what the positive and negative impacts of those choices may be.

At the design stage, I want to know... [continued]
Which communities will be affected the quickest by the project?
What will happen to the landscape?
How long will it take to build the pipes?
Will it cause visual pollution and affect local communities?
Are they considering the wellbeing of the locals, or money the business will get?
How much of a say does the public have in the matter because if they feel their input is not valued they won't try hard enough to contribute or share their thoughts?
How will we benefit?
How do you plan on updating and telling the communities about this?
Will we be kept updated on the project and any issues it may cause the local area?
Will it clash with local commutes?
Will this increase the price of the goods being made in that industry?
How long would it take for the project to be realistically completed and what are the top priorities?
Will increasing demand for updates be supported?
Will this be any cost to the companies requiring the gas?
What materials would be used and how do they affect the environment?
How long will it take for the pipes to be made?
How much land will it cover?

At the design stage of a large infrastructure project such as East Coast Hydrogen, the panellists said they want clear, early information about how the technology works, the challenges companies face, and what the design priorities actually are. A major theme is understanding local impact, and whether construction will be "intrusive".

As has been a pattern with the Young Innovators Council over the years, fairness and transparency matter. Several asked whether companies are "considering the wellbeing of the locals, or money the business will get," and how much say the public will genuinely have. Finally, they want practical details on timelines, materials, costs, and how they will be kept updated throughout the process.

At the approval stage, I want to know…
What's the benefit over going electric?
An expected timeframe (even if approximate) for the project.
The layout of the project, the areas it would affect, and how it would affect them.
What happens if locals oppose the idea?
Will there be public consultation?
Which, if any, sustainability practices are being carried out?
Will the plan ever go back if locals really dislike it?
How long will the project go on for and how will it affect our lives?
What changes have been made to the plans and if it'll affect the community?
How long does the approval process take?
How safe is hydrogen? How do we know its long term effect?
Will taxes increase?
WIll their be any noticable differences in the local area after the construction is complete?
What makes it good enough to be approved?
Costs
What are the possible reasons communities would object the idea and what would be the arguments for realistic net zero? What other investments will be made?
Will the infrastructure provide apprenticeship opportunities?
What will the impact be on the environment?
How many poeple will be instantly affected?
How would it impact local communities and daily life?
When will it directly affect the people?
Who is paying for it?

At the approval stage, I want to know… [continued]
How will the project affect communities living near the hydrogen pipelines?
How disturbing/invasive would it be to go through with it?
Will the infrastructure provide apprenticeship opportunity?
What roles to local people play in approving?
What changes have been made, and which ones effect the public the most?
Have all the drawbacks been thoroughly checked and presented to the community?
Would people around agree or disagree to the building of pipes?
How many jobs could be created during construction and operation?
How can the community feedback?
Will tax increase or decrease?
Will hydrogen be able to provide enough power to run all industries/will certain companies still be able to use natural gas?
Are there economic benefits for local community?
Costs to build and maintain it.
How do people choose whether the plan should be approved or not?
Will it affect wildlife habitats or ecosystems?
Will communities have to move?
Will the reliability of hydrogen use be considered?
Environmental damages and sustainability?

From their responses, the panellists told us that, again, they want clarity on why the project deserves approval, including the benefits and sustainability specifics. They are highly focused on impacts on communities and the environment: how many people will be affected, whether it will affect biodiversity, if it will be invasive, and whether communities might have to move.
They also want transparency about process and control: how long approval takes, the role the local people can have, whether plans can change, and how communities can give feedback. The young people also voiced practical concerns around costs, taxes, job opportunities and safety.

At the build stage, I want to know…
What is being done to overcome the impacts it may have on communities who live nearby?
How long will it take?
Will roads, infrastructures or the environment be negatively affected by this?
How long will it take?
What disturbance may be caused to the community?
How will this disrupt local areas / roads?
How much hydrogen is the network transporting and supplying to insustries each year?
How much land area will it take up, and what are the possible ‘disruptions’ that could be made to society?
Will gas be cut off while the construction is going on?
How disrupting or annoying could the build process actually be to the communities?
How is the building phase going to disrupt the community in terms of traffic noise or a lack of gas while building is taking place?
What disruptions will occur?
If there is to be a disturbance, when and for how long will it be for?
Will noise pollution be a concern and possibly be a drawback for the community?
Would this affect the environmental or ecosystems in any way at all? Would more investigation, research and raw materials/ chemicals be needed to provide this hydrogen gas?
What materials would be used?
What is predicted timescale for building?
How long is the process?
How will this benefit the local economy?
How much has the project reduced carbon emissions compared to using natural gas?
How will this affect wildlife?

At the build stage, I want to know… [continued]
Will the building phase have a negative impact on the environment? Will land be damaged?
How will environmental damage be reduced?
The negative and positive impacts of the build.
Will it detract from local economy?
Is the build permanent or fragile?
What are the short term and long term impacts?
Would the hydrogen gas reach across just cities or to all rural areas too?
Will there be a reliable constant supply?
How safe and reliable is the hydrogen pipeline system during operation?
How long will the hydrogen pipelines be used for?
Will this affect the course of nature, e.g., natural flooding?
What damage will be done to the environment during the build (If there is any)?
What are the drawbacks of using hydrogen, and is it reliable or not?
How long will it last?

Again, it is clear the the YIC panellists are concerned with disruption to daily life: how long will the build take, what disturbance it will cause, whether roads, traffic, noise or gas supply will be affected. Environmental impacts are another major theme, with information once again required about the impacts on wildlife, landscape, and the course of nature, as well as what materials will be used.

At this stage as with the design and approval stages, the YIC want clarity on safety and reliability, such as whether the pipeline system will be safe, how long it will last, and whether hydrogen will provide a reliable supply. At the build stage they are also interested in community benefits, including economic impacts and carbon-emission reductions.

Breakout rooms

Part A: in the timeline of a large infrastructure project, panellists explored the trade-off between:

Early consultation and transparency, but with	**Later consultation** and more certainty, but with
• Limited information. • High uncertainty. • May not influence decisions yet.	• Potential surprise. • Communities maybe feeling surprised or excluded.

Early consultation	
Key reasons for preferring it	**Example of what the panellists said**
People need time to prepare.	"You'd want to know if the project's going to really affect you… even if you have to relocate."
It builds trust and avoids feeling blindsided.	"It allows communities to give input before major decisions are made… it helps people feel included and builds trust."
It gives a chance to influence things before it's too late.	"If there's something they really disagree with, they can do something about it before it's too late."
It avoids the shock of late announcements.	"People would rather know early than be shocked later."
It helps young people plan their own futures.	"It might affect my future… job opportunities would be what I'd most want to know about."
Even if details change, they still want to know.	"Even if it's changing, you want to know what's currently going on."
Trade-offs	**Example of what the panellists said**
Risk of too many updates.	"You might get desensitised… you might miss the most relevant things."
Uncertainty.	"It may give the impression something is definitely happening when it might not."

Late consultation	
Key reasons for preferring it	**Example of what the panellists said**
Early uncertainty can cause unnecessary stress.	"Early consultation may give customers stress… it may not end up happening."
People don't want vague or constantly changing information.	"If the plan is constantly changing, people might lose trust."
Later consultation feels more reliable.	"Later consultation gives more clear information because plans are more developed."
It avoids raising expectations that might be broken.	"I'd be bummed out if it didn't happen after giving input… it feels like they don't care."
It doesn't matter if they couldn't influence early plans anyway.	"I don't really think I could impact the plans that much… I'd rather have clarity."
Trade-offs	**Example of what the panellists said**
Feeling excluded.	"You'd have been kept in the dark that whole time."
No time to influence.	"You might not be able to change anything."

> **"It's a trade-off between influence and information."**

Early consultation = more influence, more fairness, more trust — but more uncertainty.

Late consultation = more clarity, more certainty — but less influence and more risk of feeling excluded.

Part B: would this matter to young people like you?

Yes, it matters because...
It affects their **future**: this was one of the strongest motivators, with jobs, apprenticeships, and long-term life choices coming up repeatedly as the thing they'd most want to know about.
It affects their **families and communities**: even those who might move away still cared because their families would remain.
It affects the **cost of living:** a number of the YIC panellists linked energy infrastructure to tax increases, bills and affordability.
It affects the **climate and sustainability:** environmental impact was a major hook, with people referencing the improvement to carbon emissions helps future generation and the help to live more sustainably."

5. Key Reflections for Northern Gas Networks

Key reflections on what the YIC want to know about ECH and when:

1. NGN should begin communication at the design stage, not after approval.
2. The young people want NGN to commit to clear, honest, and continuous communication.
3. From the very start, the YIC ask for transparency about how hydrogen works, why it's being chosen, what the challenges are, and how decisions are made.
4. The panellists want to be provided with straightforward explanations from any business: realistic timelines, regular updates, and visible "you said, we did" responses to show that public input genuinely shapes the project.
5. Across all stages, the young people asked who will be affected and what the environmental consequences are. They asked that NGN offer clear mitigation plans that demonstrate responsibility and care.
6. Fairness and community benefits were central to the YIC's questions at design, approval and build stages. They want to know who pays, who benefits, whether jobs or apprenticeships will be created, and how decisions balance company interests with community wellbeing.

Key reflections on early vs. later consultation:

1. Most panellists preferred early consultation.
2. The panellists said that early communication from NGN would helps them prepare, builds trust, and avoids the feeling of being "kept in the dark."
3. This comes with conditions. The YIC want:
    - Honesty about uncertainty.
    - Clear explanations of what might change.
    - Regular but not overwhelming updates.
    - Simple, accessible communication.
    - Visible evidence that feedback is listened to.
4. A few young people preferred later consultation, but they also wanted transparency, clarity, and reassurance that decisions weren't being made without them.

Key reflections on what this group of young people really care about in relation to ECH:

1. Young people were clear about what would make them pay attention and motivate ongoing engagement:
    - Jobs, apprenticeships, and career pathways
    - Environmental impact (especially quantified)
    - Cost and affordability (bills, taxes, long-term savings)
    - Safety (addressing hydrogen concerns directly)
    - Local impact (disruption, routes, land use, community benefits)

Key reflections on how NGN should communicate:

1. The YIC want NGN to be transparent about what is known and what is not, regardless of what stage the project is at.
2. The young people were clear that NGN should always avoid giving the impression that the project is guaranteed.
3. The YIC emphasised that technical language is a barrier, and NGN should strip out jargon, use concise explanations and simple visuals.
4. The young people want to hear from NGN in short-form video (TikTok, Instagram Reels) and through partnerships with schools, colleges and youth organisations.
5. It was suggested that NGN could utilise audience-specific communication streams because tailored information would have more impact on relevance, for groups such as:
    - Young people
    - Landowners
    - Local residents
    - Schools and colleges
    - Businesses

Key reflections on NGN's sustained engagement with stakeholders about ECH:

1. Young people want to stay informed, but not overwhelmed. NGN could provide quarterly updates as a default rhythm, and send additional updates when something significant changes.
2. Balance is key: avoid long periods of silence whilst also avoid flooding people with minor updates. The YIC want to help NGN to avoid their stakeholders becoming either "desensitised" or excluded.
3. The YIC said engagement still matters even if they can't change the project yet - but only if NGN are clear about the purpose of the consultation. It should be explained clearly what young people can influence and what they cannot, and generic consultations should be avoided.
4. The YIC suggested that young people are involved in co-designing communication materials to ensure specific purposeful questions are asked. This offers opportunities for deeper involvement.
5. The panellists acknowledged that a 10+ year project may feel distant to them now, but that they will care more as they get older. If NGN build long-term engagement that evolves as young people age, they can re-engage cohorts at key life stages (e.g., leaving school, entering work, renting/buying homes).

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: 'You said... so we're' slide from the Session.

Appendix 2: Post Session Feedback Survey on NGN Engagement. As of 26/03/2026 22 of the 29 who attended have completed the survey.

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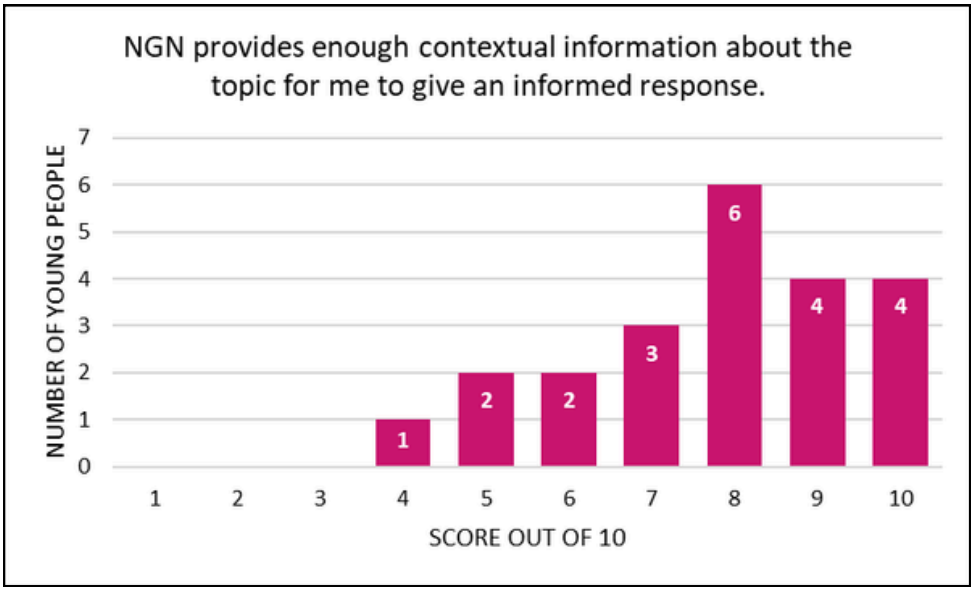

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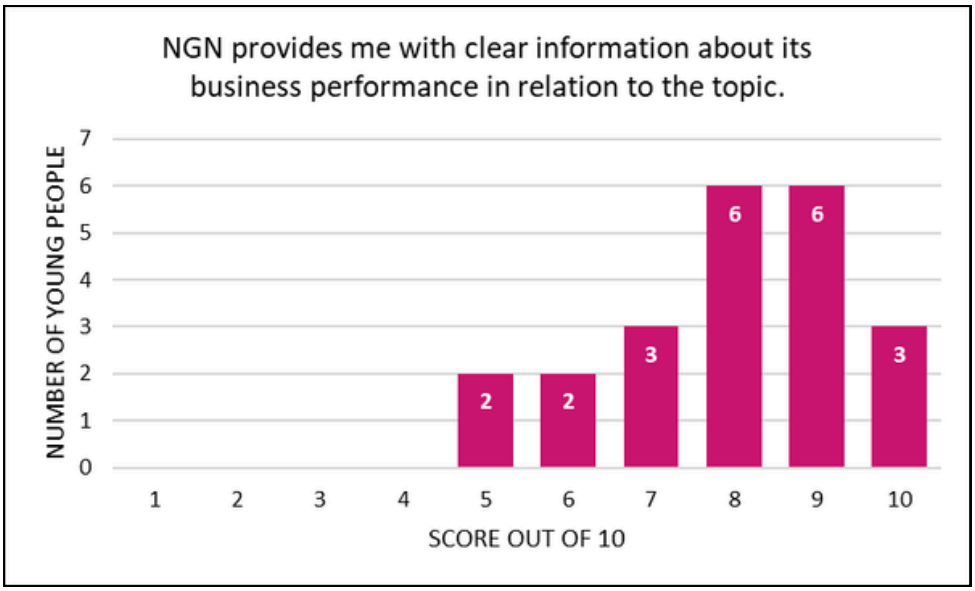

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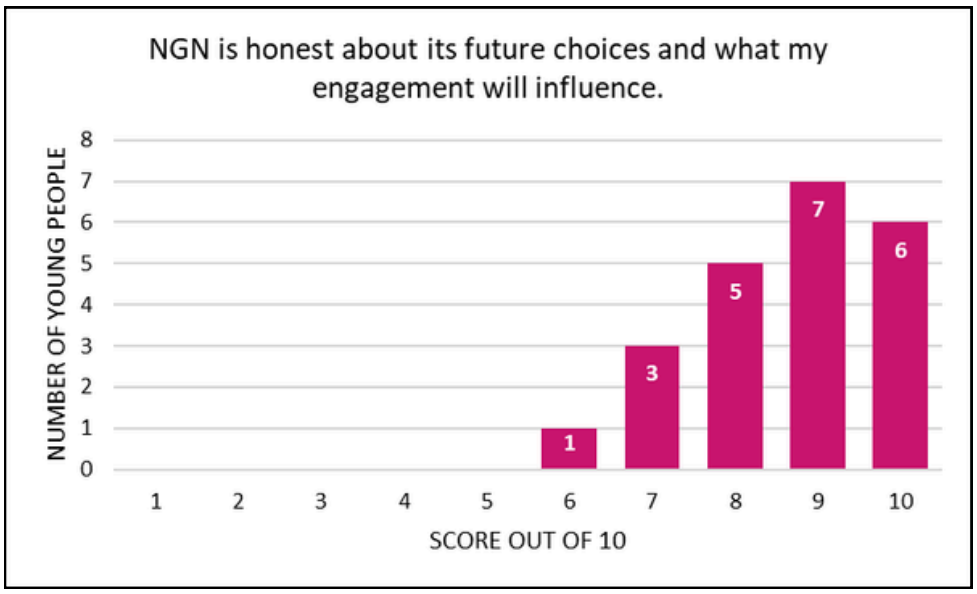

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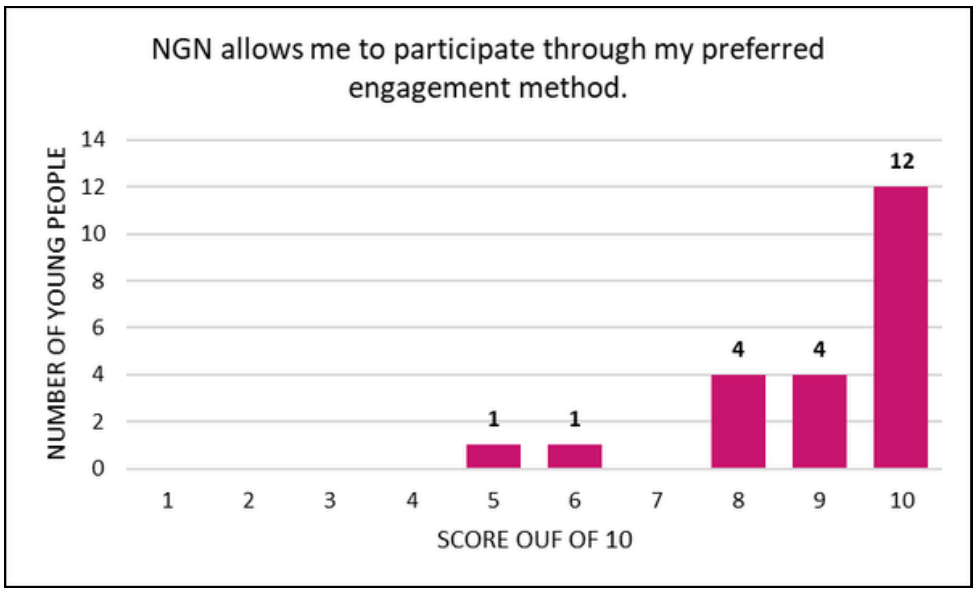

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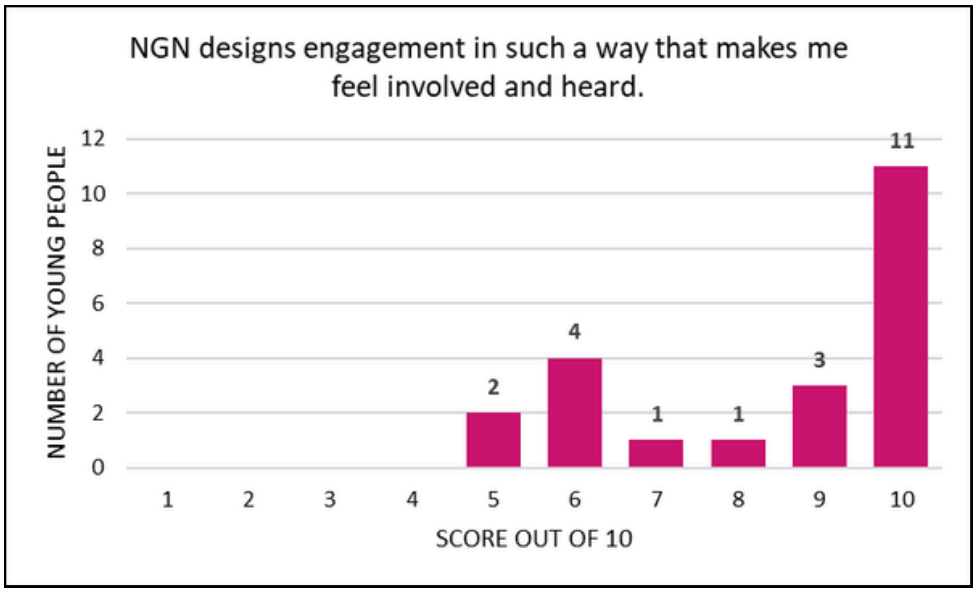

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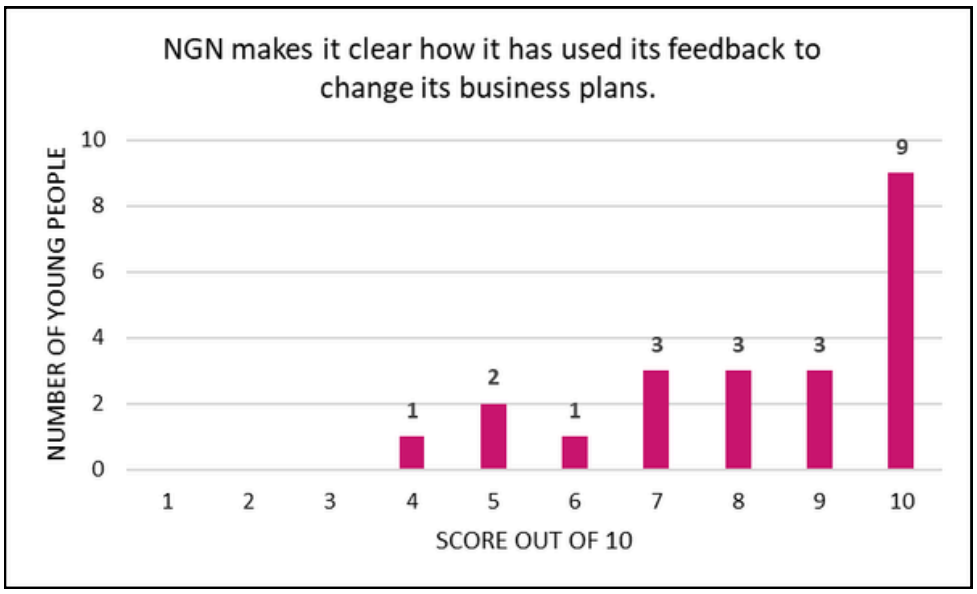

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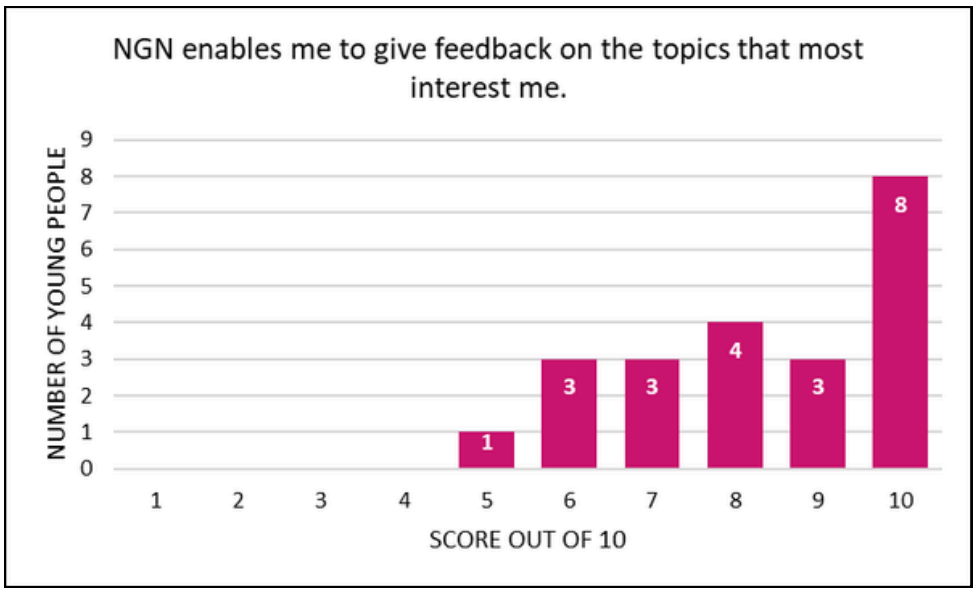

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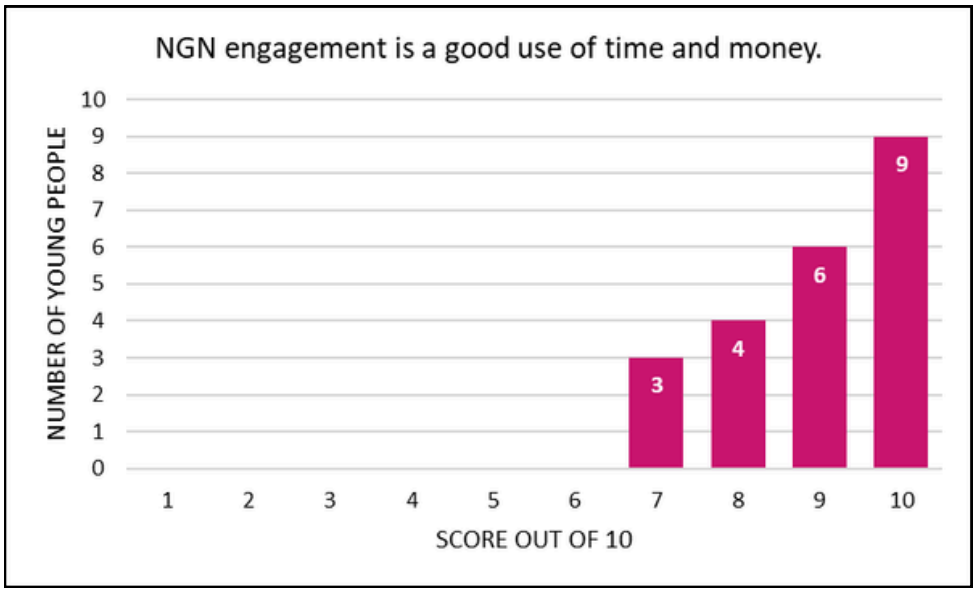

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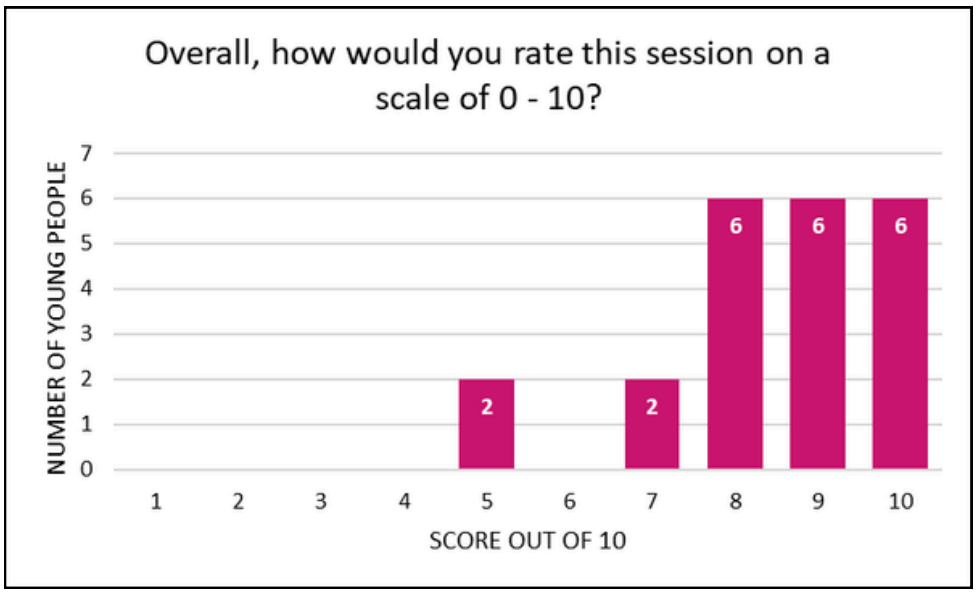

Appendix 3: Responses to the question 'Would a large infrastructure project that may create lots of new jobs encourage you to stay in the area?'

Maybe, I am not too sure
It depends on the benefits of it, if it's significantly bad and just a money grab then no.
It would depend on the type of infrastructure project, and whether the available jobs would be appealing to me.
Yes, definitely. I think this is one of the largest reasons why young people move to larger cities such as London or Manchester.
Yes because more jobs and investments could improve the local economy and opportunities which might make people want to stay in their area.
If jobs were available that would interest me - less hands-on, more office work like accountancy.
Yes as it would bring money and increased facilities to that area and general improvement.
Possibly, it also depends on its disadvantages.
Yes more appealing. Difficult to find jobs, especially up north (as opposed to e.g., London)
Nope
Depends on the timeline on the project, as locally our bus station is being rebuilt but it is very offputting to me.
No because I hate my area, not the lack of jobs.
Depends on a lot of factors but if the jobs paid well I would stay.
Although this would not convince me, I can see how many local infrastructure projects such as nuclear decommissioning and submarine building help the local communities. I would not be encouraged because these would not be the types of jobs that would interest me but I can see the benefits to the area.
It would absolutely help inform that decision, wouldn't be the only factor but would definitely be a push in the right direction.
No while the large-scale infrastructure and job opportunities are appealing, I would still like to explore and experience different areas before deciding where to settle. However, I do appreciate the investment in local opportunities, as it allows people who choose to stay to benefit and keep up with developments in the industry.
Most likely - definitely somewhere in the northern regions.
Yes but it would depend on if the jobs promoted interest me or I have the qualifications for the jobs.

Appendix 4: Responses to the question 'How would you want to hear about and be kept up-to-date on the East Coast Hydrogen project?" [13 respondents]

A community group giving out monthly updates in detail
Social media and community groups as well as schools because young people should be educated as well
social media or community groups
Social media and community groups
Emails!
I'd prefer to hear about and stay up to date on the East Coast Hydrogen project through a mix of channels. Social media would be really useful for quick updates and major announcements, especially platforms like Instagram or Facebook. It would also be helpful to get information through school or college, as that makes it easier for younger people to stay informed and ask questions. Community groups and local events are another good way to share more detailed information and allow people to engage directly. Finally, occasional updates through parents or local newsletters would help make sure information reaches households that might not use social media regularly.
Social Media
Social Media
School
Social media
Social Media, school, email
Social media
Social media

Appendix 5: Responses to the question 'Are there any ideas that you didn't get a chance to say during the session, or that have occurred to you since the session?'

Will the use of hydrogen gas increase the living cost?
When broadcasting information about hydrogen use and large projects containing hydrogen use, the information should be kept to a understandable level as the general public may not be able to digest a high level of chemistry.
What would happen to old decommissioned pipes after the changeover to hydrogen?
When the work is being done to upgrade the pipes, will companies still receive gas or will they be without it for the construction?
• How are plastic pipes more sustainable than metal pipes? • For NGN early communication to locals to be transparent, and make the information given by NGN easily understandable to the average person, and not exclusive to e.g., geographers who already have that knowledge. • Off topic, I'd love it if we could talk to our peers more.
The session included discussions, breakout groups, and returning to watch PowerPoint presentations and ask questions, which provided a good variety of activities. I particularly liked the interactive elements, such as using the whiteboard although I found this a bit overstimulating when everyone was contributing at once. As the session was longer than a typical school lesson, it became difficult to maintain focus throughout, especially during extended presentation periods. Making the sessions slightly shorter, breaking them into more manageable segments, and incorporating more playful and engaging presentation styles would help improve focus while still keeping the positive aspects of the session.

Appendix 6: Responses to the question 'What was the most interesting or thought-provoking part of the session for you?'

How we NGN is going to use hydrogen
I think the breakout rooms, it was nice to see everyone talking with each other and building off each other.
Learning about the hydrogen transition
Hearing other peoples' opinions on how information should be shared.
The short and long term consultations and their differences.
Discussing the different stages of development during the whiteboard activity
The bit about how they will communicate their ideas to people involved.
The fact that hydrogen gas is most likely to be the gas used in the future
Hearing about hydrogen in the pipelines
Breakout rooms
About how they were planning to use hydrogen fuel and how they will make and design the plan to do so
Learning that hydrogen is not as dangerous as natural gas and that it would be more affordable for people.
Discussing at what point of time in the project should the community be consulted
I was really interested in how NGN decides when and how to inform the public of their plans and decision making.
Information on what was already being done with hydrogen in example houses
How people the same age as me thought about the same thing.
How beneficial Hydrogen Projects are for local communities
The most interesting part of the session for me was learning about hydrogen and its potential as an energy source. I found it exciting to explore how alternative fuels could be used in the future, especially the idea of homes being powered by cleaner, more sustainable energy. It made me curious about how these technologies will develop and be used in everyday life.
Using the sticky notes and seeing everyones questions
The flexibility and preparation of other's ideas.
Hearing the different opinions of other people regarding if they would prefer early notice but uncertainty or late notice and finality
The breakout rooms

Appendix 7: Notes on the session materials from panellists.

1. Naturally I am in full support of whatever measures big or small we are taking to reduce our environmental impact and value this both personally and with intention of contributing my ideas to the YIC.
2. Switching to hydrogen has got multiple benefits such as its high combustibility and therefore potential to generate high amounts of heat which can be used for both manufacturing and residential roles, its cleaner overall prospects of emitting roughly 95% less carbon from its production to consumption, and its overall versatility, allowing it to be used for more purposes than initially known, such as cooling large electrical generators due to its high thermal conductivity and low density to desulfurization to produce clearer petrol and diesel.
3. With such a large project, I would imagine that it would be viewed as a long-term alternative or potential replacement and therefore should be viewed from every angle. While switching to lower carbon-emitting gas is undoubtably a benefit, other factors such as the materials used in the pipes can play a crucial role in its sustainability and viability. I would be assuming that the pipes would be made of polyethylene due to it being a more environmentally-friendly alternative to metal or concrete, however, recent studies show that PE pipes can release microplastics into water systems within roughly four years due to deterioration and can become brittle through degradation in low temperatures and alternatively can suffer from extreme heat, leading to them malforming or losing their structural strength.
4. In my opinion it is crucial that when NGN does engage/consult with certain communities, they understand the specific views, needs and wants of said community. This enables more efficient communication for both customers, as they feel cared and listened to, as well as NGN as they are provided with more constructive and practical information that they can use to put into effect. Furthermore, understanding the demographics in certain regions is massively important as this could assist NGN is gaining a greater reach of its customers through a variety of different methods, such as social media posts with an online survey/questionnaire for people under 40, while offering a postal questionnaire to residents of older age.

Ethan, NGN YIC 2026 panellist

- People usually object to large infrasturcture projects because of safety concerns, environmental impact, and disruption like noise or construction. Also, if they feel left out or don't understand the project, they're more likely to resist it.
- I'd rather hear about projects early, even if things aren't certain yet. It builds trust and makes people feel included. Waiting until later can feel like decisions are already made.
- Young people are more likely to engage with large projects if it feels relevant to them, like jobs, future impact, or energy costs. Communication should be simple and on platforms we use. It also needs to feel genuine, not like a tick-box exercise.
- I'd prefer to receive ECH updates through social media, short videos, and email.

Grace, NGN YIC 2026 panellist

What usually makes people object to big projects locally?

- Noise (from construction + traffic)
- Concerns about wildlife + environment (due to habitat destruction during construction)
- Pollution (water + air)
- Construction looks "ugly" / out of place
- Don't trust that authorities have community's best interests at heart - lack of transparency + can't see how the project benefits the community (members)
- Road closures + inconvenience

Breakout Room

	Early	Late
Pros	• Communities feel engaged + informed, even if there is little information, they will appreciate it – less opposition to project. • Can iron out any problems with community while the project is still in its early stages; before it becomes too late to change anything. • Encourages community engagement – they can see the whole project through, start to finish.	• Can be sure that information + plans being given out is definite and unlikely to be changed in the future. • Community can actually see the project in its mid-late stages, they can see what the end goal being worked towards is, instead of it being an abstract hypothetical – increased confidence in project's chances of succeeding.
Cons	• Project is still in its early stages to be sure about anything, may feel like a waste of time to give information/ plans to communities which may end up becoming obsolete/ altered in the future. • Project may still be in its infancy, community may find it hard to have faith in a project which has yet to materialise.	• Perceived lack of transparency with community – increased opposition to project in which they had little to no say. • May be too late to sort out any problems which community may have had with the project.

Would this matter to you?

- I would want to know about the project now, and I would prefer communications to be by email and online newsletters; most likely to check these and won't throw them away after reading like I would with paper letters by post.
- I would be interested to see how the project progresses, from start to finish, what the desired end product is, and how it could end up benefitting me and my community in the future; all of which by email communication + newsletters.
- If I was kept sufficiently engaged + regularly updated about the project, I would most likely be interested in such a project for the far future.
- Though I can't yet influence it, engagement is still key because it prevents community pushback and ensures that we are still interested enough in the project to give our opinions when we can actually influence it in the future.

How should NGN engage communities so that this doesn't feel like a tick-box exercise?

- Via email + online newsletters + social media, on its progress + its projected completion date.
- Host occasional Q+A sessions where people can come ask anything about the project, as well as where NGN can present the project, its vision, and its community benefits.
- Have forums where people can give their input and opinions on the project - helps gauge collective community feeling and to see if anything needs altering to avoid inconvenience + unhappiness.

Zinedine, NGN YIC 2026 panellist