

Enabling Infrastructure Investment in the North



we are
the network

Introduction

At Northern Gas Networks (NGN) we understand the challenges of dealing with large organisations when coordinating works.

We continue to engage closely with our stakeholders and improve our processes, so that working with us is straightforward and productive.

After all, we want organisations to engage with us, not just to avoid damage to our network and delays to their projects, but to keep everyone safe.

It's also an exciting time for infrastructure development in the North of England as we begin to build our business plan for the next regulatory period (known as RIIO-GD2). The period runs from 2021 to 2026 and we will submit our plan to Ofgem (the energy regulator) in the second half of 2019.

You can find out more or get involved at www.together.northerngasnetworks.co.uk

We want to ensure that our plans truly reflect what customers and stakeholders in our region need. Now, more than ever, cross-sector organisations need to work

Each day we
deliver gas to

2.7
MILLION

homes and businesses



About this report

In 2015 the UK Regulators Network (UKRN) highlighted the types of problems faced when one organisation needs to work near assets (such as cables, pipes, and fixed equipment) operated by another organisation. Right there and then, NGN made a commitment to listen, learn and act on their guidance.

In the following pages we report back on how we've performed against the promises we've made and share key case studies.

Good to know

You will find our Access Statement at the end of this report. It provides clear guidance for anyone looking to work near, cross or connect to our gas network.

Reflecting the good practice principles, our Access Statement is reviewed annually and contains the contact details, pricing information and service standards for our most common types of interactions.

Who is this report for?

You, us, everyone!

We're keen to share this report widely, to encourage early contact and regular feedback. Our examples of good practice against the five UKRN principles, for managing infrastructure interactions show you what to expect from NGN.

By taking a broad interpretation of cross-sector infrastructure interactions we continue to reflect upon our relationships with a range of key stakeholders including but not limited to:

- Biomethane producers
- Combined Authorities
- Developers and construction companies
- Domestic consumer representative bodies
- Highways authorities
- Landowners

- Local authorities
- Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- Major energy users
- Other utility companies
- Rail and road network operators
- Transport for the North and other bodies
- Utility Infrastructure Providers (UIPs)

So whether you represent one of these organisations, are a regulator or infrastructure investor we've created this report with you in mind.

About NGN

Since we started operating in 2005, we've been named the most cost-efficient of the UK's eight Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) by our regulator, Ofgem, time and time again. We've been delivering great value for money to our customers as well as a whole host of social and economic benefits to our region.

We're recognised as a dynamic, passionate, conscientious and people-focused team that safely and reliably delivers an affordable source of energy to over 2.7 million homes and businesses across the North East, northern Cumbria and much of Yorkshire.

We don't source or sell gas, but we do deliver it to homes and businesses, through a vast network of underground pipes that are constantly being invested in and upgraded. It's more complicated than it sounds and so we're always exploring cutting-edge thinking, revolutionary engineering practices and

world-class science to find new ways to provide sustainable sources of energy.

And while our customers may not see us very often, they can sleep soundly knowing that we're working around the clock to keep them connected and make sure they stay safe.

You'll find our pipes in 33 local authority areas and six Local Enterprise Partnership areas and we work with them to make sure their plans for growth don't cause disruption to our network. We're also balancing priorities with the other utility companies in the region:

Northern Powergrid,
Northumbrian Water,
Yorkshire Water,
Electricity North West,
United Utilities

These companies share the land that houses our pipes. In addition, many of our pipes cross or are near to railway lines, rivers and bridges, as well as private land.

During the last 12 months we've had 257 enquiries about moving or adapting our assets and our responses have helped 205 cross-sector organisations carry out projects safely.



Meeting your needs

We use a variety of channels to update stakeholders on our performance, so you may be familiar with some of the information in this report. However, by pulling the relevant information together here, we hope that you'll have what you need, when you need it.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the content, layout or format of this report please get in touch.

Email: stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk

Visit: www.together.northerngasnetworks.co.uk



Delivering an affordable source of energy to over 2.7 million homes and businesses across the North East, northern Cumbria and much of Yorkshire.

Our approach



We believe that by getting the basics right we can build a continued and trusted dialogue between cross-sector organisations. That's why we're working with stakeholders to ensure that their experiences of NGN consistently reflect the good practice principles for managing infrastructure interactions:

Principle 1

Recognise the stewardship role of infrastructure providers and network operators.

Principle 2

Efficiency, economy and safety.

Principle 3

Transparent processes and practice.

Principle 4

Clear, transparent and appropriate pricing.

Principle 5

Continuous learning and best practice.

You said:

'Recognise the stewardship role we play and that effective planning and delivery of new infrastructure, across all sectors, benefits everyone.'

(Principle 1)



In 2018 we have:

Continued to work with other GDNs and suppliers to support the roll out of smart meters.

More than 900,000 smart meters have been installed in our region to date.



You said:

'Act with efficiency and economy when interacting with clients'
(Principle 2)



In 2018 we have:

Surveyed utility infrastructure providers to gain feedback about our services. All GDNs have undertaken the same survey, and share areas of best practice - such as using email rather than post to make our service more efficient.

You said:

'Lessons and experience of best practice are proactively gathered and applied'

(Principle 5)



In 2018 we have:

In 2018 a number of our initiatives were featured in the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) Best Practice Hub online; which we also utilise to learn from other companies and improve our performance.

We've also evolved our approach by working collaboratively with nearby CCS sites run by other contractors and sharing best practice wherever possible.

You said:

'Follow a process that is transparent, easy to follow, appropriately resourced and commits to explicit service standards' (Principle 3)



In 2018:

Our Shippers and Suppliers told us that they value the expertise of our market services team, but they weren't always able to make contact first time. In 2018, we resolved this by bringing resource into the Market Services team to ensure there's always someone available to speak to, we also provided clarity around who to

You said:

'Fees or charges should be clearly explained, reflect reasonable and appropriate cost and risk' (Principle 4)



In 2018 we have:

Acted on feedback from our Shippers and Suppliers about giving extra consideration to the rationale and information we provide about changes that affect pricing. We have continued to work with Shippers to ensure they have a full understanding of our pricing, attending quarterly meetings and publishing relevant reports to keep them informed. We continue to maintain our 100% track record of meeting our pricing obligations to Shippers.

You said:

'Commitment to training staff to improve their stakeholder and customer engagement skills' (Principle 5)



In 2018 we have:

Continued to use stakeholder insights to inform colleague training and improve relevant cross-sector interactions. We offered Institute of Customer Services (ICS) training to all our colleagues and now have a solid foundation of 48 ICS practitioners and 4 ICS assessors within our teams.

How we measured up in 2018


Every day we help cross-sector organisations to connect to, work safely near and understand more about our network. Here, we focus on the key services we provide and detail our performance during the past year.



Making the right connection

From April 2017 – March 2018 we assisted organisations, large and small, with new connection requests; meeting and often exceeding their expectations. **We're proud of our strong performance against these regulatory requirements** (also known as Guaranteed Standards of Performance or 'GSOP'). However, we also understand the impact of falling short. That's why, since July 2017, we have voluntarily doubled the amount of compensation we will pay individuals and cross-sector organisations (up to the existing caps) should we fail to meet our targets.

NGN Team	Enquiry type / Service	Standard of service	Legal/ regulatory/ internal requirement	Target	Performance April 2017 – March 2018	Potential compensation to customer
Connections	Non-standard quotations for connections >275kWh issued	21 working days	Regulatory	99.6%	99.68%	We pay £40, followed by an additional £40 per working day thereafter. Each daily payment is made up of £20 regulatory payment and our additional £20 voluntary payment. It is capped at the quotation sum or £500 whichever is lowest.
Connections	Land enquiries response for connection >275kWh	5 working days	Regulatory	99.6%	98.26%	We pay £80, followed by an additional £80 per working day thereafter. Each daily payment is made up of £40 regulatory payment and our additional £40 voluntary payment. It is capped at £500
Connections	Commencement and completion dates provided for connections >275kWh	20 days	Regulatory	100%	99.94%	We pay £80, followed by an additional £80 per working day thereafter. Each daily payment is made up of £40 regulatory payment and our additional £40 voluntary payment. It is capped at the quotation sum or £500 whichever is lowest.
Connections	% of connection jobs substantially completed on date agreed with customer	4-8 weeks	Regulatory	95%	97.69%	From £20 to £9,000 depending upon contract value.



"I have never made contact with Northern Gas Networks and come away from an email or phone call thinking that you could have done better and this in my opinion is something to be proud of"

Lorraine Lucas – Energy Assets, talking about GT1's

Moving our assets

We've had 205 enquiries about moving or adapting our assets so far this year from cross sector organisations, 70 % of which resulted in quotations being issued to help the projects progress safely.

The standards that we adhere to are:

NGN Team	Enquiry type / Service	Standard of service	Legal/ regulatory/ internal requirement	Performance from January 2018 - Nov 2018
Diversions	Paper based form issued	24 hours	Voluntary but public	N/A – all customer requests received via online enquiry form.
Diversions	Quotation issued	45 days	Regulatory	Approx 72%

Between January 2018 to November 2018, we received 143 quotation requests from cross-sector organisations.

The table below shows the types of organisations that requests came from:

Cross-sector organisations	Quotations requested
Developer	121
Highways Agency	0
Local Authority	22
Total	143

Turn to page 14 to learn how our approach to a diversion enquiry added value to the Highways England A1 motorway upgrade project.



A tailored approach

Our 'before you dig' process is designed to be transparent and easy to follow for everyone.

Our dedicated team takes time to consider each request for gas infrastructure plans on its own merit and safety remains the overriding priority. The more complex requests are then managed by an appropriate field-based colleague.

- Complex queries relating to the presence of low and medium pressure mains are managed by our experienced local operational site managers.

- Complex queries relating to intermediate or high pressure mains are managed by our qualified pipeline technicians.

This approach helps us to build strong relationships with stakeholders. They are provided with a direct NGN contact who guides them through the end-to-end process.

NGN Team	Enquiry type / Service	Standard of service	Legal/ regulatory/ internal requirement	Cost of service of customer
Plant protection	Initial enquiry including access to NGN maps	10 working days	Voluntary but public	FREE – except in the following circumstances £25+VAT for companies who charge their customers for the service £65+VAT for Deed of Grant of Easement

Each year our Plant Protection Team receives an average of 5000 individual requests for access to our network maps, with around 75% of these being granted free of charge.

We are keen to support cross-sector infrastructure projects, so we don't normally charge these organisations for access to our maps. In the interest of efficiency and economy we are encouraging use of our online portal. Whenever a request is received, the team checks whether the organisation already has a licence to access NGN maps and if so, automatically extends it to cover the new enquirer.

However, there will remain occasions when we need to charge for the service we provide. Since December 2016, we have included the standards and pricing around accessing our network maps in our Access Statement.

A wide range of stakeholders from local authorities to developers use our online maps. This year we reached out to more than 2,500 regular users for feedback on the service and the average satisfaction rating among respondents was 8.04 out of 10.

"I really appreciate digital maps because the response is very quick and they always have what you need"

– Local authority representative, Feb 2018



A bird's eye view on safety

Pothole Partnership

We pride ourselves on making good any holes we dig in the highway during our works. However, if potholes are present before we begin, contractually, we are not able to fill them in.

We know that customers and our colleagues find this frustrating so we partnered with Cumbria County Council to trial a new approach in 2018.

We asked them to come along and repair the potholes whilst we were on site, allowing them to utilise our notices.

We were also able to invite water contractors on site to repair a damaged valve at the same time.

This pioneering approach had great results, including avoiding three separate road closures and saving local tax payers £3000.

This may seem like a 'no-brainer' but as commercial cross-sector organisations, it's taken several open and honest conversations to get this idea off the ground.

We are now working to identify other opportunities to utilise this approach.

Safety is always our number one priority so we will never just rely on other organisations contacting us about their planned works. We work with specialist company Heli Air to proactively conduct aerial surveys of our high pressure network.

We regularly hire a helicopter to undertake approximately 88 sightings per flight. Our on-board engineer is specially trained to identify potentially dangerous works and make decisions about how to respond.

The table below shows how we responded to 1195 potentially dangerous sightings last year:

NGN Team	Enquiry type / Service	Standard of service	Legal/ regulatory/ internal requirement	Estimated number between April 2017 and March 2018	Performance
Plant protection	Heli Air sighting – Direct threat	Immediate intervention	Legal requirement – voluntarily reported through UKOPA	122 (10%)	100%
Plant protection	Heli Air sighting – works within 3m of NGN assets	Site visit within 24 hours of sighting	Legal requirement – voluntarily reported through UKOPA	603 (51%)	100%
Plant protection	Heli Air sighting – works approaching 3m of NGN assets	NGN aware of, not requiring site visit. Completed by desk top study.	Legal requirement – voluntarily reported through UKOPA	470 (39%)	100%

Happy highways

Throughout 2017/18, we haven't been subject to any local authority improvement notices - a testament to the improved quality of our reinstatement work. By avoiding defects and potential future potholes we can continue to add value to Highways England's network.

NGN Team	Enquiry type / Service	Legal/ regulatory/ internal requirement	No Received YTD	No Completed YTD	No Outstanding at end of period (April 2016 – March 2017)	Charges Received in period (2016/17)
NRSWA	2 Hr 'Dangerous' Defects	Non-Statutory Code	211	211	0	0
NRSWA	4 Hr 'Dangerous' Defects	Non-Statutory Code	139	139	0	0

Our reinstatement manager continues to work closely with local highways teams to identify new ways of working together. This, along with our own internal quality audits, which we share with local planners, is helping to drive service improvements that benefit all who rely on our road infrastructure.



The right information at the right time

Our operational teams continue to speak with local authority planners and highways agencies on a daily basis, feeding their views into our short and medium term decision making processes.

Every year we publish our Long Term Development Statement (LTDS), which provides a ten year forecast of transportation system usage and likely system developments. This is available on our website for cross-sector organisations considering connecting to the gas network, entering into transport arrangements, or looking to identify and evaluate opportunities.

Take a look here to view this document: <https://www.northerngasnetworks.co.uk/document-library/>

Local authority plans are requested and managed by our distribution network Analysts who reflect these longer-term plans in our network modelling process. This helps us to establish potential future loads and identify any pipe reinforcements that may be needed in preparation for future demand.

Protecting our pipelines

We are proactive in preventing damage to our high-pressure network. At the heart of this is educating stakeholders about the 'before you dig' process and the risks of not following it correctly.

The majority of local authorities in our network have a high pressure gas pipeline running through their area. At least once every three years, our network integrity engineers visit each organisation to:

- make sure we hold up to date contact information
- confirm the location of the high pressure pipelines in their area
- advise how to contact us for help with planning enquiries
- share knowledge and best practice with planning teams and encourage them to pass information onto developers
- explain that damaging an asset could cause a major incident and ultimately endanger life
- provide a friendly face.



Between January and December 2018, our engineers held face-to-face sessions with 16 local authorities and other organisations including forestry commission (North and Yorkshire) and the National Trust.

Raising awareness of the service we provide, is key to protecting local communities-not just our pipes. In 2019, we aim to spread the message and encourage a willingness to share information with local authorities who are often the first line of protection for our

Supporting green energy growth



This year we've received **41 new enquiries** about connecting new biomethane projects to our network

Our key account managers provide a tailored service to each producer and where requested, we complete a full capacity study (for <7 bar connections) within 30 working days.

NGN Team	Enquiry type / Service	Standard of service (working days)	Legal/ regulatory/ internal requirement	Performance (April 2017 - March 2018)
Biomethane	Initial capacity Study < 7 bar (Medium and Intermediate pressure)	15	Internal/ voluntary	100%
Biomethane	Full capacity study < 7 bar (Medium and Intermediate pressure)	30	Internal/ voluntary	100%

Our specialist account managers guide producers through our five stage process to meet tight deadlines on complex projects, and help them achieve their goals. Pricing and supply assurance strategies for connecting plants to our network.

These strategies reflect our fair treatment of cross-sector organisations by applying a consistent approach, whilst taking account of individual project requirements and specific networks constraints.

In 2018/19 we did not connect any new biomethane plants, but did increase the Network Entry Agreement flow rate for one site, increasing our total biomethane capacity by 6%.

Lessons learned

From our experience of getting biomethane to grid we understand the complexities customers face for large projects. There has been huge interest in distributed power generation connections and we've worked hard this year to understand the needs of those customers.

We now provide a key account service for each project from its quotation request through to its construction.

Throughout the past year we received 1094 land enquiries, of which 148 progressed to quotation requests and we now have 5 connected sites.

Investing in everyone's future



Smart meters

we're continuing to work with the other GDNs and suppliers to better understand the roll-out process and opportunities to minimise the impact on customer; supporting the energy industry commitment to offer all homes and businesses a smart meter by 2020. Approximately 900,000 smart meters have been installed in our region to date.

HS2

High Speed 2 (HS2) is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the UK. It will deliver the highest speed train system in Europe and connect the south and north of England.

NGN will be working with HS2 to understand where our assets need to be moved, crossed or worked around during their construction. We've provided some early quotes where work is known to be going ahead.

H21 North of England (NoE)

As stewards of the gas network we want to make sure that we're future proofing the network, leading the way for infrastructure development iwhich enables a decarbonised future for energy.

Our H21 North of England (NoE) report presents a detailed engineering solution for converting the gas networks across the North of England to Hydrogen between 2028-2034.

The report has been developed in partnership with Cadent and Equinor and outlines how converting to a hydrogen network could save large amounts of CO2 emissions, leading us towards a greener, decarbonised future..

A1M Coal House Roundabout, Gateshead.

In last year's report we told you that we're supporting Highways England's motorway upgrade in the North East. We've continued to work collaboratively with Highways England to enable this project. We've made the best use of our resources and time by upgrading our equipment at the same time, meaning less disruption for our customers in the future.

Setting the service standards

We are constantly challenging ourselves to make improvements, in addition to measuring standards set through regulation and other codes of practice, we measure and benchmark our business against the best within and outside our industry to make sure we are always improving.

AA1000SES - We have been externally assuring our engagement against the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard (SES) since 2012. We use our audit recommendations to drive further improvements and we will continue to ask stakeholders what they want to know beyond the technical, regulatory requirements of Ofgem.

Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER) - In order to deliver the best service possible we achieved the 12 CEER service standards in 2015, which will apply to us from 2021. The standards include; time taken to respond to a customer request for a new grid connection, provision of information to customers on connection, activation and disconnection and customer communication channels

ROSPA safety - In August 2017, we were awarded a prestigious gold award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), the most sought-after accolade in the health and safety industry by organisations from every sector. We retained our gold status in 2018.

The non-competitive gold medal recognises how we have sustained high standards of health and safety over the past five years.

"The RoSPA Awards are the most prestigious in the world of occupational health and safety, and held in high regard around the world, as winning one demonstrates an organisation's commitment to maintaining an excellent health and safety record."

Julia Small, RoSPA's Head of Awards and Events

ISO 55001 - is a framework for asset management systems that help us to proactively manage the lifecycle of our assets, from acquisition to decommission. The system helps us manage the risks and costs associated with owning assets in a structured, efficient manner supporting continual improvement and ongoing value creation.

ISO 14001:2015 - we are assured against the updated 2015 environmental management standard; helping us to become more environmentally friendly, reduce our consumption, waste and costs. It demonstrates our commitment to 'understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties', including other cross-sector organisations.

ISO 22301 - we are assured against the international standard for business continuity. This allows us to understand and prioritise the threats to our business by providing a framework for implementing an optimised BCMS (business continuity management system). BCMS includes disaster recovery and business continuity plans to help recover critical operations as quickly as possible, enabling us to minimise business disruption and continue operating in the event of an incident.

Institute in Customer Service (ICS) -

For the past 4 years we have participated in the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) service mark scheme. This allows us to bench-mark our customer service against the best UK businesses. This year we achieved an industry-leading score of 90.4, against a utilities average of 75.1 and ICS bench-mark of 78.2. This really demonstrates that we are delivering an exceptional level of customer service not just across the utilities sector, but all sectors.

We remain among the highest ranking companies in the UK, outperforming John Lewis and Apple.





Next steps

We will continue to seek every opportunity to improve the way we work with partner organisations, in order to deliver an efficient, great value service to our shared customers.

If you'd like to share a copy of your organisation's report or provide feedback about anything contained within ours, please get in touch:



Email: stakeholder@northerngas.co.uk
Visit: northerngasnetworks.co.uk/get-involved