

## Carbon Monoxide (CO) and Environmental Impact Awareness in Cumbria Campaign

<b>Funding GDN(s)</b>	<b>Northern Gas Networks</b>
<b>For Collaborative VCMA Projects:</b>	Role of GDN(s) N/A
<b>Date of PEA submission:</b>	July 2021
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<b>Total cost (£k)</b>	*detailed separately
<b>Total VCMA funding required (£k)</b>	*detailed separately

## 1. Problem(s)

*This should outline the problem(s) which is/are being addressed by the VCMA Project*

Covid 19 and lockdown has shifted visitor patterns to the Lake District National Park and Cumbria. There has been a significant number of new users attending the park who may not be aware of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning and be respectful of the Countryside Code. There has also been an increase in people camping, using camper vans, motor homes and motorboats for the first time. It is expected these new patterns of visitor access to the Lake District will continue over the coming years. This is especially important this year due to the number of staycation holidays.

## 2. Scope and Objectives

*The scope and objectives of the VCMA Project should be clearly defined including the benefits which would directly impact customers on the participating GDNs' network(s), and where the benefits of the VCMA Projects lie.*

### 2.1 Shared Purpose

This project aims to deliver clear and effective messaging about the risks of CO poisoning when cooking in confined spaces (tents, caravans and campervans), alongside messages about respectful use of the countryside, to new and existing visitors to the Lake District and Cumbria. The project will explore the best way to do deliver these messages, conducting research with new park users and using evidence to inform and develop a suite of educational campaigns. Previous research undertaken by the Lake District Foundation (LDF), identified that there was a low level of awareness around barbecues, as a source of CO poisoning.

### 2.2 The objectives of this initiative are:

- Provide CO awareness sessions
- Research and Innovation that can increase engagement in recreational/outdoor environments

### 2.3 Scope

- Know the social groups who are using the Lake District National Park / Cumbria and their current awareness around CO
- Target groups have been identified and prioritized, and a toolkit of messages and resources developed for each
  - Two target audiences:
    - family groups from north west, (likely repeat visitors that have already been camping, but need to improve their awareness of what to do)
    - adult only groups aged 25-34 including Stag and Hen dos etc (numbers in this group increased from 8% to 15% of visitors in 2020 – CT data)

- Key mechanisms for delivery: LDNPA and CT, and camping, caravan and boat businesses.
- Review engagement
- The geographical area of Northern Cumbria

### **3. Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA**

*This should include an explanation of why the VCMA Project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria. This is a requirement*

This project qualifies under the criteria for the VCMA funding, as it will support customers who may not be aware of the dangers of CO, whilst undertaking leisure activities such as camping and caravanning. There is a general lack of knowledge around the dangers of CO in these types of activities, in particular the use of barbecues. Camping and caravan users are an at-risk group because they use things that can cause CO poisoning in enclosed spaces. Recent CO research undertaken by NGN found that increasing awareness of the dangers of CO was a priority in Cumbria and CO sessions will be delivered as part of the project outputs. This project seeks to take advantage of a unique opportunity, to provide important and potentially life-saving information to customers.

As the project has a rurality theme, it aligns with NGN'S Vulnerability Strategy and also social indicator mapping research, in that Cumbria has significant areas of rurality. As Cumbria is one of the most rural areas in the network, there will be many customers off the gas grid. As a consequence, they are likely to be using other fossil fuels, such as oil and wood burners to heat and cook, which also have the potential to cause CO poisoning.

There will be no collaboration from other GDN's nor other funded sources.

#### **3.1 Eligibility criteria**

- NGN have calculated that this project will have a positive SROI for customers
- As this project is around CO awareness and reducing the risk of harm caused by CO it aligns with the eligibility criteria. The project also supports NGN's Vulnerability Strategy by aligning with the rurality theme
- The project has defined outcomes as required (see outcomes section)
- Goes beyond NGN's licence obligations and price control funded mechanisms

### **4. Evidence of stakeholder/customer support**

*This should provide information of the customer engagement that has taken place in the development of VCMA Projects where appropriate. If there is no evidence of stakeholder engagement or customer support, this should justify why it was not appropriate to engage with stakeholders and customers.*

Within the Northern Gas Networks region, we serve 2.7 million gas-using households. The socio-economic characteristics of our region mean that we operate in many communities that are amongst the most economically deprived in the whole country. This was a key factor in our

prioritising engagement with vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups of customers, telling them about our services, about what we do and how we could improve.

Each year, we undertake analysis of all the insight we've heard in the previous year to prioritise those issues our stakeholders most want to engage on. Over the past 12-18 months, we've done this in a number of ways.

#### **4.1 Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS) Workshops 2019 – 2020**

Asking our stakeholders what's important – using our wide range of engagement mechanisms from strategic workshops to customer perceptions, we asked stakeholders to prioritise what is most important to them (including digital engagement in light of CV-19). During 2019-2020 we held multiple workshops with our stakeholders on the subject of customers in vulnerable situations. During our August 2020 workshop, which was specifically around CV-19 and its impacts, our stakeholders identified that there was an increased risk of CO poisoning due to the pandemic. This was due to a number of factors such as people being furloughed or made redundant, therefore unable to afford for appliances to be maintained, repaired or replaced. Due to financial challenges, this was not a priority for many and significantly more customers now having to choose between heating and eating. Stakeholders also said there needs to be more focus on CO awareness.

#### **4.2 Customer Engagement Group (CEG)**

This group provides an independent oversight into the actions we take to support our customers in vulnerable situations. Checking we've got it right – using a range of engagement mechanisms to assess and challenge our response to stakeholder feedback, ensuring we are responding in the right way. This has offered us robust challenges into how we deal with customers in vulnerable situations which meets the needs of our stakeholders.

#### **4.3 Social Indicator Mapping & Covid 19 Research/Vulnerability Mapping Tool (VMT)**

Academic research social indicator mapping took place in 2019 and further research around CV-19 impact was undertaken in July 2020. This was shared as part of our stakeholder engagement. A new Vulnerability Mapping Tool (VMT) has been demonstrated to stakeholders to highlight any vulnerability gaps we have on our network. The system allows you to add multiple factors of vulnerability together to create a heat map for where factors combine to create areas of highest need. All data can be mixed and matched to answer complicated questions, e.g. see where there are a high number of older people living in low energy efficient housing and in fuel poverty. This has also been updated to reflect more emerging issues. Feedback from our social indicator mapping research indicated that Cumbria and the Lake District had a high number of CO jobs attended by NGN.

In our wider stakeholder engagement programme, we have heard very strongly how safety is at the forefront of stakeholders' minds. Stakeholders see a strong correlation between safety and our social obligations and have told us that it is essential that we continue to raise awareness of CO, because doing so saves lives.

Specifically, in relation to this project, LDF has extensive networks across the region. This includes visitor economy businesses. Through this network, they have had confirmed that this campaign is welcomed. There have been a small number of tragic local incidents related to CO in recent years and the community understandably welcomes anything that can be done to prevent this happening in the future. A survey of park users was also conducted by the Lake District Foundation which highlighted issues related to lack of knowledge of the countryside code and safety amongst new users of the park. From recent research commissioned by NGN only 34% of those respondents in Cumbria, recognise that CO can kill you and 45% of respondents did not feel their awareness had increased over the past few years. 25% of the people who responded in Cumbria did not have a CO alarm in their home.

One of the biggest impacts of CV-19, from research undertaken in June 2020 was the economic impacts in terms of business closures and loss of employment and incomes. This was especially for the low paid and young people and extending to those who have been 'just about managing'. This further supports the fact that affordability is becoming a greater challenge and repairing and maintaining of appliances is not a priority, meaning CO poisoning has the potential to become an even greater risk.

#### **4.4 Vulnerability Strategy AAA Framework**

Within our vulnerability strategy we have developed, with the help of our stakeholders, the 'AAA' framework. This helps us support our customers in vulnerable situations. Awareness, Accessibility and Action. By adapting this principles-based approach into our AAA framework, we will ensure that all customers are treated fairly and consistently. The theme of rurality as part of this project aligns to NGN's Vulnerability Strategy.

### **5. Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria**

*Details of the VCMA Project outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.*

#### **5.1 Outcomes**

- Identify target groups and develop bespoke messages
- Roll out to wider audience
- LDF social media and newsletter reach – 1,000+
- LDF business community reach – 200 businesses and their audiences
- Great North Swim event on Lake Windermere Friday 11th – Sunday 13th June, LDF stall manned all day with information - 10,000 competitors and up to 20,000 spectators
- Alpkit (outdoor equipment sales including stoves and tents), social media reach 40k+
- Cumbria Tourism social media and newsletter reach
- Lake District National Park Authority social media and newsletter reach

## 5.2 Success criteria

- All vulnerable customers referred will have a greater understanding of the importance of gas safety and the dangers associated with Carbon Monoxide via the CO awareness survey (pre and post questionnaire)
- The stand at the Great North Swim will be covid safe and allow LDF to have face to face conversations with 140 + members of the public
- If the event is successful and the campaign can be delivered in a covid safe way, and is well received by the public, LDF may look to attend other events later in the year.

## 6. Project Partners and third parties involved

*Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement*

This project will be delivered by the Lake District Foundation however, business supporters and supporting organisations such as Cumbria Tourism and local authorities, may be invited to support the project.

## 7. Potential for new learning

*Details of what the GDN(s) expect to learn and how the learning will be disseminated.*

The parties will learn about the changes to visitor profiles and patterns as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This will inform future messaging and methods that can be used to raise awareness about CO poisoning and wider sustainable travel and environmental impact messages. If the project is successful there is the possibility that the lessons learned will be transferrable to other locations.

## 8. Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations

*The Funding Licensee(s) should justify the scale of the VCMA Project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this, it should provide the SROI calculation.*

NGN are making a social value assessment based on the extensive reach, assuming that 1 CO related illness is prevented in 2021/22. This project has been calculated as having a positive SROI.

### **VCMA Project start and end date**

*Detail start and end date of the VCMA Project and, where relevant, the VCMA Project that preceded this initiative.*

1st April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

**Geographic area**

*Details of where the VCMA Project will take place. If the VCMA Project is collaborative, the Funding Licensee area(s) in which the project will take place should be identified.*

This project will take place in Northern Cumbria.

**Approved by**

Eileen Brown  
Customer Experience Director