

## Green Doctor – Groundwork’s Energy Management Services (GEMS)

<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>	01 April 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*

The problem the project will solve is to tackle climate change/thermal energy-efficiency/high energy costs and energy management to net zero. Whilst supporting vulnerable customers better, as a consequence of thermal comfort in the buildings they use. The project is brand new and will be based initially in Leeds and Bradford. This project is being supported as people need to be made aware of fuel poverty, energy efficiency and thermal energy in our network. Social indicator mapping research has indicated that there are 12,835 excess winter deaths in the NGN area, of which Leeds is at 19.8%, 13% being in fuel poverty and Bradford is at 17.9%, 14% being in fuel poverty. This part of the network also has higher rates of unemployment and benefit claimants than nationally, which means deprivation and poverty are key social indicators.

### **1.1 The solution**

The Groundwork's Energy Management Services (GEMS) scheme provides an energy management service to community/charitable organisations, who are based in buildings that have poor thermal energy efficiency and high running costs. These organisations will benefit from support and advice on how to reduce their costs, increase efficiency and implement an energy management system for future sustainability. Sustainable buildings will ensure the local, vulnerable communities are better supported and will help raise awareness with them, through the energy transition.

This also enables those organisations to reduce their CO2 levels and due to the potential financial savings made, helps them to continue delivery to vulnerable people within their communities. The GEMS scheme has arisen due to requests from community organisations, local schools and churches who are struggling with energy costs, cold buildings and poor energy management systems. Groundworks have listened to their needs and had discussions with the Federation for Small Businesses, who state there is a great demand for such a service.

Some of the buildings are also attached to food banks, which addresses the issue of financial hardship. Foodbanks are a good way to engage with vulnerable customers in particular, around fuel and food poverty and raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

As GEMS is a newly developing project it is expected that clients will come from Groundworks' main delivery areas of Leeds & Bradford. They have built strong partnerships with many community/charitable organisations who would greatly benefit. With links to the local councils, it is hoped that a wider reputation and further support is gained for this scheme.

## **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 The objectives of this initiative are:

- Reduce energy costs, increase energy-efficiency and improve health and wellbeing
- Provide carbon monoxide (CO) awareness sessions
- Reduce CO emissions

## 2.32.2 Scope

- A paid for service to small, medium & micro business enterprises which would enable the project to become sustainable for future delivery and would benefit the wider community and local businesses
- Aim to support 6 community buildings, charities or social enterprises to gain an understanding of energy management
- Covers Leeds and Bradford area
- Increased awareness of carbon monoxide (CO)-
- Link into other charitable organisations such as food banks

## 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 help reduce the risk of death caused by cold weather during the winter for those impacted by fuel poverty. The buildings being supported will be more energy efficient and therefore reduce fuel costs. It will also support customers in reducing CO2 emissions, making their buildings energy efficient which will help reduce costs. At least one of the buildings (church hall) being supported, is attached to a food bank which enables information to be given out about energy efficiency, fuel poverty and carbon monoxide (CO) awareness. Financial hardship aligns to one of the themes within NGN's Vulnerability Strategy.

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

### 3.1 Eligibility criteria

- This project will have a positive SROI
- This project will support NGN's Vulnerability Strategy by aligning with the financial hardship themes
- Has defined outcomes as required
- Will raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide
- 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 – 2021

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 February 2020 annual strategic workshop, stakeholders discussed future energy and identified it as an emerging issue, including the energy transition to net zero. Part of the feedback from the workshop was to connect interested stakeholders to gauge types of research required for the energy transition. Stakeholders felt there was an opportunity to engage with SME's and other organisations, who are able to influence customers, especially those living in vulnerable situations. Further routes to educating around the energy transition and impacts were discussed such as accessing schools, different age groups and community groups. Groundworks therefore gathered feedback from schools, churches and community organisations in relation to their needs and the fact that they are struggling with energy costs. This project therefore aligns with the request to make buildings energy efficient and future ready, as well as saving money in bills, which can be reinvested back into the community, to support those most in need.

Stakeholders attending both the fuel poverty and CV-19 workshops, also provided feedback on the impact of the pandemic. In particular, in relation to the use of food and fuel banks. At least one of the buildings being supported is linked to a foodbank, so the aim is for that to be a route in to supporting the most vulnerable in these communities.

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

[This group provides](#) ~~Provide~~ an independent oversight into the actions we take to support [CIVS](#). ~~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 [CIVS customers in vulnerable situations](#) which meets the needs of our stakeholders.

### 4.3 Social Indicator Mapping, Covid 19 Research and Vulnerability Mapping Tool (VMT)

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. This included fuel poverty data. The VMT 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. This has also been updated to reflect more emerging issues.

Through the social indicator mapping, it was highlighted that both Leeds and Bradford have cultural differences as one of their top two priorities, as well as areas of deprivation and fuel poverty. Many cultural groups meet in community buildings and church halls as 'Places of Welcome' and it is therefore very important that the buildings they use are energy efficient and fit for purpose for the local community. One of the most marked impacts of the CV-19 research undertaken by NGN, was around mental health and wellbeing, which are unevenly skewed towards the most deprived areas and are impacting on those who already struggle or are at higher risk. Any of the buildings attached to a food bank, will play a major role in ensuring their communities have somewhere safe and warm to meet, which will aid mental health and wellbeing.

CO research has also identified that there are key areas to be addressed in the Leeds and Bradford areas. This project will address CO awareness in both localities. More importantly, as there are cultural differences around cooking and heating, it is imperative that CO safety messages are relayed to the communities using the buildings and associated food banks.

#### Leeds

- Target increasing awareness of the dangers of CO - only 35% recognise that CO can kill you, 41% of respondents do not feel their awareness has increased over the past few years and 7% of respondents did not know what might cause CO to build up in their home
- Increase understanding of what CO actually is – only 20% were able to identify it as gas which is invisible, colourless, odourless, not detectable and 19% stated a gas which is dangerous, deadly, poisonous, toxic.
- Encourage people to get a CO alarm - 24% of the people who responded in Leeds did not have a CO alarm in their home and 6% had a disc which changes colour (no longer recommended).
- Encourage people to test their alarms – 29% of respondents test their alarm annually and 17% did not know how often they test their alarm.

#### Bradford

- Target increasing awareness of the dangers of CO - only 32% recognise that CO can kill you, 20% of respondents rate their awareness of CO as 5 or lower. 34% of respondents in Bradford do not feel their awareness has increased over the years.

- Increase understanding of what CO actually is - only 22% were able to identify it as gas which is invisible, colourless, odourless, not detectable and only 21% identified it as a gas which is dangerous, deadly, poisonous, toxic.
- Encourage people to get a CO alarm - 33% of the people who responded in Bradford did not have a CO alarm in their home and 6 % had a disc which changes colour (no longer recommended).
- Encourage people to test their alarms – 29% of respondents test their alarm annually

#### 4.4 Vulnerability Strategy AAA Framework

Within our **V**vulnerability **S**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 financial hardship in this project and saving costs on energy, aligns to NGN's **vulnerability**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

- Aim to support 6 community buildings, charities or social enterprises to gain an understanding of energy management within their organisation
- Develop individual action plans based on the assessors report to help them reduce consumption and costs.
- Reduce CO2 emissions
- In assisting local organisations they also indirectly benefit the wider community through steps taken towards net-zero and by being more financially secure as a result of the savings

#### 5.2 Success criteria

- All **v**vulnerable customers referred will have a greater understanding of the importance of gas safety and the dangers associated with **c**Carbon **m**Monoxide via the CO awareness survey
- Success is measured by the cost savings
- Incorporation of an energy management system with ongoing monitoring
- Healthier environments

### 6. Project Partners and third parties involved

### *Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement*

The project partners involved are from local community groups to housing associations, Councils & Public Health. Partners with organisations in large programmes in Leeds and Bradford.

#### **7. Potential for new learning**

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

Learning about the impact of poor-quality buildings on climate change and how this impacts locally, regionally, nationally and globally is part of the project. Learning about energy management, monitoring and sustainable practices is again of great benefit on many levels. New information is given by a detailed report with action plans for the near, medium and longer-terms, depending on funds available to implement the recommended actions.

The learning involved as part of the process will be disseminated to other people & partners, who may take similar steps to energy management and eventually net-zero, as well as CPO awareness.

Further scope for this project could include offering this as a paid for service to small, medium and micro business enterprises, which would enable us to become sustainable for future delivery and would benefit the wider community & local businesses.

#### **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.*

Estimated financial savings to the 6 charities, plus any grants for energy and thermal efficiency improvements secured for these buildings, has been used to calculate the SROI.

This project has a positive SROI return.

#### **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.*

Leeds and Bradford

#### **Approved by**

Eileen Brown  
Customer Experience Director