

## Lake District Foundation - 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>	March 2024
<b>Project contact name:</b>	Laura Ratcliffe
<b>Project contact number/email:</b>	<a href="mailto:LRatcliffe@northerngas.co.uk">LRatcliffe@northerngas.co.uk</a>
<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*

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 The objectives of this initiative are:**

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

### **2.2 Scope**

- Know the social groups who are using the Lake District National Park / Cumbria and their current awareness around CO
- Target groups (two or three) have been identified and prioritized, and a toolkit of messages and resources developed for each.
- 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 BBQ's. 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. 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.

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
- Has defined outcomes as required (see outcome 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

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. Since 2019 we've held regular workshops with our stakeholders, on the subject of Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS). This ensures that we are well informed to address the needs of customers across our network and through collaborative projects.

Stakeholder engagement throughout 2022, told us that fuel poverty and the choice between heating and eating is becoming more prevalent. The energy and cost of living crises have further compounded this issue. This project provides a solution to helping those customers who are financially struggling and need extra help to address energy affordability. The project fully aligns with the need to help vulnerable customers in fuel poverty.

Recent social indicator mapping research carried out in June 2022, indicated that Bradford, Hull, Scarborough, South Tyneside, and Sunderland were the top five places, to emerge as having the greatest concentration of vulnerabilities within NGN's network. This was based on a combination of the following vulnerability factors:

- Fuel poverty
- Benefit claims
- No qualifications
- Long term health problem / disability

Our most recent stakeholder engagement during 2023 has informed us that financial hardship is still a key area of focus, alongside the health impacts associated with, or exacerbated by, living in cold and damp homes. Stakeholders also told us that increasing capacity for support within services would be key to addressing the immediate and longer-term impacts of fuel poverty and energy affordability. This project addresses this need and ensures additional capacity to support households who may be at risk, through a well-established and trusted advice service.

Each year we use our annual Customer Perceptions Research to understand the priorities of our customers. Amongst a set of general tracker questions i.e., same questions that are asked year on year, the evidence in the most recent research (March 2023), indicated that keeping bills as low as possible ranked more highly, than providing a safe and reliable supply of gas. This is a clear indication, as to how concerned customers are about the cost of energy and the subsequent impact this will have on other bills. Customers were also asked to prioritise the list of vulnerabilities listed below:

- Mental wellbeing
- Rurality
- Temporary vulnerability
- Physical challenges
- Financial Hardship

This was the order of priority from the customers surveyed:

- Financial Hardship
- Physical challenges
- Mental wellbeing
- Rurality
- Temporary vulnerability

Financial hardship continued to be the dimension of vulnerability that most customers prioritised, with more customers in the most recent survey selecting this as their top priority. Physical challenges were second, closely followed by Mental well-being third. Rurality and Temporary vulnerability were ranked fourth and fifth.

Very recent (Autumn 2023) Bespoke Vulnerability Stakeholder Mapping research identified categories of stakeholders that are hard to reach, this included:

- People living with a disability
- Senior citizens with long term conditions
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Mental health

Health conditions which are prevalent in the NGN region are:

- Cancer and chronic kidney disease

- Musculoskeletal conditions
- Respiratory
- Mental health

Through the research carried out, the findings show that the 5 original NGN vulnerability categories have now evolved to 10 categories. These are:

1. Physical challenges, inclusive of communication issues, physical space
2. Mental wellbeing
3. Financial hardship
4. Temporary vulnerability – including post hospital recovery and pregnancy / maternity
5. Socio Demographic
6. Household composition
7. Rural Vulnerability
8. Accessibility Including language
9. Medical Dependant on Energy
10. Cultural

#### **4.2 The Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG)**

This group provides an independent oversight into the actions we take to support our customers in vulnerable situations (CIVS). 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, which meets the needs of our stakeholders. The introduction of a dedicated role to support VCMA projects has been welcomed by the ISG.

#### **4.3 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 themes of rural and financial vulnerability within the project, align 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
- 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
- 50 CO awareness surveys

## 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
- 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.*

Any learning will be shared with stakeholders, including GDN's, DNO's and water companies

## 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.*

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.*

1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

### **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