

Power for life

A Western Power Distribution publication

Spring 2014



Welcome to the fifth edition of **Power for Life**, a publication designed to give the 7.8 million people across the Midlands, South West England and Wales who depend upon Western Power Distribution for electricity an opportunity to learn more about our business.

Put simply, our role is to ensure the power network of poles and pylons, cables, wires and substations – the infrastructure that we all rely upon to live our lives to the full – delivers electricity to our homes and businesses around-the-clock.

This publication highlights the scope and scale of our operational responsibilities, looks at some of our achievements during the last year, and explains our spending plans for the future. It illustrates our investment in people and equipment, and shows how world-class standards of customer service coupled with technical excellence and innovation have shaped our business – making it one of the most efficient service providers of all the UK's electricity distribution companies.

But equally importantly, this publication is designed to encourage your input and feedback, and I'm delighted to say that many of you have communicated with us in the last year – helping us to understand the issues that are important to you and to shape our future investment plans for electricity distribution.

To find out more about our work please visit our website at www.westernpower.co.uk or if you would like to get in touch directly you can call us on 0800 121 4909.

You can also email us at info@westernpower.co.uk write to us c/o Corporate Communications, Avonbank, Feeder Road, Bristol BS2 0TB or contact us on Twitter @wpduk.

Who do I call if there's a power cut?

If you need to speak with us in an emergency, perhaps because you are experiencing a loss of power supply, you can contact us on the following numbers:

Landline Users

East Midlands 0800 056 8090	South Wales 0800 052 0400
West Midlands 0800 328 1111	South West 0800 365 900

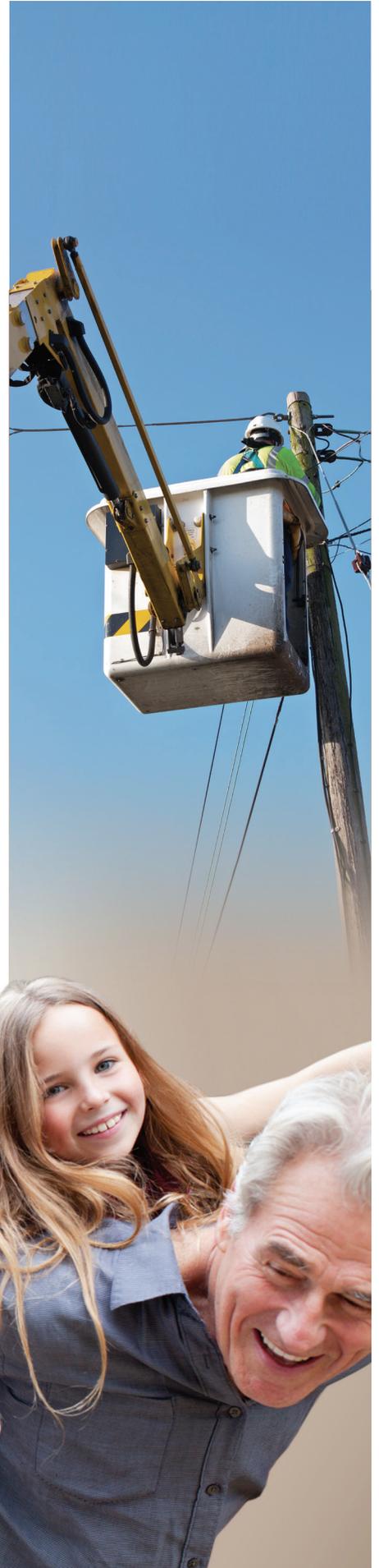
Mobile Users *

East Midlands 0330 123 5009	South Wales 0330 123 5002
West Midlands 0330 123 5008	South West 0330 123 5001

* Calls to 0330 numbers cost no more than a local rate number from a landline or mobile.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Robert Symons
Chief Executive, Western Power Distribution



Who we are, what we do

For many people the distinction between electricity supply and electricity distribution businesses is often blurred, which creates a degree of confusion.

Supply companies sell electricity, read meters and send out bills. Distribution companies own and look after the infrastructure like the wires, poles, transformers and substations. They do not sell electricity but charge supply companies for delivering it.

Distribution companies' prices are set periodically by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem). When Ofgem does this it takes into account our need to replace old infrastructure and our efficiency, and will only allow prices to rise to the extent that they believe the money we get will be spent efficiently.

There are many challenges. We have to provide value for money as well as having as small an impact as possible on the environment. We must also provide a safe and secure power supply to the homes and businesses we serve, and Ofgem sets demanding targets to ensure that this is done.

World-class customer service

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do because distributing power to homes and businesses impacts on all our lives. We are guided by the simple philosophy of treating people the way we would wish to be treated – ensuring, as far as possible, that they receive a consistently high level of service.

Around the clock, our own state-of-the-art customer contact centres provide a focal point where well-trained and motivated staff can depend upon the latest communications technology.

Our industry is highly regulated and it demands that rigorous performance targets be met – and not least in customer service. But, like all other areas of activity, we seek to exceed those standards by establishing additional skills and measures that

are innovative, enhancing the way we serve people.

For instance:

- Our Priority Service Register contains the details of our most vulnerable customers who rely on electricity for medical reasons. We inform them in advance of any planned interruption either by telephone or letter. We also write to anyone that registers to confirm their inclusion on the register and provide a direct telephone number to use during a power cut;
- We work with the British Red Cross and the Royal Voluntary Service to provide assistance during longer power cuts, including providing hot meals or drinks for customers in need.

For more information about how to register for a priority service please call us on:

0845 724 0240 if you live in the Midlands

01208 892217 for South Wales and South West.

7.8 million
the number of customers

Over 6,000
the people who work for us

220,000 kilometres
the length of overhead line
and underground cable for
which we are responsible

120
the new apprentices
taken on in the last year

Almost £7 billion
what we'll spend on our
network between 2015
and 2023

Almost 89%
the percentage on average of
power supply losses restored
within the first hour

Over 99%
the customer calls answered
within 20 seconds. Under
two seconds is the average
speed of answer

A year of achievement

We promised in our Power for Life customer communications last year that we would provide an update of our performance and achievements. Here's a brief glimpse of how we've done during the last twelve months.

In customer service:

- Answered over 99% of inbound calls within 20 seconds – with an average speed of answer of under two seconds. This is quite an achievement given that it involved answering almost one million calls;
- Restored power to 88.6% of customers, on average, within the first hour of supplies being disrupted;
- Achieved an average customer satisfaction rating of 8.7 out of 10 – the top performance of all UK distribution companies;
- Resolved 82.5% of complaints within a day of being received and 98.3% within 31 days;
- Recognised as the industry leader for engaging with our stakeholders – as part of Ofgem's regulatory reward initiative – by an independent panel of experts.
- Retained the Government's Customer Service Excellence Standard – which replaced Charter Mark (an accolade we have held continuously since 1992). The new standard is much tougher to meet, examining over 100 aspects of our customer service.

In customer communication:

- Talked in detail to over 4,000 customers – the majority of whom had previous contact with us – to improve awareness, assess satisfaction levels across a range of different services and to establish any areas needing improvement;
- Held quarterly customer panels attended by our Chief Executive as well as eight separate stakeholder workshops with those interested in a range of industry-

specific issues – including social obligations and the investment priorities of future customers;

- Organised connection surgeries to provide customers with face-to-face advice and guidance about new generation connections to our network;
- Established additional training for staff to equip them to deal with the growing number of specialist enquiries – especially in relation to green power technology – and we redesigned our website to provide more detailed information and guidance.

In environmental care and innovation:

- We consulted with environmental groups and bodies to help us identify and prioritise iconic sites where overhead power cables could be placed underground. Schemes have been completed in Somerset, Bath, Lincolnshire and Derbyshire and others are set to take place across our region in the coming months;
- We are trialling new technologies and approaches to running the networks of the future, so that we can continue to provide a secure and value for money power supply as the country moves to a low carbon economy;
- A number of our operational sites have won an internationally-recognised environmental award, while all of our new and refurbished buildings continue to be constructed to the highest environmental standards
- We're also helping to reduce our own carbon footprint by installing low energy-use lighting and biomass heating systems, solar photovoltaic (PV) technology and wind turbines at our depots and offices.



Investing in the future

Every few years Ofgem carries out a price control review to establish how much money distribution companies like ours are entitled to, and what we have to deliver for that money. Around 16% of a typical household bill – approximately £100 a year – currently comes to us to distribute your power.

In the latest review we are the only UK electricity distribution business to have had our business plan for 2015 – 2023 recommended for fast tracking by the regulator. This promises settlement of the plan a year ahead of schedule, providing business stability and a clear direction for staff. It is also recognition by Ofgem of our proven track record of frontier performance and of delivering on our promises.

During this eight year period we will invest around £7 billion on the electricity network, while reducing the amount our customers pay by an average of 11.6% or around £11.30 at 2012/13 prices.

This investment is needed to maintain and upgrade the network so that it meets increased demands from customers and new generation, and to protect it against the impact of climate change and security risks. We also have a responsibility to minimise our impact on the environment in relation to greenhouse gases.

Of course, investment in equipment means nothing without a highly skilled and motivated workforce – which is why our commitment to recruiting and training the right calibre of people also continues at pace.

With 120 apprentices having joined our training scheme in the last year, and a similar number set to join in the year ahead, we are well placed to meet customer expectation and the regulatory demands placed upon us.



Having your say

Customer workshops

We believe regular communication with stakeholders is vital, which is why we always give customers the opportunity to have their say on our plans for the future.

In recent years we have been consulting on our plans for 2015-2023, and have spoken to over 4,200 people from a wide range of areas including domestic customers, businesses, local authorities, parish councils and vulnerable customer groups – and we've listened. Indeed, feedback from stakeholders has led us to:

- Increase the amount of tree trimming to make the electricity network more resilient to severe weather;
- Accelerate our flood protection programme at major substations;
- Agree to reduce the number of power cuts experienced by 13%;
- Agree to improve the time it takes to provide a new connection by 10% by 2015;
- Introduce social media and power cut information online to give customers more choice for accessing information.

Guaranteed standards

We work hard to provide customers with the very best service possible but if we fall short the guaranteed standards set by Ofgem provide a level of compensation to customers who have not received these minimum service levels.

Following feedback from our stakeholders in 2013, we committed to voluntarily double the payments we make to customers if we fail these standards. For example:

Weather conditions	Timescale for restoring supplies	Payment set by Ofgem	WPD's payments
Normal weather	18 hours	£54 (domestic) £108 (business)	£108 (domestic) £216 (business)
	24 hours (incidents affecting 5,000 customers or more)	£54 (domestic) £108 (business)	£108 (domestic) £216 (business)

To find out more or to view a full list of Guaranteed Standards please visit www.westernpower.co.uk and follow the appropriate links.

If you would like to register an interest in taking part in our stakeholder consultation or if you have any questions regarding the work we do, please call us on **0800 121 4909**, email us at info@westernpower.co.uk or write to us c/o **Corporate Communications, Avonbank, Feeder Road, Bristol. BS2 0TB.**

You'll also find more information on our website at www.westernpower.co.uk under Our Stakeholders



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