

## IMP530 VoLL Discussion Guide

<b>ECP Meeting 1</b>	<b>April 2016</b>	<b>Objective- To understand how customers define the reliability of their electricity supply and measure the impact of a power cut on their household/business.</b>
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### GROUP STRUCTURE (1½ HOURS):

AREA OF DISCUSSION	TIME ALLOCATION
(1) Introduction / Warm Up	5 minutes
(2) Introduction to Electricity North West (Q&A/Video)	10 minutes
(3) Setting the scene: The last power cut occasion	10 minutes
(4) Expectations of electricity supply reliability	20 minutes
(5) Understanding the real cost of power cuts to customers (Leaflet)	10 minutes
(6) What happens when power cuts occur? (Video/ FAQ)	15 minutes
(7) Financial and social impact of power cuts	20 minutes
(8) Wrap up	

### 1 Moderator Introduction (2 – 3 minutes):

- Introduce yourself
- Explain that the research is being conducted on behalf of Electricity North West
- Explain purpose of discussion (*reliability of their electricity supply and the impact of power cuts*).
- Confidentiality is guaranteed, no right / wrong answers, interested in everybody's opinions, in as much detail as possible
- Explain moderator's role and set out 'rules' (speak loudly / clearly / not all together)
- Explain audio and video recording, one-way mirror and presence of observers
- Re-confirm the repeat nature of the ECP meetings- attendees will be expected to take part in at least one more group on date <<insert>>
- Any questions?

### Warm-up

#### **EACH RESPONDENT WILL BE ASKED TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES TO THE GROUP IN TERMS OF:**

- Domestic: first name, who lives in their household and the last occasion they experienced a power cut.
- Commercial: first name, type of company and individual role and responsibilities within organisation.
  - Experience of power cuts specific to their organisation (discounting their domestic experience of power cuts).

### 2 Introduction to Electricity North West (Q&A/Video – 10 -15 minutes)

**Moderator Info:** This document/video contains:

- The structure of the UK electricity industry
- The role of Electricity North West versus that of a supplier.

**ENSURE RESPONDENTS HAVE A COPY OF Q&A AND PLAY VIDEO:** "Electricity North West: Who we are and what we do" <https://youtu.be/zCBmgMRFEGU>  
*3 minutes 57 seconds*

## ASK THE GROUP

- Overall impressions and thoughts
  - Probe on:
    - Understanding and clarity of the subject matter
      - Clarity on the difference between Electricity North West vs. suppliers and National Grid
      - Clarity as to what Electricity North West does (*does the panel understand it is Electricity North West that should be contacted in the event of a power cut?*)
      - Clarity on electricity bill charges (*DNO vs. supplier*)
      - Anything **confusing** / or that they didn't understand?

**MODERATOR:** acknowledge the importance of supplier bills and electricity charges; however, ask the group to **put this topic to one side for the remainder of the group.**

**PAUSE / BREAK – ENSURE ALL RESPONDENTS ARE COMFORTABLE WITH THE STRUCTURE OF THE ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY AND ROLE OF ELECTRICITY NORTH WEST BEFORE MOVING ON.**

## 3 Setting the scene: The last power cut occasion

- Thinking about the last power cut you experienced...
  - Was it the first time you had experienced a power cut?
  - How did you first come to realise that the power was off ? (*e.g. observed appliances turning off, returned home to find intruder alarms ringing out, having to re-set electronic clocks etc, family member notified you.*)
  - What was your first thought when the power went off?
    - Did you feel in any way vulnerable? Did you know what to do next?
  - Had you ever previously considered the possibility of a power cut and prepared for this eventuality (ie know where to find a torch?)
  - Did you speak to anyone, for instance your neighbour or a family member?
  - Did you report the power cut and did you know exactly who to turn to?
    - Which organisation, if any, did you contact? Electricity North West?
  - How long did the power cut last?

## 4 Expectations of electricity supply reliability

N.B. Dictionary definition of reliability: *consistently good in quality or performance; able to be trusted.*

Ask the group to contemplate what **reliability** means in the context of their electricity supply

### LIST DEFINITIONS ON A FLIP CHART

- **PROBE:** Frequency of power cuts
  - Probe as to **expectations**; at what frequency of interruption do they still consider their supply to be reliable? Are there **different levels** of reliability; if so how would the group define them? (*If necessary prompt* is 1 power cut per year ok? How about 3? Or 5?)
  - At these different levels/bands of reliability, how many power cuts would customers experience in a given time period?
  - Would expectations be different if you moved from a rural location to city (and vice versa, *tailor according to group*)
- **PROBE:** Duration of power cuts
  - Probe as to **expectations**; if a power cut occurs, what duration is acceptable for the power to be off? Are there **different levels** of acceptability; if so how would the group define them? (*If necessary prompt* is 1 hour acceptable? How about 3? Or 12?)
  - At these different levels/bands of reliability, how long would power cuts last when they occur?
- Establish perception regarding **changes** in the reliability of their electricity supply over the last 10 years/ couple of years
  - Has reliability improved, stayed the same or deteriorated?
    - What, if anything, has changed and why do you think this might be? (*If necessary prompt on weather/frequency of storms, change in personal circumstances, societal changes such as population numbers*)
- Overall is it the duration or the frequency of interruptions that's more of an annoyance for customers?
- What should be the priority; having less frequent power cuts or more support when they happen?
- **READ SHOWCARD** "Our commitment to you"
  - Check understanding of the need for planned interruptions and emotion towards them; a nuisance, a necessary evil, a positive/proactive activity?
  - Check tolerance towards them (is tolerance different to unplanned power cuts, if so why?)
  - Expectations regarding the frequency and duration of planned interruptions
  - Expectations regarding the timing of planned interruptions (season, day of week, time of day)

## 5 Understanding the real cost of power cuts to customers (leaflet)

### STIMULUS: LEAFLET

**ENSURE RESPONDENTS HAVE A COPY OF AND HAVE READ LEAFLET**

*REFER TO PAGE 3 AND 4: Understanding the real cost of power cuts to our customers*

*REFER TO PAGE 3:*

- Reactions to this information?
  - **PROBE:** 99.99% reliable – understanding of this statistic and credibility?
  - Had they ever thought about how power cuts can affect different customers in many different ways?
  - How important is the time of day or the season in which it occurs?
    - When do customers **need** their supply the most?
    - How long could they reasonably cope without their supply

- Does this vary by the time of day or the season?
- Had they ever thought about customers becoming increasingly reliant on electricity in the future as we reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, start to drive more electric vehicles and use new technologies for heating our homes?

*REFER TO PAGE 4: The problem - How the cost of power cuts is appraised by network operators*

- Reactions to this information?
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*REFER TO PAGE 4: What is Electricity North West doing?*

- Reactions to this information?
- - **PROBE:** Reaction to the existing formula used and assumption that customers are impacted by power cuts equally i.e. one customer's power cut is valued the same as another?
  - To what extent are customers impacted by power cuts differently?

## CHECK UNDERSTANDING BEFORE PROCEEDING

### **6 What happens when power cuts occur? (Video/ FAQ – Further information on power cuts)**

**REFER TO FAQ: SUMMARISE BRIEFLY THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS**

- Can we prevent power cuts?
- How do we respond to faults?

**PLAY VIDEO:** "What happens when I have a power cut" <https://youtu.be/Zx2FojeXrA8>  
*2 minutes 38 seconds*

#### **ASK THE GROUP**

- Overall impressions and thoughts
  - Probe on:
    - Understanding that power cuts cannot be eliminated altogether and their causes
    - In terms of planning power cuts which parts of the network need investment; do they perceive the network to be more/less reliable in specific areas; e.g. city, densely urban, sub-urban, rural?
- How do domestic customers and businesses **prepare for power cuts**? Is there a need to prepare?
- What level of information/support should **Electricity North provide** in order to help customers prepare?

#### **SPLIT THE GROUP INTO PAIRS AND ASK THEM TO BRAINSTORM:**

What support should be provided to customers during and/or after a power cut?

Should this differ depending on the type of customer?

*(May include, but should not be limited to: communication, generators, compensation, welfare, refreshments)*

Please think about what the support is, who will benefit from it and when it should be delivered?

For instance:

Who	What	Why	When
Elderly customers	Home visits; providing welfare packs and hot drinks	Vulnerability; higher dependency and impact	Within 4 hours of losing supply

**REFER TO SHOWCARD:** What customer support can we provide during a power cut?

- Overall impressions and thoughts
  - Probe on:
    - Priority Services Register
    - Home visits
    - Providing welfare packs (e.g. blankets, torches, cordless phones)
    - Catering vans/ refreshments
    - Generators or making a temporary connection
    - Providing regular updates via telephone and social media platforms

## 7 Financial and social impact of power cuts

**MODERATOR READ OUT:** Power cuts can be extremely disruptive and can affect different customers in many different ways. Loss of electricity supply is always inconvenient and can be costly for both businesses and domestic customers. They can also be distressing, particularly for elderly and vulnerable customers, who may require additional support during a power cut.

**REFER TO SHOWCARD: DEFINITION OF VULNERABILITY**

Moderator to brainstorm the likely **financial** and **social impacts** of power cuts on customers.

- It may help to initially think about any '**opportunity costs**' i.e. the things customers can no longer do that they value when the supply is no longer available.

Moderator to spend more time on this section with SMEs who are likely to think in terms of the financial cost of lost productivity in their business (*how do they quantify this?*).

**MODERATOR READ OUT:** Now I would like you to consider the extent to which power cuts have a different impact depending on who they are and the circumstances they find themselves in.

**MODERATOR HAND OUT SHOWCARD AND REVIEW EACH COLUMN IN ISOLATION:**

- Which **customers** on the list, if any, do you feel are more likely to be (financially & socially) impacted by power cuts relative to other customers? Why?

- During which **season**, if any, do you feel customers are more likely to be (financially & socially) impacted by power cuts relative to other seasons? Why?
- During which **time of day**, if any, do you feel customers are more likely to be (financially & socially) impacted by power cuts relative to other times? Why?
- In terms of power cut **duration** where is the tipping point at which the impact on customers is likely to be unacceptable? Is there a difference in service expectations (information, support etc.) for a power cut up to 6 hours, 6-12 hours or more than 12 hours?
- To what extent do **quality of information** and **availability of support** assist in alleviating the financial and social costs of power cuts?
- Is there a difference in financial and social impact for unplanned power cuts vs planned power cuts where notice has been provided

**MODERATOR NOW CONSIDER ALL COLUMNS IN COMBINATION:**

- Which combination of factors is likely to cause the greatest financial/ social cost? Why?

Customer	Season	Time of day	Duration of power cut	Frequency	Quality of information	Availability of support
Domestic households	Spring	Early morning – 6am-9am	1-3 hours	1 per year	Ease of communication	Welfare packs
Commercial organisations	Summer	Daytime – 9am -5pm	3-6 hours	2-3 per year	Availability of regular updates	Home visitors
Organisations providing care/support to other customers (e.g. hospitals, care homes)	Autumn	Evening 5-10pm	6-12 hours	4-5 per year		Hot drinks
Customers experiencing a form of vulnerability	Winter	Nighttime 10pm-6am	12+ hours	5-10 per year		
Customers with no gas supply and/or above average electricity usage				10+ per year		
Customers living in remote rural locations						
Customers living in city/						

densely urban areas						
Customers living in flood plains						
Customers with low carbon technologies such as electric vehicles, solar panels						

## **ASK THE GROUP**

### **8. Summary (5 minutes)**

- Any questions from attending colleagues?
- Reminder of date and time of next ECP
- Thank respondents & depart