

# **NIA ENWL018 Project Avatar**

## **NIA Progress Report**

**31 July 2017**



## VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Author	Status	Comments
V0.1	22 June 2017	T Kennelly		

## REVIEW

Name	Role	Date
L Eyquem	Innovation Programme Assistant	10 July 2017
G Bryson	Innovation Engineer	10 July 2017
P Turner	Innovation Manager	16 July 2017

## APPROVAL

Name	Role	Date
Steve Cox	Engineering & Technical Director	20 July 2017

## **CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	<b>PROJECT BASICS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>SCOPE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>SUCCESS CRITERIA</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL PROJECT AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND SUCCESS CRITERIA</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>REQUIRED MODIFICATIONS TO THE PLANNED APPROACH DURING THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>LESSONS LEARNED FOR FUTURE PROJECTS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>THE OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>PLANNED IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>OTHER COMMENTS</b>	<b>7</b>

# 1 PROJECT BASICS

Project title	Project Avatar
Project reference	NIA_ENWL018
Funding licensee(s)	Electricity North West Limited
Project start date	October 2016
Project duration	3 Years 2 months
Nominated project contact(s)	Kate Quigley (kate.quigley@enwl.co.uk)

## 2 SCOPE

### **Engagement with Electricity North West customers, GB suppliers with learning applicable to all licensed operators**

**Experts:** consultation with a range of specialist service organisations and manufacturers of innovative technologies and relevant trade associations.

**Customer engagement:** research across the full range of Electricity North West customers: domestic and commercial customers with specific quotas on sub-segments including, but not limited to, urban, rural, the young (18-24 years) and customers who have made previous contact with their distribution network operator (DNO).

**Employee engagement:** frontline Electricity North West customer service teams.

## 3 OBJECTIVES

Delivering customer interactions in a technologically advanced seamless system manner will only impact on the costs and quality of a system operator's operations if the customer responds positively to that interaction.

- To broaden the level of understanding concerning customer service needs and future expectations
- To have a robust measure of anticipated future attitudes, behaviours and needs by customer segment
- To integrate customer research with existing service provisions and innovative solutions to optimise a customer service approach, enabling a strategy for DNOs to meet the future needs and expectations of its customer base
- To facilitate the creation of bespoke customer service solutions targeted at specific customer groups to meet their unique medium- and long-term future needs
- A blueprint for implementing bespoke customer service solutions incorporating a link to network control systems and data.

## 4 SUCCESS CRITERIA

The project success criteria are:

- An understanding of current and future customer service needs and how unmet needs might be addressed
- Identification of a range of innovative solutions that best meet customers' increased servicing expectations
- Reactions to mass customer contact capabilities and identification of the optimal strategy in terms of automation and interactivity
- An appreciation of the variations in acceptability and applicability of innovative technologies and solutions across key customer segments and groups
- A customer service blueprint, which incorporates data from existing network control systems, to best meet existing and future needs of specific customer groups and leverage higher levels of customer satisfaction
- A demonstration of how innovative technologies and solutions can assist DNOs to better plan their customer investment strategy.

## 5 PERFORMANCE COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL PROJECT AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND SUCCESS CRITERIA

### 5.1 Phase 1: Current trends and expert thinking

#### *Desk research and literature review*

A comprehensive desktop/literature review has been completed to gain contextual understanding of the trajectory of the future of customer service from a range of different industry sectors.

#### *Discussions with leading manufacturers*

Discussions were held with Schneider Electric (SE) and DXC Technology (formerly Hewlett Packard Enterprise) to understand potential new and future innovations in customer services.

#### *Methodology statement*

A methodology statement, which outlines the proposed project approach, has been developed and published.

#### *Peer review of methodology*

A copy of the Avatar project methodology has been submitted to Ariel Bergmann, lecturer of energy economics at the University of Dundee for peer review.

#### *Employee engagement workshops*

A series of workshops, facilitated by SE and DXC, were held with colleagues, closest to the current issues and needs of customers, to advise the project from 'bottom up'. The workshops comprised four distinct colleague groups representing relevant customer touchpoints and were designed to reflect an appropriate balance of age, seniority, expertise and experience from across the business. These colleague groups were as follows:

- Customer contact centre senior and team managers
- Operational/field based managers and engineers
- Connections services colleagues – middle and senior management
- Millennials – keen and enthusiastic younger colleagues from across the business

The workshops successfully met the following research objectives:

- To broaden our understanding of current and likely future customer needs and how unmet needs and expectations might be addressed.

#### *Customer engagement plan and data privacy statement*

Customer engagement plan (CEP) and data privacy statement (DPS) documents have been drafted and will be submitted to Ofgem in July for approval (in accordance with sections 4.6 to 4.10 of the Electricity Network Innovation Allowance Governance Document) before commencing any engagement with relevant customers.

#### *Co-creation workshop*

A co-creation (Envision) workshop was held with SE and DXC to disseminate findings from the colleague engagement workshops and develop common themes into conceptual solutions. It was also an opportunity to showcase new techniques which hybridize commercial considerations with customers' service expectations, applicability and acceptability. The workshop was successful in helping to identify bespoke innovative solutions which best meet customers' increasing servicing expectations.

#### *Development of prototype*

The development of an early prototype(s)/conceptual solution/s for customer evaluation in Phase 2 is currently ongoing.

The documents produced in Phase 1 are published on our webpage at [www.enwl.co.uk/avatar](http://www.enwl.co.uk/avatar).

## **5.2 Phase 2: Exploratory research with customers**

Phase 2 of the research comprises focus groups and depth interviews with a cross-section of customers to explore current and future customer servicing needs and reactions to specific customer service concepts and techniques.

#### *Engaged customer panels*

The first in a series of engaged customer panels will be arranged when CEP/DPS approval has been granted and the scope of this activity will be documented in the next reporting period.

## **6 REQUIRED MODIFICATIONS TO THE PLANNED APPROACH DURING THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT**

### **6.1 Phase 1: Current trends and expert thinking**

It was originally planned to undertake exploratory research with customers to evaluate and quantify their customer service requirements in the early phase of the project, before testing new innovative solutions using delivery technologies developed later of the project.

However, it was felt that greater insight and more in-depth responses would be achieved if a prototype could be shared with customers earlier in the project. On advice from SE and DXC who have significant experience in this field of research, the early prototype(s) development was brought forward using feedback from the colleague engagement workshops. The rationale for this revised approach was on the basis that these colleagues are experts in their respective fields, they engage with customers on a regular basis and their breadth of knowledge and understanding of customer challenges means they were best placed to advise the project.

As a consequence of this modification, the prototype(s) will be tested on customers earlier in the project. This will allow greater scope for re-evaluation and further iterative refinement of the prototype(s), based on customer feedback, throughout the life of the project.

## **7 LESSONS LEARNED FOR FUTURE PROJECTS**

### **7.1 Phase 1: Current trends and expert thinking**

#### *Discussions with leading manufacturers*

Consultation with specialist organisations was extremely valuable and this expert thinking has helped to develop and shape the concepts and techniques which will be explored with customers in future phases of the project.

#### *Colleague engagement workshops*

This phase of research represented the first time that Electricity North West had facilitated colleague engagement workshops, specifically to elicit insight from colleagues across the wider business, during any previous innovation projects. Engaging with colleagues proved to be extremely effective and the learning elicited from their breadth of knowledge and their wealth of experience highlighted common themes. This helped inform the development and refinement of ideas and shape the conceptual solutions that will be taken forward, based on real customer experience.

## **8 THE OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT**

Not applicable.

## **9 PLANNED IMPLEMENTATION**

Not applicable.

## **10 OTHER COMMENTS**

Not applicable.