Northern Powergrid

BEET first wave survey

Report: October 2024

Introduction

An overview of the project background, objectives and methodology.

Objectives

The survey forms one part of a multi-method approach to understanding how communities in the Boston Spa Energy Efficiency Trial (BEET) feel and think about the trial. Insights will help to feed in future planning of communications and engagement for BEET and other innovation projects.

Specifically, the survey will help us to:

- Develop an understanding of residents' and businesses' awareness and perceptions of BEET

- Learn how those in the trial area have heard about BEET and what they understand the key messages to be

- Understand the opinions and any concerns of those in the trial area.

It is important to note that this survey is wave 1; results will help us to benchmark awareness, perceptions, and understanding. Wave 2 will take place at the end of the trial period.

Analysis

- Please note, as this was both online and in-person, and to encourage completion, the survey was designed to be streamlined. Therefore, only screening questions were mandatory. As a result, base sizes will vary between questions.

- To allow commercial respondents to be reported on, an aggregated group 'Business' has been created. This combines '*No - I don't live in the area but I own a business in the area*' and '*No - I don't live in the area but I work in the area*' together.
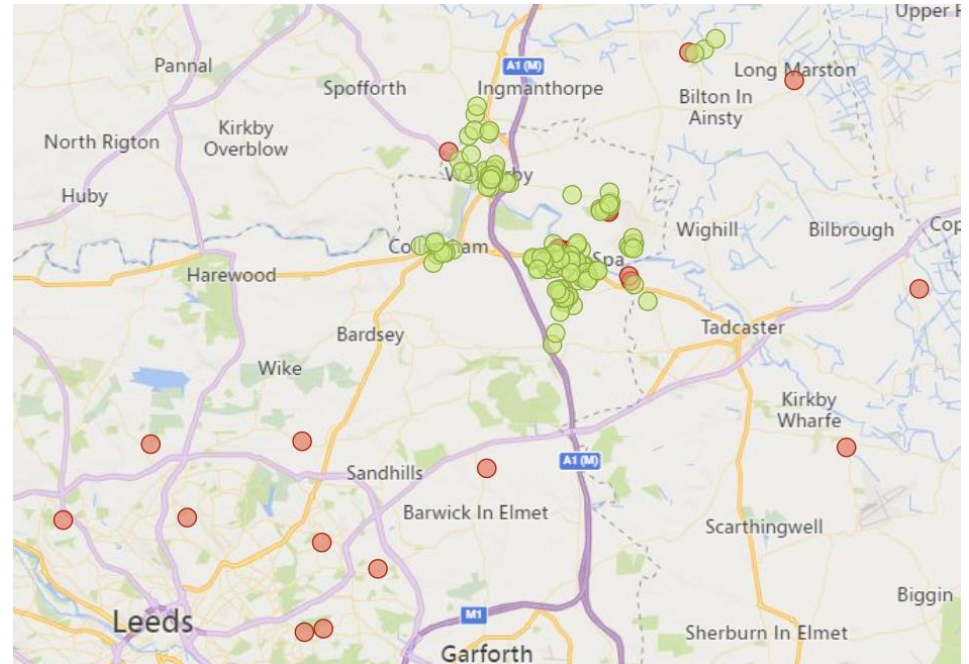
Respondent profile

Respondent profile

Do they live in the area based upon postcode? (Base 315)

84%

16%

Yes (266)

No (49)
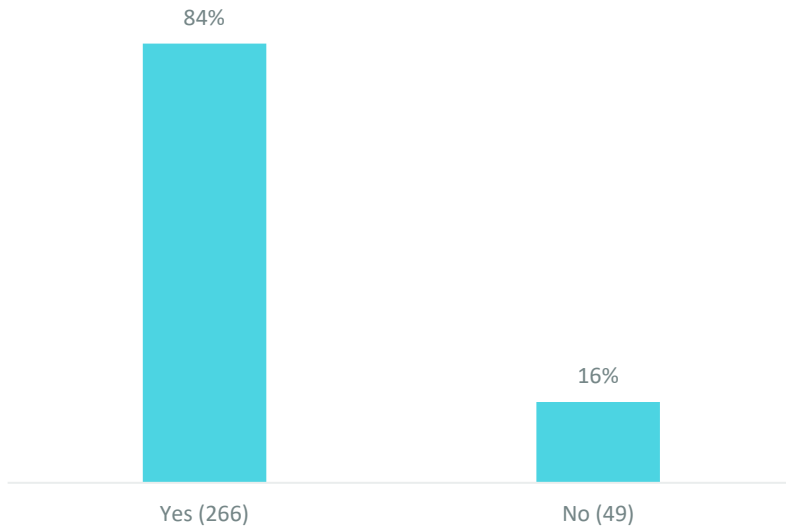
Overall, the majority of those completing the survey were residents within the BEET trial area (84%).

Though 16% of respondent postcodes were outside the trial area, most lived within 15-20 miles. This makes sense as business owners, workers, and landlords make up a high proportion of respondents in this group.

Respondent profile

Do you currently live in any of the areas within the yellow border on the map? (Base 315)

Bar chart:
- Yes (262): 83%
- No - I don't live in the area but I work in the area (27): 8%
- No - I don't live in the area but I own a business in the area (14): 4%
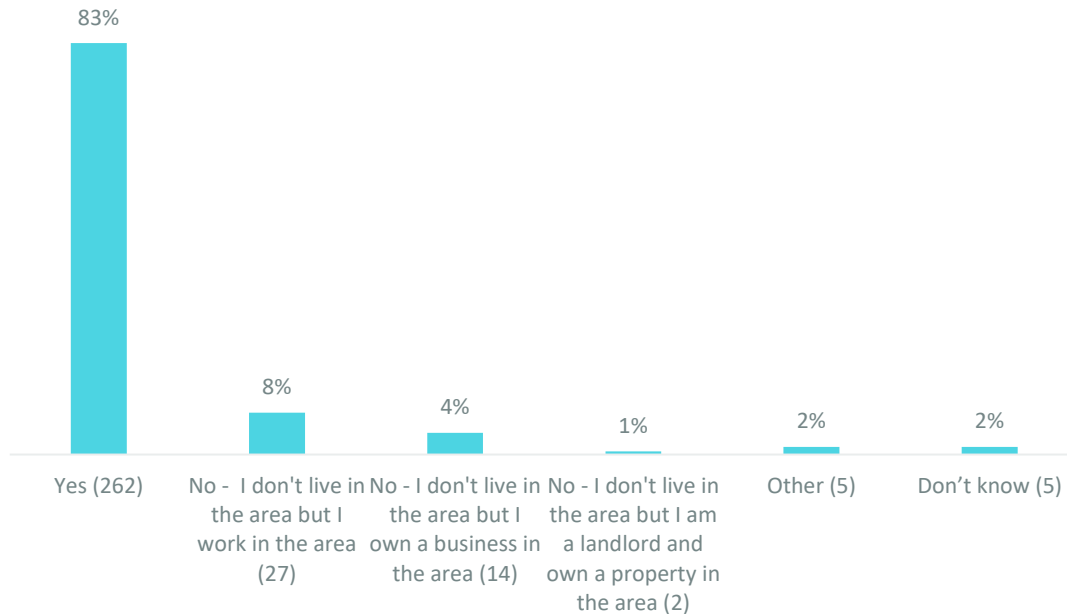- No - I don't live in the area but I am a landlord and own a property in the area (2): 1%
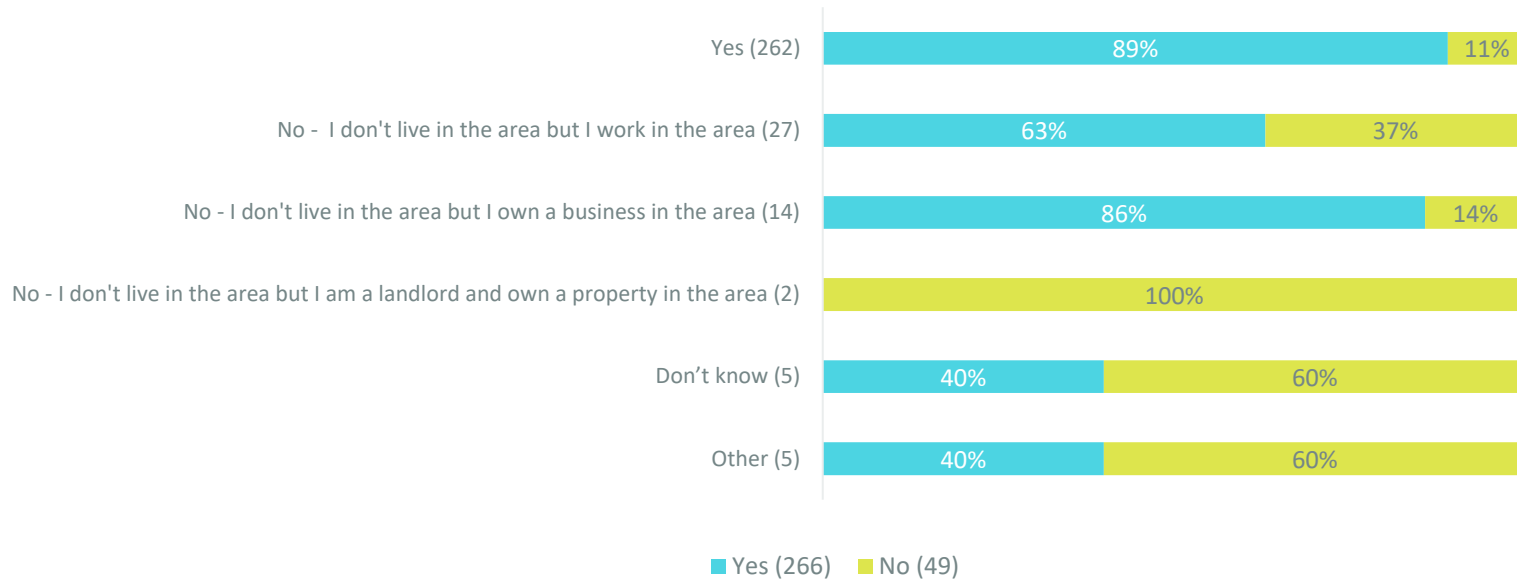- Other (5): 2%
- Don't know (5): 2%

The majority of those who completed the survey were residents in the BEET trial area (83%).

An additional 15% of those surveyed didn't live in the area but either worked, owned a business or is a landlord/owner of property in the area.

Respondent profile

Of those who said they currently live within the yellow border on the map, how many held a valid postcode?
(Base 315)

Category	Yes	No
Yes (262)	89%	11%
No - I don't live in the area but I work in the area (27)	63%	37%
No - I don't live in the area but I own a business in the area (14)	86%	14%
No - I don't live in the area but I am a landlord and own a property in the area (2)		100%
Don't know (5)	40%	60%
Other (5)	40%	60%

■ Yes (266)   ■ No (49)

Overall, the majority of those stating they lived within the yellow area* held a valid postcode within the trial area (89%).
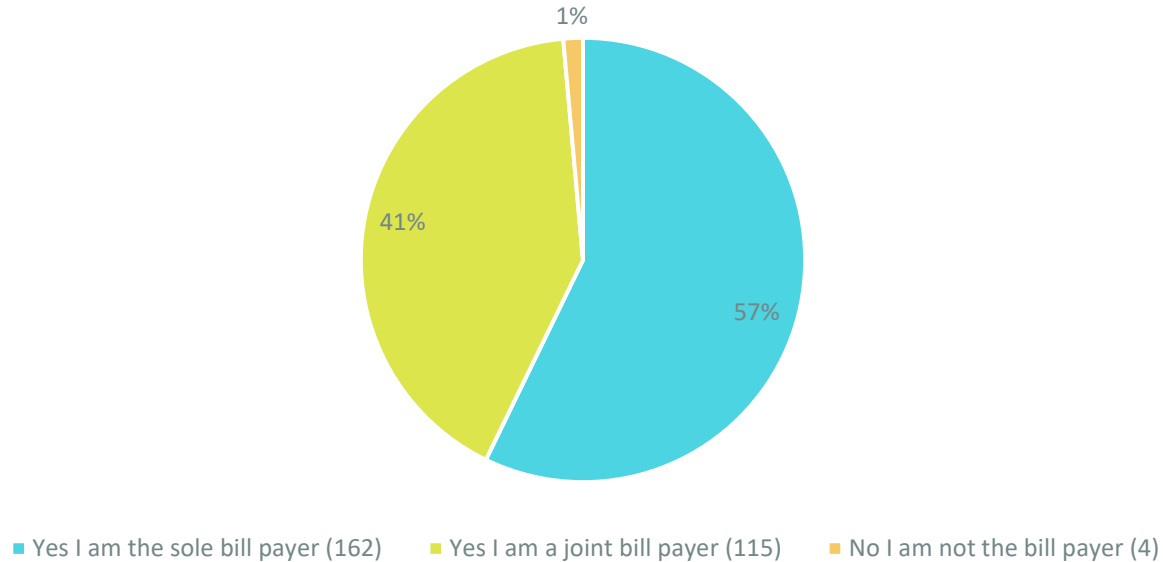
For those selecting not living in the area but working in it, 63% of respondents did in fact live within the trial area.

*Image of yellow bordered map is shown at Slide 7

Respondent profile

Are you responsible for paying the electricity bill at the property? (Base 278)

1%

41%

57%

■ Yes I am the sole bill payer (162)   ■ Yes I am a joint bill payer (115)   ■ No I am not the bill payer (4)
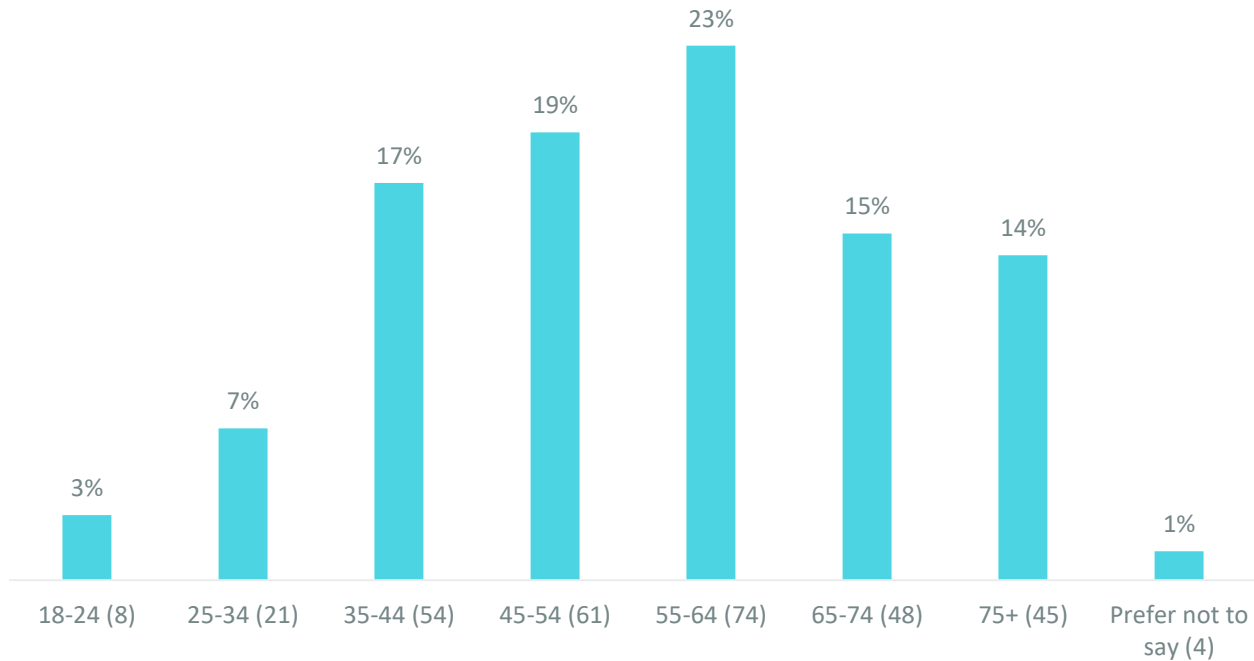
The majority of those surveyed (57%) were 'Sole bill payers'. A further 41% stated that they were 'Joint bill payers'.

Of those surveyed, there was only a small number which were not the 'bill payer' (1%).

Respondent profile

Which of the following age categories applies to you? (Base 315)

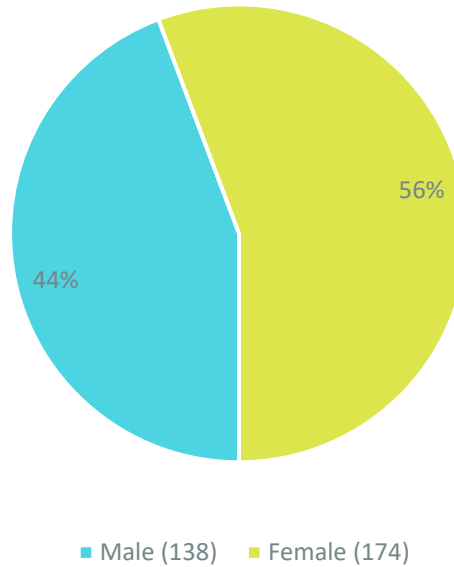| Age group	Percentage
18-24 (8)	3%
25-34 (21)	7%
35-44 (54)	17%
45-54 (61)	19%
55-64 (74)	23%
65-74 (48)	15%
75+ (45)	14%
Prefer not to say (4)	1%

Of all age groups, those aged 55-64 years accounted for the largest surveyed group (23%).

Respondent profile

Please tell us how you prefer to identify your gender (Base 312)

56%

44%

■ Male (138) ■ Female (174)

There was close to an equal split between Male and Female. Females made up the majority of those surveyed (56%).

Key findings

Awareness of Northern Powergrid

Awareness of Northern Powergrid

Before starting this survey, had you heard about Northern Powergrid? (Base 312)

Yes: 85%

How do you feel about Northern Powergrid?* (Base 315)

Mean score: 3.11

Residents (262)
Mean: 3.12

Business (41)
Mean: 3.05

Before starting the survey, most respondents (85%) had heard of Northern Powergrid.

When looking at how respondents felt about Northern Powergrid, a mean score of 3.11 was obtained. This means respondents were indifferent to NPg.

Between 'Business' and 'Resident' there was only a minor difference in mean scores (0.07) signifying no differing feelings towards NPg between both groups.

Please note, a scale of 1-5 was used for this question, where 1 is 'Very negative' and 5 is 'Very positive'

BEET perceptions, awareness and priorities

71% of respondents hadn't heard about BEET

Before starting this survey, had you heard about the Boston Spa Energy Efficiency Trial (BEET)? (Base 312)

2%

27%

71%

■ Yes (83) ■ No (222) ■ Don't know (7)
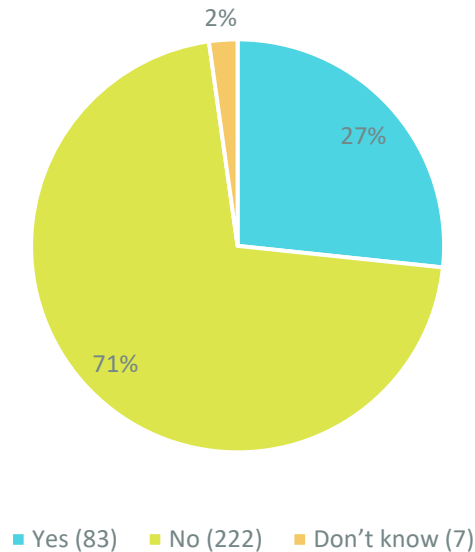
Residents (259)
No: 67%

Business (41)
No: 98%

Of the 312 customers surveyed, there was a low awareness about BEET, with 71% stating they hadn't heard of it.

Just over a quarter of those surveyed had heard of BEET (27%). This is explored further next.

When comparing 'Business' and 'Residents', 'Residents' had a greater awareness of the project. Almost all 'Business' didn't know about BEET.

What do you know about BEET?

Top three themes from comments (Base 73)

Monitor/alter voltage (32)	Money saving (20)	Energy saving (15)

When respondents were asked what they know about BEET, the highest proportion mentioned the monitoring and altering of voltage (32).

Following on from this, respondents were also aware of the cost and energy saving benefits of the project (20 and 15 respectively).

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How did you find out about BEET?

Top four themes from comments (Base 75)

Leaflet (24)

Social media (13)
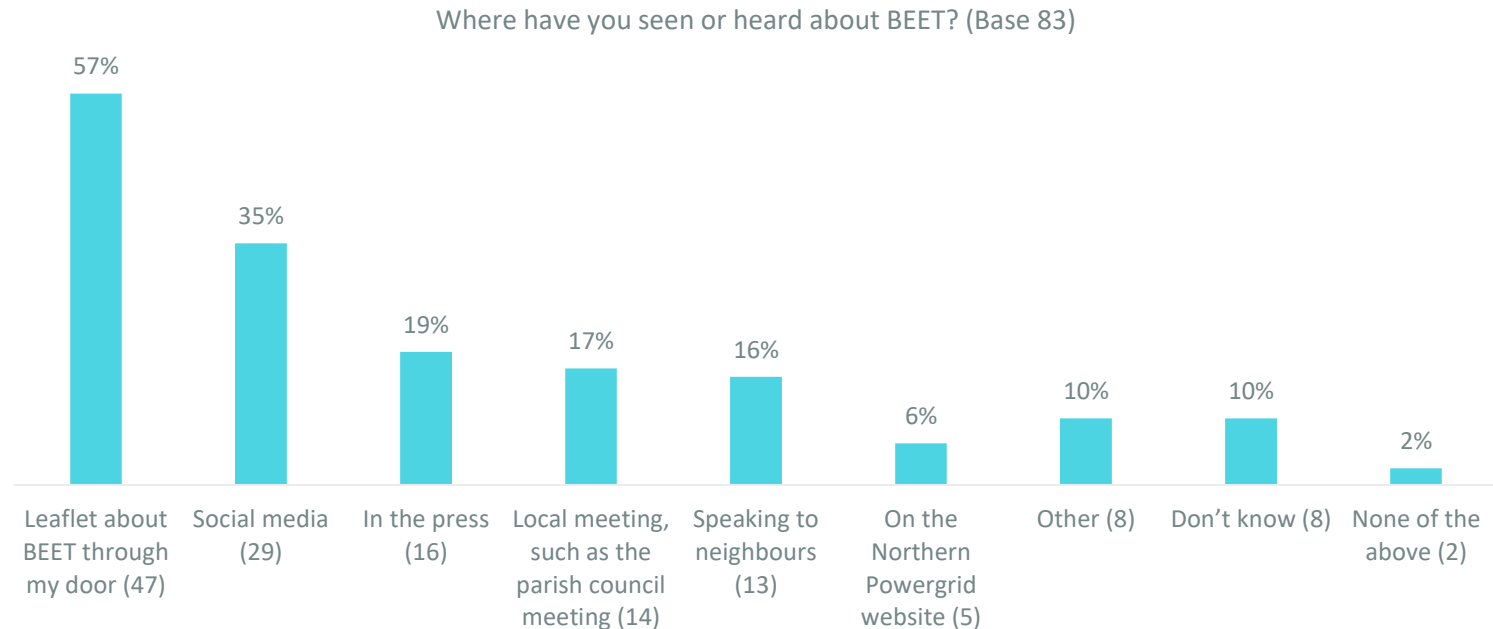
Via Keith Jackson (13)

Local press (10)

When asked how they found out about BEET, the majority of respondents stated receiving a 'Leaflet through the door' (24).

Moreover, both 'Social media' and 'Via Keith Jackson' were also common responses, being cited the same number of times (13).

Please note, not all themes are displayed on this slide. Therefore, the base size won't match.

Leaflets were the main way respondents were made aware of BEET

Where have you seen or heard about BEET? (Base 83)

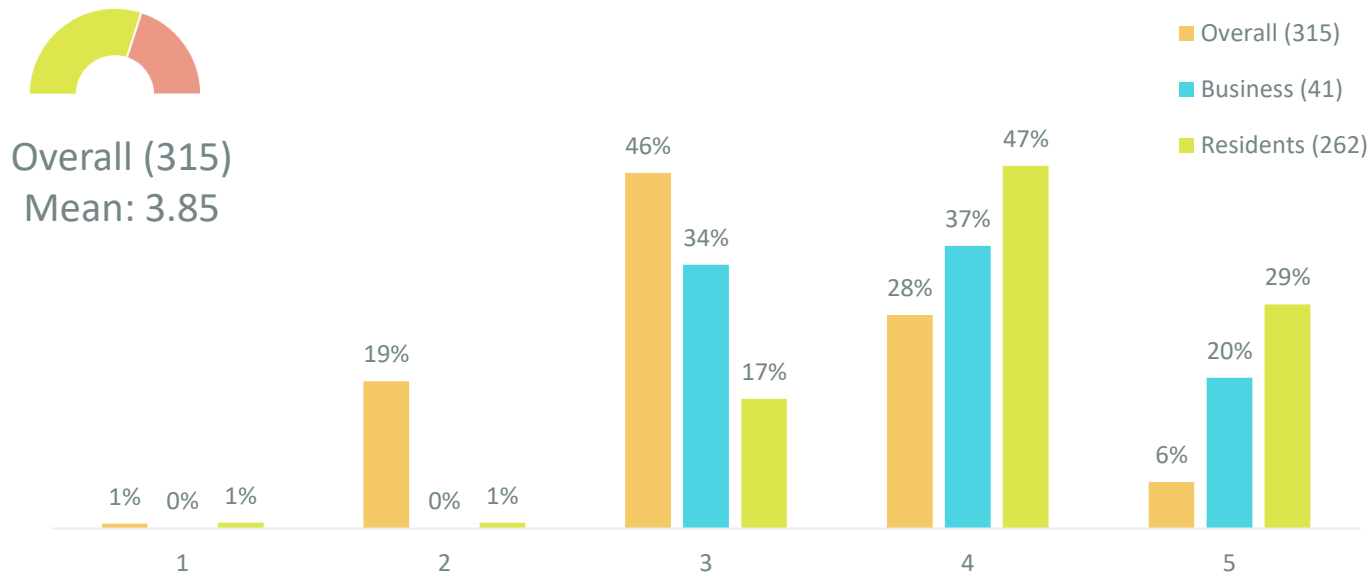| Category	Percentage
Leaflet about BEET through my door (47)	57%
Social media (29)	35%
In the press (16)	19%
Local meeting, such as the parish council meeting (14)	17%
Speaking to neighbours (13)	16%
On the Northern Powergrid website (5)	6%
Other (8)	10%
Don't know (8)	10%
None of the above (2)	2%

For those who had heard of BEET before the survey, the largest proportion had seen or heard about it via 'Leaflets through the door' (57%)

Following this, more than a third of those surveyed (35%) learnt about BEET through 'Social media' channels such as Facebook or Instagram.

After reading information about BEET, most respondents felt positive about the project

Having read this information, how do you feel about BEET? (315)

Overall (315)
Mean: 3.85

Residents (262)
Mean: 3.85

Business (41)
Mean: 3.46

Legend:
- Overall (315)
- Business (41)
- Residents (262)

Chart data:

Score	Overall (315)	Business (41)	Residents (262)
1	1%	0%	1%
2	19%	0%	1%
3	46%	34%	17%
4	28%	37%	47%
5	6%	20%	29%

When asked to score how they initially felt about the project on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive, an overall mean score of 3.81 was achieved.

After reading the information provided, close to three quarters (74%) of respondents felt the BEET project was positive in some sense by scoring 4 or 5.

Although 19% of respondents scored indifferent (a score of 3) about how they felt, when asked why they provided this score, most didn't cite a reason.

Comparing both 'Business' and 'Residents', 'Business' scored 0.39 less than 'Residents'.

Saving money was the main reason for a respondent's score

Top four themes from comments (Base 239)

Saving money (98)	Environmental impact (42)	Positive comment (34)	Saving energy (33)

As most respondents scored positively about the project, optimistic viewpoints made up a high proportion of themes.

Saving money was the most cited theme (with 98 comments), roughly 41% of those who answered this question.

Please note, not all themes are displayed on this slide. Therefore, the base won't match.

Both saving money and the environment were key reasons positively affecting scores

Saving money

- *"Good idea when energy prices are going up"*

- *"Anything that saves energy and me money has to be good"*

- *"I will always be positive about something that is expected to save money and is efficient"*

- *"If it's something to lower your bill and a positive for the environment then this is great"*

Environmental impact

- *"Good thing to try and lower carbon emissions for global warming to try and reduce what we're doing . Save the environment and save money would be nice"*

- *"It's good saving carbon emissions for the planet"*

- *"I'd love to help reduce carbon emissions and save money. It would be great to see this project rolled out nationally"*
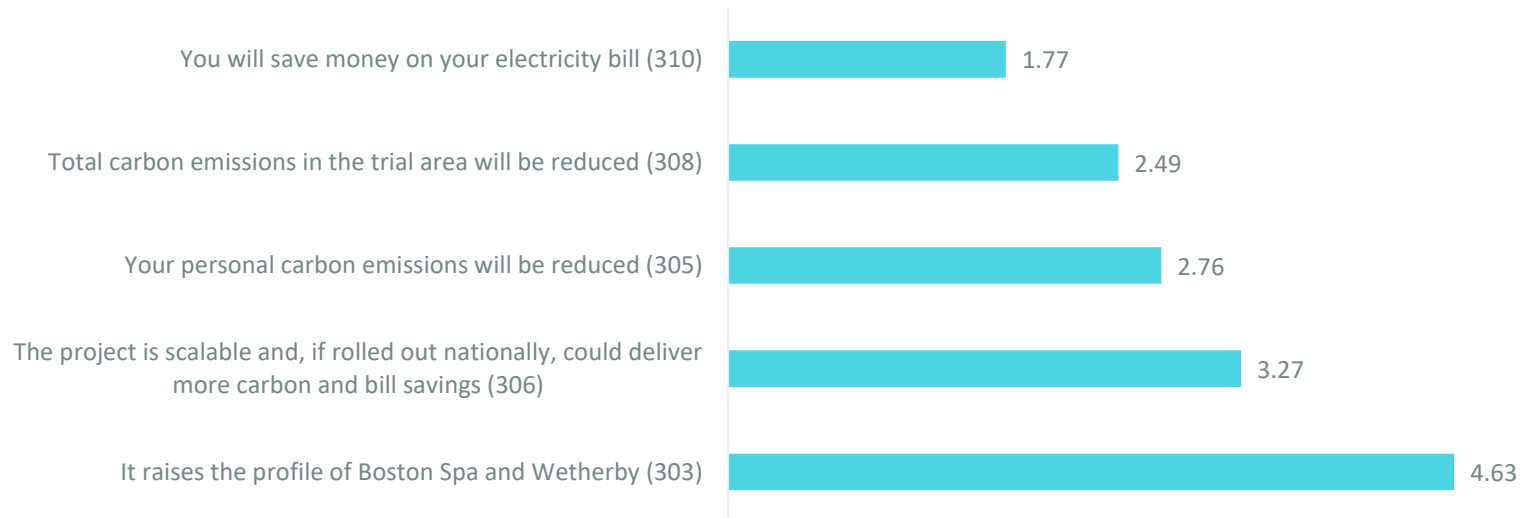
Positive contribution

- *"Aims of the project are efficient"*

- *"Hopefully if the company itself is monitoring it, it should be a good project"*

- *"Not knowing much about it - from the little info I've heard it's a positive thing"*

- *"From what you've said, sounds a good thing for everyone"*

- *"Something that's going to make a difference can only be a positive thing"*

Saving energy

- *"The potential to save consumption and cost is great"*

- *"Reduced energy consumption is good from an environmental perspective and a reduction in energy bills is would be very welcome"*

- *"It's exactly what we should be doing. We should be optimising our energy use. It will save money and carbon. This should have been done years ago"*

Saving money on bills was the most important benefit

List of benefits from the project. Please rank these from the most (1) to least (5) important to you (Base 310)

| Benefit	Ranked average
You will save money on your electricity bill (310)	1.77
Total carbon emissions in the trial area will be reduced (308)	2.49
Your personal carbon emissions will be reduced (305)	2.76
The project is scalable and, if rolled out nationally, could deliver more carbon and bill savings (306)	3.27
It raises the profile of Boston Spa and Wetherby (303)	4.63

While looking at ranked average, the most important benefit of the project for respondents is its ability to reduce their electricity bill (1.77).

Respondents thought raising 'the profile of Boston Spa and Wetherby' was the least important aspect of the project, achieving a ranked average of 4.63.

Most respondents don't have concerns about BEET

Having read this information, do you have any concerns about BEET? (Base 312)

6%

4%

89%

- Yes (20) - No (279) - Don't know (13)
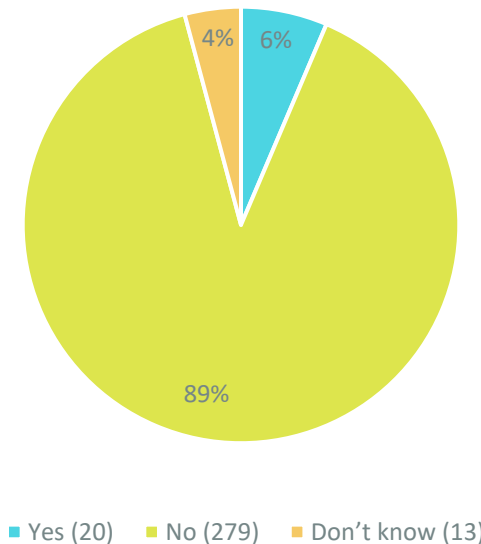
Residents (261)
No: 89%

Business (40)
No: 95%

Generally, after respondents read information about BEET they didn't have any concerns with the project (89%).

Nevertheless, there was a minority of respondents (6%) which did have concerns with the project. These are explored next.

Reviewing 'Residents' and 'Business', the majority of respondents from both groups didn't have concerns about BEET (89% and 95% respectively)

Project finance was the most cited concern by respondents

Key themes from comments (Base 17)

Financial concerns

"Who pays for it? What infrastructure is needed and who will pay for this? All this is "should" and "may" and energy bills are not wholly dependent on the amount you use, so there is no guarantee that bills will go down"

"Reduced voltage would put the price up"

"I don't believe it will result in real savings for anyone"

"…I just wonder how NPg are benefitting from this. Will it really save me money - because I use very little energy as it is. The majority of my bill is standing charges"

Other concerns

"We live on a working farm and I'd like to know if the lowering of the voltage might affect our pig farm feeding system… in Winter would the lighting be affected etc as that's critical for the welfare of our animals"

"The practicality of launching it nationally"

"Finds it difficult to roll out"

"As long as they don't mess about with what I'm paying now and change my meters"

"Don't trust it to be honest"

"Just wondered if you'd ever know if the optimisation was restricting my use generally. Would I notice, what could I do about it. Say, if I needed more usage how would it allow me. The immediacy of changed usage and how that might be affected… just details like that would be good to know"

What else would you like to know about BEET?

Top three themes from comments (Base 137)

The results (15)

How it works (10)

Future plans (7)

Of those who provided a comment, a high proportion said that there was nothing else they would like to know about the project or didn't know (57%).
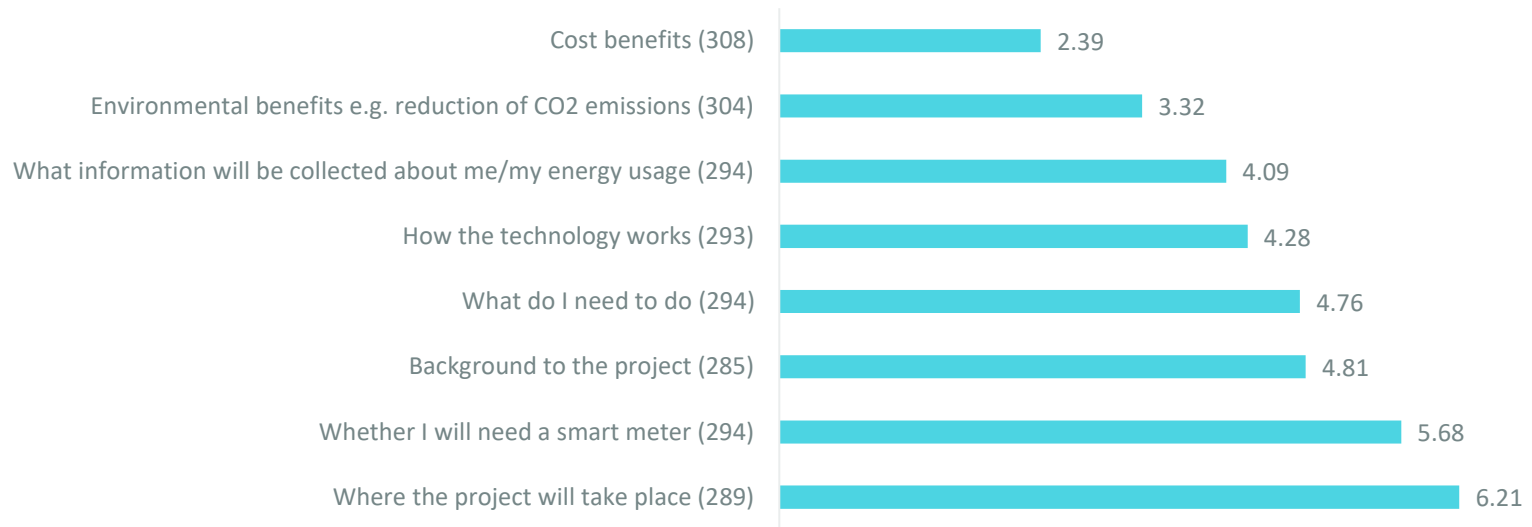
However, of those who wanted to know more, the most cited aspect was to know the results of the project (15).

Please note, not all themes are displayed on this slide. Therefore, the base size won't match.

Respondents thought the cost and environmental benefits were key information

When receiving information about the trial, which of the following would be most important? (Base 308)

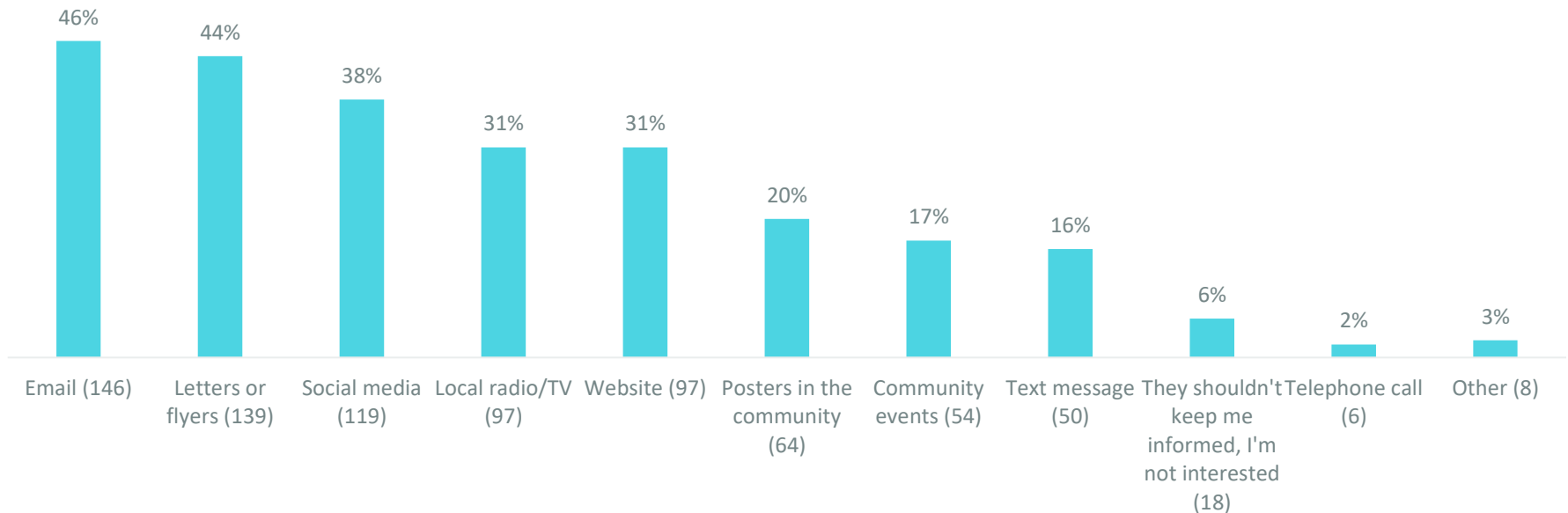| Information type	Score
Cost benefits (308)	2.39
Environmental benefits e.g. reduction of CO2 emissions (304)	3.32
What information will be collected about me/my energy usage (294)	4.09
How the technology works (293)	4.28
What do I need to do (294)	4.76
Background to the project (285)	4.81
Whether I will need a smart meter (294)	5.68
Where the project will take place (289)	6.21

While reviewing the ranked average of each of the information types, 'Cost benefits' and 'Environmental benefits' were the most important to respondents (2.39 and 3.32 respectively).

Conversely, the information types with the lowest importance were the 'Need for a smart meter' (5.68) as well as 'Where the project would take place' (6.21).

Email, flyer, and letters were the main ways to update respondents

How should Northern Powergrid communicate updates about BEET to the community? [Select all that apply] (Base 314)

Bar chart values:
- Email (146): 46%
- Letters or flyers (139): 44%
- Social media (119): 38%
- Local radio/TV (97): 31%
- Website (97): 31%
- Posters in the community (64): 20%
- Community events (54): 17%
- Text message (50): 16%
- They shouldn't keep me informed, I'm not interested (18): 6%
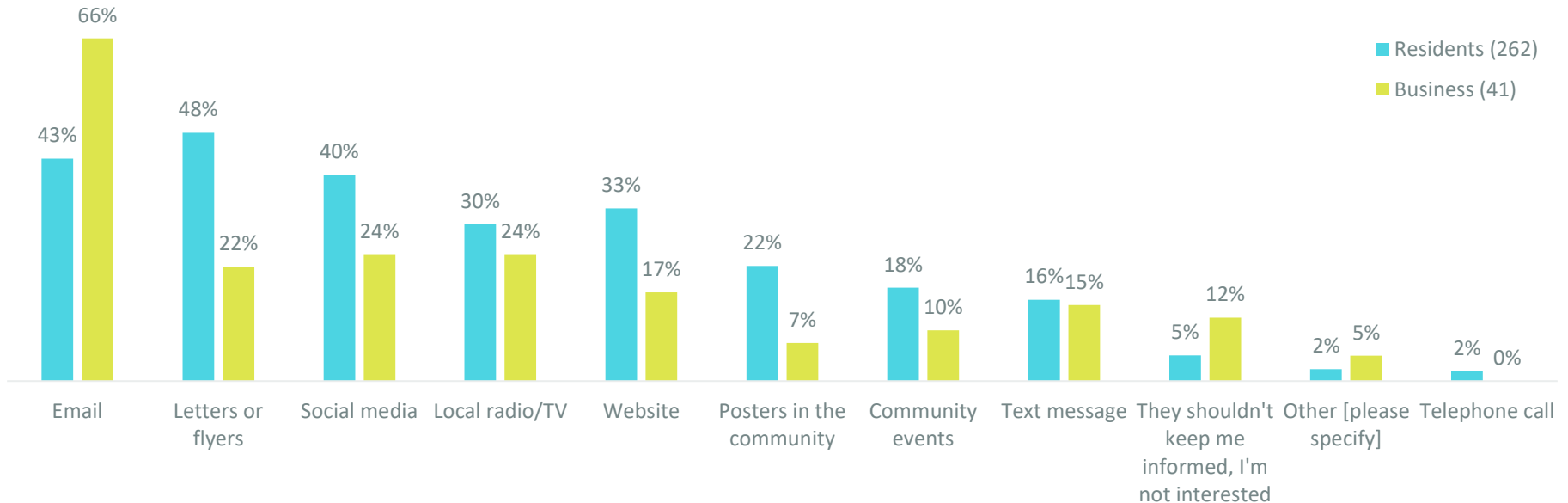- Telephone call (6): 2%
- Other (8): 3%

Generally, respondents selected a range of preferences about how NPg should update the community about BEET.

Of all those who were surveyed, the highest proportion thought 'Email' and 'Letter/Flyers' were best ways to update the community (46% and 44% respectively).

For business, email was the update preference for the majority

How should Northern Powergrid communicate updates about BEET to the community? [Select all that apply]

- Residents (262)
- Business (41)

| Channel	Residents	Business
Email	43%	66%
Letters or flyers	48%	22%
Social media	40%	24%
Local radio/TV	30%	24%
Website	33%	17%
Posters in the community	22%	7%
Community events	18%	10%
Text message	16%	15%
They shouldn't keep me informed, I'm not interested	5%	12%
Other [please specify]	2%	5%
Telephone call	2%	0%

The majority of the 'Business' category selected 'Email' as their preference for receiving updates (66%). Second was 'Social media' and 'Local radio/TV' (both 24%).

For 'Residents', preferences were varied across all channels. The most selected options were 'Letter or flyers' and 'Email' (48% and 43% respectively).

Just over half of respondents would like updates every three months

How often would you like to receive updates about BEET? (Base 312)

■ Monthly (71) ■ Every 3 months (162) ■ Every 6 months (48) ■ Other (31)
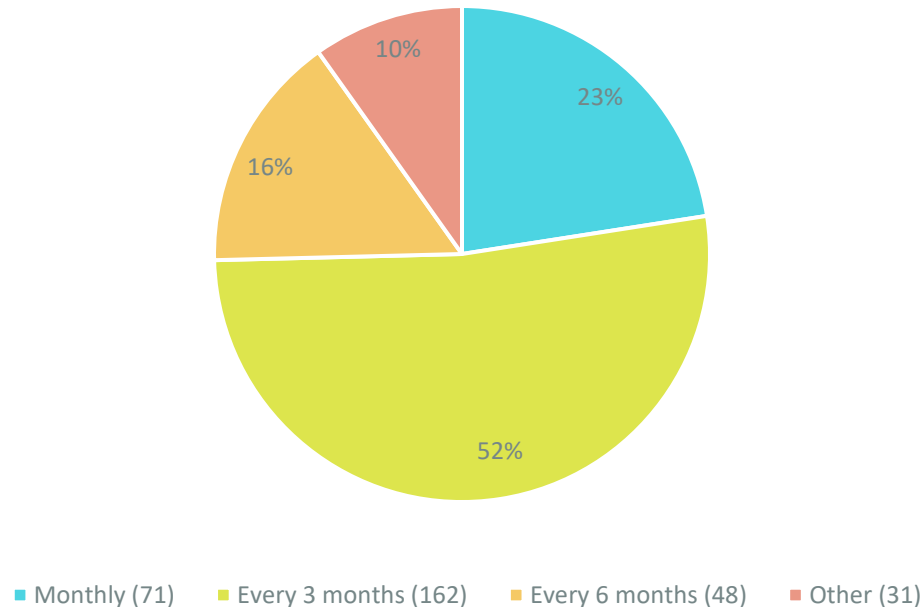
Just over half of all respondents (52%) would like to receive an update about the project 'Every 3 months'.

Additionally, close to a quarter of respondents (23%) stated they would like 'Monthly' updates about BEET.

Of those who stated 'Other', a high proportion weren't interested in updates (48%) Conversely, many would like to receive updates as and when a milestone is reached (23%).

Perception of Northern Powergrid

After learning about the project, scores about Northern Powergrid increased
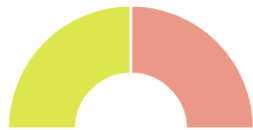
Before

After

Residents (259)
Mean: 3.12

Business (41)
Mean: 3.05

How do you feel about Northern Powergrid?*
(Base 315)

Mean score: 3.11

Having read the information in this survey, how do you feel about Northern Powergrid?*
(Base 315)

Mean score: 3.90

Residents (262)
Mean: 3.85

Business (41)
Mean: 3.46

At the end of the survey, respondents' feelings about Northern Powergrid were more positive, rising to a mean score of 3.90 (+0.79).

With an improvement in score, the BEET project is a good opportunity to increase the awareness and perception of Northern Powergrid.

*Please note, a scale of 1-5 was used for this question, where 1 is 'Very negative' and 5 is 'Very positive'

Conclusions and recommendations

An overview of the implications of the research and our recommended actions.

Conclusion

Overall positive and low concern

Generally, respondents believed BEET to be a positive initiative. Close to three quarters (74%) of respondents felt BEET was positive after reading information about the project. Again, after reading information about the project, most respondents (89%) didn't have any concerns with BEET.

Cost and environment resonated the most

Throughout the survey, the cost and environmental benefits of the project were voiced by respondents as key benefits of the project, as well as the most important messages to share with the trial area.

Communication with the community

Email, letters, and flyers were the preferred methods of communication. Additionally, just over half of respondents (52%) wanted project updates every 3 months.

Perception of Northern Powergrid was more positive at the end of the survey

At the beginning of the survey, when asked 'How do you feel about Northern Powergrid?', respondents scored 3.11. However, at the end of the survey, scores increased by 0.79 to 3.90.

Recommendations

Increase awareness

It is important that NPg begins to actively promote its innovation projects, as awareness and knowledge of BEET has shown to positively increase customers' perceptions.

Communication with the community

Northern Powergrid should look to update the community every 2-3 months using a variety of different communication channels to ensure residents are aware of key updates, outputs, and outcomes.

Communication pieces

Cost savings and environmental impact were key messages that resonated with the community. These messages should be considered as key, where relevant, for future innovation projects and campaigns.

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