

Hydrogen Village Community Working Group – Meeting Summary & Key Actions

Location: Hydrogen Experience Centre

Date: 08/12/22

Time: 5.30-7.30pm

Attendance:

| Attendees | Organisation |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Kate Blowfield | Cadent Gas |
| Marc Clarke | Cadent Gas |
| Martin Davidson | Resident |
| Jonathan England | Local resident |
| Tim Green | British Gas |
| Cllr Louise Gittins | Leader of Council |
| Tracy Humphreys | Local resident |
| William Lacey | Local resident |
| Adrian Morris | Local resident |
| Cllr Peter Rooney | Ward Councillor |
| Catharine S | Cadent Gas |
| Beth Tarling | SEC Newgate |
| George Thomas | SEC Newgate |
| Ann Williams | Resident |
| Apologies | |
| Helen Denny | Local resident |
| Peter Dunne | Local resident |
| Leigh Jenkins | Local resident |

Agenda Item

- **Introductions**
 - All Community Working Group members introduced themselves, in particular for the benefit of any new members.
 - LG explained the Council's role on the project. The Council is not delivering the project but they are working with the programme team to support engagement with the local community.
- **Key actions from previous meeting**
 - BT explained that the timeline of engagement will be put onto the website in the following days, as well as the full set of FAQs, Hydrogen Village factsheets, and a range of independent papers about hydrogen for heating.
 - CS confirmed that Gemserv is the organisation conducting the research into insurance and house prices.

- AM asked whether this should have been done prior to the programme announcement, to which CS explained that it was always part of the delivery plan to commission the research before conversion.
- MC confirmed that Justin Madders MP's request for a ballot and for a public debate is still under discussion. He also stated that the upcoming public events will offer a space for debate to happen.
- AW stated that it will be important to have people from both sides of the hydrogen debate at events. LG confirmed that the Council will be hosting an event that will offer residents the opportunity to hear both sides.
- LG also stated that she would ideally like there to be an extension to the current phase of the programme.

Action that the project team will update the group on engagement with Justin Madders MP.

- **Terms of Reference**

- BT reminded attendees of the group Terms of References and agreed protocol for publishing minutes.
- MC explained that the purpose of the group is to work collaboratively, with residents providing feedback on draft material for the programme. Ideally, the project team and residents should work together to co-create documents before wider dissemination. It is therefore also important that any materials shared in advance are kept confidential until they are publishable.
- WL highlighted that this worked well with the Hydrogen Village Handbook, which the residents provided feedback on after the first meeting.

- **Recent Engagement**

- KB gave an update on the Hydrogen Experience Centre, which has had around 350 visits since opening in mid-October. This has included a range of visitors, from elected representatives to appliance manufacturers, and many Whitby residents.
- KB gave details of the recent session with the University of the Third Age (U3A) that happened in the centre and also highlighted the generosity of the of the team and members of the public towards the Stanlaw Abbey Christmas Toy Appeal. 53 toys have been donated to the charity.
- TG gave an update on the In-Home Hydrogen Assessments. At the time of the meeting, over 1,200 assessments had been completed, with 156 repairs also carried out on appliances.
- MC confirmed that having an assessment undertaken does not in any way commit residents to the programme or indicate that they are supportive. It is instead a means for Cadent to understand what work is required to individual households if the programme goes ahead in Whitby. Importantly, it also helps ensure that households in the programme area have safe and working appliances.
- AM suggested that people have been told contrary to the above, as part of correspondence from Field Mouse, who are undertaking research for the programme. CS said she would check this as this should not be the case.

- JE explained that there are surveys going to residents not from the programme team. CS asked to if she could see the correspondence.
- MC raised the case that a field engineer was recorded unwillingly whilst in a resident's property, with the footage later shared online. MC explained that this is unacceptable and has caused considerable upset. The group agreed that this would be fed back to other residents.

Action that that we will ensure correspondence from Field Mouse does not indicate that having an in-home hydrogen assessment commits residents to being involved in the programme.

- **Research programme**

- CS gave an overview of the research programme. CS is overseeing the delivery of the research for the programme, and will be formulating the evidence submission to the Government and Ofgem.
- CS stressed the importance of having a research programme that reflects how people engage and at what stage they choose to engage.
- CS explained that an interim questionnaire is sent out after residents book their in-home assessment, which captures feelings toward the programme and any questions from residents. A second questionnaire is currently being commissioned that will help shape the offering and the delivery of the programme.
- When discussing residents who have not yet engaged with the programme:
 - MD explained that he found it easy to engage with the programme from the outset, having been involved in the initial discussion forums.
 - LG stated that there will always be engaged and disengaged people, the only way of ensuring somebody has awareness is by knocking on each door in the programme area, which is what Cadent has done.
- AW stated that the bigger picture, moving away from fossil fuels, is positive, but has concerns about the credibility of the programme – mainly that there will be such a desire for the programme to be a success, the Government will be unwilling to go back to natural gas even if there is considerable discontent amongst residents.
 - TG explained that discussions are being had in the coming weeks to help define exactly what will happen at the end of the programme.
 - MD stated that assurances on what the end of the programme will look like will be very important.
- AM again expressed concern about there being an information void. BT indicated that the upcoming engagement events and creation of an Information Hub on the website should help to alleviate this.
- TG explained that natural gas boilers cannot be widely used in the future if the country is to reach its net zero targets and the programme is an important way of showing us if hydrogen is a viable alternative.
 - LG highlighted the importance of the climate aspect and expressed her excitement about the area playing a part in what the net zero future looks like. She did, however, stress the importance of ensuring all residents are fully informed as there are a lot of concerned people.
- JE said he would have liked the Council to have been more involved in communications from the early stages.
- When discussing availability and safety of appliances:

- PR stated that it is only the burner that will be different in hydrogen appliances compared to natural gas appliances. It won't, therefore, be a huge job for manufacturers to develop hydrogen equivalents.
- MD stated that he is comforted by the manufacturers who have already stated they are on board.
- TG stated that the manufacturers will adapt their business models whatever the switch from natural gas looks like.

Action that the programme team will share the new information section on the website with the residents.

Action that the programme team will share information from the exit strategy discussions.

- **Upcoming engagement**

- The upcoming community information events in December and January were discussed.
 - BT explained that the information being shown at the event has been shaped by the questions that have come in from residents.
 - BT also explained that a number of external academics and industry experts would be in attendance, as per the Community Working Group's previous requests.
 - The residents confirmed that the community seems to be aware of the upcoming events - everybody at the meeting had received the flyer about the events.
 - The residents were asked whether anything was missing from what will be on show. MD suggested more information on the ongoing maintenance involved, importantly, the availability of hydrogen trained engineers. TG explained that there is a willingness from local engineers – who have been coming into the centre – to learn about hydrogen. TG also explained that there is little difference between maintaining hydrogen appliances and natural gas appliances, and that British Gas are working with GasSafe to ensure engineers are trained.
- BT highlighted the imminent website overhaul, intended to give residents more information and address some of their concerns.
- LG expressed concerns about how worried some people in the community are and that it is difficult to know what information to believe. She also raised concerns about figures at some external organisations claiming to be 'independent' and sharing information deliberately to worry residents.
- PR then highlighted an article that had been written in PHAM News questioning the role hydrogen can play in residential heating. MC stated that it is important to look at the authors of these articles, as often they come from people with a vested interest in other renewable energy sources succeeding.
- MC thanked the members for yet another constructive discussion.

Action that the programme team will include information on ongoing maintenance at future information days.

- **A.O.B**

- AM asked how many complaints have been received.
- AW said she is having difficulties with receiving emails.

Action that the programme team will bring numbers of complaints to the next meeting.

Action that the programme team will look into the issues with AW's email address.

- **Date of next meeting**

Date of next meeting provisionally agreed for 19th January, 5.30pm-7.30pm at the Hydrogen Experience Centre.

List of actions

| Action | Attributed |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Update the group on engagement with Justin Madders MP | SEC Newgate / Cadent / British Gas |
| Ensure correspondence from Field Mouse does not indicate that having an in-home hydrogen assessment commits residents to being involved in the programme. | Cadent |
| Share the new information section on the website with the residents | SEC Newgate |
| Share information from the exit strategy discussions. | SEC Newgate / Cadent / British Gas |
| Include information on ongoing maintenance at future information days | SEC Newgate / Cadent / British Gas |
| Look into the issues with AW's email address | SEC Newgate |
| Bring numbers of complaints to the next meeting | SEC Newgate |