

Western Power Distribution recruiting members for new Customer Engagement Group

Western Power Distribution is looking for expert members to join its new Customer Engagement Group (CEG).

U.K. regulator Ofgem requires all distribution network operators to set up a CEG to scrutinize their business plans for the next regulatory period, which runs from 2023 through 2028, and the processes by which they are built.

The CEG will have the ability to challenge WPD on its priorities, proposed outputs and expenditure; approach to sustainability, resilience and innovation; WPD's transition to become a Distribution System Operator; stakeholder engagement processes; and support for vulnerable customers, for example.

Its key output is to produce an independent report for Ofgem that will sit alongside WPD's Business Plan and outline areas of agreement and disagreement.

Duncan McCombie, Chief Executive of the fuel poverty business YES Energy Solutions CIC, has been appointed as Chair of WPD's CEG. He has vast experience as an independent consumer expert, most recently as a member of Welsh Water's Customer Challenge Group for the price review process PR19, playing a key role shaping their plans at a strategic and working level.

He has previously been a member of the Climate Change Commission for Wales and the Welsh Transport Minister's Low Carbon Vehicle Steering Group and was Chair of the Existing Homes Network for Wales. He has a long history of providing evidence to Government committees and scrutiny panels.

"I am thrilled to have been appointed to lead the CEG at a time of radical transformation within the energy sector, as distribution network operators become distribution system operators," Duncan said.

"The CEG will fulfil a vital role to ensure customers are placed at the heart of WPD's plans for the future and that actions and decisions made by the company are truly positioned to deliver the long-term interests of consumers.

"I am looking to recruit a diverse range of stakeholders as CEG members, including consumer representatives, regional interest groups, as well as topic experts spanning areas as varied as non-traditional business models, innovation, fuel poverty, community energy and consumer research, for example.

"We will work hand-in-glove with the industry regulator Ofgem to provide them with essential, independent oversight and assurances throughout."

The role of a CEG member requires a long-term commitment, up to 2023, including regular attendance at meetings four to six times a year plus the time to delve into the detail of WPD's plans to provide robust challenge and review. More details are available at: westernpower.co.uk/yourpowerfuture

WPD Chief Executive Phil Swift said: "This new forum will play a crucial role in scrutinising our future plans on behalf of consumers at a critical and exciting time for WPD and the wider industry.

"Over the next few years we will be setting out our most ambitious plans yet to continue to deliver a safe, reliable network while, at the same time, using cutting-edge innovation to build smarter, flexible networks. As we do so, remaining number one for customer satisfaction and ensuring maximum value for money for our customers will be paramount.

"The CEG is an exciting opportunity for independent expert representatives to come on board to help shape WPD's future. We're very keen to hear from anyone who would be interested in getting involved."

For further information: WPD press office 01332 827172.

