

Fair Future Panel:
Shaping the ED3 Business Plan

Key findings and how views developed across four deliberative customer workshops, April – August 2026

SSEN with Create Clarity

Dawn Mulvey and Michael Brainch

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In summary





In summary:

THE PANEL 27 customers, three panels, four workshops over five months

THE VERDICT Investment direction supported; bill rises not rejected

PRIORITIES Protect capacity, reliability and support for the vulnerable

CHALLENGES Fairness: regional charging and ‘who else pays’

THE LESSON Informed views need time, evidence and real prices

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Executive summary

The Fair Future Panel brought together 27 domestic customers from both SSEN regions across four workshops (April to August 2026) to explore a central ED3 question: **how to build a future-ready network while keeping bills fair.**

- Panellists accepted the case for investment once the drivers were explained, but their support was conditional on fairness, affordability, clear need and transparency.
- Given the trade-offs, they consistently protected network capacity and reliability first, and wanted investment targeted at worst-served and vulnerable customers.
- Indicative bill increases were not rejected, but panellists stressed rising household costs and warned that uninformed customers would need more context.
- Fairness remained the main unresolved issue: regional differences in charges, the role of government and big business, and protection for those who can't use low carbon technology.
- Views shifted most when costs were attached. Initially, only indicative cost ranges were shared, and most panellists selected the cautious middle options. Views shifted once more detailed cost information was provided.



Methodology and rationale

2

Rationale

Why form a deliberative customer panel to support ED3 business planning?

1. **A significant period of change**
   SSEN's next business plan, RIIO-ED3 (2028–2033), must prepare the network for rising demand, net zero and more extreme weather, while keeping bills affordable

2. **Ofgem expects informed evidence**
   Ofgem's Sector Specific Methodology Consultation (SSMC) asks for evidence on distributional fairness, informed trade-offs, inclusive participation and sensitivity to vulnerability.

3. **Depth that surveys can't give**
   Deliberation lets customers learn, question experts and revisit views over time. This ensures their conclusions are informed, not first reactions.

4. **Part of a wider golden thread**
   Designed with Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) input; the Fair Future Panel builds on other engagement evidence SSEN gathered and synthesised from the views of 24,000 household customers, business customers, stakeholders and colleagues, culminating in acceptance testing of the final plan.

THE BIG QUESTION

How can we build a future-ready, decarbonised network while keeping bills fair for everyone?

EXPLORED THROUGH ONE LENS AT EVERY SESSION

Reliability, resilience, vulnerability, net zero and local disruption were all discussed, with affordability and fairness kept central throughout.

Research aims

What the panel set out to do.

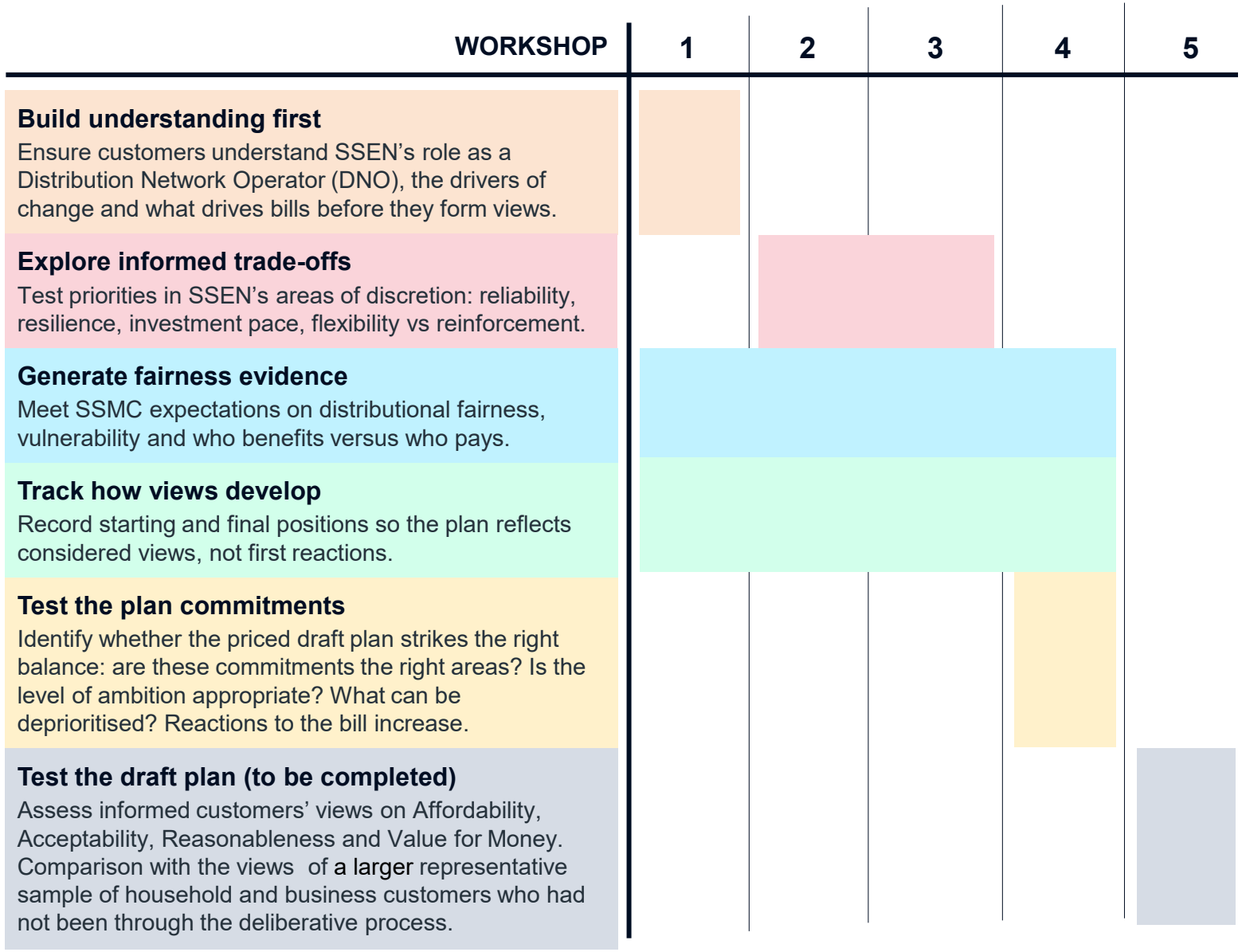
OVERALL AIM

To bring informed domestic customer views into SSEN's ED3 Business Plan on its central dilemma: a future-ready, decarbonised network with bills that are fair for everyone.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Informed customers accept the direction of the plan and can say clearly under what conditions they would accept higher costs.

Because the panel ran while the plan was being developed, customer views could shape decisions as they were made, rather than react to a finished plan.



The choices at the heart of ED3

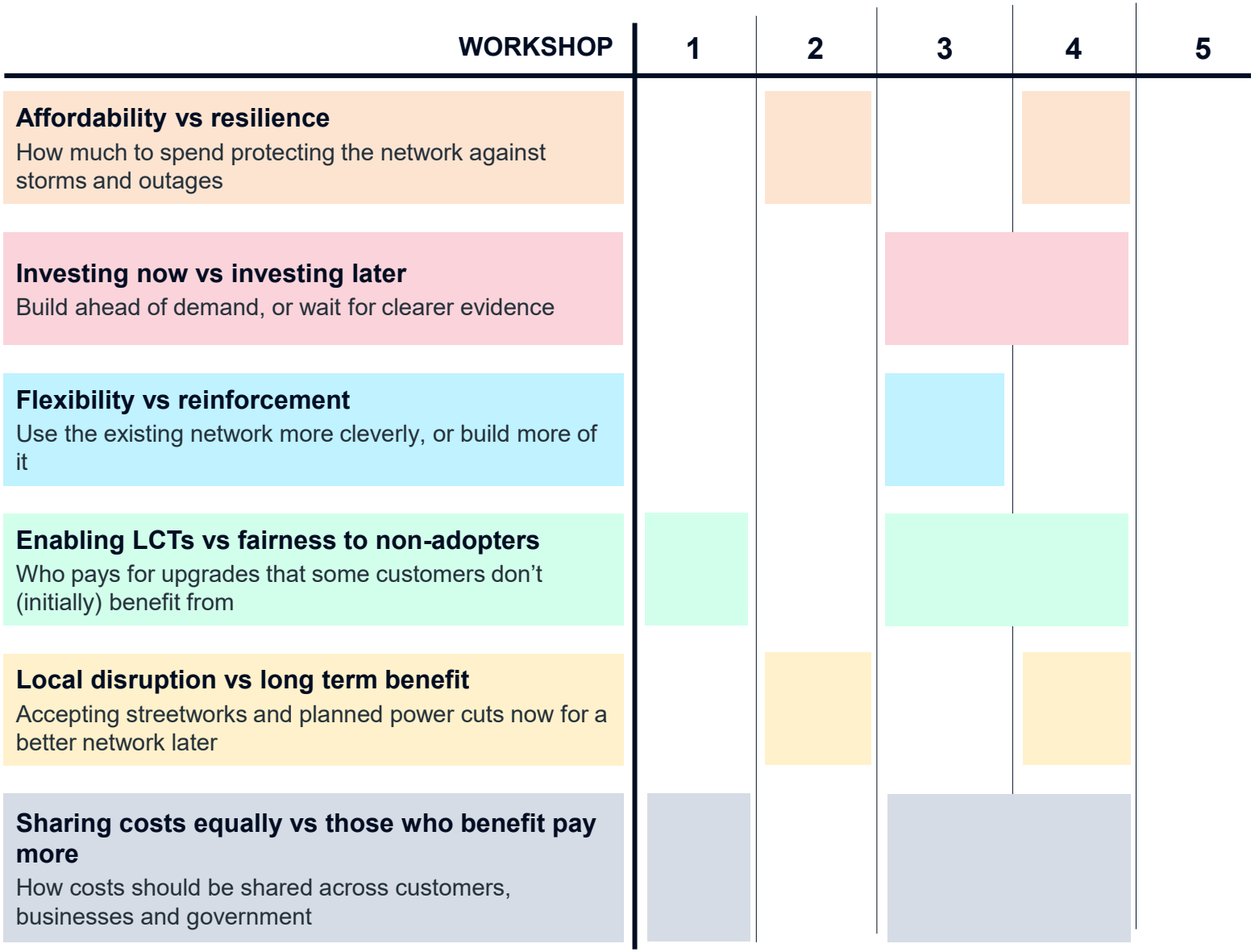
Six tensions explored.

SAME QUESTIONS, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Behavioural segments meant engaged customers, future shapers and core customers tackled the same issues throughout.

REVISITED OVER TIME

Meeting repeatedly let panellists return to issues as their understanding grew.



The journey

Four workshops conducted to date, each building on the last.

	APR 2026	MAY–JUN 2026	JUN–JUL 2026	AUG 2026
	WORKSHOP 1 **Setting the scene**	WORKSHOP 2 **Reliability, resilience & local impacts**	WORKSHOP 3 **Future demand & investment pace**	WORKSHOP 4 **Testing the priced draft plan**
OBJECTIVE	Build a shared foundation of understanding before opinions are formed	Explore how to balance cost, reliability and future resilience	Test how fast to invest ahead of demand, and when to flex rather than build	Test whether the draft plan strikes the right balance, with bill impacts
FOCUS	Why the network must change; drivers to 2040; fairness of the transition	Power cuts, climate risk and three investment options	Forecasting, security of supply, flexibility vs reinforcement (£10 task)	Bill impacts, five investment areas, counters in jars, protect/maintain/reduce
GUEST	SSEN	NESO	Regen	SSEN & Citizens Advice
FORMAT	Online	Online	Online	Face-to-face in Perth and Reading
ATTENDEES	**27**	**26**	**26**	**24**

Guest speakers were incorporated through video content

Play-backs of homework reflections opened each workshop. A fifth workshop tests acceptance of the plan and bill impacts (see next steps).

Quality assurance

How we made the evidence robust.

DESIGN



Good-practice principles
Built on the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) good-practice principles for deliberative processes.

Regulatory alignment
Structured around Ofgem SSMC expectations on fairness, trade-offs, inclusion and vulnerability.

Deliberate diversity
Three behaviour-led panels spanning both regions and different levels of engagement.

Independent design input
Approach co-designed with input from the ISG.

Observed and recorded
SSEN colleagues and a selection of ISG members observed; recordings give an audit trail.

DELIVERY



Independent and MRS-compliant
Run by an independent research agency in line with the Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct.

Level playing field
Induction for new recruits and a recap of SSEN's role (including the proportion of the average energy bill allocated to SSEN) at the start of every session.

Balanced evidence
Independent voices (NESO, Regen, Citizens Advice) alongside SSEN

Time to reflect
Homework between sessions; consistent groups so views could build over time.

Consistent facilitation
The same moderator led every workshop

VALIDATION



Panellists checked our understanding
'You said, we heard' play-backs; homework findings verified at all Workshops.

Systematic analysis
Sessions recorded and transcribed; findings analysed by theme, segment and region. Exercise results (votes, £10 split, counters) counted and compared from first to final positions.

Cross-checked with other evidence
For example Workshop 2 findings consistent with collaborative DNO research on climate resilience.

Triangulated and assured
Synthesised with 290+ evidence sources; supported by independent assurance of how evidence is used.

Full workshop reports, discussion guides and stimulus materials for each session are available on request, so the approach can be reviewed or repeated.

ISG involvement

Challenge that shaped the programme.

1 DESIGNED TOGETHER, OVER SEVERAL ITERATIONS

The panel was developed with the Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) through several design rounds. The ISG challenged SSEN to apply robust deliberative principles and to go deep enough to see how views develop when panellists get new information, weigh trade-offs and face genuine choices.

2 BEHAVIOURAL SEGMENTS, NOT TOPIC GROUPS

A key ISG recommendation was to replace topic-based groups with behavioural segments, so customers with different starting points considered the same issues throughout. This showed where views converged, diverged or changed, and became a defining feature of the method.

3 FROM ONE LARGE WORKSHOP TO A HYBRID APPROACH

The ISG first favoured a single, larger deliberative event. SSEN concluded that one location would limit representation across both its regions and make it harder to track changing views. With the research agency and the ISG, SSEN developed a hybrid: behavioural segments, repeated online sessions, panellists from both regions and regional face-to-face workshops.

4 THE RESULT

A method that reflects the principles the ISG sought while keeping broad regional representation. It gave a more nuanced picture of priorities, trade-offs and divergence than either approach alone. Panel findings have been shared with the ISG throughout, alongside the other engagement strands.

Target population and sampling

3

The panel

Deliberate diversity, not representativeness.

MOST ENGAGED → LEAST ENGAGED

A ENGAGED CUSTOMERS

10 panellists

Recent, direct experience of SSEN: either worst-served, Priority Services Register, Low Carbon Technology (LCT) adopter or people affected by outages or upgrades.

B FUTURE SHAPERS

8 panellists

Those whose relationship with SSEN will change in ED3. Either aged 18–29 and not yet bill payers, likely LCT buyers in the next three years, or interested in flexibility (e.g. time-of-use tariffs).

C CORE CUSTOMERS

9 panellists

Typical of SSEN's general customer base. Bill payers with no recent contact with SSEN, who are not and don't currently plan to be early adopters of low carbon technology.

Panels met online in consistent cross-regional groups for Workshops 1–3, then face-to-face by region for Workshop 4 (Perth: 7, Reading: 17). A fifth Workshop was convened in September 2026 to support final acceptance testing of the Business Plan with an informed audience.

The majority of panellists had taken part in focus group sessions for SSEN in September 2025 that explored emerging priorities. Seven new recruits completed an induction session on the role of a DNO first.

Attendance fluctuated over the workshops: 27 → 26 → 26 → 24.

Combining lived experience, emerging behaviours and wider societal views means the panel captures the full range of reasoning needed for complex trade-offs, such as fairness, affordability, resilience and how fast to invest.



Image taken at the face-to-face workshop in Perth (Workshop 4)

The panel: Sampling approach

- **Target population:** domestic bill payers, and future bill payers aged 18–29, in SSEN's two regions (north of Scotland and central southern England).
- **Sampling method:** purposive, not random. Panellists were selected by behaviour and circumstance into three segments, so that the groups most affected by ED3 decisions are included.
- **Recruitment:**
  - Free-found by an independent agency, with loose quotas on age, gender, socio-economic group and rural/urban across both regions.
  - 20 were re-recruited from the Consumer Priorities focus groups (September 2025) and 7 were new.
- **Group size:** 8–10 per group, so everyone could contribute in a two-hour online session, with three groups giving 27 in total.
- **Attendance and dropout:** 27, then 26, 26 and 24. The three who missed Workshop 4 were invited back for Workshop 5.
- **Robustness:** sized for depth of reasoning, not statistical measurement.



Topline findings

4

Workshop 1: Setting the scene

The case for change was accepted, but with conditions. Panellists broadly accepted that the network must change, recognising the pressures of decarbonisation, population growth and rising demand

WHERE PANELLISTS STARTED

- Bill-focused, domestic view of energy
- Scepticism about 'energy company profits' and net zero
- Following the recap about what SSEN do, everyone agreed they understood it and remembered it. However, there were questions throughout showing that there was still some level of misunderstanding

WHERE THEY ENDED

- Network pressures seen as systemic and long-term
- SSEN understood as a regulated infrastructure operator
- Population growth, ageing, EVs and homes as places of care make investment feel necessary
- Acknowledgement that poor resilience can have severe consequences for some customers (particularly those medically dependent on electricity), and that some customers (for example rural) have less reliable supply

CONDITIONS FOR ACCEPTANCE

FAIRNESS
costs shared fairly; vulnerable protected

AFFORDABILITY
bills 'constantly going up'

NECESSITY
real-world drivers made explicit

TRANSPARENCY
where the money goes

> *The EV targets, the heat pumps, energy security… Regardless of my view on climate change, we [need] better cabling and stuff like that. So, I say, yeah, we need to invest now.*
>
> **Core customer (C)**

> *If it's going to keep us safe or keep our supply more consistent, then yeah, we're going to pay for it.*
>
> **Core customer (C)**

Workshop 1: Setting the scene

Fairness is plural, so who should pay?

A ENGAGED CUSTOMERS

Strongest push for government to contribute and for vulnerable customers to be protected through social tariffs, banding or exemptions.

"Some kind of social tariff for those that are more vulnerable and can't afford it."

B FUTURE SHAPERS

Most willing to spread costs across everyone as we will all benefit. However, wary that vulnerability definitions could be open to abuse.

"We should all be in it together… We're part of the investment."

C CORE CUSTOMERS

Felt support for those who can't pay already exists; keen that large energy users pay proportionally more.

"You know that [large energy users] are only paying a small percentage, and we as consumers keep getting hit by it."

COMMON GROUND

- All groups acknowledged the ongoing cost-of-living and energy crisis, with bills "constantly going up".
- There was unease about paying more, with explicit concerns for low-income and/or vulnerable customers. Protecting vulnerable and medically dependent customers was non-negotiable for everyone.
- All three panels distrusted 'short-term pain' framing: "would it then be an increased bill forever?"

Workshop 2: Reliability, resilience & local impacts

Reliability today shapes appetite to invest.

Most



couldn't recall their last power cut, and were pleasantly surprised by SSEN's reliability figures

20–30%



more planned interruptions were readily accepted to allow longer-term improvements

Comms



not outage length, drives impact: accurate restoration times let people make a plan

WHAT ELSE WE HEARD

- **No appetite to de-invest.** 'Investment to stand still' was supported when linked to real-world risks.
- **Worst-served and vulnerable first.** Customers were content not to benefit directly. A form of 'levelling up' seen as fair.
- **Major incidents felt remote.** A wide-area blackout scenario was dismissed by many as 'like something from a movie'.
- SSEN has a role to support customers during interruptions, but there is limited appetite for SSEN to do more than they already do. Instead, they should continue to focus on customers who are least able to help themselves.
- **Shared responsibility, in principle.** People accept a role in preparing for outages, but most act only after experiencing one.

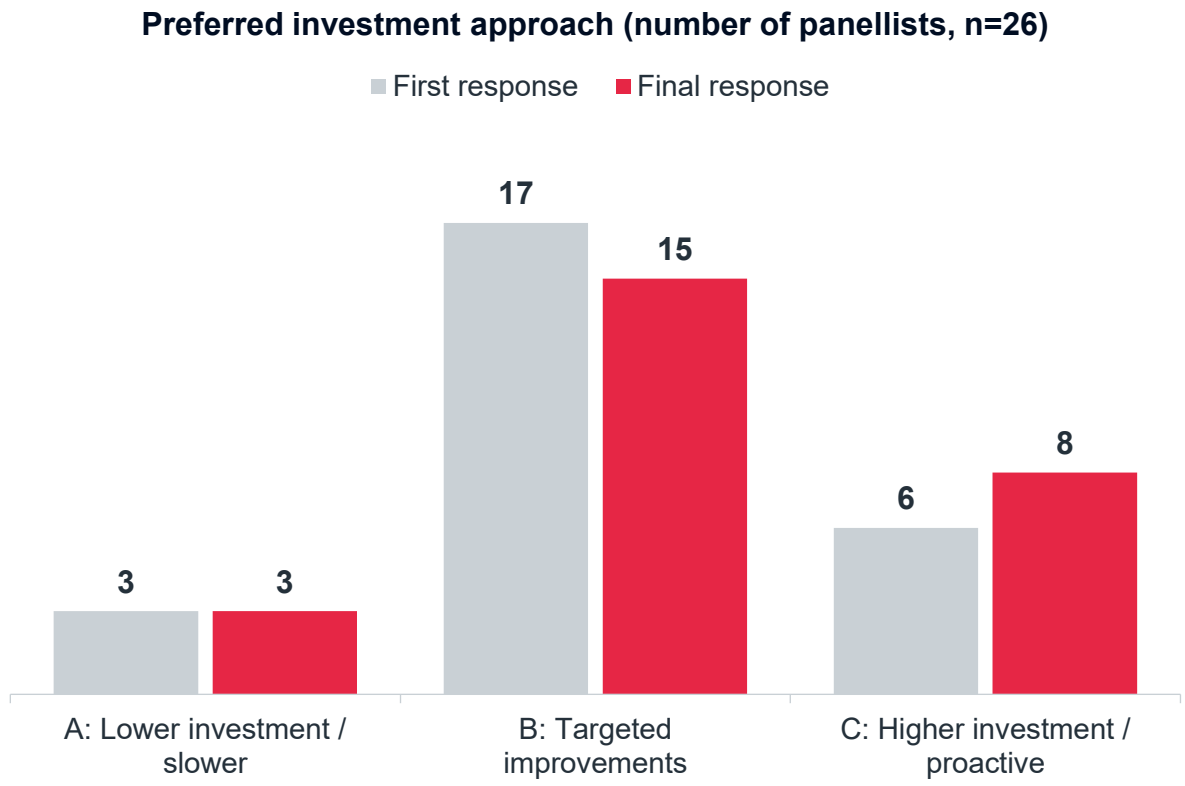
DIVERGING VIEW

- Future shapers and core customers preferred to have one longer power cut (~8 hours) rather than two shorter (4-hour) ones, though longer advanced notice for an eight-hour interruption was felt to be required.
- Households with medical needs preferred two 4-hour cuts.

> *I don't want them to put my bill up to make it even more reliable, because it's ultra-reliable now.*
>
> **Core customer (C)**

Workshop 2: Reliability, resilience & local impacts

Although there was some movement in views over the session, customers tended to opt for the middle ground of targeted improvements.



Stimulus was high level: options had no bill, disruption or outage figures attached.

Without detailed information on cost or disruption, customers were nervous to select option A which might commit to high disruption and a larger bill down the line, or higher investment option C which might inflate customer bills to an unaffordable level.

→ **Climate evidence moved some towards C**
Six became eight, mostly engaged customers and future shapers, many with storm experience.

→ **Cost acted as a brake**
Even those drawn to C pulled back, worried about others who couldn't afford it.

→ **B reflected uncertainty, not conviction**
Without numbers, the middle felt safest and most reversible.

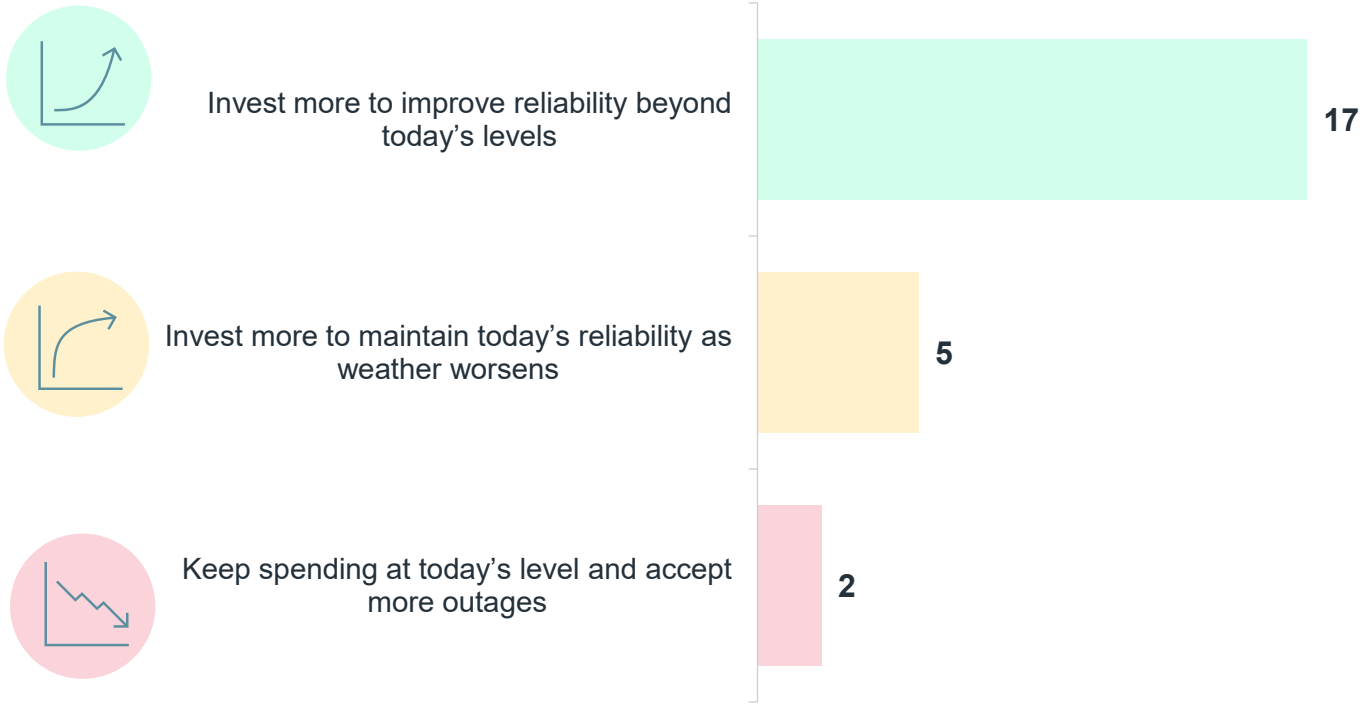
> **At the start:** *"Just because of the way things are in the economy at the moment… I'm kind of erring towards B…"*
>
> **At the end:** *"If costs remain level, I think the actual service is going to decrease."*
>
> **Engaged customer (A)**

> **At the start:** *"I think in the current financial climate, UK-wide, I would choose Option A."*
>
> **At the end:** *"I just wanted to say I've changed my mind to option B, because I like the idea of reducing risk."*
>
> **Core customer (C)**

Workshop 2: Reliability, resilience & local impacts

When it comes to resilience, few would trade reliability for lower bills.

Panellists' first choice when ranking three investment options



WHAT THIS TELLS US

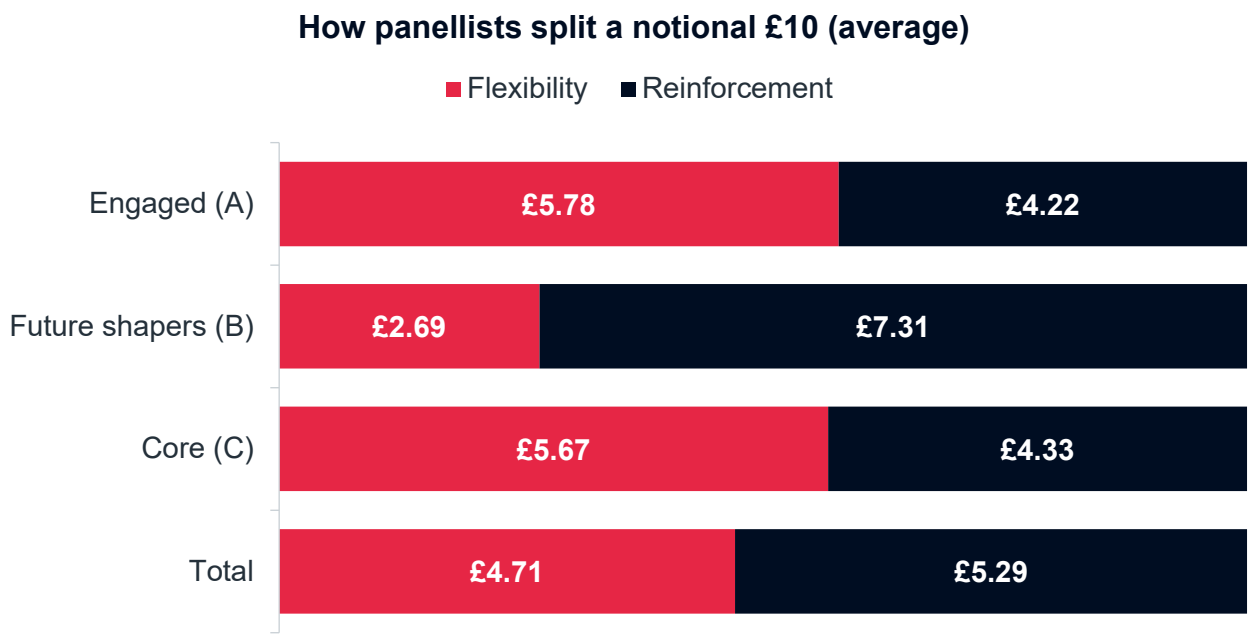
- **Most would pay more to improve reliability over time.** 17 ranked this first and a further 5 ranked it second.
- **Even the cautious would pay to keep pace with the weather.** Those who preferred to maintain today's levels still accepted higher spending.
- **Very few would accept more outages to hold bills.** Only two panellists, both future shapers, chose this.

CONSISTENT WITH WIDER RESEARCH

Joint research by electricity network companies on climate resilience found the same pattern. Customers support resilience investment when it is evidence-led, proportionate and targeted at known risks: worst-served areas, repeat interruptions and climate-exposed locations. Restoring power and supporting customers when disruption happens remains essential.

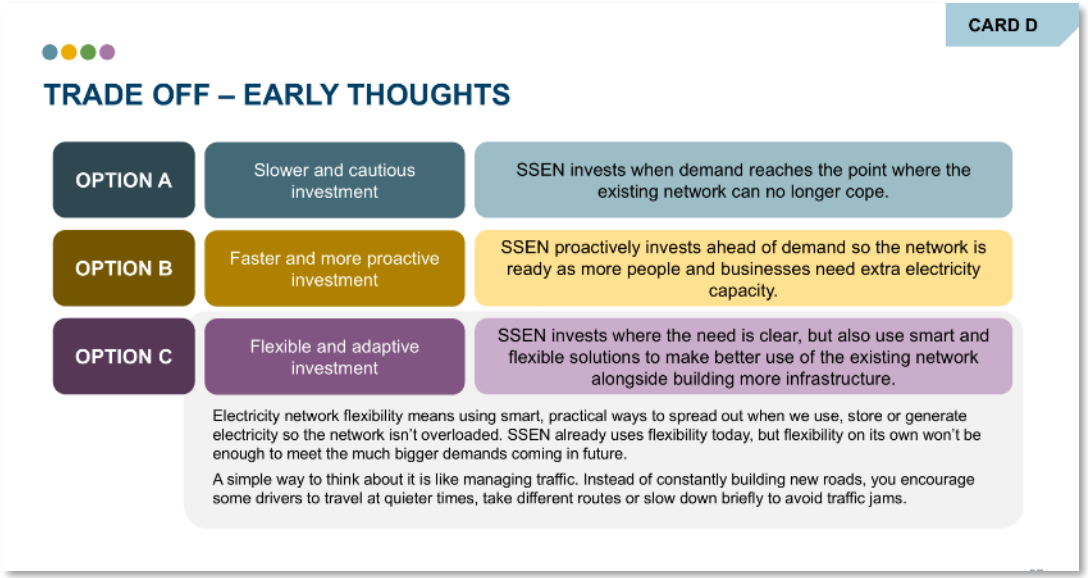
Workshop 3: Future demand & investment pace

Demand growth accepted, but how fast should SSEN build?
Panellists expect demand to rise and will flex their own use with the right incentives, but want reinforcement alongside.



> *£8 reinforcement, £2 flexibility. We are trying to use electricity faster than the network's available.*
>
> **Future shaper (B)**

> *Maximising the efficiency of the network that we've got… has to be a priority, otherwise it's a waste.*
>
> **Core customer (C)**

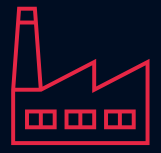


- **The slow investment option was rejected outright.** Seeing connections demand at more than double the forecast made 'wait and see' feel short-sighted.
- **Future shapers wanted to build ahead.** Fear of under-investment drove over 70% of their £10 into reinforcement.
- **Engaged and core customers wanted flexibility first.** Use existing capacity before building, but 'flexibility can only go so far' and needs incentives.
- **Events sharpened views.** Record heat and a fuel price shock raised interest in EVs, air conditioning and energy security. Customers were clear that protecting Great Britain's supply as much as possible from external influences is a priority, leading to strong support for investment to move towards increased self sufficiency for energy.

Workshop 3: Future demand & investment pace

Fairness widened and panellists wanted to see bill impacts.

BIG USERS SHOULD PAY THEIR SHARE

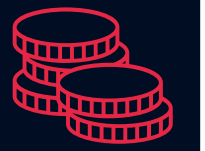


Panellists emphasised the importance of data centres and other large energy users making proportionate contributions. They sought reassurance that these users would cover connection costs and actively participate in flexibility services.

"It does seem a bit unfair that there's going to be these massive data centres using energy all day and all night, and we have to do our washing at 2 in the morning."

Future shaper (B)

DON'T PENALISE THOSE WHO CAN'T FLEX



Renters, people in flats, households without smart tech or with medical equipment can't shift use equally. Flexibility must reward, not punish.

"There are just some things that you can't compromise with … especially medical equipment, oxygen therapy."

Core customer (C)

WITHOUT PRICES, PEOPLE HEDGED



Several wanted more reinforcement but chose flexibility-first because bill impacts were unknown. Flexibility was read as 'cheaper' by default.

"If costs and our bills had nothing to do with it, then I would just say B."

Future shaper (B)

Workshop 4: Testing the priced draft plan

Bill rises not rejected but context is needed.

SCOTLAND (PERTH)

£xx – £xx

per year · c.x–x% of an average dual-fuel bill

SOUTH (READING)

£xx – £xx

per year c.x-x% of an average dual-fuel bill

Draft, indicative figures were presented in August 2026 for each region .

Shown alongside five investment areas and comparisons with other regulated bills.

Bill information redacted for report publication.

Accepted in context

More acceptable when tied to clear benefits in plain English and compared with other bills.

"x% to x%, in my mind, is not massive… I think that's affordable."
Perth

Cumulative pressure

The South accepted the figure alone, but stressed that every other bill is rising too.

"It's not just this increasing, it's other bills, groceries etc."
Reading

Easy for us, hard for others

Panellists warned that customers without workshop context may resist.

"It's going to be an impossible sell, because your neighbours haven't been through this."
Perth

Regional fairness

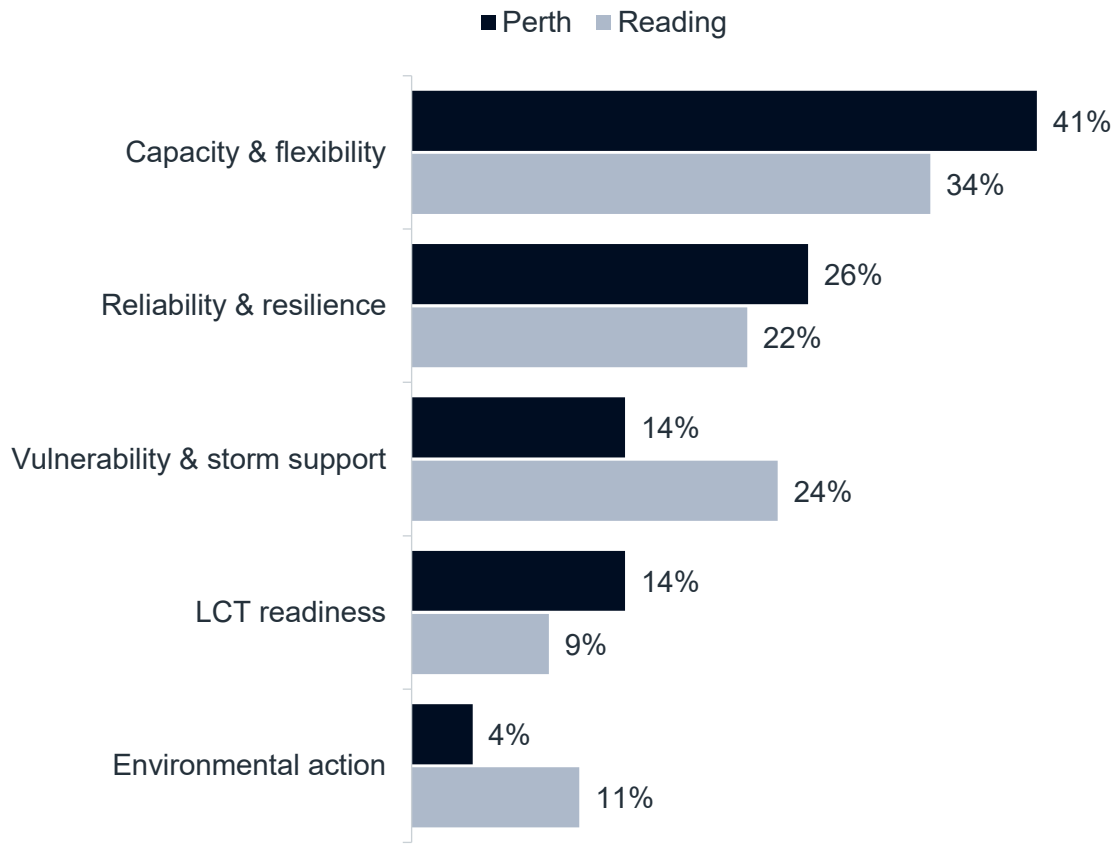
Scotland questioned why northern costs are higher and what SSEN actually controls.

"What I see is 'we will share the fairness but not share the pain'."
Perth

Workshop 4: Testing the priced draft plan

With prices attached, there is a clear hierarchy.

Share of counters placed in each investment jar



Small base (24: Perth 7, Reading 17), so treat shares as directional.

PROTECT, MAINTAIN OR REDUCE? (AT LEAST ONE CUT REQUIRED)

Investment area	Perth	Reading
Capacity & flexibility	**Protect**	**Protect**
Reliability & resilience	**Protect**	**Protect**
Vulnerability & storm	**Maintain**	**Protect / maintain**
LCT readiness	**Maintain**	**Reduce**
Environmental action	**Reduce**	**Maintain / reduce**

THE HIERARCHY

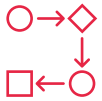
Keep the network ready, reliable and resilient first; support vulnerable customers practically; keep environmental commitments visible even with lower spend.

LCT readiness was the most fairness-sensitive area.

How views developed: From principles to a priced plan

	WORKSHOP 1	WORKSHOP 2	WORKSHOP 3	WORKSHOP 4
QUESTION EXPLORED	**Is the challenge credible?**	**How much reliability and resilience?**	**How fast to invest ahead of demand?**	**Does the draft plan strike the right balance?**
HOW VIEWS MOVED	From bill-focused, 'energy company profit' views → seeing SSEN as a regulated infrastructure operator facing systemic, long-term pressures	From 'it works today' → accepting that de-investment is not an option; targeting worst-served and vulnerable seen as fair	From abstract to specific: slow option rejected; flexibility-first chosen partly because costs were not yet known	With prices attached: capacity and resilience protected; fairness sharpened into regional charging and 'who else pays'

WHAT DELIBERATION HAS TAUGHT US



Preferences evolve as evidence is introduced; without detail, people take cautious 'holding positions' in the middle



Customers need quantified trade-offs (bill impact, disruption, outages) to form stable preferences



Fairness acts as a stabilising principle, but is plural and contested (income, age, geography, ability to benefit)

Over time: What shifted and what held steady?

WHAT SHIFTED

Understanding	‘Energy company profits’	**A regulated network facing long-term pressures**
Appetite to invest	Cautious, bill-first reactions	**More supportive of investment in both regions**
Investment pace	Middle-ground ‘holding positions’	**Clear priority to protect capacity once priced**
Fairness	Abstract ‘who pays?’	**Specific: regional charging, renters, big users**

WHAT HELD STEADY

Protect the vulnerable
Medically dependent and low-income customers: non-negotiable from first session to last.

Reliability is the foundation
No appetite for de-investment at any point.

Show us the value
Transparency and plain-English benefits were the price of trust.

Affordability as a brake
Cumulative household pressures tempered every choice.

Others should contribute
Government, big business and shareholders, not just bill payers.

Diverging views

	WHAT DROVE THEM	INVESTMENT PACE	FAIRNESS LENS
Engaged (A)	Lived experience of outages, the Priority Services Register and low carbon technologies	Most open to resilience spend; flexibility-first (£5.78 of £10)	Protect the vulnerable via social tariffs; government should pay more
Future shapers (B)	Future LCT use; fear of falling behind	Build ahead: over 70% of £10 to reinforcement	Shared responsibility; those who benefit most should pay
Core (C)	Least engaged; biggest shift in understanding	Cautious; avoid ‘waste’ and optimise first	Transparency on profits; don’t squeeze ‘average earners’
Perth	Rural exposure, storms	Resilience prioritised; environment lowest (4%)	Regional charging: ‘share the fairness, not the pain’
Reading	Housing growth, heat, data centres	Vulnerability support up (24%); readier to cut LCT enabling	Cumulative bills; LCTs benefit those who can afford them

Key findings

What informed customers want from ED3.

1 Invest: the case is made

Demand growth is real and de-investment is not an option. Support for investment grew over the four sessions.

2 Protect the foundations

When trade-offs were forced, capacity & flexibility and reliability & resilience were protected first.

3 Target where need is greatest

Worst-served, vulnerable and climate-exposed customers first; low carbon technology spend where network need is shown.

4 Prove the value

Bill rises were accepted when tied to clear benefits in plain-English and set against cumulative household costs.

5 Resolve fairness openly

Regional charging, who else pays, and protection for renters and non-adopters are the live issues.

6 Communicate honestly

Say what SSEN controls versus Ofgem and government; drop ‘short-term pain’; lower spend must not read as lower ambition.

Implications and next steps

5

Impact on the business plan: How views fed in

WHAT THE PANEL TOLD US	IMPLICATION FOR THE PLAN	DRAFT PLAN POSITION (TESTED AT WORKSHOP 4)
Reliability and resilience are the foundation; fix the worst-served first	Protect core reliability and resilience; target worst-served and climate-exposed areas	Targeted resilience strategy at moderate ambition, protected by both regions
Capacity is the top informed priority, but forecasts feel uncertain	Protect capacity and flexibility; show scenarios and review points	Balanced, ‘just ahead of need’ approach combining flexibility and reinforcement
Protecting vulnerable customers is non-negotiable	Protect vulnerability and storm support; raise awareness of the Priority Services Register; don’t define need by income alone	Batteries for medically dependent customers, resilience hubs and pop-up crisis centres
Low carbon technology benefits feel unevenly shared	Target low carbon technology investment where need is shown; protect renters and non-adopters; ‘dig once’	Proactive, area-based low-voltage network upgrades and unlooping; the most debated area
Environment matters, but ranks lowest	Keep commitments visible; frame lower spend as a mature programme	Reduced standalone spend, building on progress in the current plan (ED2)
Acceptance depends on explained value and fairness	Show costs with tangible outcomes; explain regional differences and who controls what	To shape the plan narrative and customer communications

Draft plan position as presented to the panel in August 2026 (draft, indicative). SSEN to confirm the final position in the submitted plan.

Balancing the evidence

Where panel views were weighed.

SUPPORT IS INFORMED AND CONDITIONAL

Panellistss kept weighing bills today against benefits tomorrow, reliability against affordability, investing now against later, and who benefits against who pays. These tensions remained even as they became more informed.

Engaged customers and future shapers were more comfortable investing ahead of need; core customers wanted stronger evidence.

Affordability worries eased with understanding but did not disappear.

OVERALL, NEITHER MAXIMUM INVESTMENT NOR MINIMUM COST.

The panel favoured a proportionate approach combining resilience, affordability, flexibility, transparency and targeted support. The plan reflects panel views where they align with wider evidence, and shows where they were balanced against engineering needs, deliverability and long-term value.

WHERE PANEL PREFERENCES WERE NOT ADOPTED IN FULL

WHAT THE PANEL SAID	HOW THE PLAN RESPONDS
A minority wanted more proactive investment	The plan keeps the targeted approach most panellists preferred. Investment for less certain future demand is held back, to be released only if that demand appears (through Ofgem's 'uncertainty mechanisms').
Many preferred flexibility first	This shaped how options were assessed, but proactive upgrades to the local low-voltage network remain where justified, so the programme stays forward-looking.
Southern panellists wanted to cut spend on readying networks for low carbon technology	Balanced against future network needs by targeting unlooping (giving homes that share a supply cable their own connection) at the areas of greatest need, rather than removing it.

Limitations: What to bear in mind, and mitigations

The panel was designed to build informed judgement, not to measure public opinion. Findings show how views develop through deliberation, not how common a view is, and complement wider research and acceptance testing.

LIMITATION	WHY IT MATTERS	MITIGATION
Small, non-representative sample (27; 24 at Workshop 4)	Findings are qualitative; shares and counts are directional only	Deliberate diversity by design; representative acceptance testing (1,000+ online and 50 - 100 face-to-face)
Informed panellists are not typical customers	‘An easy sell to us, a hard sell to others’	Workshop 5 asks the panel the same acceptance questions as the representative survey, so informed and uninformed views can be compared
Uneven regional split at Workshop 4 (Perth 7, Reading 17)	Scotland’s view rests on a small base	Regional differences reported as nuance, not as firm contrasts
No costs until Workshop 4	Earlier choices were cautious ‘holding positions’	Trade-offs revisited with priced propositions from Workshop 4 onwards
External events during fieldwork	Heatwaves and a fuel price shock may have amplified energy-security and EV interest	Context recorded in each report; checked through triangulation
Framing and facilitation effects	Stimulus can steer views	Independent speakers, balanced pros/cons, pre-reads, first vs final positions recorded
Order and information effects	What panellists are told, and in what order, can shape their views.	Topics built step by step with recaps; positions recorded before and after new information

What we learnt: Making deliberation work

1. **Share evidence in advance**
   Pre-reads moved discussion from questioning sources to weighing trade-offs.

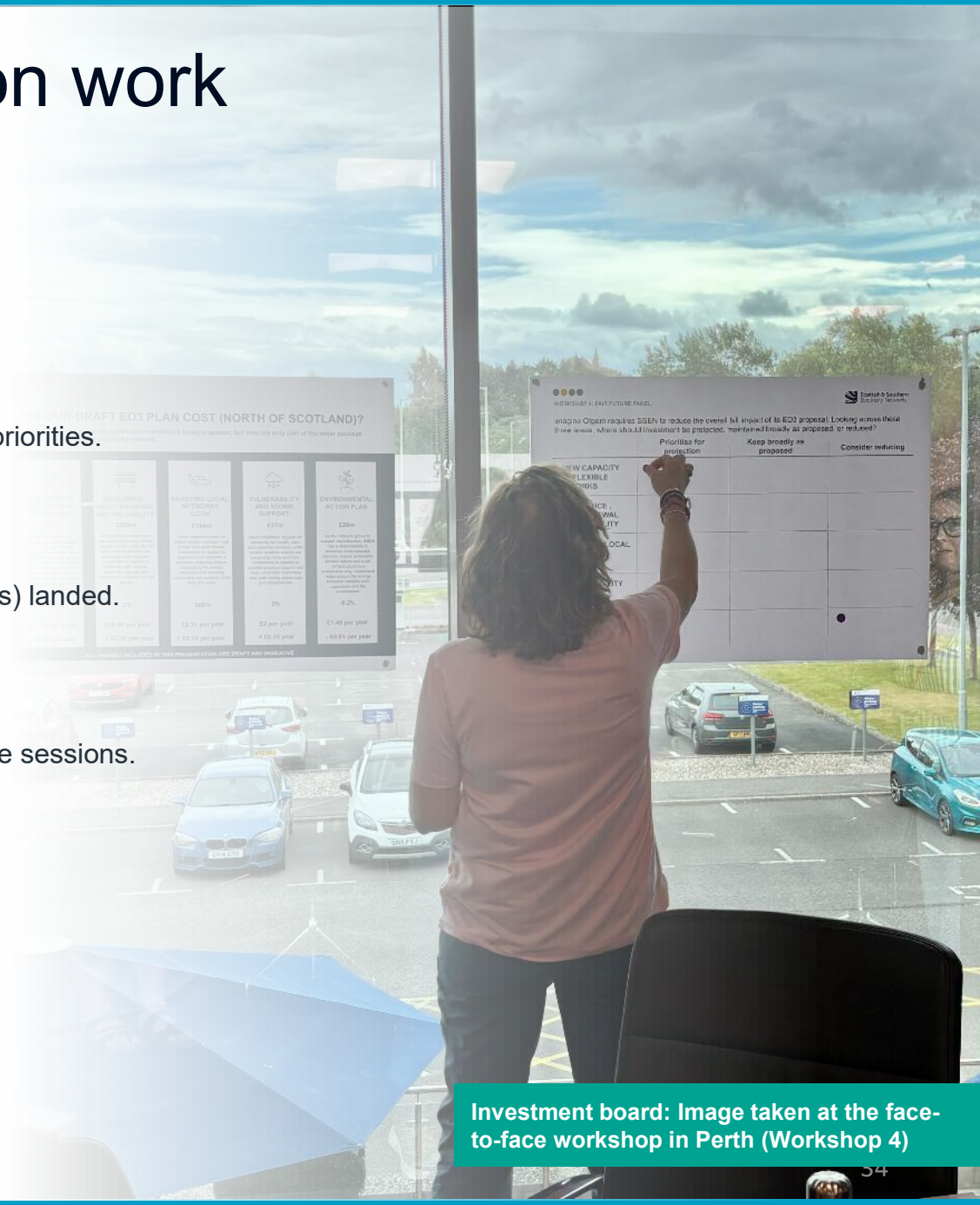
2. **Put numbers on trade-offs**
   Without prices people took cautious middle positions; priced options produced clear priorities.

3. **Make risk tangible**
   Remote scenarios were dismissed; local, recent examples (storms, heat, data centres) landed.

4. **Guest speakers**
   Guests built credibility; pre-recorded briefings were one-way to accommodate multiple sessions.

5. **Expect context to matter**
   Heatwaves and fuel price shocks shaped views on energy security and EVs.

6. **Test beyond the panel**
   Informed panellists warned their views aren't those of uninformed bill payers.



Investment board: Image taken at the face-to-face workshop in Perth (Workshop 4)

Next steps: From deliberation to the final plan

SEPT 2026

WORKSHOP 5

Panel acceptance test of the plan and bill impacts, using the same questions as the uninformed customer survey

OCT 2026

TRIANGULATION

Panel findings combined with all other engagement evidence

OCT 2026

INDEPENDENT ASSURANCE

Check that customer evidence is reflected in decision-making

OCT 2026

ACCEPTANCE TESTING

Representative read: 900 domestic, 100 non-domestic online, plus 50–100 face-to - face

NOV 2026

FINAL PLAN TO OFGEM

Business plan submitted

WHAT THE PANEL ASKED SSEN TO DO NEXT

Close the loop

Play back ‘you said, we did’ so panellists can see their influence on the plan.

Explain the hard parts

Regional charging, what SSEN controls, and why some spend is going down.

Test the message widely

Check acceptance with customers who haven’t had the workshop context.

Diversity, inclusion and ethical considerations

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Diversity, inclusion and ethical considerations

Inclusion was not treated as a separate exercise: it shaped who was recruited, how people could take part, and how complex information was presented.

DIVERSITY



- The segments deliberately included the groups ED3 affects most:
  - customers on the Priority Services Register and those relying on medical equipment
  - worst-served and rural customers
  - early adopters of low carbon technology
  - 18–29s who don't yet pay bills
  - customers with no recent contact with SSEN
- Loose quotas on age, gender, socio-economic group and rural/urban, across both regions.
- Vulnerability and fairness were discussed in every session; Citizens Advice was a guest speaker.

INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY



- Plain-English materials, visual showcards, and pre-reads sent in advance on request.
- An induction session for new recruits, and a recap at the start of every session, so no one started behind.
- Small groups so every voice was heard; homework allowed time to reflect.
- Online sessions reduced travel barriers; regional face-to-face venues in Perth and Reading.
- Venues for face to face sessions met accessibility and inclusivity standards, including step-free access, accessible toilets, and suitable facilities to support the participation of all attendees.
- Support with technology before the online sessions with a Zoom literacy session offered.
- Known gap: customers who aren't online. This is addressed by the face-to-face strand of acceptance testing (50–100 digitally disengaged customers).

ETHICS AND DATA PROTECTION



- Conducted under the MRS Code of Conduct and UK GDPR.
- Informed consent for taking part, recording and observation; observers introduced at the start of each session.
- Quotes anonymised and attributed only by segment or region.
- Recordings stored securely and kept in line with Create Clarity's data policy.
- Personal details stored separately from responses with access restricted to the project team
- Personal data deleted after 6 months in line with Create Clarity's retention period.
- Panellists could withdraw at any time.
- Incentives paid for time and homework.
- Sensitive topics (medical dependency, money worries) handled with care, with signposting to the Priority Services Register and Citizens Advice.

Glossary

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Glossary: Terms used in this report

Acceptance testing	Research asking a representative sample of customers whether the final plan and its bill impact are acceptable
Citizens Advice	Independent charity and the statutory consumer advocate for energy
Deliberative research	People learn about an issue, hear from experts and discuss it over time before giving a considered view
DNO	Distribution Network Operator: runs the local network that carries electricity to homes and businesses
ED2 / ED3	Ofgem's five-year price controls for electricity distribution: ED2 runs 2023–2028, ED3 covers 2028–2033
Flexibility	Shifting when electricity is used (e.g. charging a car overnight) so the existing network can carry more
ISG	Independent Stakeholder Group: scrutinises and challenges SSEN's engagement and business plan
LCT	Low carbon technology, such as electric vehicles (EVs), heat pumps, solar panels and home batteries
Longitudinal	The same people take part several times, so changes in their views can be tracked
Low-voltage (LV) network	The local cables and substations that supply streets and homes
MRS	Market Research Society: the UK professional body for research
NESO	National Energy System Operator: plans and operates Great Britain's energy system
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; publishes good-practice principles for deliberation
Ofgem	Great Britain's energy regulator; decides what network companies can spend and recover through bills
PSR	Priority Services Register: free extra support for customers who need it, e.g. during a power cut
Regen	Independent, not-for-profit energy transition experts
Reinforcement	Building more network capacity, such as bigger cables or substations
SSMC	Sector Specific Methodology Consultation: Ofgem's framework for how companies build ED3 plans
Triangulation	Combining evidence from several sources to reach robust conclusions
Unlooping	Giving homes that share one supply cable their own connection, so they can add EV chargers or heat pumps
Worst-served customers	Customers who have more frequent or longer power cuts than average



Fair Future Panel:
Shaping the ED3 Business Plan

Key findings and how views developed across four deliberative customer workshops, April – August 2026

SSEN with Create Clarity

Dawn Mulvey and Michael Brainch

October 2026