

# Northern Gas Networks

## Young Innovators Council



### Session 1: recruiting future talent

February 2023

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(YIC, S4TP, Northern Gas Networks and other)
- 2.Overview of the session
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# 1.Attendees

## Young Innovators Council

Alexa	Jack
Amiee	Jess
Anisha	Joyce
Ben	Kaitlin
Bradley	Lauren
Chloe	Lucy
Dhanayus	Naheerah
Druvan	Nitya
Lizzie	Noah
Ellie	Oliver
Henry	Theo
Holly	Thomas
Imose	Yasmeen

## Solutions for the Planet

Fran Isherwood	Youth Insights Coordinator
Kat Luckock	CEO (Maternity Cover)

## Northern Gas Networks

Alex Brightman	Hydrogen Home Coordinator
Emma Middleton ( <i>observer</i> )	HR Apprentice
Hollie Scott	Stakeholder Engagement and Project Coordinator
Jarred Knott	H21 Project Engineer
Jenny Wilkinson	Stakeholder Engagement Lead
Kati Sexton	Customer Care Officer
Lili Vastel ( <i>observer</i> )	Business Admin Apprentice
Lindsey Filer ( <i>observer</i> )	HR Director
Nadine McLoughlin ( <i>witness</i> )	Recruitment and Resourcing Business Partner

## Other

Alan Lowdon ( <i>observer</i> )	Northern Gas Networks' CEG (Professor in Practice & Member, Durham Energy Institute Advisory Board)
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## 2. Overview of session

### Background

2023 marks the third consecutive year of Northern Gas Networks' Young Innovators Council (YIC). The YIC continues to be the voice of young people at Northern Gas Networks (NGN). It provides young people's perspectives and Northern Gas Networks ensures these young people's thoughts and opinions are put at the heart of the business' decision making. Each session agenda is co-created by S4TP and Northern Gas Networks, influenced by the YIC's input on what topics they want to talk about. The aim is for meaningful and relevant engagement which provides a real opportunity for the YIC members to influence decision-making at Northern Gas Networks. This year, the YIC is made up of 36 young people aged 14–18 who are based across the footprint of Northern Gas Networks.

### Background to session:

Northern Gas Networks' aim for this first session of 2023 was to explore the YIC's perceptions of NGN as a future employer, in order that they can begin to understand *how* to make NGN an attractive place to work. Secondary to this was the question of what makes the gas sector, as a whole, an appealing, or indeed unappealing, industry. This will help to inform NGN's recruitment and workforce succession strategies.

The preliminary questions that Solutions for the Planet used to plan the session were:

- What do future employees consider important in job adverts?
  - What's meaningful – environmental credentials, pension, working hours?
  - What makes a company attractive?
  - Tone of voice - what are you comfortable with and not?
  - Terminology and tone (prioritised list of importance?)
- What is it the YIC are looking for in a company - brand, reputation, image?
  - What makes an organisation attractive?
  - And what puts you off?
- What roles do the YIC think about when they think about NGN?
  - Are they interested in more general business roles, such as finance/HR/3iG/legal/data analysis/marketing & comms, etc.
  - What would make them think of the gas sector?
- Where would the YIC look for when applying for a role?
  - What are schools/colleges/universities pushing?
  - Would they use social media to research a company?
  - What would give them a positive impression of the organisation?

## YIC 2023 Session 1: recruiting future talent

**Total length:** 1 hour 30 minutes

**People involved:** 1 S4TP facilitator, 1 S4TP support, 5 NGN facilitators, 1 YIC witness, 1 NGN witness, 3 NGN observers, 1 external observer

**Date and time:** Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 5.15pm

**Panel attendance:** 26

**Apologies:** 7

**Did not attend:** 3

### Objectives:

- A. To begin to understand how to make NGN an attractive organisation to work at for future generations.
- B. To understand this attractiveness and perceptions of branding, job adverts, roles, reputations, etc. at NGN and within the gas industry and the wider energy industry.

### Materials and tools:

Prior to the session, the YIC were asked to look at jobs and apprenticeships available on the following websites:

<https://www.totaljobs.com/>

<https://www.cv-library.co.uk/>

<https://www.britishenergyjobs.co.uk/>

<https://www.energyutilitiesjobs.co.uk/>

- Are any of these jobs attractive to you? If they are, make a note of why. If not, try to think about why they are not attractive.
- What would put you off applying for one of these jobs? (\*disregarding qualifications & experience, we will be covering this in the session.)  
(\*don't forget to use your location, or compare with other locations)

During the session:

1. Zoom main room discussions, Q+A, [Slido](#) questions and chat functions were used to support the witness presentations about current recruitment strategy at NGN, discover the YIC's perceptions of jobs at NGN, and views of the wider energy industries as employers.
- A breakout session focused specifically on the questions:
  - Where would you look when applying for a role?
  - What do you look for in a company for future employment?
- As shown in Table 1 below, a section was planned using the online collaboration platform [Mural](#), but it was felt during the course of the session that much of what would have been asked on the Mural had been covered, and time would be better spent focusing on the breakout room discussions.

## Agenda:

Time	Activity	Lead	Room (M/B)	Timings (mins)
5:15	Welcome - Group Agreement: feed it back from meet up session	S4TP/NGN	M	7
5:22	Introduction to session, agenda & objectives	S4TP	M	3
5:25	Activity 1: feedback from pre-session work	S4TP	M	10
5:35	Witness 1: YIC member	YIC/S4TP	M	2/3
5:37	Witness 2: NGN HR team Q+A	NGN	M	7/8
5:45	Activity 2: what 3 words – Slido word cloud	JW	Slido	5
5:50	Activity 3: mind map on NGN jobs/roles - Mural	S4TP	Mural	10
6:00	Breakout session	S4TP/NGN	B	30
6:30	Feedback	S4TP	M	10
6:40	Thanks & End			2

Table 1: Agenda; YIC 2023 Session 1

### 3. Key Discussion Points

#### Group Agreement

At the meet up session that took place in person on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February at NGN's offices in Leeds, YIC members in attendance (19 out of 36 members) were offered the following provocation:

**Creating a Group Agreement – 2, 4, more**

- How can we make the YIC a good experience for everyone involved?
- Create your own ground-rules for how to work together effectively and respectfully.
- Everyone shares what they need from others in order to participate effectively.
- **In 2s:** discuss your requests and suggestions for our YIC Group Agreement. (5 mins)
- **In 4s:** share and expand on your suggestions in groups of 4. Write them on post-it notes. (10 mins)
- **More:** feed back all our suggestions as a group, to create our YIC Group Agreement 2023. (15 mins)

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Figure 1: Group Agreement activity; YIC 2023 meet up session

The following thoughts were shared by those YIC members present and have been organised into the sub-headings. These were then read out during this session and agreed upon by the whole YIC via the session feedback form [see Appendix 6].

**Meet up session**  
YIC 2023 group agreement

Sharing ideas and decision making

- Small groups and breakout rooms are important to allow less vocal people to offer ideas.
- Everyone can choose when to speak. Everyone should have the opportunity to share (or not share) their views.
- 1 voice at a time should be the aim, especially in the Zoom setting.
- Be open to different ideas.
- Others may ask for further explanation of ideas, in which case further explanation is welcome; as is the response *"let me have a think about that and come back to it"*.

**Meet up session**  
YIC 2023 group agreement

Listening and feedback

- All ideas are welcome (not to be laughed at, overlooked or dismissed).
- Give people time to speak. This might include some constructive moments of quiet.
- Constructive criticism is welcome when delivered in the form of a question.
- Try to expand or build on each other's ideas, especially when following another speaker – yes, and...
- Share with the facilitators if you are confused or need further explanation.
- Be aware and take responsibility for your own input. Give others enough time and space to share their ideas.

**Meet up session**  
YIC 2023 group agreement

Community

- Be kind.
- Be respectful.
- Include everyone.
- Be open and responsive to the natural difference between the main Zoom space and smaller breakout rooms.
- Try not to be afraid to speak in the safe space of the YIC discussions.
- Feel free to use and explore the full Zoom functionality.
- Use inclusive language.
- This is about having fun and feeling engaged – share with the facilitators if this isn't your experience.

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Figure 2: YIC 2023 final Group Agreement; YIC 2023 Session 1

## Feedback from YIC pre-session work

1 week before the session, the YIC were invited to research jobs and apprenticeships that are currently available at Northern Gas Networks. This was to provide them with some context for the session discussions by doing their own research around outward-facing recruitment at NGN. It also allowed them to begin to build a picture of NGN as an employer, which helped inform their input to both session objectives. During the session the YIC were invited to share the highlights of their research in the Zoom chat [see Appendix 1]. Further pre-work was also shared by email following the session [see Appendix 2].

The YIC had clearly researched the jobs available fully and it was largely a variety of engineering roles that were highlighted. Unsurprisingly, the YIC members shared the job roles that most attracted their attention, based on their individual interests, personalities and perceptions of the types of work they might like to do. The area of sustainability was mentioned by several young people, and one possible reason for this might be that community responsibility and environmental awareness featured repeatedly in later discussions around what the YIC look for in a company for future employment. One or two members mentioned roles like *Aerothermal Analysis Engineering* and *Technical Project Manager* as being of interest, highlighting the appeal of very specialised roles to the young people who are interested in pursuing those careers.

Key words used by the YIC when describing roles were fast paced, dynamic, practical, creative and sustainable.

YIC comment	YIC further thoughts
"I don't really like the idea of being a construction worker."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Not keen on outdoor work</li><li>- An office/indoor job seems more appealing</li><li>- A job in a team would be more appealing</li></ul>
'Aerothermal analysis engineering'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Appealed because it's to do with aerodynamics and materials that are really resistant to heat, and other uses, e.g. aeroplanes and spacecrafts which is really interesting.</li><li>- The word 'aerothermal' is what attracted them to click on the link</li><li>- Recalls the job advert requiring bachelors/master's degree in aerospace engineering, or similar</li></ul>
'TOTEX'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Not knowing what something means in a job role or description can be alienating</li><li>- (of course, aware that some jobs are qualification/experience specific)</li></ul>
'Electrical Design Engineer'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sounds really appealing because you design, build and maintain electrical systems and machinery</li><li>- Fun as somebody who likes making and fixing things</li></ul>

Table 2: YIC pre-work responses; main room Zoom feedback; YIC 2023 Session 1

It is worth noting here that it was very apparent to the facilitators, both from the chat conversations and further comments, that there is a noticeable difference amongst the YIC between those young people who are interested in static jobs and those more interested in work that moves them around. This extends further to interests in team working vs. independent working. From a brief show of hands during this activity, the majority of the YIC did NOT think of office/indoor work when they thought of NGN as a gas company, and this is certainly something worth investigating further.



### Witness 1: Theo, YIC member

Theo attended the YIC 2023 meet up session that took place in person for the first time on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2023, at NGN's headquarters near Leeds. Theo is a new member of the YIC 2023 and asked pertinent and challenging questions of NGN's innovation team (and partners Synovate) during their presentation at this event. For that reason, we invited him to feed back to the YIC what he'd learned about LeakVISION Thermal Imaging Robotics, and what this development might mean for recruitment at NGN.

Theo explained the mechanism of the robot and its interaction with potential gas leaks. He had a question about the longevity of the robotics in relation to metal vs. plastic pipes which was answered in the Zoom chat [see Appendix 3] and reminded us that the robot we saw is currently one of a kind in the world. In terms of what this work means for jobs at NGN:

*"We discussed the typical people who will dig into the ground and locate the leak and fix the pipe manually. Their jobs could be at risk because now the robot does it. We mentioned they'd have to be retrained to drive and programme the robots. Provided there is some upskilling and retraining, then that's the ideal."*

### Witness 2: Nadine McLoughlin, Recruitment and Resourcing Business Partner at NGN

- What is recruitment and why is it important?
- Recruitment challenges at NGN
- Recruitment at NGN in 2022 and looking forward in 2023



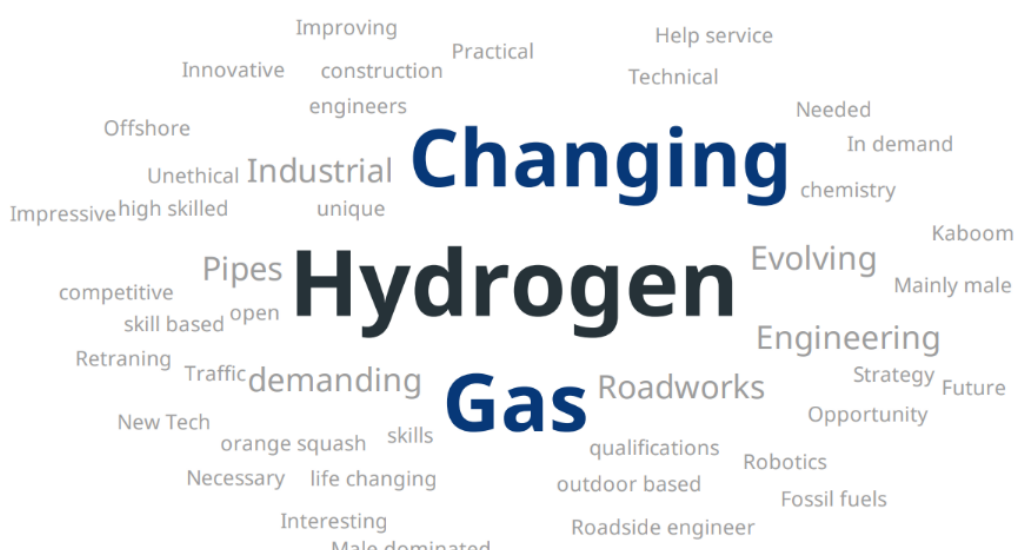
Figure 3: Excerpt from Nadine McLoughlin's witness presentation; YIC 2023 Session 1

The word cloud function on Slido was used to ask the following questions. Asking the YIC these questions after they have done surface level research into jobs at NGN and then heard from NGN's recruitment team, helped them to respond using a combination of their preconceived perceptions with some further understanding of the situation within the business.

0 2 5



0 2 5



## Young Innovators Council 2023: recruiting future talent

## Breakout session 1

In the first half of the session, we thought and talked about current jobs at NGN and perceptions of NGN as a business to work for. The following breakout room discussions allowed the YIC and facilitators to drill deeper into what exactly could make a business an attractive place to work and where they would want to find this information, in smaller groups and therefore in more detail.

In their smaller groups, the YIC first answered the question ‘Where would you look when applying for a role?’ Their responses [see Appendix 3] fell into two main categories:

1. lists of specific sites or events they would go to and therefore expect to see job roles listed and companies represented e.g. social media / school careers events.
2. the detail they would expect to see alongside an advert:
  - personal, unbiased reviews of roles and companies are vital and very effective
  - connections within local communities, for example through company office open days, would build on school careers’ information

The breakout rooms were then asked to explore what they would look for in places of future employment, and we have categorised their responses as follows:

	What do you look for in a company for future employment?
Reputation	Positive reviews and thoughts from previous and current employees
	Acknowledgement from a company after submitting a job application
	Poor reputations for treating employees badly are hugely off-putting
	Good PR relating to community and environmental pledges
	Company being open with its community
	Working for a “good” company is more important or as influential as £s
	“If friends and family talk positively and enjoy their job it does influence your opinion, but it comes down to individual choice.”
Culture	Strict policies on topics such as discrimination
	Making everyone feel welcome and thought of fairly
	Good communication
	Wellbeing of the staff
	Community involvement and engagement
	Supporting environmental goals
	Working towards a more sustainable future
	Honesty and transparency
	“I want to be treated fairly and have my voice heard by an employer – not be judged by how I look.”
	Job security: that a job is reliable and that the company will take care of you while you do work for them.
	A company’s ethics
	Flexibility and a good workplace environment
	A company’s aims and values having a philanthropic focus on how their work affects its people and customers.
	Do they listen to all their employees at all levels?

<b>Branding</b>	Good social media presence
	Celebrate and platform staff success stories to help with recruitment and promotion
	Advertise apprenticeships and internships (not just permanent jobs) across all public platforms
	Clear messaging around a company's aims
	Placing importance on customer and community opinions
	Brand is important: recognisable name, reputable company
	Company sharing its insights and values
	Authenticity, reliability, stability
	Video diaries
	Job adverts: opportunities/benefits that you would receive with the job would be attractive to young people; a modern design of the actual advert with colour; clear and precise qualification requirements; don't be vague, but keep it simple
<b>Employees' days &amp; development</b> <i>(personal &amp; professional)</i>	Support to build up CVs
	Work experience of other roles/areas
	Opportunities higher up in the company
	Development of careers
	Diversity within the role
	Detailed description of the role is important
	Benefits
	Competitive pay
	"Money is a factor but I'm not driven by that"
	It's a balance between enjoyment /fulfilment and financial reward
	"Interviews are a really important part of the process for me to understand a company."
	Flexibility and part-time or short-term options attractive: "I'm young with no commitments so fixed permanent jobs for life aren't that appealing."
	Types of work hours available; hybrid, home/office, flexible
	Good wages, reasonable managers, career progression
	Diverse opportunities for promotion
	Employee entitlements, e.g., insurance
	Collaboration between managers/team leaders and lower level employees
	Appealing to move around within a business rather than have a linear career
	Rewards, e.g. accreditations

Tables 3: Summary of breakout room discussions; YIC 2023 Session

## Feedback responses

Some of the questions that the YIC were asked in the feedback form for this session are pertinent to the session objectives, so are highlighted here. The remainder of the responses are in Appendix 1.

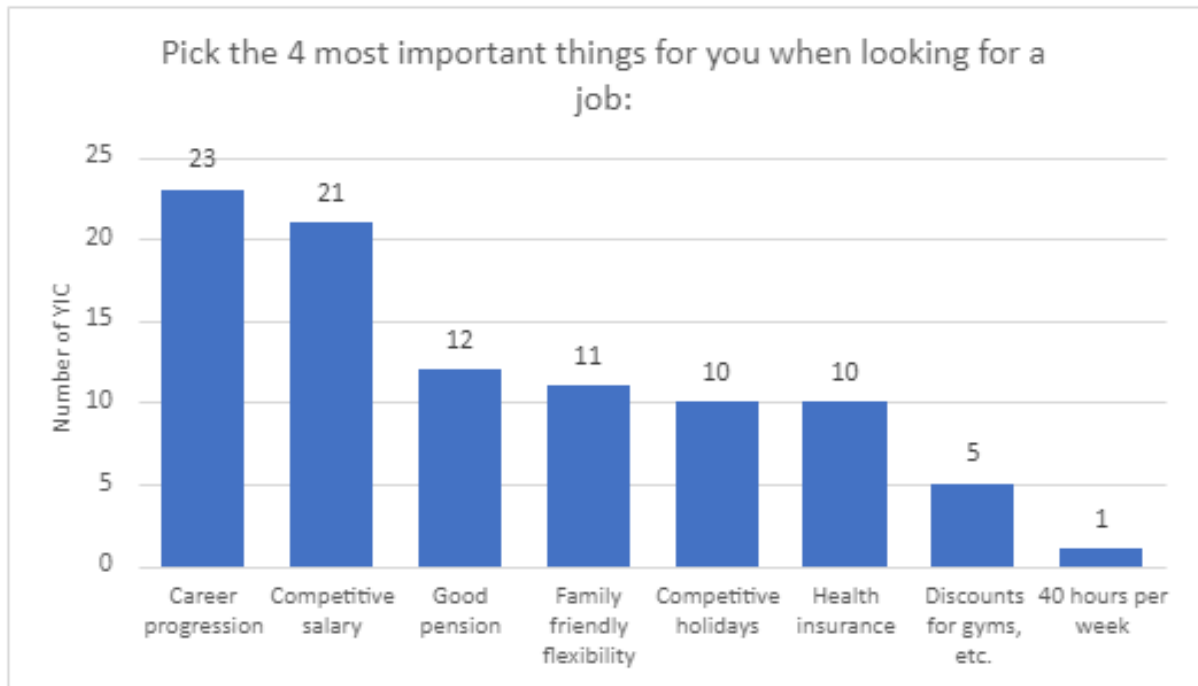


Figure 5: Topic-related graph 1 extracted from feedback form responses; YIC 2023 Session 1

How important is a business' reputation and word of mouth in choosing a job or an employer? \*

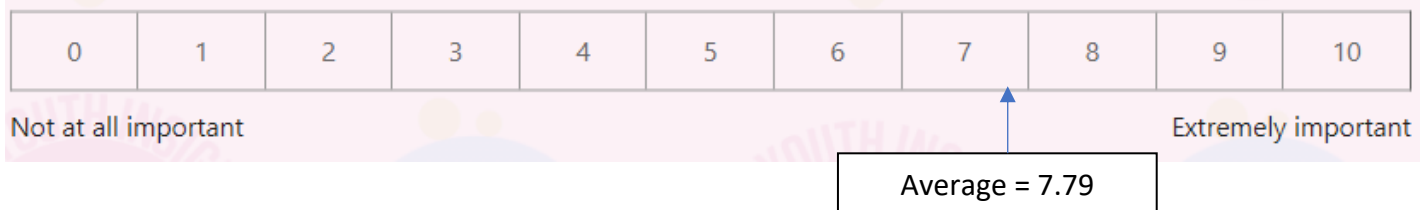


Figure 6: Topic-related graph 2 extracted from feedback form responses; YIC 2023 Session 1

Please rank the following job benefits that NGN offers at the moment in order of importance to you. Highest at the top, lowest at the bottom.



Figure 7: Topic-related graph 3 extracted from feedback form responses; YIC 2023 Session 1

## 4. Key recommendations (priorities)

There was a fair amount of repetition or crossover in the more detailed discussions held in each breakout room, and the key pieces of feedback from each group can be seen in Appendix 5.

The YIC put huge importance on the reputation of a company. To appeal to their generation, the YIC want balanced and encouraging word-of-mouth information and to see positive reviews from past and present employers. This is reiterated in the fact that when asked in the feedback form, on a scale of how important from 0 to 10 (where 10 is very important), a business' reputation and word-of-mouth in choosing a job or an employer scored an average of 7.8 [see Appendix 6].

When it comes to the workplace environment, feeling authentically involved in a company's decision-making as an employer and tangible career development opportunities were two very important factors the YIC want from employment.

Interestingly, whilst salary and benefits were only mentioned as a priority in passing by one breakout group, it too has presented as one of the most important factors for the YIC through their feedback form responses, both when looking for a job and as a key job benefit currently offered by NGN.

### **In summary:**

- Make opportunities for school leavers (aged 16+) more visible on your website.
- Make apprenticeship opportunities more visible on your website and opportunities for people to apply early e.g., before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or before they have their results.
- Be specific about working hours (not just Mon-Fri), pay (not just "competitive") and details about company and working culture.
- Be clear about what the additional benefits, holiday and sick pay are on the advert (where available)
- Look at ways to provide a progressive, non-bias recruitment process.
- Use social media, not just for advertising roles but raising the profile of your business as an employer of choice and about what your company does for younger people.
- Simple access (online) to further information about roles and company (not "email us for details")
- Suggestions on where to advertise:
  - School careers days and open evenings / events
  - Insight days at company
  - Social media including TikTok ('a day in the life of')
  - On company website with all active/current roles
  - LinkedIn, Totaljobs and Indeed

## 5. Conclusion

Northern Gas Networks does currently appeal to the young people of the YIC as a place to work, as highlighted by the 'what 3 words' activity. The most commonly used words used to describe NGN as an employer were 'Welcoming', 'Changing', 'Innovative', 'Understanding', 'Inclusive' and 'Competitive'. Important to consider too, though, are the words 'Unethical', 'Male dominated' and 'Fossil fuels', which came to mind when the YIC were asked to describe jobs in the wider gas industry in general. Though not the most-used words, their presence in these word clouds speaks to a still-prevalent perception amongst some young people that the gas industry has some work to do to attract them.

The YIC was represented by 26 out of a possible 36 members, and most absentees sent their apologies. It was felt that contribution and interaction from and amongst the YIC and the facilitators was excellent, especially considering this was the first session of a new year of the YIC.

As we have been aware of from YIC 2021 and YIC 2022, some voices were understandably more dominant than others. We hope to continue to accommodate for this on the YIC through facilitation and having a variety of options for input from the young people. The YIC had clearly done a great deal of research and thinking around this topic, and it sparked a huge interest in employment at Northern Gas Networks.



## 6. Appendices

### Appendix 1: YIC 2023 Session 1 pre-work responses

Roles available at NGN	YIC comments
Civil engineering	Chance to make something new and creative, like Heatherwick's Rolling Bridge
Electrical design engineer	Sounds like a cool job
Electrical engineer	A job that I found was an electrical engineer, this job interested me because I liked the idea of it providing benefits, its payment was also good and its job description overall was interesting.
	I also looked into electronics as I did that for work experience and absolutely loved it.
Jobs in 'quality'	I feel that a job in quality would be interesting because it involves assessing a range of different engineered things, whether that be pipes or even robots. It pays quite well and I think it would suit me because I'm good at looking for things that are out of place.
	However, I am not too keen in working in the gas industry unless it can be better for the environment and this is something that I would definitely consider when applying for a job.
Construction Worker	I don't really like the idea of being a construction worker.
Gas Operative	Why it appeals? Doing a range of different tasks (won't be too repetitive), being a part of something that can help people.
	Drawbacks? Possibly a lot of driving long distances (away from home a lot), not in renewables or green energy (more personal to me).
Aerothermal analysis engineering	Seems like a really interesting area that'll stay relevant.
Planning	I find the designing of projects (stuff like gas pipes) interesting and a fun logistical challenge.
Sustainability specialist	I came across something, can't remember which site I found it on, but it's a sustainability specialist which looks at developing and implementing programmes of sustainability across all their manufacturing sites. The main focuses are on energy, waste management, carbon and water footprints and reducing plastic packaging.
New energies production; nuclear fusion	One type of job that I found interesting was anything working with new types of energy production, specifically nuclear fusion. I know I would probably find it interesting but since I haven't experienced what the job is actually like, I'm not sure about it.
	I think I'd probably quite like a job in the energy sector but instead of being, say, an electrician be someone who maybe research's new ways of making energy or maybe something like a nuclear or chemical engineer.

Aerospace engineering	Jobs in engineering are looking good to me, for example aerospace engineering, especially apprenticeships as they give you so much experience.
Operation Response Engineer	I found a job ad for an Operation Response Engineer for NGN, I liked it because it sounds dynamic and fast-paced, practical but also technical (which suits me).
Technical project manager	I saw a job as a technical project manager that was attractive as it said about how it values inclusion in the workplace, and teamwork and collaboration in the job role.
Practical technicians	However, some of the jobs that were less attractive included practical technicians as it gave a more general description and didn't seem as interesting.
TOTEX	I don't think I would like to be a TOTEX Technician at NGN because I don't have a large interest in engineering (also I don't know what the job entails, or what TOTEX means/stands for).
Strategy manager	However a strategy manager seems more up my street.

<b>YIC observations about employment at NGN</b>
I did research and found quite a few apprenticeships that were available to come into the gas industry.
Some parts of the energy business are very heavily based on being outdoors which I am not a fan of. I think I would prefer the more in office and organisation work.
Jobs which pay per hour - lots of flexibility but downside of no sick pay as it is not based on a salary.
Teamwork jobs are quite appealing to me as we can help each other as everyone will have different experiences.
I think I'd probably quite like a job in the energy sector but instead of being, say, an electrician, be someone who maybe researches new ways of making energy or maybe something like a nuclear or chemical engineer.
Engineering, especially chemical or something in sustainability seems really interesting but I feel like experience is always needed.
Options of working in different locations (online, at an office, worksite...)
A lot of onsite engineering jobs are kind of like applying the knowledge you learn – but it's also a really demanding job especially as it requires you to do a lot of hands-on work, but it also lets you travel a lot of places too.
There also seems to be a stark divide between “hands on work” and “office jobs”.

## Appendix 2: Pre-work shared by YIC members

**Kate H:** “I have had a look at a few jobs that would be appealing to me and suitable for my level of education.”

\*Kate has carried out research broader than roles at just NGN

### HR Apprentice

- 37.5 hours a week, manageable and decent pay (£6.83 per hour)
- 24-month contract, offers job security
- Good benefits offered especially at an apprentice stage (26 days holiday, paid voluntary days, funded professional subscription)

### Junior Graphic Designer

- Temporary assignment, not secure
- Great pay (£10 per hour)
- Working on small projects alone and bigger projects with more experienced people can learn as you go on the job.
- No details of working hours, just says Monday – Friday
- Doesn't mention the company, can't research

### **Oliver L**

- Pay per hour jobs: high flexibility with hours worked but lack of benefits as it has no fixed salary.
- Location of jobs: globalisation has made it easier along with covid to allow more online based jobs which enable companies to expand globally quicker with links in other countries - however this can lead to poor productivity and laziness as offices surrounded by colleagues can improve focus.
- Notes for advertisements:
  - Simplicity is key. As well as employers looking through thousands of applications, people looking for jobs will scan through hundreds of advertisements. Both need precise information in short context or else both will lose interest.
  - 'Competitive Salary' is not useful as the applicant will have other options available with the figures presented to them.
  - Benefits, holiday leave, and sick pay should be at the forefront of the advertisement as these are the selling points of working at YOUR company compared to others. Leading on from this, each job no matter how small or large it may be needs a feature that sets you apart from the other companies.
  - In my personal opinion, pronouns, age, ethnicity and gender should not be viewed by the person reading the applications. It is not necessary for them to be inputting in this stage of the applications, this can prevent bias but also enable the right people being selected for the right job. I realise inclusion and diversity is a growing issue but no one should be valued over another, so if one person is able to do a task/job more productively and efficiently than another then it shouldn't matter about gender, ethnicity, age and pronouns. However later on in the interviewing stage, if a person fits in better with the environment, work ethic and morals of the company then they should be selected over the person who can do the task they are assigned better than

another. (P.S. that may not make any sense so I am open to any questions you have if you want to reply to this.)

- Another key form of advertisement is exposure. Social media platforms can enhance or demolish a company's standing. Exposure does not always mean an increase in sales but it does create an interest for the company itself. For example, if you look at Ryanair and Lotus Cars on the TikTok platform, they create content that creates interest for the company and entertains the people using social media. The Lotus Cars account started with a graduate and was a project that was run along with the social media executive. Content like this would be beneficial to Northern Gas Networks as it draws attention to the company and the industry, bridging the gap between the customers and workers as they are free to ask questions and you would be free to answer them.

**Aiden N:** "I've done some research on different job sites, using Google. I've known what I wanted to do for a couple of years so have targeted home pages, job sites and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) for updates. Maybe I'm looking in the wrong places, but these are some examples when searching:

NGN Apprenticeship Scheme seeking recruits to deliver a greener energy future | Northern Gas Networks

- Although last year's, it says apprentices must be 18 years plus, so immediate put off. No mention of employment options for school leavers, so pushing me to look elsewhere.

Home | Northern Gas Networks

- NGN's own website only has a small 'Join Us' link at bottom of home page and when you click on it, it only activates your emails so you can just email them, so no information on apprenticeships on their home page.

Facebook

- NGN Facebook has one posting in National Apprentice week (last week) but no links to information on upcoming employment application processes or even 'click links' to any information on their apprenticeship opportunities.

There were some adverts for last year's apprenticeships at NGN advertised for Houghton-le-Spring area in Sunderland, not for near my home, which would have been brilliant for me. But these have been taken off the internet now (but they were still on before Christmas even though they were last year's). I believe they were advertised on 'total jobs' and again all said 18 years+, and although they're now a year old I thought this age criteria would be the same for this year.

I know it's probably early for people looking at apprenticeships, lots of my friends at school are not showing any interest in apprenticeships and certainly not in energy, some looking at potential call centre new apprenticeships or sports types, but I'm really keen on gaining a trade that will hopefully lead to a lifelong career. I thought being early and showing interest would make me more attractive to companies, and to be honest lots of companies I've

spoken with have been impressed with me being part of NGN's YIC so thanks, as I do believe it will help me in the long run.

South Tyneside Homes  
Believe Housing  
Gentoo  
Thirteen Group

- All above are putting out information on apprenticeships, some taking applications now on promise of GCSE results gained. Most of the apprenticeship offered by these companies are gas/heating engineers, plumbers, joiners, electricians, plasterers and other administration/office roles.
- South Tyneside Homes were brilliant by the way [at an apprenticeship event he attended, which clashed with YIC 2023 Session 1, hence his absence]. They hosted and were really encouraging me to apply (not a lot of people attended so maybe they didn't have much choice 😊), but their apprenticeships are live and you can apply now. They even had back up plans for you if you just missed the grades expected, to quickly get them to run alongside the apprenticeship."

### **Nitya Singh**

Energy Strategy Manager

+ves:

- Quite an innovative role in that you are part of NGN's project to get low carbon gases.
- You play a pretty big part in that you provide expert advice on NGN's Energy Policies and the importance of gas in the future.
- There is a chance to develop many key skills such as listening and communicating your thoughts in a manner that is direct and polite as you have interactions with third parties.

-ves:

- Job is heavily dependent on your skills in leading a team and being able to provide a solution which is economically and environmentally just, this can cause some stress.
- You have very big responsibilities which can cause stress and underperformance.

### Appendix 3: Further detail of discussions in breakout rooms

Where would you look when applying for a role?
Reviews and thoughts from previous and current employees (*reiterated throughout)
Reach out personally to local businesses
School careers meetings and open evenings about higher education and local jobs
Following up on schools careers' information
Open days for a companies: lists of jobs available, answer job questions, tailored to different roles/careers, interactive, materials to take away, follow up with schools
"It would be great to have an insight day as part of a recruitment process, giving candidates the chance to meet employers/bosses and find out about the company, the people and its values."
Instagram, TikTok, Facebook adverts
Company social media
Company website: talk about opportunities, salaries, numbers of applications
Would sign up for updates directly from companies
LinkedIn
Indeed.com
Totaljobs.com
Google search: "jobs for [insert role] in [area]"
BBC Bitesize to research career paths, then .gov.uk to find opportunities in those areas
.gov.uk for apprenticeships, but are very official and can be offputting, so would follow up looking at company social media to get a feel for the company
Part time jobs appear to be hard to find for 16+
Difficult to find the right roles unless you have links in that career/area
"Parents do influence your choice, such as going to university and looking for graduate jobs rather than school leaver jobs with training."

Appendix 4: Further detail of feedback form question “Please rank the following job benefits that NGN offers at the moment in order of important to you.

In the order of benefits in the graph in Figure 6, the following details the percentages of respondents who ranked each benefit 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.

1.	<b>A generous pension scheme</b> 1st choice: 4 (17%) 2nd choice: 7 (29%) 3rd choice: 3 (13%) 4th choice: 5 (21%) 5th choice: 1 (4%) 6th choice: 1 (4%) 8th choice: 2 (8%) 9th choice: 1 (4%)	2.	<b>Full training provided: development opportunities</b> 1st choice: 5 (21%) 2nd choice: 5 (21%) 3rd choice: 6 (25%) 5th choice: 1 (4%) 6th choice: 1 (4%) 8th choice: 3 (13%) 9th choice: 3 (13%)
3.	<b>A competitive salary</b> 1st choice: 10 (42%) 2nd choice: 2 (8%) 5th choice: 3 (13%) 6th choice: 3 (13%) 7th choice: 3 (13%) 8th choice: 1 (4%) 10th choice: 2 (8%)	4.	<b>Wellbeing support: e.g., employee assistance, flu jabs, blood</b> 1st choice: 2 (8%) 2nd choice: 5 (21%) 3rd choice: 3 (13%) 4th choice: 4 (17%) 5th choice: 1 (4%) 6th choice: 2 (8%) 7th choice: 2 (8%) 9th choice: 2 (8%) 10th choice: 3 (13%)
5.	<b>Incentive schemes: additional earnings</b> 2nd choice: 2 (8%) 3rd choice: 3 (13%) 4th choice: 6 (25%) 5th choice: 6 (25%) 6th choice: 1 (4%) 7th choice: 2 (8%) 8th choice: 2 (8%) 9th choice: 1 (4%) 10th choice: 1 (4%)	6.	<b>25 days annual leave (plus recognised bank holidays and 2 h</b> 3rd choice: 3 (13%) 4th choice: 3 (13%) 5th choice: 7 (29%) 6th choice: 3 (13%) 7th choice: 4 (17%) 8th choice: 3 (13%) 10th choice: 1 (4%)
7.	<b>Number of working hours per week</b> 1st choice: 1 (4%) 2nd choice: 1 (4%) 3rd choice: 2 (8%) 4th choice: 3 (13%) 5th choice: 3 (13%) 7th choice: 2 (8%) 8th choice: 6 (25%) 9th choice: 2 (8%) 10th choice: 4 (17%)	8.	<b>6 weeks' paternity leave and 6 months' full pay for employee</b> 2nd choice: 2 (8%) 3rd choice: 2 (8%) 5th choice: 1 (4%) 6th choice: 6 (25%) 7th choice: 4 (17%) 8th choice: 2 (8%) 9th choice: 2 (8%) 10th choice: 5 (21%)
9.	<b>Flexible benefits: e.g., discounts on a variety of UK attraction</b> 1st choice: 2 (8%) 3rd choice: 1 (4%) 5th choice: 1 (4%) 6th choice: 4 (17%) 7th choice: 4 (17%) 8th choice: 5 (21%) 9th choice: 6 (25%) 10th choice: 1 (4%)	10.	<b>Free onsite parking</b> 3rd choice: 1 (4%) 4th choice: 3 (13%) 6th choice: 3 (13%) 7th choice: 3 (13%) 9th choice: 7 (29%) 10th choice: 7 (29%)



## Appendix 5: Key recommendations from each breakout room

<b>Group 1 priorities</b>
A company with good ethics and environmental policies
Displaying a willingness to change and work with the wider community
Money is not the most important thing; job satisfaction is more important in terms of both the roles they are doing and the way they are treated at the company.
'Insight days' at a company could be hosted, allowing people to interact with the workplace and team, before actually applying for a role – to see if it's right for them.
<b>Group 2 priorities</b>
Job websites such as Indeed.com are very useful if we're not too sure which area of work or role we want to go into
Recommendations from family/friends and reviews from past/present employees are key
A company that is flexible with the workplace environment they provide, as well as how much they listen and collaborate with their employees; to make sure we'd be getting the best out of the job.
Contrary to the previous group, money is a main driver – especially considering the current financial climate
<b>Group 3 priorities</b>
Companies should be represented at job fairs and school events, with the right person to answer questions, and follow ups that are more specific to sector/roles available
Introduce broad and open profiles of specific jobs available; videos on Instagram/TikTok, 'a day in the life of [insert role]', that aren't biased <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The algorithms built into social media will help ensure the right roles are recommended to the people with appropriate interests</li> </ul>
Rewards, i.e., what you get at the end of a job; an apprenticeship needs to say what a candidate would have to show for it at the end, e.g., accreditation, etc.
<b>Group 4 priorities</b>
Company culture is important
Job applications should be followed up with emails of acknowledgement from the companies – even if this is just a reminder of timings, what stage the applications are at, and how many people have applied, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- related to this: even if you didn't get the job, advice about something you did in the interview would be helpful, giving you a chance to improve and grow through applications</li> <li>- especially for very young people like the YIC, who don't have much experience of applying for jobs and interviewing, etc.</li> </ul>
Bad reviews would mean they wouldn't apply, on the other hand reviews detailing if they were treated really well and enjoyed their work, that would be hugely appealing



## Appendix 6: YIC 2023 Session 1 feedback remaining responses

### 1. Do you feel that you were given enough information about this topic?

[More Details](#)

Strongly agree	9
Agree	12
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0



### 2. Do you feel that you had the opportunity to contribute to the discussions in this session?

[More Details](#)

Strongly agree	13
Agree	9
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



### 3. Do you feel that your ideas were listened to?

[More Details](#)

Strongly agree	12
Agree	10
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



#### 4. Do you feel that you had an influence on Northern Gas Networks' key business agendas and strategies through today's session?

##### [More Details](#)

Strongly agree	3
Agree	12
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	0



We know it is a big group and a big topic. If there is anything you would like to say, ask us, or add to the conversation.

Do NGN offer any work experience or anything along those lines? If so what sectors and how widely advertised is this to youth?

The branding of a company is important, and some companies get exposed about their wrongful ethics which bring its reputation down. If NGN becomes a "transparent" company so to speak, as in it is open about its plans (not in full details, can be vague) and how it will affect the environment/existing customers/people interested, it can be beneficial because at least NGN would be able to understand from another POV how the company is seen and reacted to by the gen. public.

No thanks, great session though. Would prefer face to face however.

Today's session was very good and I enjoyed the topic.

Something I would suggest is doing a 6 month in person course where we deal with real life situations according to an individual's age. At the end a certificate should be provided with the skills they have gained from the job. It is sort of volunteering, however you could pay them too. I have seen schemes like this in some jobs, for example for the role of a pharmacy assistant. It is similar to what we are doing currently but I feel like an in person one is a good idea too because you can learn more skills.

At the end when we split into breakout rooms, it sometimes feels a bit school-like, where you must talk, while I think it is better to have activities to do rather than just discussions which can be done as a big group in the beginning.

Would you like to share any thoughts on the above group agreement?

It looks inclusive of everyone and gives opportunity for everyone to share ideas.

It is epic :)

I completely agree with it.

It's really nice.

It covers a large spectrum needed.

LOVE IT!

Inclusive and well thought out.

I think it's very good

Very good :)

I think it really show what the group is about.

No thoughts as there are no issues with it.

[Extracted February 2022; sample size 24]

#### Appendix 7: questions asked by the YIC during the session

Q: If NGN are replacing the older metal pipes with plastic pipes, how does this effect the robotics and it's continued usefulness

A: Most of our smaller diameter pipes will be plastic, but for our larger diameter pipes, it's likely they will still be metallic due to the integrity that they can provide – therefore mainly the smaller pipes are being replaced, and the larger metal pipes will still have need of the thermal imaging robotics!

Q: [referring to NGN's recruitment statistics in Nadine's witness presentation] Where these 300 vacancies filled for jobs all over the company, including the engineers who you see in the vans on the road?

A: Yes, that's right. These vacancies were for all of our jobs.

Q: With the rise of hydrogen as a sustainable alternative to carbon based gases, can existing infrastructure be used for distribution of hydrogen or would this cause problems with separating them as they reach homes with different boilers?

A: Yes it can! h21.green is the website to look into.

## Appendix 8: Responses to 'Why would you like to become a member of the Young Innovators Council?'; YIC 2023 application form

### Why would you like to become a member of the Young Innovators Council?

I think it's an amazing opportunity to help the world that we have to grow up in.

I would like to become a member of the Young Innovators Council because I'm curious to gain insight into the inner workings of such a complex and important infrastructure company. I would also like to have an impact and represent young people my age, as I think it is important that we can influence decisions that directly affect us. Being a member would also help me with my personal development and skills goals. I have an interest in STEM, STEM careers and study all STEM subjects at A-Level, which shows this opportunity fits my skills/personality. I also have knowledge and insight into many topics we may discuss, such as the cost of living crisis, energy innovation and green industries, so I really do think I would be able to contribute lots to discussions.

I personally think it is great that a company like Northern Gas Networks care so much about young people and their opinion on such an important piece of critical infrastructure. It would also be a great addition to my CV when I am of the age to get a job. It would be especially useful considering I am looking for a job in urban planning or politics.

I would to become a member to actively take a role in a scheme that makes a difference. Stereotypically it is always the adults in charge and it is their thoughts and rules, but the YIC allows young people's voices to be heard. In addition, my ambition is to undergo an apprentice degree with GSK and this opportunity links to the STEM aspect.

I am personally quite concerned over how climate change could potentially be the cause of a political war. Some people could abuse the good of trying to change/stop pollution and other means. I want to become a member of the Council because of my fear that me and other people of my generation that we won't get to live fully all because the world has gotten more dangerous due to climate change/global warming making natural disasters more prominent.

Being part of the YIC would allow me to gain valuable skills such as confidence within a large group of people and teamwork, integral for good performance in any career. Additionally, I am very passionate about the current climate crisis, and discussions of sustainability with an influential company would further fuel my interest in it and allow me to make an impact. Being able to gain invaluable knowledge of such a major company would be fantastic and give me further insight into how a major utility company operates and what goes on behind their decisions.

It seems like a very good opportunity for me to build my social skills and other key skills needed for a career in the future such as teamwork. I am also interested in sustainability and the environment and I am excited to learn more about it and what companies do to be more eco friendly.

Because it's an exciting opportunity to be part of, so many possibilities open up to you and I would like to engage with those possibilities.

I've always had an interest in energy and how we could make it cleaner, safer and more efficient on a whole.

I would like to be a member of the Young Innovators Council because I am interested in energy and would love to hear Northern Gas Networks' thoughts on what energy will be like in the future. I'm very interested in the environment, and would like to progress into a career in the environmental sector one day: I would love to hear about how NGN will deal with climate change in the future and become more sustainable (as it has become a much larger problem recently). I'm also interested in hearing what emerging strategies NGN is coming up with, and to offer my own opinions about this (especially about the strategies on environmental impact). We are also in the middle of a worldwide energy crisis, with the cost of living sky rocketing up. Therefore, I'm interested in how energy is distributed, and how NGN is working through this. Overall, I think being a member of the Young Innovators Council would be a great experience, and a way to get involved and have more knowledge on the gas industry and how it's run.

I would like to become a member as I am very interested in STEM and would like to gain as much varied industry experience as possible before I make my mind up about which aspect of STEM/Engineering I would like to pursue as a career. With climate change and the current cost of living crisis, sustainable energy is in higher demand so I would like to explore these issues further.

I would like to be a member of the Young Innovators Council as I believe that it is essential to focus on our energy's future because the ones who will be affected the most if the older generation doesn't do something about its crisis will of course be the 4th, 5th generations etc, therefore I believe that it is important for young individuals to have a piece of good knowledge about our energy. Furthermore, having a good sustainable life for some families can be difficult as we can't afford to buy electric cars, install sustainable roofs, etc. therefore it would be nice to learn other methods that we can do for now. However, having a good understanding of CO safety is important to everyone as we all know how dangerous it can be.

I am interested in finding solutions to the problems emerging with traditional energy generation methods.

I would like to be a member of the Young Innovations Council so that I can be a part of this rare and unique opportunity to learn more about energy (particularly gas) companies and to further develop my intrigue in engineering. The Council immediately stands out to me as something that I would love to partake in, as I am enthusiastic to learn and would love to gain experience and knowledge from people who really know what they are talking about! As well as learning, I am keen to share my thoughts to further improve gas supply in the area.

Right now the energy industry is world renowned for its innovation and its true devotion for a renewable future and the YIC means that I could be one of the reasons that the north of England is leading in the energy industry. Nonetheless, I am very interested in STEM and hope to produce a career in STEM in the near future in hopes of creating change for myself and those around me and the YIC would help develop an insight to what it truly is like working in STEM and in energy.

I would like to become a member to create more opportunities for young people who may not know they need it as well as helping to improve the company's carbon footprint along with aiding the company in developing their relationship with both the environment and customers.

I'm interested in learning about different areas of engineering to consider as career options later in life as I'm currently unsure exactly what I want to pursue.

I would like to become a member of the Young Innovators Council for NGN because it offers the ideal opportunity to combine my connected interests in science and the natural world. It is my strong belief that scientific innovation is the only way that our generation can hope to protect and repair the natural world and this is something to which I plan to devote my future career. My interest in STEM subjects started out with an interest in exploring outside through mapping the local moors with my family, birdwatching with my dad and playing games in the woods with my friends. As I have learned more about science, I have developed my own interests through whatever means I can: self-education, museum visits, work experience in Leeds University Chemistry and Molecular Biology departments and even astrophotography sessions. I would like to generate more interest and understanding in scientific subjects through talking to and learning from others in my region, both experts and other young people.

It is a great opportunity to gain experience in how decisions are made in big companies like Northern Gas Networks. It will also improve my communication skills and help in future projects. I am also very interested in how we as citizens can help combat climate change and this would be a great chance to implement this.

I would love to become a member of the Young Innovators Council as this would provide opportunities for me to engage in an industry which I am very interested in. I would like to pursue a degree in engineering for a career in energy engineering, sustainable development or operations management, or another STEM discipline such as chemistry. Additionally, I am also hugely interested in research of new materials, renewable energy and technology such as carbon capture. Along with my strength in mathematics and problem solving (achieving 97% in my Mathematics GCSE), I love debate and thrive off detailed evaluation of the best possible solution to a problem. The opportunity to enrich and deepen my own understanding and ideas by hearing the input and knowledge of other young people with similar interests to my own would be wonderful. Academic interests aside, I understand that the input of young people's thoughts to current issues in sustainability of how we sell products, use the energy resources available to us and ultimately how we live off the current market is extremely important as we look to shape a future for ourselves, in the current climate crisis.

*[Extracted February 2023]*