

Sustainable Futures Energy Forum

What is the forum?

The Sustainable Futures Energy Forum will be an online forum to support young people (aged 18-25) to share valuable insights and input into decision-making in the energy sector in Great Britain.

The forum will bring together young people and young people's organisations with Ofgem (the energy regulator for Great Britain), government departments, and energy companies to investigate some of the key issues in the energy sector in the face of **climate change**.

Why is this important?

Only **1 in 5 young people** believe they are listened to when it comes to decisions on climate change and the environment. ([Groundwork 2021](#))

It's important that young people, who are inheriting this changing world, are involved in making decisions that affect their future. This forum is an exciting opportunity for young people to input into Ofgem's decision-making and share **visions for the future energy sector**, so that it is sustainable and inclusive.

Young people face several urgent and interconnected issues, today and in the future, that the energy sector must address. These include:

- **A cost-of-living crisis** – for millions of people the energy price cap will increase by £693 this April, with a significant rise also expected in October, impacting people's ability to heat their homes and having knock-on effects in other areas. These issues affect today's young people as well as those who will start paying energy bills in the next few years.
- **Climate change** – Young people are already experiencing the impacts of climate change in the UK (e.g. extreme weather, flooding) and will experience them more severely in the future. The government has committed to reducing carbon emissions to 'net zero' over the next 30 years. (This means getting to a point where less carbon is being released into the atmosphere than is being removed.) This will require huge changes, including switching to low-carbon energy and transport.
- **Technological change** – To get to net zero, the way we use energy will need to change. Data can give us a better understanding of how/when people are using energy, and technology and digital apps can help people use energy more efficiently. But it's important that any technological solutions are inclusive, accessible, and a force for good.

The issues the forum explores will be open to discussion by the forum members. Ofgem will share their existing priorities for the coming year, and forum members can both explore some of these topics and put forward suggested priorities. The forum will provide a space for open discussions around existing and emerging issues.

What do you think are the most important energy issues affecting young people, both today and in the future?

WHO IS OFGEM?

Ofgem is Great Britain's independent energy regulator. It works to protect energy consumers, especially vulnerable people, by ensuring they are treated fairly and benefit from a cleaner, greener environment. Government decides Ofgem's duties (i.e. what they're set up to do). Some things Ofgem looks at include: the price of energy, the emissions from the energy system, and protecting customers who are more vulnerable. You can read more on the [Ofgem website](#).

WHO IS SUSTAINABILITY FIRST?

Sustainability First is small charity and research organisation based in the UK. We promote sustainability (i.e. social, economic, and environmental wellbeing) in the areas of energy, water, and communications. We work closely with companies, regulators like Ofgem, and the government and we make recommendations on how they can support sustainability. We also bring together people from across different sectors including artists, activists, and community groups to think creatively about how to build a fairer and more sustainable future.

The energy sector needs to tackle its current lack of diversity. It needs to involve a wider range of citizens and communities in its planning, including those with lived experience of climate change and social inequalities.

Ofgem recognises the importance of listening to future energy bill payers, to ensure that their voices are heard and fed into policy planning.

It's important that the energy sector engages underrepresented groups in decision-making both to make sure processes are **equitable and fair**, and to lead to better **plans and actions** that meet people's real needs and priorities. This project is piloting just one approach with Ofgem, but it needs to become a standard part of how decisions are made.

What are the aims of the forum?

The aims of the forum are to:

- Support young people to influence decision-making in the energy sector in Great Britain
- Help ensure that plans for reducing carbon emissions and responding to the impacts of climate change in the energy sector are fair, inclusive, and consider the needs and priorities of diverse young people, including those with lived experience of climate change
- Act as a pilot for how Ofgem can engage voices and interests that are currently underrepresented in their processes and decision-making over the long-term

What format will the forum take?

The project is still in its very early stages and many of the details on what the forum sessions will look like are still to be decided. We're keen to speak to as many people as possible – especially existing young people's groups – to learn about the types of approaches and formats that work best.

The project will start with a kick-off workshop that will bring a group of young people together with senior Ofgem staff to explore priorities and plans for the project. The workshop will be an opportunity to discuss key questions, such as: What energy issues are young people most concerned about, and what issues should the forum focus on? And how would young people like to engage with Ofgem? What actions are within Ofgem's remit and how could the forum effect change?

The format the forum takes will therefore be shaped by the issues, priorities, and processes identified and discussed in the kick-off workshop. It might be a series of online workshops, it might be a Dragon's Den style pitching activity, it might use more creative approaches to explore key issues, it might be an online survey ... or something completely different.

We'd like the forum to be an open space where members can get creative, think big, and develop innovative ideas that tackle some of the key issues in the energy sector today.

Forum members don't need prior knowledge of the energy sector. There will be plenty of opportunities to put questions to energy professionals and learn more about the chosen issue areas before/during each session. We'll make sure forum members have all the information and materials they need. We value forum members' expertise and lived experience and will be able to provide a fee to members involved.

Get in touch!

If you'd like more information about the project, or if you'd like to share any materials, ideas, or experiences of similar projects please get in touch with Alice Cross (Research Officer at Sustainability First) on alice.cross@sustainabilityfirst.org.uk.



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