

Mr Matchmaker: National Grid's Nathan Winyard reflects on six months of linking up the community with business experts

Helpful connections made as Nathan helps link up community groups in Reading with local business experts

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- National Grid's Nathan Winyard has been working as a Business Connector in Reading to assist vital work in the community
- Part of a pioneering scheme, run by charity Business in the Community, to enable the skills and talent from business to benefit local communities
- Scheme backed by David Cameron and Prince Charles

Voluntary organisations and charities in Reading have been enjoying a boost over the past six months after National Grid placed a full time Business Connector in the area.

Nathan Winyard left his day job as a National Grid System Operator Assurance Manager six months ago to take on a unique matchmaking role to link up charities and voluntary groups in Reading with businesses who can help them.

Backed by HRH the Prince of Wales and Prime Minister David Cameron, the Business Connectors programme is run by the charity Business in the Community.

Part of a £4.8m Big Lottery funded scheme, the programme takes talented individuals from the business world and places them in communities where they can use their time, networks and expertise to connect local needs with business resources in the area.

Talking about his work, Nathan said: "I'm delighted to be the Business Connector for Reading and am grateful that National Grid gave me the opportunity to do this role. I believe business has a vital role to play in supporting and working with the voluntary sector. In my six months on the ground, I've seen this work out in a number of ways.

"For example we've arranged for 365 ITMS, an IT support company based in Risely, to give mentoring support to Christian Community Action and adult learning service New Directions."

Steve Ellis, Managing Director of 365 ITMS says, "Nathan approached us about participating in a mentoring support initiative and we were delighted to help. We are always looking at ways to give something back to our local community and this initiative is a "win win" as far as we are concerned. The ability to share knowledge, expertise and experience is an enriching and rewarding experience both for the mentor and mentee".

"We've also seen further matches made with marketing support being given by a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing to the 3Cs community cafe in Caversham, and another match where Waitrose have provided mentoring to The Mustard Tree Foundation which runs projects that work with those on the fringes of society."

Nathan, who is due to complete his matchmaking secondment in April 2016, added: " It's very much like being a matchmaker putting together business and community groups for the benefit of the town and the organisations and companies matched creating a truly win win situation."

Stephen Howard, Chief Executive of Business in the Community, said: "Business Connectors is based on the proven impact of taking business resource, skills and time into the heart of communities where vital community services are under pressure to do more with less. Three years into the programme it is clear they are having a powerful impact, but there is still so much more to be done.

"We're delighted that National Grid has placed Nathan Winyard to work in this community. We hope others are inspired by the leadership shown by National Grid and all the other organisations that support the programme, to also take a stand to build sustainable cohesive communities at this critical time."

For further information visit: <http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/business-connectors>

Contact for media information only

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Notes for editors

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About Business in the Community

Business in the Community is the Prince's Responsible Business Network. Its members work together to tackle a wide range of issues that are essential to building a fairer society and a more sustainable future.

It is a business-led, issue focused charity with more than 30 years' experience of mobilising business. It engages thousands of businesses through programmes driven by its core membership of over 800 organisations from small enterprises to global corporations.

Responsible business is about how a business makes its money not just how it spends its profit. It is about managing growth responsibly while reducing dependency on natural resources. It is about how the business operates as an employer, supplier and customer and how as a neighbour it helps to create vibrant communities where people can flourish.

With the encouragement of strong leadership, Business in the Community is proving responsible business can be a force for positive change – and that tackling social and environmental issues can return financial value.

About Business Connectors

Business Connectors is a business-led programme borne out of a desire by businesses to do more to connect with and provide a business response to community need across the UK.

It was developed following a consultation in December 2010 with the UK's senior business leaders on the role of business in the context of the Government's aspirations for a 'Big Society' and HRH the Prince of Wales' call for businesses to step up and increase activity in areas of greatest social need.

Business Connectors are individuals seconded from business, trained by Business in the Community to address local community need by connecting the resource of local businesses to the needs of a local community, such as small businesses, the voluntary sector and community groups.

Following a successful pilot programme the Prime Minister called on Business in the Community and business to enable more of these roles in the coming years. Business Connectors applied for and was awarded £4.8m from The Big Lottery Fund, and is committed to recruiting and placing hundreds of Business Connectors across England, seconded from a wide range of sectors.

Notes to Editors:

National Grid is pivotal to the energy systems in the UK and the north eastern United States. We aim to serve customers well and efficiently, supporting the communities in which we operate and making possible the energy systems of the future.

National Grid in the UK:

- We own and operate the electricity transmission network in England and Wales, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. We also operate, but do not own, the Scottish networks. Our networks comprise approximately 7,200 kilometres (4,474 miles) of overhead line, 1,500 kilometres (932 miles) of underground cable and 342 substations.
- We own and operate the gas National Transmission System in Great Britain, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. Our network comprises approximately 7,660 kilometres (4,760 miles) of high-pressure pipe and 618 above-ground installations.
- As Great Britain's System Operator (SO) we make sure gas and electricity is transported safely and efficiently from where it is produced to where it is consumed. From April 2019, Electricity System Operator (ESO) is a new standalone business within National Grid, legally separate from all other parts of the National Grid Group. This will provide the right environment to deliver a balanced and impartial ESO that can realise real benefits for consumers as we transition to a more decentralised, decarbonised electricity system.

- Other UK activities mainly relate to businesses operating in competitive markets outside of our core regulated businesses; including interconnectors, gas metering activities and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) importation terminal – all of which are now part of National Grid Ventures. National Grid Property is responsible for the management, clean-up and disposal of surplus sites in the UK. Most of these are former gas works.

Find out more about the energy challenge and how National Grid is helping find solutions to some of the challenges we face at <https://www.nationalgrid.com/group/news>

National Grid undertakes no obligation to update any of the information contained in this release, which speaks only as at the date of this release, unless required by law or regulation.

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- > [Our business](#)
- > [Electricity](#)
- > [Gas](#)
- > [Operating responsibly](#)
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- > [Annual reports](#)
- > [Biographies](#)

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- > [Our business](#)
- > [Operating responsibly](#)
- > [Investor factsheets](#)
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- > [Biographies](#)