

Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

2020/21 Submission



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Foreword

The events of the past few months have highlighted the critical role we play as our region's Distribution Network Operator (DNO).

We understand the importance of what we do. Every new connection we deliver contributes to the economic growth of our region and keeps the power flowing to the customers and communities we serve.

Our colleagues are rising to the challenge by continuing to deliver new connections that enable new homes to be built, new businesses to start trading and new forms of renewable generation to come on line and start producing energy. However, we know that the ways in which our customers are choosing to generate, distribute and consume energy are changing and that we too must adapt to meet their evolving needs.

We are responding by transitioning to become a Distribution System Operator (DSO), responsible for the integrity of a more distributed, flexible, decarbonised energy system. We want to help our customers to get best value out of the system by making best use of their energy assets. This will also mean an increase in new and different types of connections to our network.

We cannot hope to deliver a connections service that exceeds our stakeholders' expectations without fully understanding their needs. Proactive engagement and collaboration is critical and the Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) is one of the mechanisms through which we can achieve this.

Stakeholder-led strategy

We have a clearly defined strategy for engaging with our connections stakeholders and together, we have built a robust process for ICE that delivers positive outcomes and meaningful results.

Patrick Erwin

Patrick Erwin
POLICY AND MARKETS DIRECTOR



During the 2019/20 ICE plan year, we delivered an extensive programme of in-year engagement that drove our service improvement plans and provided insights that are helping to shape our future business priorities and plans.

However, we are continually looking to improve the ways that we engage with our customers and stakeholders, which in turn, enables us to keep identifying opportunities to deliver a better connections service.

Service improvements driven by stakeholders

Our 2020/21 ICE Looking Forward work plan has been informed and endorsed by our connections stakeholders and all of the actions that we will deliver this year have originated from their feedback and suggestions. Although the COVID-19 crisis meant we had to make changes to our usual approach, our broad and inclusive consultation with stakeholders on our proposed Looking Forward work plan was still a significant undertaking and I would like to personally thank all those who took time to contribute, even during these unique and challenging times.

Our 2020/21 ICE work plan consists of 17 service improvement actions that address the emerging issues and existing challenges our large works customers have identified.

We will be making it quicker and easier to make new applications and offering enhanced, upfront support and advice to those seeking a new connection to our network – including Community Energy groups.

We are working hard to support our stakeholders with the challenges they facing in relation to national and local decarbonisation targets and so many of the actions in our 2020/21 ICE Looking Forward work plan focus on emerging issues that are impacting on the wider energy system.

We will be engaging with stakeholders on the decarbonisation of transport and heating, two of the most important pathways on the UK's journey towards achieving net zero emissions by 2050. We have actions designed to accelerate the uptake of low carbon technologies and will be working with stakeholders at all levels to achieve this – from the local government representatives who are setting the decarbonisation agenda to the installers tasked with delivering the deployment.

Continuous improvement

Our commitments to continuous improvement and operational excellence mean that we are always looking at how we can do things better and more efficiently.

We proactively seek feedback to inform our thinking and approach and are continually adapting our plans in response to what we learn. I would encourage all our connections stakeholders and customers to continue to contribute to ICE and to our wider engagement programme. Your feedback holds us to account, helps to shape our business priorities and ultimately, improves the service we provide you.

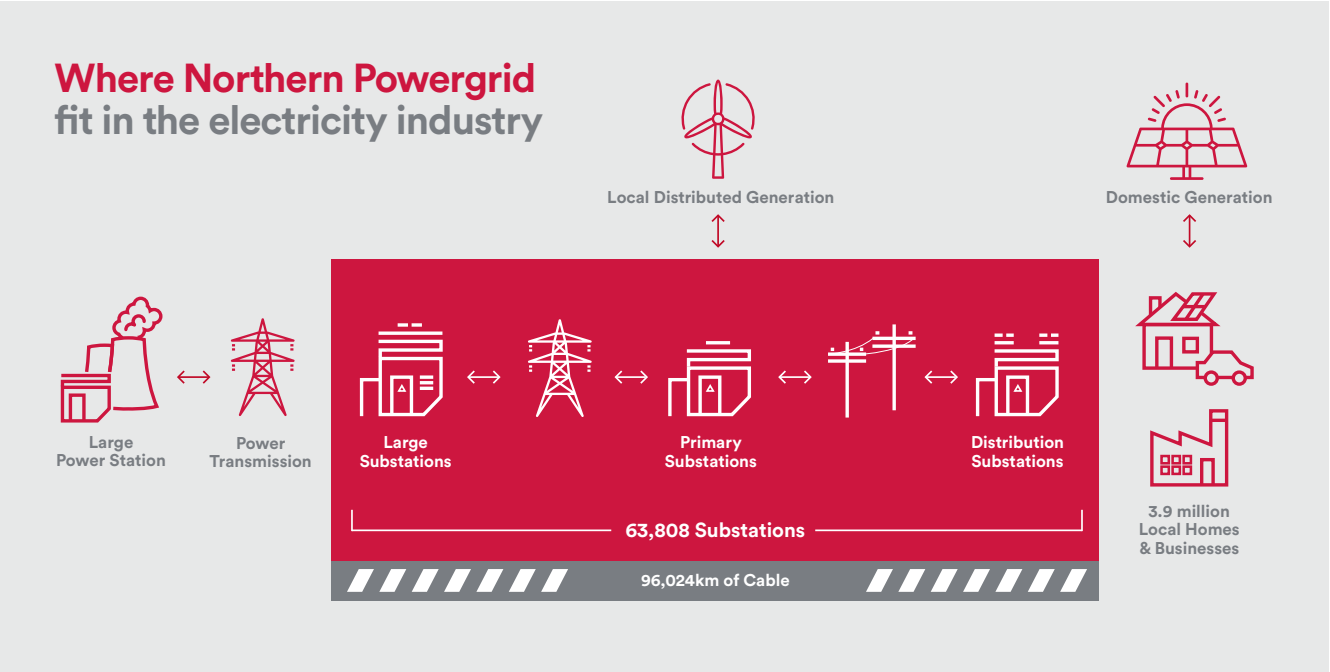
What we do

Northern Powergrid manages the electricity distribution network that powers everyday life for more than 8 million people across the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

We connect people to the region's electricity network and, if our customers' power supply is ever interrupted, we are there to fix it 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Our network spans from the Scottish borders to northern Lincolnshire, from the North Sea coast across to the Yorkshire Dales and delivers a safe and secure supply of electricity to 3.9 million homes and businesses.

Our dedicated team of more than 2,680 colleagues are proud of the role we play in powering the lives of the people and communities we serve.



An introduction to ICE



The purpose

At the last price control review, our regulator Ofgem introduced a new mechanism, the Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) to encourage network operators to deliver a consistently high level of service to large works customers seeking new connections. ICE complements other connections-related incentives that apply during the current price control period, such as the time to connect incentive and the broad measure of customer service, which is designed to address the needs of smaller works customers.

ICE is a penalty-only incentive. Under ICE, a DNO must provide evidence that it has listened to the views of its connections stakeholders and responded accordingly. If a DNO fails to meet Ofgem's minimum assessment criteria for ICE, it can incur a penalty.

Ofgem explains that ICE is designed to drive improvements in both the contestable and non-contestable activities that DNOs can offer customers in the relevant market segments of the local connections market, as outlined in table 1. ICE does not capture performance in the excluded market segments (LV connections of up to four domestic premises).

The aim

The aim of ICE, as outlined in Ofgem's guidance,¹ is to provide network operators with an incentive to deliver good customer service that is associated with competitive markets. This could be by improving the timeliness of connections, extending the provision of available information or enhancing overall customer service.

The incentive also recognises innovative connections solutions for customers which may include:

- improved coordination with other utility connections providers and between connections customers;
- innovative commercial arrangements with customers; and
- the introduction of new technologies that can reduce connections charges for customers.

Table 1: Relevant Market Segments for ICE

M	Metered Demand Connections (M)	Low-voltage (LV) work: LV connection activities involving only LV work, other than in respect of an Excluded Market Segment
		High-voltage (HV) work: LV or HV connection activities involving HV work (including where that work is required in respect of connection activities within an Excluded Market Segment)
		HV and extra-high-voltage (EHV) work: LV or HV connection activities involving EHV work
		EHV work and above: extra-high-voltage and 132kV connection activities
UM	Unmetered Connections (UM)	Local Authority (LA) work: new connection activities in respect of Local Authority premises
		Private Finance Initiative (PFI) work: new connection activities under PFIs
		Other work: all other non-LA and non-PFI unmetered connections work
DG	Distributed Generation Connections (DG)	LV work: low-voltage connection activities involving only low-voltage work
		HV and EHV work: any connection activities involving work at HV or above

Service improvements driven by stakeholders

ICE gives connections customers and stakeholders the opportunity to drive our service improvement plans. In April each year, following a comprehensive programme of stakeholder consultation, we publish a detailed work plan of service improvement commitments for customers operating in the relevant market segments. We will also include actions that benefit Independent Connections Providers (ICPs) and Independent Distribution Network Operators (IDNOs) where they will promote fair and open competition in connections.

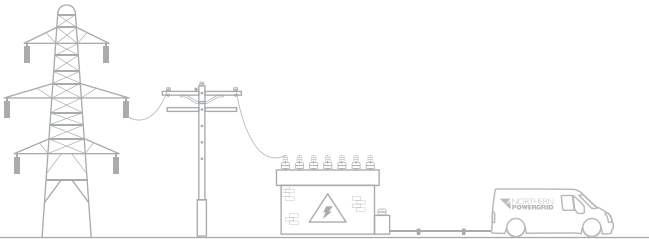
This year, in recognition of the important role they will have in driving forward the low carbon transition, we have included actions to benefit Community Energy stakeholders and groups.

All our ICE work plans are developed together with our connections stakeholders and all of our service improvement actions are derived from their feedback and requests.

Our ICE submission for 2020/21 consists of two distinct sections: a Looking Forward report and a Looking Back report.

In the Looking Forward report, we describe our strategy for engaging with connections stakeholders and the robust process we employ when developing our ICE work plan. We focus on the service improvement actions we will deliver in the coming regulatory year and explain how they have been informed and endorsed by the views of our stakeholders.

In our Looking Back report, we explain how we implemented our engagement strategy and delivered the commitments we made in the 2019/20 ICE plan year. We also share some of what our customers and stakeholders have told us about their experience of working with us and the actions we have undertaken.



¹ Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) Guidance Document: www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2015/03/ice_guidance_doc_010415_0.pdf

Meeting the criteria

Providing a good connection service that aligns with customers' needs is one of the most important jobs of a DNO. ICE is designed to drive improvements in the overall connections process and ensure customers receive a consistently high level of service.

In its guidance², Ofgem sets out the criteria by which it will assess DNOs' ICE performance. A penalty can be applied if a DNO is deemed by Ofgem not to have met the minimum requirements. We are confident that, as in previous years, we have met all of the prescribed criteria as evidenced throughout this submission and summarised in this section. The passages in bold text are the assessment criteria for ICE as specified by Ofgem.



agreed that we engage with stakeholders and facilitate joint discussions

Source: Explain telephone survey, April/May 2020



agreed we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders

Source: Explain telephone survey, April/May 2020



improvements delivered through ICE

Figure correct to April 2020

The Looking Forward criteria

The licensee has a comprehensive and robust strategy for engaging with connection stakeholders and facilitating joint discussions where appropriate;

We have a robust strategy for engaging with our connections stakeholders and we continue to refine and strengthen our approach in response to what they are telling us about the ways in which they want to engage and interact with us.

Our annual connections customer survey provides evidence to support this, with 89% of those who responded agreeing that we engage with our stakeholders and facilitate joint discussions.

The licensee has a comprehensive work plan of activities (with associated delivery dates) to meet the requirements of its connection stakeholders. If not, then the reasons provided are reasonable and well justified;

We employ a robust, stakeholder-led process when developing our ICE work plan that meets Ofgem's requirements and gives our stakeholders plenty of opportunities to influence our plans. It also forms an important part of our wider stakeholder engagement strategy, allowing us to gain important insights that help to shape our future business priorities and plans.

Our ICE Looking Forward work plan is intended to address the emerging issues and existing challenges our large works connections customers are facing. We have set forecast completion dates for each of our ICE actions to ensure we remain on track but, in each case, our commitment is to deliver all of those actions within the course of the 2020/21 ICE plan year.

We have now delivered 150 significant service improvements through ICE and believe this provides evidence that the process is working well and continues to add value.

The activities we have undertaken, backed by our robust strategy for stakeholder consultation, gives us confidence that our ICE Looking Forward work plan addresses the key areas for improvement our stakeholders have identified. Our customers agree, with 96% of those who responded to our survey stating that we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities for 2020/21 that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders.

The licensee has set itself relevant outputs that it will deliver during the regulatory year (e.g. key performance indicators, targets, etc.); and

Guided by Ofgem's encouragement to all DNOs to set stretching targets and our stakeholders' requirement that we should set targets that enable them to assess the effectiveness of our actions, we set performance measures for all our ICE actions.

Our stakeholders and customers are able to track our progress and assess the effectiveness of our actions using our online ICE work plan³, which is updated whenever we close an action and provides links to useful online resources and outputs.



The licensee's proposed strategy; activities and outputs have been informed and endorsed by a broad and inclusive range of connection stakeholders. If endorsement is not possible, licensees must provide robust evidence that they have pursued reasonable endeavours to achieve this.

We employ a robust, stakeholder-led process when formulating our ICE work plans. During the course of the year, we record and respond to all feedback we receive about our connections service. We seek feedback from a range of different sources including events, customer surveys, surgeries and the interactions our team has with our customers and stakeholders.

All feedback we receive is logged and acted upon as appropriate, whether that requires contact from one of our team, a change to our business as usual (BAU) practices or a more significant improvement action delivered through ICE. Our stakeholder feedback log is the foundation on which we build our annual ICE work plan.

This year, we recorded 316 comments from our connections customers and stakeholders, a significant increase on the previous year that reflects the increased level of in-year engagement we have delivered. Only 14% of that feedback required an action in our 2020/21 ICE work plan, as we were able to address the rest through other channels.

So we could be confident that we had correctly understood their comments and that the action and outcomes we were proposing would address the issue they had raised, we contacted all those stakeholders whose feedback had generated an action in our ICE Looking Forward work plan. We were able to speak to 14

stakeholders by telephone to discuss their comments in detail and seek their endorsement of the action we were proposing. All those we were able to speak to confirmed to us that they supported our proposals.

The COVID-19 crisis required us to adapt our usual approach to consultation on our ICE Looking Forward work plan but wherever reasonable, we challenged ourselves to do the same or more. This year we extended our period of consultation to ensure all those who wanted to had an opportunity to contribute to our plan.

To ensure our ICE work plan was informed by a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders, we contacted 7,250 of them by email - 1,450 more than last year - with an invitation to share their views via an online survey. Explain, an independent market research provider, contacted 118 customers who had applied for a new connection in the past 12 months by telephone, to seek their detailed feedback on our service and our plan. This was less than our target of 300 but still a significant undertaking and we would like to thank all those who took time to contribute to the process.

Despite the challenges faced during the first few months of the year, the activities we have undertaken, backed by our robust process of stakeholder consultation, gives us confidence that the service improvement actions we are proposing for 2020/21, address the issues that our connections stakeholders have raised. However, we will continue to engage with our stakeholders to ensure we are meeting their expectations and fully understanding their needs.

² Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) Guidance Document: www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2015/03/ice_guidance_doc_010415_0.pdf

³ www.northernpowergrid.com/ice-work-plan



The Looking Back criteria

The licensee has published a Looking Forward section in its previous ICE submission, in accordance with paragraph 3.4

Our ICE submission for 2019/20 featured a detailed Looking Forward section where we described our strategy for connections engagement and the service improvement commitments we were undertaking in the year.

In this, our 2020/21 ICE submission, we report on how well we delivered against the commitments we made and describe how we have engaged with our connections customers and stakeholders, to ensure the improvements we were making met their expectations and addressed the issues they had raised.

The licensee has implemented its comprehensive and robust strategy for engaging with connection stakeholders. If not, then the reasons provided are reasonable and well justified;

Despite the challenges faced during the first few months of 2020, we achieved everything we set out to and delivered a comprehensive programme of in-year engagement that enabled us to reach more stakeholders than ever before, including those we consider hard to reach.

We hosted more workshops, webinars and customer meetings than in previous years, giving our connections stakeholders plenty of opportunities to engage with us. We introduced virtual connections surgeries for those who are unable to travel to our offices and continued to host our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars, which are the foundation of our connections engagement strategy.

We delivered better upfront conversations with customers and with the launch of AutoDesign⁴, our new LV budget estimating tool, we added to the suite of free, online tools we make available to help customers to perform their own upfront assessments.

We established a Local Authority forum where these stakeholders can come together to explore emerging issues and the ways in which we can support them. During these forums, local government representatives shared their insights on topics including Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure roll-out and future energy planning challenges, allowing those taking part to learn from the experience of others. Our Distributed Generation (DG) Owner Operator forum continues to go from strength to strength with two of the actions in our 2020/21 ICE Looking Forward work plan originating from this forum.

In line with our ICE process, we recorded and responded to every comment we received on our connections service and this feedback informed our 2020/21 ICE Looking Forward work plan. Before finalising that plan, we consulted with our stakeholders to ensure the actions we are proposing would be of benefit to a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders and not just the individual or group who had requested the change.

The licensee has undertaken its comprehensive work plan of activities (with associated delivery dates) to meet the requirements of its connection stakeholders. If not, the reasons provided are reasonable and well justified;

In April 2019, we published our ICE work plan for 2019/20, which consisted of 12 service improvement actions. The work plan was developed together with our connections stakeholders and the actions in the work plan were derived from their feedback and suggestions. In October 2019, we added one further action to our work plan, making a total of 13 service improvement commitments for the year.

The actions in our ICE work plan were grouped under six key themes or areas for improvement. These were broadly the areas where our customers had told us we could improve and where we continue to focus our efforts.

- Theme 1: Provision of information;
- Theme 2: Improving our application and delivery processes;
- Theme 3: Improving our communication and engagement;
- Theme 4: Technical and commercial development;
- Theme 5: Enabling competition; and
- Theme 6: Innovation.

We are pleased to report that we completed all 13 actions in our 2019/20 ICE work plan by the deadline of 31 March 2020. Some actions we delivered early, enabling customers to benefit sooner and one action was completed later than forecast, but still within the ICE plan year.

Action 3.2 focused on improving our customers’ connections surgery experience. This action had a number of deliverables and all but one; our commitment to trial virtual surgeries, were delivered by the forecast completion date of December 2019. It took time to identify the right digital platform for us and our customers and as a result, the action was completed seven weeks later than we had expected.

We spoke to stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements and once we had identified the right digital platform, we responded quickly, delivering six virtual surgeries by the end of the ICE plan year. As we continued to offer surgeries via telephone and at our offices during that time, we do not consider any stakeholders were adversely affected during this short delay in delivering that commitment.

The licensee has delivered its relevant outputs (e.g. key performance indicators, targets etc.). If not, the reasons provided are reasonable and well justified; and

In our ICE work plans, we clearly define the activities and outcomes we will deliver in the year and the performance measures we have set that will allow us, Ofgem and our stakeholders to assess our performance.

By the end of March 2020, we had delivered all 13 actions in our 2019/20 ICE work plan and had sought feedback from those customers and stakeholders whose comments had generated the actions in our plan. This allowed us to close the loop and ensure the outcome we had delivered had met their expectations.

The Looking Back section of this submission provides evidence to support the successful delivery of the 13 actions in our 2019/20 ICE work plan.

The licensee’s strategy, activities and outputs have taken into account ongoing feedback from a broad and inclusive range of connection stakeholders. If not, the reasons provided are reasonable and well justified.

In line with our strategy, we proactively seek feedback throughout the course of the ICE plan year to inform our thinking and the development of future ICE work plans.

Where an improvement can be delivered through a change to our BAU practices or by contact from our team, we do not wait to include it in our annual ICE plan. We take action and deliver the change as soon as possible to the benefit of our customers. Where the feedback we receive identifies an emerging issue or challenge we cannot address immediately, or one that requires further discussion with the stakeholder, we maintain a watching brief and use that information to inform future iterations of our ICE work plan.

⁴ www.northernpowergrid.com/auto-design



Our Looking Forward report

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Introduction to our Looking Forward report

In our Looking Forward report we describe our strategy for connections engagement and explain how it drives our service improvement plans. We describe the robust process we employ when developing our ICE work plans and how the actions we will deliver have been informed and endorsed by our stakeholders.

Our 2020/21 ICE Looking Forward work plan consists of 17 service improvement actions. These actions are intended to address the existing challenges and emerging issues our customers and stakeholders have identified. We have set forecast completion dates for each of our ICE actions to ensure we remain on track but in each case, our commitment is to deliver all of those actions within the course of the 2020/21 ICE plan year.

Making it easier to get connected

Responding to our customers' feedback, we will be making it quicker and easier to make new connections applications. We will be streamlining the process for customers who make multiple, repeat applications and making changes to our website to make it easier to apply to connect different types of low carbon technologies (LCTs). We will also be engaging with stakeholders on our AutoDesign LV budget estimating tool and seeking their feedback to further develop its functionality and future use cases.

Supporting the low carbon transition

Now, more than ever, our connections stakeholders are looking to us to collaborate and support them as they strive to achieve their low carbon ambitions. As a result, many of the actions our 2020/21 ICE Looking Forward work plan are intended to address emerging issues that are impacting on the wider energy system.

We will be engaging with our stakeholders on the decarbonisation of transport and heating, two of the most important pathways on the journey towards achieving the UK's target of net zero emissions by 2050.

We have included actions that will help identify any roadblocks to the continued roll-out of LCTs. We are working with stakeholders at all levels to achieve this – from the local government representatives who are setting the decarbonisation agenda to installers tasked with delivering the deployment.

We will be offering pre-application surgeries for planners and developers to help them identify the most cost-effective locations to install new EV charging infrastructure and other LCTs and, at the request of the stakeholders who took part, we will be evolving the focus of our targeted Local Authority forums to concentrate on local energy planning issues.

Recognising the role they will have to play in driving forward the low carbon transition, we are making a commitment to better support our Community Energy stakeholders and to provide them with tools and resources that will help them when seeking a new connection to our network.

Industry outlook

Responding to feedback from stakeholders who take part in our DG Owner Operator forum, we will be establishing a local working group to support generators involved in the Energy Network Association's (ENA) Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme. This will provide a channel for them to seek clarity on the process and, if necessary, will equip us with the necessary information to advocate on their behalf.

Our transition to a Distribution Systems Operation (DSO) model remains a priority and we will be continuing to engage with connections stakeholders, while also seeking their input on our Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES)⁵ to help inform our future energy models and investment plans.

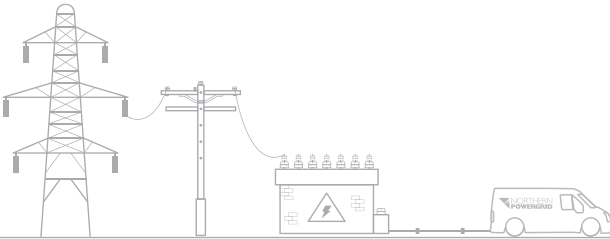
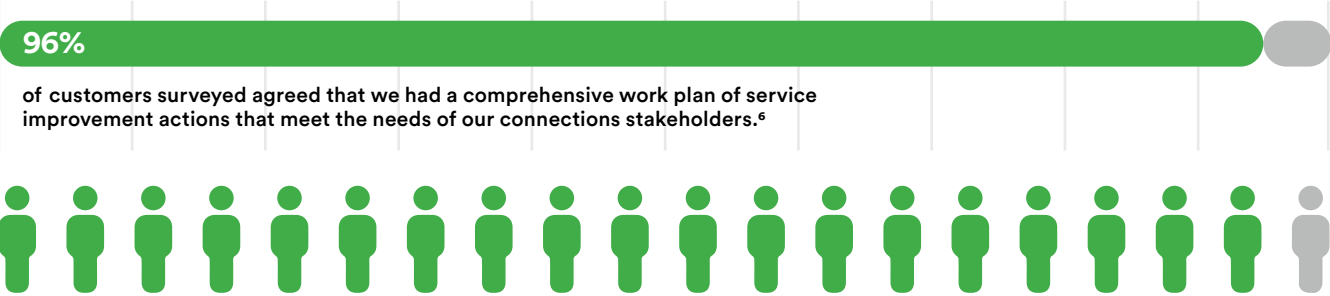
Service improvements driven by stakeholders

Our 2020/21 ICE Looking Forward work plan has been informed and endorsed by a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders and all of the actions we will deliver this year were derived from their feedback and suggestions.

Our stakeholder-led strategy and the robust process we employ when developing our plans, has once again helped us to deliver a work plan of service improvement actions that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders. However, we are always looking at how we can do more and do things better, and so we will continue to engage with our stakeholders and proactively seek their feedback to improve their experience and further enhance the connections service we provide.



Customers were asked to endorse our work plan for the next 12 months



⁵ odileeds.github.io/northern-powergrid/

⁶ 96% of connections customers who took part in our telephone survey agreed that we had a comprehensive work plan of service improvement actions that meet the needs of our connections stakeholders.

Our strategy for engagement



We work hard to understand the views of our connections customers and stakeholders and to continuously improve the service we provide.

We have a clearly defined strategy for engaging with our connections stakeholders and together, we have built a robust process for ICE that drives change and delivers positive outcomes. Our approach is endorsed by our stakeholders whose feedback continues to inform our thinking on the ways in which we engage and interact with them.

Channels for engagement

Our Connections Customer Forums remain the foundation on which we build our connections engagement strategy and the source of the majority of feedback we receive. These events cover a broad range of topics and are an opportunity for customers to meet our team and tell us what more we can do to help them to get connected. Our ICP Seminars are similarly well received, giving ICPs and IDNOs a platform to engage with us and drive change.

We host workshops and events that focus on the key issues our stakeholders tell us are important. More recently, these events have also given us a platform to start discussions on our RIIO-ED2 business plan and explore our stakeholders' priorities for 2023 and beyond.

Responding to stakeholder requests and a signal from Ofgem in last year's ICE assessment, we have delivered more information by webinar. We were able to reach more connections stakeholders using this channel and, as we consider how to adapt our strategy

to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19, digital engagement channels are likely to become even more important.

We have made improvements to the free connections surgery service we offer, and our team has continued to deliver the upfront discussions that customers tell us are important to help them narrow down their options before making a formal application.

Targeted engagement forums

We think it is important to bring together groups of similarly focused stakeholders so that we can better understand their collective priorities and expectations; the challenges they are facing and how we can support them.

In 2018, we launched our DG Owner Operator forum for generators with assets in our region. This forum gives these stakeholders an opportunity to meet with our operational experts on a regular basis and obtain accurate information on planned and unplanned outages that helps them to plan more strategically and effectively. Membership of this group is growing steadily and two of the actions in our ICE 2020/21 Looking Forward work plan have originated from this forum.

We are working hard to respond to the challenges our stakeholders are facing in relation to national and local decarbonisation targets. We established a Local Authority forum where stakeholders can come together to explore emerging energy issues. We gave those taking part opportunities to shape the agenda and format of those sessions and invited local government representatives to share their experiences, so that those attending could benefit from peer-to-peer learning. This forum also gave us an opportunity to host our first ever co-working session, where those taking part were able to work on live LV connections projects with support from our design engineers.

User experience driving improvements

We provide free, online tools to help our customers assess the likely cost, timescales and viability of their proposed connection before making an application. We added to this suite of tools last year with the launch of AutoDesign, our new LV budget estimating tool. Our stakeholders have been involved every step of the way, taking part in workshops and user acceptance testing and providing feedback that helped shape the development of the tool.

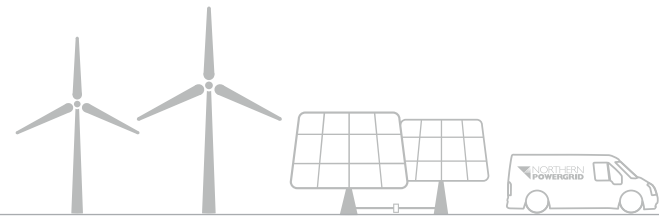
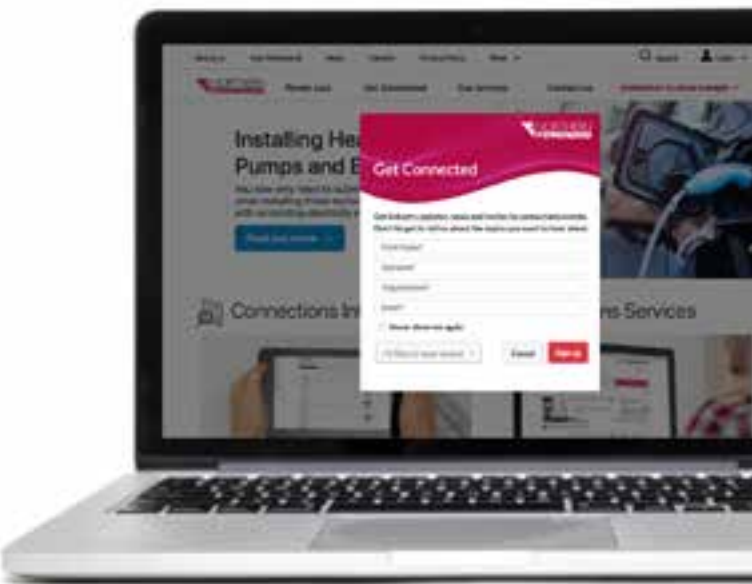
Continually working to improve our approach

We continue to develop our strategy and approach in response to what our connections stakeholders are telling us about the ways they want to interact with us. We give our stakeholders plenty of opportunities to give us feedback at the events we host, the discussions we facilitate and via the surveys we conduct. However, we are always looking at how we can do more and do things better.

In response to feedback, we now promote all our engagement events and webinars on social media. Stakeholders who register on our website will also receive email updates from us and priority invites to future connections events and webinars.

Increasing our social media presence, more frequent email updates and more webinar based engagement are all things that our stakeholders have told us we should be considering and we will continue to develop our approach to respond to their suggestions.

Stakeholders who register at northernpowergrid.com/get-connected will receive regular email updates and priority invites to connections events.



An embedded approach



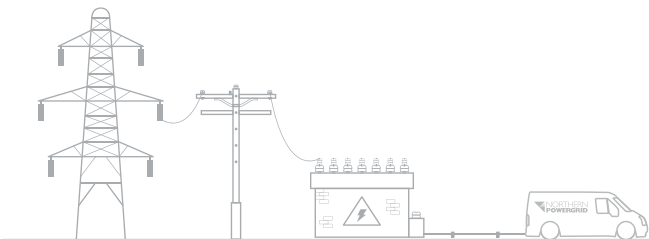
We have a clearly defined strategy for engaging with our connections stakeholders and together, we have built a robust process for ICE that delivers meaningful outcomes and improves the service we offer.

Insights captured for ICE are also fed into our wider engagement programme, ensuring the voice of our connections stakeholders is heard throughout our business and that their views are incorporated into our future plans.

Our extensive programme of connections engagement has given us a platform to begin discussions with stakeholders on our RIIO-ED2 plans. Our embedded engagement groups and expert panels have also played a critical role, providing valuable input, insights and constructive challenge.

During the 2019/20 ICE plan year our Stakeholder Panel (44 members) and embedded Social Issues Expert Group have provided input that helped inform our thinking on:

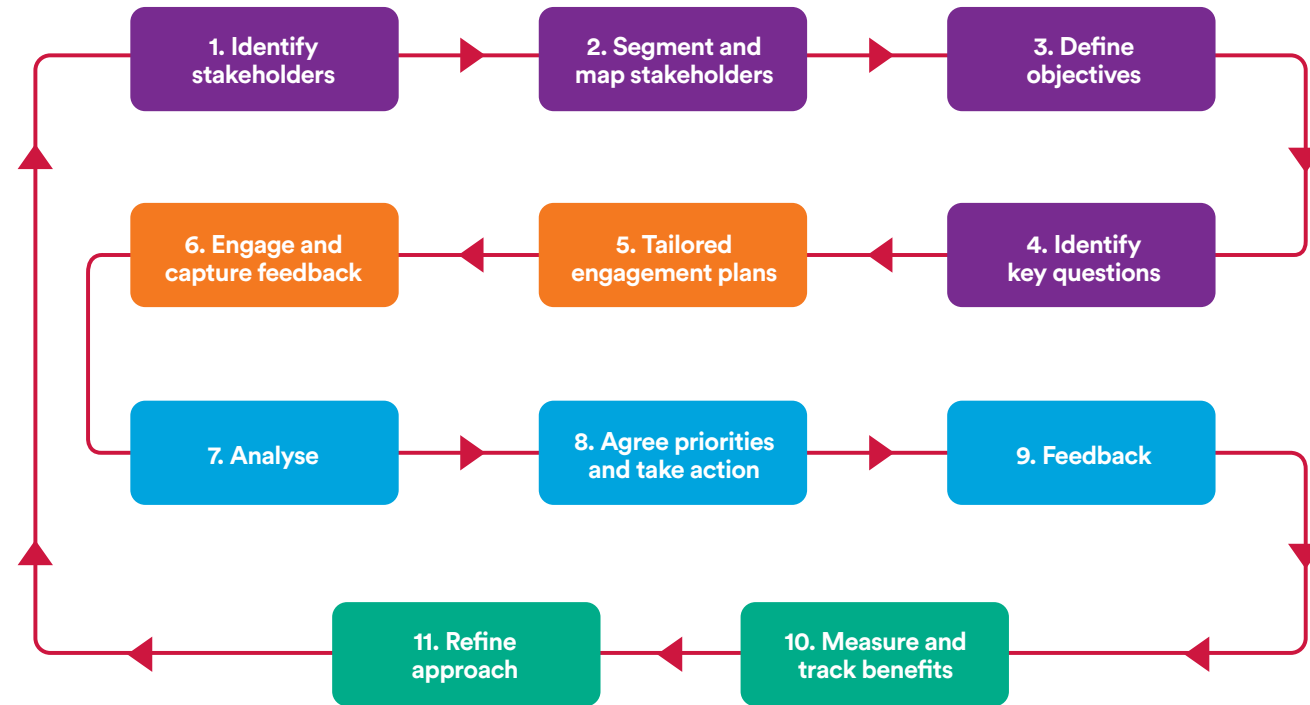
- AutoDesign, providing insights that helped improve users experience;
- our industry-first trial for the procurement of flexibility services; and
- two iterations of our DSO and EV readiness documents and our Community Energy Engagement Strategy.



Our embedded engagement process

Our engagement process is underpinned by our engagement principles and supported by extensive assurance and governance including the AA 1000 annual audit process.

- Identify and understand
- Analyse, act and feedback
- Engage
- Measure and Improve



Our engagement principles

Our connections stakeholder engagement strategy is underpinned by our businesses core engagement principles, which were introduced earlier this year and validated by our Stakeholder Panel and Social Issues Expert Group.



Stakeholder-led – we are flexible, proactive and responsive. Early deliberative engagement informs our plans and allows for testing with stakeholders.



Representative & Inclusive – we will not leave anyone behind. All voices are heard from across the diverse region we serve.



Open and Transparent – explaining what, why and how we work. Encouraging active participation from customers and stakeholders to aid planning and decision making.



Accessible – employing a range of engagement methods designed to engage all ages and capabilities. Educating stakeholders so they can understand our business, make better informed decisions and provide richer input.



Responsive and Adaptive – best practice leads us, experience shapes us. Our programme is continuously evolving as we learn more about the needs of others.

Developing our ICE work plan

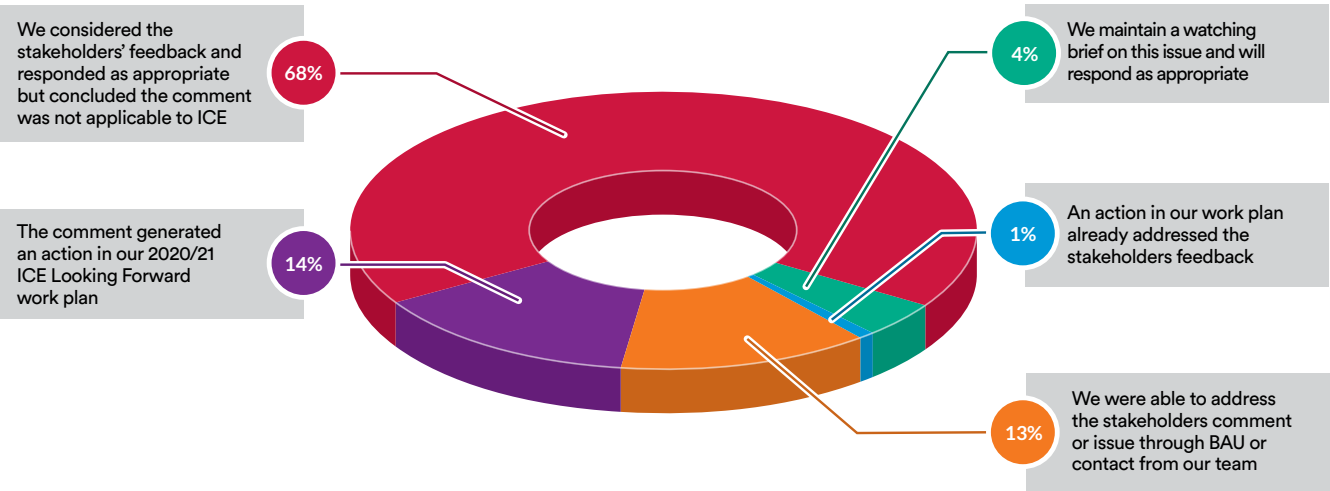
When developing our annual ICE work plan, we follow the same stakeholder-led process that has proven successful in previous years.

We seek feedback throughout the course of the year, from a range of sources including events, customer surveys, surgeries and the interactions of our team. All the feedback we receive is recorded and acted upon as appropriate, whether that requires contact from one of our team, a change to our BAU practices or a more

14%

of feedback required an action in our 2020/21 work plan

We recorded 316 comments from connections stakeholders this year and this feedback was the foundation on which we built our ICE 2020/21 Looking Forward work plan.



⁷ We record all feedback we receive on our service in a stakeholder feedback log. We record the stakeholder's comment verbatim, where that feedback originated from, our interpretation of the issue, next steps and any interactions that have taken place. This is the foundation upon which we build our ICE work plans.

A small number of comments related to new technological developments, new commercial arrangements or the emerging technologies our customers are looking to connect. We maintain a watching brief on these issues and will engage with the stakeholders to agree how best to respond and when it is appropriate to do so.

Where we think a stakeholder's issue can be addressed through ICE, we will seek to engage with the individual or group who provided the feedback to ensure we have understood their comments and that the activity and outcomes we are proposing will fully address their needs.

Our ICE work plan proposal is then reviewed by senior leads from across our business and by our Executive Leadership Team who will provide constructive challenge and endorsement. In this way, responsibility for the delivery of our ICE commitments is shared across all our business functions.

We are confident that the robust, established process we employ when forming our ICE work plan delivers positive outcomes and meaningful results.

We employ a stakeholder-led strategy when formulating our ICE work plan, consisting of five key stages.

Stage 1

We gather feedback from a range of different sources throughout the course of the ICE plan year.

Stage 2

All feedback we receive is recorded and then acted upon, whether that requires contact from one of our team, a change to BAU or a more significant improvement delivered through ICE.

Stage 3

We create a proposed ICE work plan of actions which is reviewed and challenged by senior leads and our Executive Directors. Each action is assigned to an Executive sponsor, ensuring that responsibility for the delivery of our ICE commitments sits with leaders from across our business. Accountable Executive Directors will then assign a lead from their own teams who is responsible for delivery of the ICE action.

Stage 4

We seek to engage with the stakeholders whose feedback generated actions in our ICE work plan to ensure we have understood their comments and that the activities we are proposing will address their needs. We then consult with a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders on our proposed work plan.

Stage 5

Feedback from internal and external stakeholders is incorporated into the final version of our ICE work plan which is published by the end of April each year.



Our stakeholders support our plans



We consult with our customers and stakeholders when developing our ICE work plans to ensure the activities we are proposing will be of benefit to a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders and not just the individual or group who suggested the change.

We work hard to consult with as many of our stakeholders as possible but this year, the COVID-19 crisis meant we had to make some changes to our usual approach.

To ensure that the actions we were proposing would meet our stakeholders' needs, we first sought to contact all those customers and stakeholders whose comments had generated an action in our proposed ICE work plan. We wanted to ensure that we had correctly understood their feedback and that the activities we were proposing would address the issues they had raised. These discussions informed our thinking on the actions, outcomes and performance measures in our proposed Looking Forward work plan.

To account for difficulties in engaging with customers whose priorities would likely be focused elsewhere, we extended our consultation period so that our stakeholders had longer to provide feedback on our plans. To ensure our work plan was endorsed by a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders, we contacted 7,250 connections stakeholders by email, an increase of 1,450 from last year, with an invitation to share their views via an online survey.



of respondents agreed we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders.⁸

We set ourselves a target to conduct telephone interviews with 300 customers and commissioned independent market research company Explain to carry out the work. This annual survey informs our ICE work plan but also provides valuable feedback on our customers' experience of working with us and so we thought it important that we should aim to reach similar numbers of customers as last year. 118 connections customers took part in the telephone survey, less than in the previous year, but still a significant undertaking.

⁸ Explain telephone survey, April/May 2020

Feedback



7,250

connections stakeholders invited to share their views via an online survey.



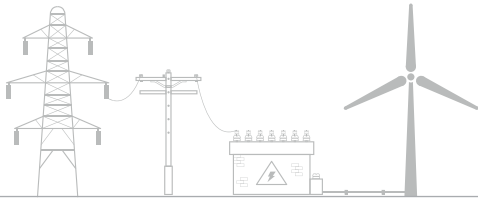
118

customers took part in telephone interviews and gave detailed feedback.



14

stakeholders whose feedback generated actions in our ICE Looking Forward work plan contacted to seek input and endorsement.



Incentive on Connection Engagement (ICE)

2020/21 ICE LOOKING FORWARD WORK PLAN

ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO		Q2 2020			Q3 2020			Q4 2020			Q1 2021			
								Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
1.1	We will publish data on transmission constraints and mod apps on our heat maps.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have access to more timely and accurate data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Data published as part of the detailed datasheets that accompany our heat maps.	EHV HV	ON TRACK	M	DG													PAGE 26
1.2	We will develop and run a trial with generators to provide more timely and accurate information on planned outages.	Stakeholders will be better informed about network constraints and any planned outages affecting their assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Trial participants identified.Trial developed and implemented.Next steps agreed with stakeholders.	EHV HV	ON TRACK		DG													PAGE 27
1.3	We will produce a guide aimed at Local Authorities and LEPs which signposts the support and tools we make available.	Stakeholders will have a useful reference that signposts the help, support and online tools we make available to those seeking a new connection to our network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New guide developed and published.Guide issued to all Local Authorities and LEPs in our region.	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM													PAGE 28
2.1	We will make changes to our online application process to make it easier to apply to install different types of Low Carbon Technologies (LCTs).	Stakeholders will be better informed and find it quicker and easier to make applications for different types of LCTs projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and requirements.Make improvements to our online application process as required.	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE										PAGE 29
2.2	We will engage with stakeholders and seek feedback to develop our budget estimating tool.	Stakeholders will have opportunities to contribute to the continued development of our budget estimating tool and to help inform future use cases and the tool's functionality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with stakeholders to understand their requirements.Feedback used to help inform future use cases and development of the tool.	LV	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE										PAGE 30
2.3	We will work with customers who make multiple, repeat applications to streamline our applications process.	Customers who submit multiple, repeat applications on behalf of themselves or a third party will find it quicker and easier to make new connections applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New process developed and implemented.Customers who are potentially affected identified and notified.	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM		ICP											PAGE 31
2.4	We will offer free, pre-application surgeries for developers, Local Authority planners and consultants to help them identify the optimum and most cost-effective connections solutions.	Stakeholders considering new builds and significant developments will be able to access local, specialist knowledge and advice. We will work together to identify the most viable and cost-effective connections solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Notify all Local Authorities and LEPs in our region about the new service we are making available to them.Identify developers and consultants active in our region and ensure they are also aware of the service we can offer.	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP											PAGE 32
3.1	We will host local energy planning forums for local government and other interested stakeholders.	Stakeholders can come together to explore future priorities and any emerging challenges. They will have opportunities to shape the content of these sessions and be better informed about the help and support we provide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Three forums delivered during the 2020/21 ICE plan year.	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP											PAGE 33
3.2	We will provide support for Community Energy groups and stakeholders seeking a new connection to our network.	Community Energy groups and stakeholders will have access to specialist advice and will be better supported when seeking a new connection to our network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create a dedicated Community Energy section on our website.Provide information on available technical support, advice and free online tools.Create a frequently asked connections questions factsheet aimed at Community Energy stakeholders.Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.	LV	ON TRACK					CE										PAGE 34

Incentive on Connection Engagement (ICE)

2020/21 ICE LOOKING FORWARD WORK PLAN


ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO					Q2 2020			Q3 2020			Q4 2020			Q1 2021				
											Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
4.1	We will establish a local working group for stakeholders involved in the ENA's Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme (ALoMCP).	Stakeholders will have a channel to give feedback and seek clarity on the process and, if necessary, can use us as an advocate to work on their behalf and share their issues with the national working group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Quarterly meetings held.Stakeholder updates delivered.		Number of stakeholders taking part.	Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	ON TRACK			DG		CE	◆									◆	PAGE 35
4.2	We will continue to engage with stakeholders about the actions we are taking to support the roll-out of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in our region and on our role in the low carbon transition.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the actions we are taking to support the electrification of transport in our region. They will have a platform to explore emerging opportunities and any potential roadblocks to achieving the decarbonisation of transport by 2035.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.		Number of stakeholders engaged.	Target of 85% satisfaction rate with sessions delivered.	Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆								◆	PAGE 36
4.3	We will engage with stakeholders on the electrification of heating and our role in the low carbon transition.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the steps we are taking to support the electrification of heating in our region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.		Number of stakeholders engaged.	Target of 85% satisfaction rate with sessions delivered.	Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆								◆	PAGE 37
4.4	We will engage with installers of Low Carbon Technologies (LCTs) to better understand their priorities, any challenges they are facing and how we can best support them.	Stakeholders will have opportunities to provide feedback on our connections process and how we can best support them. We will signpost available support and free online tools that can help them when seeking a new connection to our network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stakeholders identified and feedback sought.Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.		Number of stakeholders engaged.	Stakeholder feedback.	LV	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG		CE	◆								◆	PAGE 38	
5.1	We will make changes to the alternative provider register on our website so that Independent Connections Providers (ICPs) who are authorised to self-determine points of connection and self-approve designs are clearly identifiable to customers looking to appoint an ICP to carry out contestable works.	It will be quicker and easier for customers to identify ICPs who are authorised by Northern Powergrid and NERs to self-determine points of connection and self-approve designs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Website changes implemented.Stakeholder briefings delivered.		Stakeholder feedback.		ALL	ON TRACK		UM		ICP		◆						◆			PAGE 39	
5.2	We will review our policy on the installation of link boxes for non-domestic, small works Independent Distribution Network Operator (IDNO) connections.	The requirement to install link boxes for non-domestic, small works connections like EV chargers on IDNO networks will be reconsidered and where practicable removed, making the process quicker, easier and more cost-effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Policy reviewed and revised as required.Stakeholder briefings delivered.		Stakeholder feedback.		LV	ON TRACK				ICP		◆						◆			PAGE 40	
6.1	We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we transition to a Distribution System Operator (DSO).	Stakeholders will be involved and their views taken into consideration as we transition to a DSO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.Stakeholders will have opportunities to inform and help shape our strategy and approach.		Number of stakeholders engaged.	Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆								◆	PAGE 41	
6.2	We will continue to engage with stakeholders to inform our Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES).	Stakeholders will be involved and have opportunities to contribute to our DFES and as a result will be able to help inform and shape our future investment plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Data sought from stakeholders to inform our plans and projections.Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.		Number of stakeholders engaged.	Target of 85% satisfaction rate with sessions delivered.	Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆					◆			PAGE 42	

ACTION
1.1


THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Heat map data

M DG

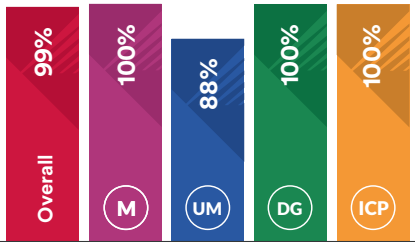
Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will publish data on transmission constraints and mod apps on our heat maps.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have access to more timely and accurate data.	Data published as part of the detailed datasheets that accompany our heat maps.	Data published and updated on a monthly basis. Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	 31/12/20

Our stakeholders said...



Northern Powergrid's ICE team were key in translating my comments into a deliverable action, which will be helpful to a large number of generation customers and enable early discussions regarding the potential transmission impact on connections. The publication of this data is a really important step to ensure that generation applicants are aware of whether their project is likely to require a Mod App with National Grid, a step which has taken up to 9-12 months to complete for some of our projects, and can significantly increase project costs and timescales.

Catherine Cleary
Gridserve



Heat map data
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020

One of the commitments we made in our 2019/20 ICE plan was to keep our stakeholders informed about developments in the national Appendix G and Statement of Works trials.

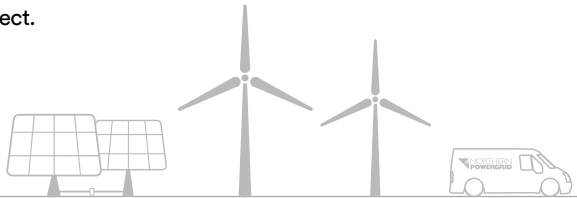
We understand this is an important topic, especially for generators, as it identifies constraints on National Grid's transmission network and any associated liabilities or requirements that could impact customers who are seeking a new connection to our network.

We kept stakeholders informed about the progress of the trials and any transmission issues or works that could affect them when securing a connection to our network with briefings held at events throughout

the 2019/20 ICE plan year. However, at our Connections Customer Forum, one of our customers challenged us to do more.

In response to this challenge, we began publishing Appendix G information towards the end of last year. We are now building on that initiative by publishing data on transmission constraints and mod apps as part of the detailed datasheets that accompany our heat maps.

The downloadable data sheets are updated monthly and contain a wealth of useful network information. Adding this data will further extend the provision of information we make available to our customers, helping them to make more informed decisions about where to connect.




ACTION
1.2


THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Information on planned outages

DG

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will develop and run a trial with generators to provide more timely and accurate information on planned outages.	Stakeholders will be better informed about network constraints and any planned outages affecting their assets.	Trial participants identified. Trial developed and implemented. Next steps agreed with stakeholders.	Updates delivered in a timely manner. Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	 31/03/21

Our stakeholders said...

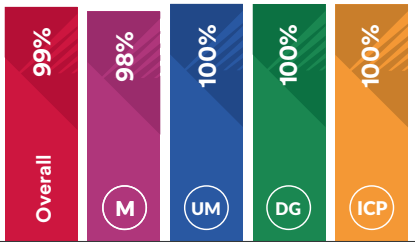


Providing timely and accurate information on planned outages would really help us as asset managers and allows us to prior-plan and give the PPA/Offtakers as much as notice as possible. We have different arrangements and needs with each and while we know short notice works happen, it will be very beneficial to have as much notice as possible for planned work.

Ian Clark
RES

This action sounds along the right line. It would be good to get the specific generator outage plans in a similar way to the information we receive from National Grid. Sometimes it seems there may be an internal challenge to get this information out to stakeholders, so it is great to see Northern Powergrid developing a strategy to address this.

Dan Thomas
Bank Renewables



Information on planned outages
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020

To run a safe and secure network and keep the power flowing for the people and communities we serve, we sometimes need to undertake essential upgrade and maintenance works. For generators, in particular those with cheaper single circuit connections, the operational and financial impact of service interruptions caused by planned works can be significant.

Feedback received from our DG Owner Operator forum, where generators can meet with our operational experts and gain information on outages that helps them

to plan more strategically and effectively, is that generators require more bespoke information, potentially on a site-by-site basis. They told us that, when properly managed, the impact of planned outages could be minimised and that with sufficient notice, they may be able to arrange for their own maintenance schedules to align with ours.

In response to this feedback, we will run a trial with a small number of generators with significant operating assets in our region. We will engage with them to understand

their expectations and, together, we will agree a process whereby we can provide them with more accurate and timely information about planned outages. Learning from this trial will then inform our approach to the provision of planned outage information for all generators that are connected to our network.

ACTION

1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Local Authority and LEP guide

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UM

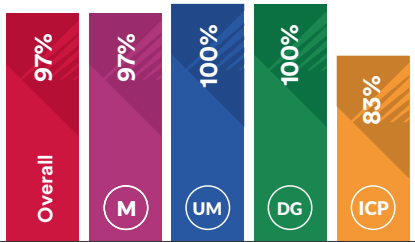
Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will produce a guide aimed at Local Authorities and LEPs which signposts the support and tools we make available.	Stakeholders will have a useful reference that signposts the help, support and online tools we make available to those seeking a new connection to our network.	New guide developed and published. Guide issued to all Local Authorities and LEPs in our region.	Number of guides issued. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div> </div> 30/09/20

Local Authorities are on the front line in the push to reach net zero and are increasingly looking to us to collaborate on their plans. Our team is now supporting these stakeholders more than ever, as they strive to achieve targets for EV infrastructure roll-out and other LCTs and rise to the challenges presented by the low carbon transition.

Feedback received from our Local Authority forum and from meetings we have held with local government representatives to understand their individual priorities and challenges, has led to an action in this year's ICE work plan.

At the request of the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), we will be creating a simple guide that signposts the resources we make available to anyone seeking a new connection to our network.

The guide will be issued to all Local Authorities and LEPs in our region and will provide an overview of the support we provide. It will feature guide prices, links to our network availability heat maps and other useful online resources. There will be information on our connections surgeries and what to expect from us and contact details for our Commercial Engineers and Design Team Managers.



Local Authority and LEP guide
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020



ACTION

2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Low Carbon Technologies

M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will make changes to our online application process to make it easier to apply to install different types of low carbon technologies (LCTs).	Stakeholders will be better informed and find it quicker and easier to make applications for different types of LCT projects.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and requirements. Make improvements to our online application process as required.	Website improvements delivered.	ALL	<div> </div> 31/03/21

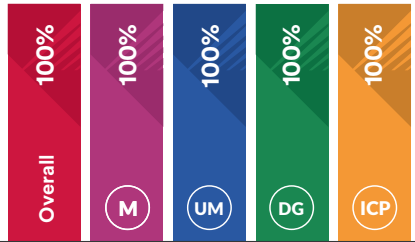
The transition to net zero is driving an increase in the amount of local generation and LCTs coming on to the energy system.

It is also driving a significant increase in the number of applications we are receiving for new and different types of LCT connections.

We received feedback from some stakeholders that they find it difficult to navigate our online process when applying to connect different types of LCTs. We are responding to these comments with a commitment to simplify and improve our online application process.

We will create an online decision tree - similar to our generation connections guide⁹ - that asks a few simple questions about the type of connection they require, so that we can direct customers to the right form or process to use when applying to connect different types of EV charging projects, heat pumps and other LCTs.

We will seek feedback from stakeholders on their experience and requirements and work with them to develop a simplified process that makes it quicker and easier to apply for these types of connections.



Low Carbon Technologies
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020



ACTION

2.2

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

LV budget estimating tool


M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will engage with stakeholders and seek feedback to develop our budget estimating tool.	Stakeholders will have opportunities to contribute to the continued development of our budget estimating tool and to help inform future use cases and the tool's functionality.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their requirements. Feedback used to help inform future use cases and development of the tool.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Stakeholder feedback.	LV	 31/03/21

Our stakeholders said...

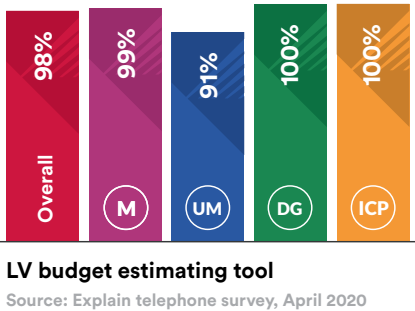
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It is great to know that this kind of estimation tool is available, particularly as councils look to electrify their fleets. Moving forward it would be beneficial if the tool could estimate the cost of larger EV chargers to account for the ever growing numbers of larger EV trucks and wagons.

”

James Grainger

Northumberland County Council



Earlier this year, we launched our AutoDesign LV budget estimating tool. Our stakeholders were involved at every step in the process, taking part in workshops and user acceptance testing that helped shape development of the tool.

AutoDesign is already helping Local Authorities to accelerate the EV uptake in our region by enabling them to identify the best and most cost-effective locations to install new EV charging infrastructure.

Given the positive response we have received, we are now looking at how we can develop the tool's functionality further and will be proactively seeking feedback from our stakeholders to understand their expectations. In doing so, we can ensure that we are developing the tool's functionality in line with their requirements.



ACTION

2.3


IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Streamlining our application process

M

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will work with customers who make multiple, repeat applications to streamline our applications process.	Customers who submit multiple, repeat applications on behalf of themselves or a third party will find it quicker and easier to make new connections applications.	New process developed and implemented. Customers who are potentially affected identified and notified.	Number of customers making use of the new process.	ALL	 31/03/21

Customers who make multiple, repeat applications - usually consultants working on behalf of another client - should find it quicker and easier as a result of a commitment we are making in our ICE plan this year.

Some of these customers have told us that our standard application forms ask for information that is not relevant to their connections and that completing this information each time they make a new application can be a time-consuming and resource-heavy task.

We can and do accept new connections applications in a different format as long as they contain all the information we require to process the application and so we will be working with customers who request our help to streamline their application process. We will identify customers who we think might benefit and write to them with an invitation to help develop a more bespoke application process.



ACTION

2.4

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES


Pre-application surgeries for planners and developers

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will offer free, pre-application surgeries for developers, Local Authority planners and consultants to help them identify the optimum and most cost-effective connections solutions.	Stakeholders considering new builds and significant developments will be able to access local, specialist knowledge and advice. We will work together to identify the most viable and cost-effective connections solution.	Notify all Local Authorities and LEPs in our region about the new service we are making available to them. Identify developers and consultants active in our region and ensure they are also aware of the service we can offer.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Number of surgery sessions delivered. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with sessions delivered.	ALL	 31/03/21

Our stakeholders said...

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Pre-application surgeries will help when it comes to working with developers on EV charge point installations. We have struggled in the past with developers claiming viability concerns for EV charging and so to have an opportunity to discuss this issue on an open platform will be very useful.

Rebecca Cockburn
Hartlepool Borough Council

Pre-application surgeries between local authorities, house builders and developers will enable us to progress planning and development strategies more efficiently. It would be beneficial to have similar surgeries with all utilities as well as just Northern Powergrid.

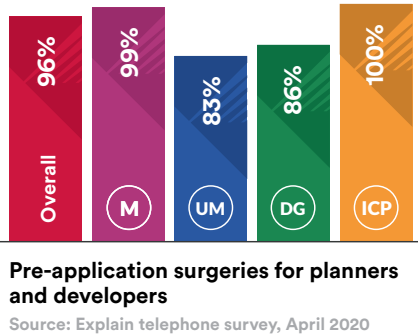
Paul Muir
Sunderland Council

Through our engagement with Local Authorities, we have identified an issue where their planning teams are encountering developers who tell them that they cannot integrate LCTs, such as new EV charging points, into their plans because the connections costs are too high.

To support Local Authorities in achieving their low carbon ambitions and developers in identifying the most cost-effective connections options, we will offer pre-application surgeries. During these sessions, which can be delivered by

WebEx or held face-to-face at our offices, our engineers will sit down with both parties, review their plans and work with them to identify the most viable connections solutions.

We will be contacting the planning teams in all the Local Authorities in our region to make them aware. We will also be identifying consultants, house builders and developers who we think might benefit and contacting them with an invite to make use of this free service.



ACTION

3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT


Local energy planning forums

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will host local energy planning forums for local government and other interested stakeholders.	Stakeholders can come together to explore future priorities and any emerging challenges. They will have opportunities to shape the content of these sessions and be better informed about the help and support we provide.	Three forums delivered during the 2020/21 ICE plan year.	Number of stakeholders taking part. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the engagements delivered. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	 31/03/21

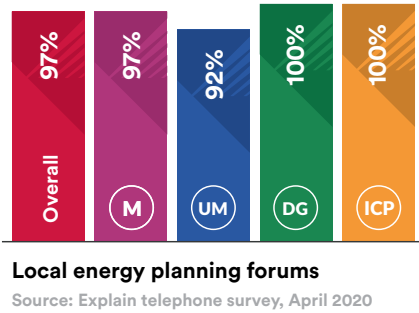
Our stakeholders said...

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Sunderland council has recently gone live with a strategy on delivering housing up to 2030. Shaping the agenda of future local authority forums will enable us to discuss these plans and any potential challenges with the DNO and fellow local authorities who are likely going through a similar process.

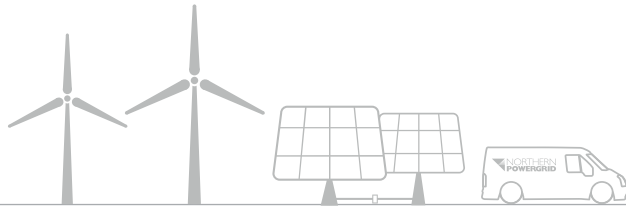
Paul Muir
Sunderland Council



Last year we hosted a series of Local Authority forums. Those taking part were given opportunities to help shape the content and agenda for these sessions and we invited local government representatives to share their experiences, so that those attending could benefit from peer-to-peer learning.

These forums enabled us to focus on the key issues that these stakeholders are facing and gave us a better understanding of their priorities and expectations, both now and in the future. Our local government stakeholders now also have a better understanding of the support we can provide, as they build their plans for the communities we collectively serve.

These forums were always intended to be a springboard for on-going and closer engagement and so, acting on requests from local government representatives who took part, we will be shifting the focus of these sessions to concentrate on local energy planning matters and extending an invitation to other public sector bodies who we think may be able to benefit. These forums will also provide us with a platform to explore these stakeholders' priorities and expectations for 2023 and beyond and to continue discussions around our emerging thinking on our RIIO-ED2 business plan.




ACTION 3.2

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Community Energy

CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will provide support for Community Energy groups and stakeholders seeking a new connection to our network.	Community Energy groups and stakeholders will have access to specialist advice and will be better supported when seeking a new connection to our network.	<p>Create a dedicated Community Energy section on our website.</p> <p>Provide information on available technical support, advice and free online tools.</p> <p>Create frequently asked connections questions factsheet.</p> <p>Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.</p>	<p>New webpage developed and deployed.</p> <p>Frequently asked questions factsheet published.</p> <p>Number of stakeholders engaged.</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback.</p>	LV	 <p>31/03/21</p>

Our stakeholders said...

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It's clear that Northern Powergrid is taking its role as an enabler of community energy seriously. The company is demonstrating its commitment to delivering meaningful environmental, social, and local economic benefits across Yorkshire and the North East and we look forward to working with them to make that happen.

Emma Bridge, Chief Executive
Community Energy England

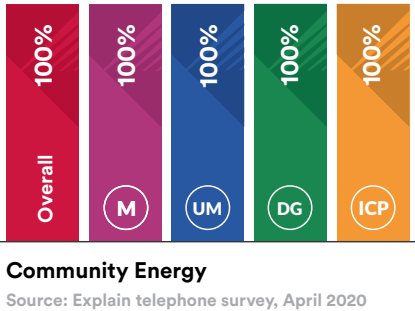
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Recognising the important role Community Energy groups will have in driving forward the low carbon agenda, we have made a series of commitments in this year's ICE work plan aimed at better supporting these stakeholders.

Our experience with Community Energy groups to date shows that they have great ambition and worthwhile ideas but limited experience of our connections process. We will address this issue with a series of actions aimed at supporting these stakeholders when seeking a new connection to our network.

Community Energy stakeholders will be able to access free support and advice on any proposed projects using our connections surgery service. We will create a new dedicated Community Energy section on our website that signposts available support and resources, and we will publish a factsheet with answers to connections-related questions that are frequently asked by Community Energy stakeholders.

Our Community Energy Engagement Strategy was published in May 2020 and is available at: [northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/5485.pdf](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/5485.pdf)




ACTION 4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme

DG CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will establish a local working group for stakeholders involved in the ENA's Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme (ALoMCP).	Stakeholders will have a channel to give feedback and seek clarity on the process and, if necessary, can use us as an advocate to work on their behalf and share their issues with the national working group.	<p>Quarterly meetings held.</p> <p>Stakeholder updates delivered.</p>	<p>Number of stakeholders taking part.</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback.</p>	ALL	 <p>31/03/21</p>

Our stakeholders said...

“

Smaller generators are not always aware of programmes like the ALoMCP. An open an accessible communication channel will ensure that all generators can access important information from both Northern Powergrid and the ENA. It would also be beneficial for the ENA and DNOs to liaise with generators on the technical aspects on new initiatives before they are made public to ensure technical compliance and ease of use.

Mike Ford
Whitby Esk Energy

”

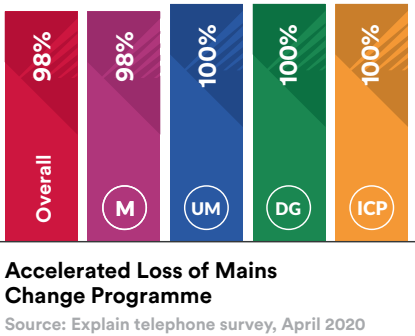
A recurring topic for discussion at our DG Owner Operator forums over the last six months has been the ALoMCP. Generators taking part told us they required clarification on certain exemptions, funding and technical specifications. There was also concern from Community Energy stakeholders that smaller generators were not aware of the programme and were not being sufficiently supported.

We play an active role in the ENA working groups that have been set up to drive through this change and have established a dedicated project team to support customers who are affected.

There was however, significant support from our stakeholders for a more focused local ALoMCP working group.

The local working group will be a channel for our generation customers to give feedback on their experience, seek clarity on the process and, if necessary, equip us with the information we need to advocate on their behalf with the national working group.

Anyone who is interested in learning more or contributing to our local working group should email us at yourpowergrid@northernpowergrid.com.



ACTION

4.2

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Electrification of transport


M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will continue to engage with stakeholders about the actions we are taking to support the roll-out of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in our region and on our role in the low carbon transition.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the actions we are taking to support the electrification of transport in our region. They will have a platform to explore emerging opportunities and any potential roadblocks to achieving the decarbonisation of transport by 2035.	Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with sessions delivered. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	 31/03/21

Our stakeholders said...

“

”

Sometimes it can be unclear whose role it is to provide EV charging facilities. I am glad to see that Northern Powergrid will continue engaging with all stakeholders in the sector, private companies, local authorities, and developers on this matter. As a local authority, we would like to discuss multi-story car parks and destination charging with the DNO, as well as implementing larger scale EV chargers.

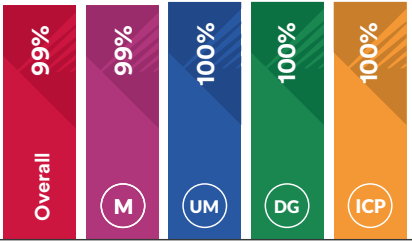
Robert Snowball
Newcastle City Council

With hybrid and plug-in EVs forecast to account for over 10% of all new car registrations in the UK this year, we expect to see a significant rise in the number of EVs on our region's roads over the next few years and more than 3 million by 2035, according to our latest projections¹⁰.

We are committed to supporting the electrification of transport in a way that minimises the need for new network infrastructure and reinforcement and delivers maximum value for our customers. We set out the actions we were taking in our EV readiness document¹¹ published last year and engaged with our stakeholders at events, workshops and webinars.

However, with more of our customers and stakeholders than ever before mapping a road to net zero, we are making a commitment to continue to engage with them on this topic by hosting a minimum of two EV-focussed events in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.

Responding to feedback received during our consultation with stakeholders on this action, the first of these sessions will focus on exploring emerging opportunities and on defining the roles different groups will have to play in facilitating the electrification of transport in our region. There will also be opportunities for stakeholders to give feedback and inform our emerging thinking on our RIIO-ED2 business plans.



Electrification of transport
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020

ACTION

4.3

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Electrification of heating


M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will engage with stakeholders on the electrification of heating and our role in the low carbon transition.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the steps we are taking to support the electrification of heating in our region.	Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with sessions delivered. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	 31/03/21

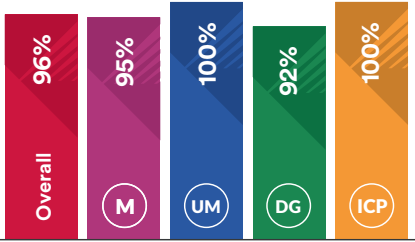
Our stakeholders said...

“

”

Electrification of heating is live issue for everyone at the moment. It will be useful to engage with Northern Powergrid on large heat pump installation projects and disruptive heat technologies. We would also like to know if the implications for EV technology are running in parallel with heat developments.

David Lynch
North East LEP



Electrification of heating
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020

The decarbonisation of heating is the next critical step on the UK's pathway to reaching net zero emissions by 2050. Our Local Authority and LEP stakeholders told us that changes in government policy are making the roll-out of electric heating for new builds and social housing one of their top priorities.

We have committed to hosting a minimum of two engagement events in the 2020/21 ICE plan year. These events will provide an opportunity to engage with our stakeholders; set out what we are doing to support the electrification of heating in our region and explain how we can work with them to achieve their

targets. It will also provide an opportunity to explore stakeholders' priorities and expectations and inform our thinking on how we can best support them.




¹⁰ datamillnorth.org/dataset/northern-powergrid-dfes/
¹¹ Maximising the value of electric vehicles for our customers EV readiness document

ACTION 4.4

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS Installers of Low Carbon Technologies

M DG UM CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will engage with installers of low carbon technologies (LCTs) to better understand their priorities, any challenges they are facing and how we can best support them.	Stakeholders will have opportunities to provide feedback on our connections process and how we can best support them. We will signpost available support and free online tools that can help them when seeking a new connection to our network.	Stakeholders identified and feedback sought. Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Stakeholder feedback.	LV	 31/03/21

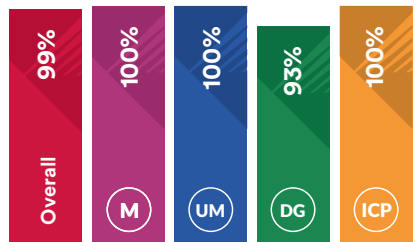
Our stakeholders said...

“Installers and people in industry need clear best practice recommendations from DNOs about connections processes, and a clear route of communication and engagement to ensure that all stakeholders are educated on the application process. I would like to see Northern Powergrid and other DNOs to be trialing adaptive load balancing technology that can help futureproof large capacity installations like EV chargers.”

Paul Rawlinson
E-vei

Installers of LCTs are a group that we have not actively engaged with outside of our business as usual programme of connections engagement. We recognise, however, that these stakeholders have an important role to play in driving forward the low carbon transition and can provide valuable insights into our connections service and processes.

We will host a minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions in the 2020/21 ICE plan year where we will engage with these stakeholders to better understand their priorities and challenges and any improvements to our connections processes that may be required to accelerate the uptake in LCTs.



Installers of Low Carbon Technologies
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020


We will provide technical support and advice and introduce them to tools like AutoDesign that can help them to self-serve and generate their own free of charge budget estimates. We will also seek feedback from these stakeholders to inform our thinking on the levels of service and support they require and our longer term business priorities and plans.



ACTION 5.1

ENABLING COMPETITION Alternative provider register

UM ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will make changes to the alternative provider register on our website so that Independent Connections Providers (ICPs) who are authorised to self-determine points of connection and self-approve designs are clearly identifiable to customers looking to appoint an ICP to carry out contestable works.	It will be quicker and easier for customers to identify ICPs who are authorised by Northern Powergrid and NERs to self-determine points of connection and self-approve designs.	Website changes implemented. Stakeholder briefings delivered.	Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	 31/12/20

Our stakeholders said...

“Local authorities do not accept a self-approved design unless it has been stamped approved by the DNO, so can the NPg Alternative Providers Register be updated to detail those ICPs that are NPg authorised to self-approve designs, therefore providing the local authorities with the relevant assurances and allowing the ICP to self-approve designs for local authorities?”

Billy Robertson
ICP Design Solutions Ltd

We are not the only company that can provide a new connection to our network. Our customers are free to compare our prices and levels of service with ICPs who can also deliver some, or all of the work.

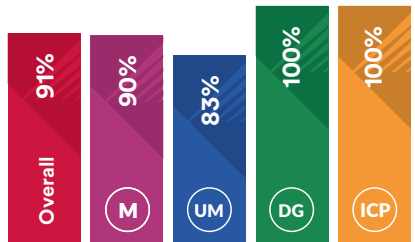
The work ICPs can undertake is known as ‘contestable’ and we remain committed to fostering an environment where they can compete freely with us to undertake these works.

One of the ways in which we promote fair and open competition in connections is by providing an alternative providers register¹² with contact details for ICPs who are accredited to carry out contestable works.

During our ICP Seminar in November, one of the ICPs who took part highlighted an issue whereby some Local Authorities will not accept self-

approved designs from ICPs, unless those designs had also been approved by a DNO.

They asked us to make changes to the alternative providers register on our website, so that ICPs who are accredited by us and the National Electricity Register Scheme (NERS) to self-approve designs would be more easily identifiable to customers. We thought this was a good suggestion and will be engaging with our stakeholders to agree the next steps and deliver this improvement.



Alternative provider register
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020



¹² www.northernpowergrid.com/alternative-providers

ACTION

5.2

ENABLING COMPETITION

Link box policy

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will review our policy on the installation of link boxes for non-domestic, small works Independent Distribution Network Operator (IDNO) connections.	The requirement to install link boxes for non-domestic, small works connections like EV chargers on IDNO networks will be reconsidered and where practicable removed, making the process quicker, easier and more cost-effective.	Policy reviewed and revised as required. Stakeholder briefings delivered.	Stakeholder feedback.	LV	<div><div></div><div>31/12/20</div></div>

Our stakeholders said...

“

The NPg requirement of a link box on all IDNO connections seems rather onerous and costly for all parties. There is the option of using the LV fuses at the cable head as the point of isolation, and I believe we can accommodate the BCA alteration to allow dual access, and if required any legal requirements for this.

Jeff Reynolds

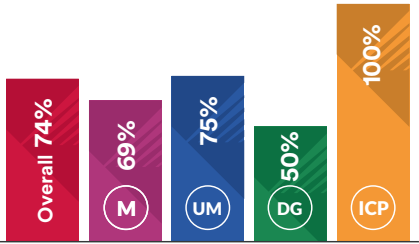
Envevo

Network link boxes are a critical part of the underground LV network. In a cable fault situation, they ensure that we are able to back feed electricity supplies and keep the lights on in people’s homes and businesses.

Our current policy is that all new connections require a link box to be

installed. However, we shall review our requirement for link boxes to be installed for some smaller, non-domestic IDNO connections, for example EV charging points.

We will be responding to customer feedback by reviewing our policy and making changes as appropriate. Where



Link box policy
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020

practicable, the requirement to install link boxes for these types of connections will be removed, to make the process, quicker, easier and more cost-effective for all.



ACTION

6.1

INNOVATION

Our DSO transition

M DG UM ICP CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we transition to a Distribution System Operator (DSO).	Stakeholders will be involved and their views taken into consideration as we transition to a DSO.	Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year. Stakeholders will have opportunities to inform and help shape our strategy and approach.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	<div><div></div><div>31/03/21</div></div>

Our stakeholders said...

“

It is great to see this kind of engagement coming from Northern Powergrid as the transition from DNO to DSO will be increasingly important for distributed generators. By ensuring our views as stakeholders are taken into consideration, Northern Powergrid can ensure this is an efficient and inclusive transition.

Dan Thomas

Banks Renewables

I am keen to understand how the transition of DNO to DSO will release more distributed generation capacity and where the opportunities lie for me e.g. ANM, battery storage etc. Engaging with NPg on these technologies will be very useful.

Mark Wood

Black Mountain Development

As we continue on our journey towards becoming a DSO, it is important that we do so in a transparent and open way that gives all of our stakeholders and customers opportunities to help inform our vision and approach.

Our connections stakeholders told us that they want us to continue to keep them informed about our progress and make them aware of any opportunities that our DSO transition could offer them. We will, therefore, hold a minimum of two dedicated DSO engagement sessions in the year to give our connections stakeholders’ the opportunity to help shape our vision, future direction and priorities.



Our DSO transition
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020

ACTION

6.2

INNOVATION

Distribution Future Energy Scenarios

M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will continue to engage with stakeholders to inform our Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES).	Stakeholders will be involved and have opportunities to contribute to our DFES and as a result will be able to help inform and shape our future investment plans.	Data sought from stakeholders to inform our plans and projections. Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with sessions delivered. Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	<div></div> 31/12/20

Our stakeholders said...

“

”

It will make people more informed and aid future proposals, as well as allowing Northern Powergrid to understand how they can support likely future developments.

Anonymous

Explain telephone survey

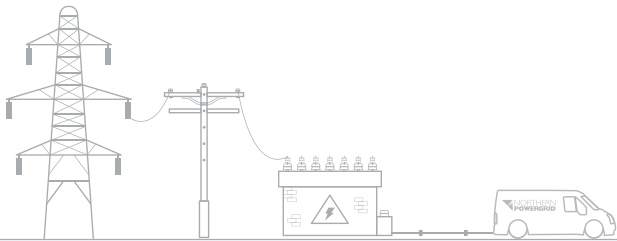
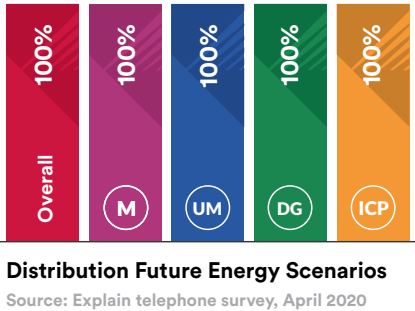
The potential future uptake of LCTs including EVs, heat pumps, solar PV generation and energy storage is being mapped and made publically available as part of our DFES project.

Our DFES project provides an annual overview of potential future energy pathways and gives a multi-scenario view of the potential rates of decarbonisation for generation, heating and transportation. It is built around the four scenarios defined in the National Grid Future Energy Scenarios: consumer evolution, community renewables, steady progression and two degrees.

The accuracy of this data is vital to help us to plan and invest in our network in response to customer need. In turn, the

network plans that we will evolve based on this data, will have a direct impact on our customers’ activities.

Our connections stakeholders have told us they want to be more involved in our DFES planning to ensure that our network evolution matches the scale and ambition of their plans. We will hold a minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions in the 2020/21 ICE plan year and seek input from our connections customers and stakeholders to inform our projections.





Our Looking Back report

In this section you will find:

- 46 An introduction to our Looking Back report
- 48 How we implemented our engagement strategy
- 50 Our 2019/20 ICE Looking Back report
- 52 How we delivered our 2019/20 actions

Introduction to our Looking Back report

Our Looking Back report gives us an opportunity to provide more detail on the service improvements we have delivered over the past year.

 **150**

improvements delivered through ICE¹³

In this section, we explain how we have implemented our strategy for engaging with connections customers and stakeholders, including seeking their views to help shape our plans and improve the service we provide.

We describe the activities we undertook to deliver the commitments we made in our 2019/20 ICE plan and how we have engaged with our stakeholders to ensure we were meeting their expectations at all times.

A year of significant improvements

The 2019/20 ICE year saw us embark on a wide-ranging connections service improvement plan, consisting of 13 actions. These actions addressed a mix of current challenges and emerging issues that our stakeholders had identified and were grouped under six key themes or areas for improvement.

We are pleased to report that during the course of the ICE plan year, we delivered all of our ICE commitments, the most notable of which was the launch of our AutoDesign LV budget estimating tool.

AutoDesign¹⁴ uses real-world network data to help customers self-serve and perform their own upfront assessments, identify the most viable connection options and get a free of charge budget estimate in just minutes. Our stakeholders have been involved every step of the way, providing feedback that helped shape development of the tool. We believe this is a great example of what can be achieved when we work together with our stakeholders.

AutoDesign is already helping Local Authorities to accelerate the uptake of EVs in our region by enabling them to identify the best locations to install new charging infrastructure. Earlier this year, we launched AutoDesign at our first ever co-working session, where local government representatives had the opportunity to work on live projects together with our engineers.

We have been working hard to respond to the challenges our stakeholders are facing in relation to national and local decarbonisations targets. With more people and businesses than ever before mapping a road to net zero – now, more than ever – we are supporting our stakeholders and partners as they rise to the challenges presented by the transition to a low carbon economy.

Our connections surgeries have always been popular and acting on our stakeholders’ feedback, we now offer this free service via telephone, face-to-face meetings or WebEx. As we consider how to adapt our engagement strategy to meet the challenges of COVID-19, we expect this initiative to become an important part of our strategy.

Another important action was the introduction of a new end-to-end process that allows accredited ICPs to undertake overhead street lighting transfers as contestable works. This opened up a significant new market for ICPs and underpins our commitment to facilitating fair and open competition in connections.

As our journey towards becoming a DSO continues, we have been keeping our connections customers and stakeholders informed about the opportunities it could bring for them. Towards the end of 2019, we identified customers with significant assets sited at seven key locations across our network and invited them to take part in a trial where they would be required to flex their energy usage, in return for financial incentives.

Developing our ICE plans

When developing our ICE plans, we have always been guided first and foremost by customer insight and stakeholder feedback. We operate a robust process when forming our ICE plans, which sees every comment, request or suggestion we receive, recorded, considered and where appropriate, acted upon. Whether it requires contact from one of our team, a change to our BAU practices or a more significant action delivered through ICE, we remain committed to continually improving the service we provide.

We are also guided by Ofgem’s expectation that all DNOs will set stretching targets in relation to ICE and be ambitious in the improvements proposed. Ensuring our stakeholders are aware of these targets is important and so we set clear performance measures that allow them to assess the impact of our actions.

We endeavour to keep in touch with all those stakeholders whose feedback has generated an action in our ICE plan. In doing so, we ensure not only that we have understood their comments and that the action we are proposing will address their needs, but also, that what we have delivered meets their expectations and addresses the issue they raised.

All of the actions we have delivered this year, backed by our robust strategy for stakeholder consultation gives us confidence that we have delivered the improvements our connections stakeholders and customers expected from us this year.

Our plans for 2020/21 continue to build on our identified areas for improvement and include a number of actions and initiatives designed to address the emerging issues our stakeholders have identified.



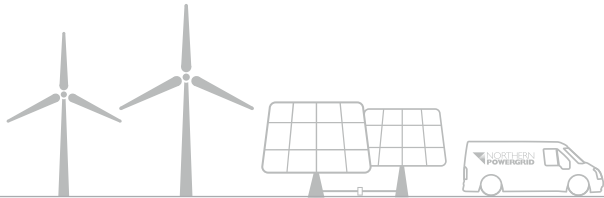
Customers were asked to rate our service over the past 12 months

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2020



¹³ Figure correct to April 2020

¹⁴ www.northernpowergrid.com/auto-design



How we implemented our strategy

Despite the challenges faced during the first few months of 2020, we achieved everything we set out to do in this ICE plan year. We delivered a comprehensive programme of in-year engagement that enabled us to able to reach more stakeholders than ever before, including those that are considered hard to reach.

We delivered workshops, webinars and connections events, the feedback from which is driving our service improvement plans. We embraced new channels for engagement, hosting virtual connections surgeries for time-poor customers and those unable to travel to our offices. As we adapt to meet future challenges, digital engagement will become an increasingly important part of our engagement strategy and we are already putting in place the resources to help us do this better.

Our engineers continued to deliver the early phase engagement that our customers tell us is so important when helping them to understand their options. We also hosted our first ever co-working session where local government representatives were able to work on live connection projects alongside our design engineers.

With the Local Authorities in our region increasingly looking to us to collaborate on their plans, our team has been busy working to support them in achieving their net zero targets. That support included the establishment of a forum where local government representatives can come together to explore emerging energy issues and learn from the experience of their peers.

89%

of those surveyed agreed that we engage with stakeholders and facilitate joint discussions.

Going forward, as we adapt to the 'new normal' required to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19, we will continue to develop our approach to connections engagement in response to what our stakeholders are telling us about the ways in which they want to engage and interact with us.

>54,600 connections enquires answered by our Contact Centre

>7,250 connections stakeholders kept informed with regular email communications

101,000 website hits

www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected

webinars

4

Twice-yearly Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars

Hosted our first first co-working session



Targeted forums for generators and local government stakeholders

Followers

18,950 Facebook
24,900 Twitter
13,600 LinkedIn



Monthly surgeries for Connections Customers and ICPs



Monthly major works customer satisfaction surveys



Engagement highlights	Q2 2019			Q3 2019			Q4 2019			Q1 2020		
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Stakeholder Panel			✓			✓			✓			
Social Issues Expert Group			✓			✓			✓			
Stakeholder Summit								✓				
Connections Customer Forums	✓							✓				
ICP Seminars			✓					✓				
Connections customer surgeries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ICP surgeries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early engagement and pre-application discussions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AutoDesign user acceptance testing and engagement	✓		✓					✓ x2		✓		
SafeDig briefings and workshops	✓		✓			✓						
Updates on Statement of Works and Appendix G			✓					✓ x2				
Engagement on power factor correction												
EV engagement	✓					✓		✓ x2			✓	
DSO and flexibility engagement	✓							✓ x2	✓			✓ x2
Local Authority forums							✓			✓		✓
DG Owner Operator forums			✓									✓
Webinars						✓	✓		✓ x2			
Connections email updates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Over the last few months, we have been looking to bring forward some solar and storage projects in the NPg territory and this involves a pretty intensive process of site selection based on a number of parameters, not least of which being likely availability of a grid connection.

Whilst we can analyse this to a certain extent with our own data, there are just some nuances that are either beyond us or not in the common domain so I have, on a number of occasions recently, sought initial feedback from Northern Powergrid's commercial engineers.

They have responded promptly, courteously, and with a wealth of genuinely useful information that has informed our process enormously, saving us considerable time and money in establishing suitable sites to progress.

Whilst most DNOs are getting better at this, I do feel that NPg are an excellent example of how DNOs can interact with their customers in a way that is mutually beneficial and hopefully enables us to get more quality solar and storage projects connected.

Chris Sowerbutts
Lightrock Power

Incentive on Connection Engagement (ICE)

2019/20 ICE LOOKING BACK WORK PLAN

ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO				Q2 2019			Q3 2019			Q4 2019			Q1 2020			MORE INFO
										Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
1.1	We will develop and publish a new Electric Vehicle (EV) connections guide. We will also review the EV information that is currently available on our website and make updates and improvements if required.	Stakeholders will have a useful guide on how to apply for different types of EV connections and access to better online information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with stakeholders to understand their requirements.Develop and publish a new EV connections guide.Review the information available on our website and make improvements if required.Add an EV connections FAQ section to our website	LV	COMPLETE	M	UM		ICP	◇								◆				PAGE 52
1.2	We will inform stakeholders about the launch of our new SafeDig webpage and provide briefings and training for users.	Stakeholders will be better informed about our new SafeDig system and its benefits and have access to an automated and more user-friendly system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Issue a communication to SafeDig users regarding the launch of the new webpage.Hold briefings on our new SafeDig system at our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars.Hold a 'how to' training session on the new SafeDig system.	ALL	COMPLETE	M	UM	DG	ICP	◇								◆	◆			PAGE 53
1.3	We will produce a new guide for customers with contact details for our connections team.	Customers will have access to a useful guide that tells them who to contact about new connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop and publish guide.	ALL	COMPLETE	M	UM	DG	ICP	◇								◆				PAGE 54
1.4	We will deliver training on our network availability heat maps for users.	Stakeholders will be better informed about how to use our heat maps and the network information available. They will also have opportunities to provide feedback to help inform any future developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deliver a heat map training webinar.Create a 'how to' guide for heat map users.	EHV HV	COMPLETE	M		DG					◇					◆				PAGE 55
1.5	We will engage customers with poor power factor and offer advice on how they can reduce their losses and in turn their electricity costs.	Stakeholders will be better informed about losses and how to reduce their electricity consumption and therefore costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify customers with poor power factor.Briefings held at our engagement events in Q4 2019.Develop and publish an information guide.	EHV HV	COMPLETE	M											◇				◆	PAGE 56
2.1	We will develop and deploy a new Low Voltage (LV) self-serve budget estimating tool.	Users will have access to a new automated tool that will allow them to self-serve and generate their own LV budget estimates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New tool developed and deployed.	LV	COMPLETE	M	UM	DG	ICP	◇									◆		◆	PAGE 57
3.1	We will engage with stakeholders who use a contractor to procure multiple connections and seek feedback from those stakeholders on our service.	Customers who use a contractor to procure multiple connections on their behalf will have the opportunity to give feedback and help shape our service improvement plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify customers who use a third party to procure their connections.Contact identified customers to seek feedback on our service.	ALL	COMPLETE	M	UM	DG		◇							◆					PAGE 58

Incentive on Connection Engagement (ICE)

2019/20 ICE LOOKING BACK WORK PLAN

ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO				Q2 2019			Q3 2019			Q4 2019			Q1 2020			MORE INFO
										Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
3.2 We will engage with stakeholders to understand what we could do to improve their connections surgery experience.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to give feedback and help shape our proposition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with stakeholders to seek their feedback.Review how we promote and deliver our connections surgeries and make improvements if necessary.Trial 'virtual' surgeries for customers who find it difficult to attend our offices.Introduce a new process to survey satisfaction of stakeholders attending our surgeries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of customers and ICPs who attended our connections surgeries identified and their feedback sought.Number of virtual surgeries trialled.New satisfaction survey introduced.	ALL	COMPLETE	M	UM	DG	ICP													PAGE 59
3.3 We will deliver a series of connections forums aimed at Local Authorities where they can come together to discuss emerging connections issues and access specialist advice.	Local Authorities will have a forum where they can explore common approaches to emerging connections topics. They will have a better understanding of how to engage with us and have access to specialist advice and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Three Local Authority forums delivered in the 2019/20 ICE plan year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of Local Authority stakeholders taking part and feedback from attendees.Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the sessions held.	LV	COMPLETE	M	UM	DG	ICP													PAGE 60
4.1 We will engage with stakeholders to inform them about the steps that are being taken to facilitate the roll-out of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in our region.	Stakeholders will have a greater understanding of what we are doing to prepare for the expected growth in EVs. They will have a platform to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead and the actions we are taking to accommodate the electrification of transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two dedicated engagement sessions delivered in the 2019/20 ICE plan year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of stakeholders attending.Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the sessions held.	ALL	COMPLETE	M	UM	DG	ICP													PAGE 61
4.2 We will provide updates on developments in the Statement of Works process and progress of the Appendix G trials.	Stakeholders will be better informed about how we manage new connections that are affected by the Transmission network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Briefings held at our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Updates delivered.Number of stakeholders engaged.	EHV HV	COMPLETE	M		DG														PAGE 62
5.1 We will develop a new process that will allow accredited ICPs to undertake street lighting overhead pole transfers as contestable works.	The new process will allow accredited ICPs to undertake this work, extending the scope of the work they can offer to unmetered clients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New process developed and implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Application forms updated to include unmetered overhead transfers.ICP activity post-implementation.	LV	COMPLETE		UM		ICP													PAGE 63
6.1 We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we transition to a Distribution System Operator (DSO).	Stakeholders will be involved as we transition to a DSO. They will be able to inform our strategy and approach and be kept informed about opportunities arising, including the provision of flexibility services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two dedicated engagement sessions held in the 2019/20 ICE plan year.Stakeholders will have opportunities to provide feedback and help shape our DSO transition plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of stakeholders engaged.Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	COMPLETE	M	UM	DG	ICP													PAGE 64

ACTION

1.1

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

New EV connections guide

MUMDG

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will develop and publish a new Electric Vehicle (EV) connections guide. We will also review the EV information that is currently available on our website and make updates and improvements if required.	Stakeholders will have a useful guide on how to apply for different types of EV connections and access to better online information.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their requirements. Develop and publish a new EV connections guide. Review the information available on our website and make improvements if required. Add an EV connections FAQ section to our website.	Number of guides issued or downloaded. Website information reviewed and improvements implemented if required. Stakeholder feedback.	LV	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We published a new EV connections guide that provides practical advice on different types of EV charging projects and signposts available resources and support.
- ✓ We reviewed the information on our website and made improvements, creating a new dedicated EV section with links to online application forms and tools.

Our stakeholders said...

“

Not all EV connections will be at a premises (e.g. no MPAN or on the high street) so it's good to see that the guide covers a range of different connections as I'd hoped. Beyond the guide, I've found that the contact with Northern Powergrid's engineers has been crucial for me in terms of project shaping and to explore the art of the possible. I've always found them very easy to engage with and helpful at all levels of the organisation.”

”

Ian Goodwin

EVs.energy

Net zero targets are driving a significant increase in local generation and the uptake in low carbon technologies, in particular EVs.

Earlier this year, it was announced that the UK's ban on selling petrol, diesel and hybrid cars would be brought forward from 2040 to 2035, which is designed to cut carbon emissions and achieve the national target of creating a fully decarbonised UK transport system by 2050.

Our latest projections suggest that there could be more than 3 million EVs on our roads by 2035¹⁵ and we have been working with our stakeholders and partners to support the development of the charging infrastructure required to support this uptake.

We have seen a significant increase in the number of applications we are receiving for new and innovative types of EV charging projects and our team is working hard to support our customers, help them understand the technical parameters

and identify the most viable and cost-effective connections solutions.

Recognising that there is not a 'one size fits all approach', we have made it easier for customers to apply for different types of EV charging projects. We produced a new guide with practical advice for anyone looking to install chargers at home, in public areas and on streets and motorways.

We made improvements to our website, creating a dedicated EV section that explains how to apply for different types of EV charging projects and provides links to useful online resources and tools, including AutoDesign. We also published a series of EV-related frequently asked questions, providing answers to some of the most commonly asked questions we receive.

Importantly, we have delivered these improvements together with our connections stakeholders and in line with their feedback. We will continue to work with our customers and stakeholders to support them and to help accelerate the uptake of EVs in our region.



¹⁵ odileeds.github.io/northern-powergrid/

ACTION

1.2

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

SafeDig

MUMICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will inform stakeholders about the launch of our new SafeDig web page and provide briefings and training for users.	Stakeholders will be better informed about our new SafeDig system and its benefits and have access to an automated and more user-friendly system.	Issue a communication to SafeDig users regarding the launch of the new webpage. Hold briefings on our new SafeDig system at our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars. Hold a 'how to' training session on the new SafeDig system.	Number of users registering to use the new SafeDig system. Number of stakeholders attending our briefings and training sessions. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with our training sessions.	ALL	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We promoted our SafeDig service to stakeholders by delivering briefings, workshops and webinars and provided training for users.
- ✓ It is now quicker and easier to identify where our underground assets are located.

Our stakeholders said...

“

Thank you for holding the webinar on the new NPg safe digging portal. I have taken some really useful things out of it and I would be interested to be kept up to date with progress on being able to scale up the area of plans on the system.

”

Hannah Stalley

Premier Energy

To ensure the safety of construction workers, developers and anyone else completing work that requires them to dig near our assets, we provide information on where our underground cables are located.

Previously, this information had to be requested from us by email and before starting any work but in 2019, we introduced our new and improved SafeDig service, which makes the process of obtaining this information quicker and more efficient.

SafeDig combines our two legacy processes for the North East and Yorkshire regions into a single, automated and easy-to-use system that is compatible with all modern web browsers. Users can log in - whilst on site if necessary - select an area of our network and download the asset data in just a few minutes.

We have worked hard to promote SafeDig and its benefits. We contacted more than 1,800 customers who used the old legacy system with an invitation to start using the new system. We held SafeDig briefings

and workshops at our Connections Customer Forums, ICP Seminars and other connections events throughout the year. Our team has also provided bespoke training for major users, including utility providers and their contractors.

A webinar we hosted proved popular with more than 130 stakeholders registering to take part. We used the session to walk them through the features of the new system and, when asked if the session had improved their understanding of how to use SafeDig, 90% of those who responded agreed that it had.

The improvements we delivered have made it quicker and easier to obtain information on our underground assets.

Since SafeDig went live on our website in September 2019, more than 1,570 individuals have registered and begun using the new system.



- 📺 A recording of our SafeDig webinar is available on our YouTube channel at: youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid
- 📄 To use SafeDig visit: northernpowergrid.com/services-directory/safedig

ACTION

1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Connections customer guide

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will produce a new guide for customers with contact details for our connections team.	Customers will have access to a useful guide that tells them who to contact about new connections.	Develop and publish guide.	Number of guides issued and downloaded. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We produced a guide for customers that features contact details for our connections team and made it available to download on our website.
- ✓ Going forward we will make sure the guide is kept up-to-date and refreshed as required, so that our customers always know who to contact to discuss their connection project.

Our stakeholders said...

“

That's fantastic because sometimes you're trying to contact a DNO and because they're a large organisation it's not always easy to get through and talk to someone who understands you.

”

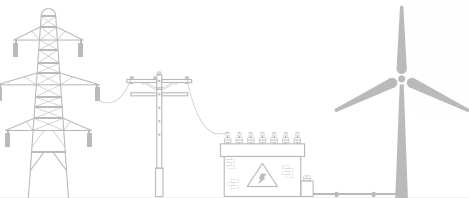
Anonymous
Explain telephone survey

We know that it is important for our customers to be able to pick up the telephone and talk to our team. Whether it is to discuss an existing project or explore their options ahead of making an application, our customers continue to tell us how valuable they find this interaction.

Contact details for our team have been available on our website for some time now but last year, we produced a comprehensive new guide for customers with contact details for our Design Team Managers, Commercial Engineers and Competition in Connections (CiC) team.

The new guide contains the contact details and areas of responsibility for our connections team and the routes for escalation, should our customers need to use them. It also provides an overview of the new regional structure that we have put in place to better serve the local needs of our customers.

Our contacts guide is available on our website at: [northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/5259.pdf](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/5259.pdf)



ACTION

1.4

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Heat map training

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DG

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will deliver training on our network availability heat maps for users.	Stakeholders will be better informed about how to use our heat maps and the network information available. They will also have opportunities to provide feedback to help inform any future developments.	Deliver a heat map training webinar. Create a 'how to' guide for heat map users.	Number of users registering for heat map training webinar. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with our training sessions. 'How to' guide developed and published.	EHV HV	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We delivered bespoke training and hosted a training webinar to inform and educate stakeholders on the use of our heat maps.
- ✓ We published downloadable datasheets that contain 'how to' guidance for heat map users.
- ✓ Our stakeholders now have an improved understanding of how to use our heat maps and the network data available.

Our stakeholders said...

“

In my experience over the past year, NPg is the most engaging and easily accessible of the DNOs with whom I have worked, so I am very grateful to the NPg team for the time, effort and support that they have provided. The webinar on heat maps was very valuable as they are the starting point of everything I do (solar development) and understanding them in detail is important.

”

Mark Woods
Black Mountain Developments

Our network availability heat maps form part of a suite of free online tools we make available for customers who want to conduct their own upfront assessments. In most cases, these are the same tools used by our own design engineers.

We were the first DNO to launch heat maps and make this level of detailed network information available to customers. The web view of our heat maps helps our customers to understand where there is capacity to connect to our distribution network using a simple red, amber, green traffic light indicator. In December 2019, we began publishing detailed datasheets that sit alongside the web view heat maps.

The downloadable datasheets provide a wealth of additional information that is not currently available via the web view. They also contain 'how to' guidance for customers on how to use our heat maps and a glossary of terms.

In the same month, we hosted a webinar aimed at new and existing heat map users. We wanted our stakeholders to have an improved understanding of the data available to them and for them to be able to make more informed decisions about network capacity and where to connect. The webinar was well received and, when asked to rate their satisfaction with the session, all those who responded unanimously agreed that it had improved their understanding of how to use our heat maps.

We have worked hard this year to raise awareness about our heat maps and the data we make available, delivering briefings at our Connections Customer Forum and DG Owner Operator forum and providing bespoke, one-to-one training sessions for those who requested it.

A recording of our heat map webinar is available on our YouTube channel at: [youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid](https://www.youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid)

ACTION

1.5

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Engaging with customers with poor power factor

M

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will engage customers with poor power factor and offer advice on how they can reduce their losses and in turn their electricity costs.	Stakeholders will be better informed about losses and how to reduce their electricity consumption and therefore costs.	Identify customers with poor power factor. Briefings held at our engagement events in Q4 2019. Develop and publish an information guide.	Number of customers identified. Briefings held. Number of guides distributed or downloaded.	EHV HV	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓

We identified customers with poor power factor and offered advice on how to correct it.
- ✓

We gave briefings at our engagement events to raise awareness and produced an information guide for those customers.

We have been taking steps to minimise losses on our network by investing in new technology, lowering voltages and utilising smart meter data to pinpoint and target losses.

However, we have also been thinking about how we can help industrial and commercial customers to minimise their losses. We wanted to engage with these customers to offer advice related to power factor, which we use as an indication of how efficiently the power supply is being utilised.

Customers with poor power factor can materially impact losses on the network. The power factor values we attribute reflect the amount of ‘real power’ that is absorbed compared to the ‘reactive power’ flowing in the circuit. Poor power factor is often caused by equipment such as motors or transformers that use lots of reactive power, which ultimately costs our customers more money whilst increasing their carbon footprint.

We wanted to raise awareness of the issue and so we engaged with customers, holding briefings at our Connections Customer Forum and Stakeholder Summit.

We created an information guide for customers with practical advice on how to correct poor power factor and published it on our website where it has been downloaded 147 times. Our guide was also published on the Carbon Trust’s website.

We used metering data to identify customers’ with poor power factor and sent an email to 249 of them with a link to our guide and an invitation to contact us should they need more information, support or advice.

Our power factor guide is available at: northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/5322.pdf



ACTION

2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

AutoDesign

M DG UM ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will develop and deploy a new LV self-serve budget estimating tool.	Users will have access to a new automated tool that will allow them to self-serve and generate their own LV budget estimates.	New tool developed and deployed.	Number of users’ self-serving and using the new tool. Stakeholder feedback.	LV	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓

We developed and launched a new online LV budget estimating tool that allows customers to self-serve and generate their own free of charge budget estimates.
- ✓

AutoDesign helps customers to identify the most viable and cost-effective connections options.
- ✓

Since its launch, 136 connections stakeholders have registered to use AutoDesign.

We know that many of our customers want to perform their own upfront assessments and so at the start of this year, we added to the suite of online tools we make available to help customers assess the likely cost, timescales and viability of their connection with the launch of AutoDesign, our new LV budget estimating tool.

AutoDesign can provide customers with an indicative cost for their new LV connection in minutes. It guides them to the most viable and cost-effective connection solution, using a simple green, amber, red (yes, probably, no) indicator and allows them to generate a free of charge budget estimate in minutes.

During the course of the year, we engaged with stakeholders - in particular Local Authorities and their consultants - to develop AutoDesign. Stakeholders were invited to take part in workshops and user acceptance testing and gave feedback that helped to shape the tool’s development and functionality.

We gave demonstrations at our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars, at our Stakeholder Summit and at the Low Carbon Network and Innovation Conference.

In January 2020, we launched AutoDesign at our Local Authority forum and 29 local government stakeholders representing 15 Local Authorities in our region took part. Those attending were invited to bring along details of any new LV connections they were considering and use AutoDesign to design live projects, with support from with our engineers during our first ever co-working session.

Our stakeholders said...

“

The launch event provided a valuable opportunity to test AutoDesign using real-life locations and scenarios. Cost and availability of power are two vital considerations when undertaking EV planning and AutoDesign will be an essential tool in streamlining what was previously a lengthy process. It was also useful to discuss the challenges of EV charging with both Northern Powergrid and our fellow local authorities. Understanding EV plans for the region will help us realise our ambitions to introduce a number of EV charging hubs across the Tees.

Ann Wilson, Strategic Freight Advisor
Tees Valley Combined Authority

”

AutoDesign, which has already been nominated for two industry awards, will be particularly useful in accelerating the uptake of EVs in our region by helping customers to identify the most cost-effective locations to install new charging infrastructure.

The response from stakeholders has been extremely positive and we have already seen 136¹⁶ customers register to take advantage of the benefits AutoDesign offers.

AutoDesign is available at: northernpowergrid.com/auto-design

¹⁶ Figure correct to 30 April 2020

ACTION

3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Customers who procure connections through an agent or third party

M

DG

UM

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will engage with stakeholders who use a contractor to procure multiple connections and seek feedback from those stakeholders on our service.	Customers who use a contractor to procure multiple connections on their behalf will have the opportunity to give feedback and help shape our service improvement plans.	Identify customers who use a third party to procure their connections. Contact identified customers to seek feedback on our service.	Number of customers identified as using a third party contractor to procure multiple connections. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓

We identified customers who procure connections via a third party and contacted them to seek feedback on our service.

Many new applications we receive come via agents working on behalf of a client who is seeking a connection to our network, and so this year, we have been thinking about how to engage with customers who choose to interact with us through a third party.

We want to ensure that all of our customers - whether they engage with us directly or use a consultant, contractor or ICP to procure connections on their behalf - have opportunities to give feedback on our connections service and know how to contact us, should they need to.

We have been proactive in our approach using data, the knowledge of our connections teams and the relationships we have with third parties to identify these customers. To make this process easier going forward, we have made changes to our application forms to include a new section for applicants to complete and tell us if they are working on behalf of another party.

We were able to identify 35 end customers, including large retailers, telecom providers and manufacturers,

and wrote to them with an invitation to provide feedback on our connections service.

We have also held constructive meetings with contractors and consultants working on behalf of major clients to identify any emerging trends or challenges, before they can impact on either of our critical paths.



ACTION

3.2

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Connections surgeries

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will engage with stakeholders to understand what we could do to improve their connections surgery experience.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to give feedback and help shape our proposition.	Engage with stakeholders to seek their feedback. Review how we promote and deliver our connections surgeries and make improvements if necessary. Trial 'virtual' surgeries for customers who find it difficult to attend our offices. Introduce a new process to survey satisfaction of stakeholders attending our surgeries.	Number of customers and ICPs who attended our connections surgeries identified and their feedback sought. Number of virtual surgeries trialed. New satisfaction survey introduced.	ALL	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓

We sought feedback from our customers and stakeholders on how to improve our connections surgeries.
- ✓

We took steps to improve their experience and gave them the option to book 'virtual' surgeries.

Our stakeholders said...

“

The surgery absolutely exceeded expectations - I think if you are able to offer that platform for technical pre-application discussions it would dramatically improve the connection process for us. Thank you!

Catherine Cleary

Gridserve

Our monthly connections surgeries give customers and ICPs the opportunity to sit down with our design and commercial engineers and discuss any planned projects. Our customers continue to tell us how important these pre-application discussions are when exploring their options and how they benefit from our engineers' local knowledge of the network.

We were the first DNO to introduce the surgery concept back in 2011 and, although our surgeries continue to be well utilised, we have been looking at how we can refresh the format and improve our customers' experience.

Feedback is key to improving this service and so we identified 74 connections customers and ICPs who had attended a surgery in recent years and contacted them with an invitation to provide feedback on their experience. We followed this up with telephone interviews with regular surgery users to seek their views.

As a result of this feedback, we are taking steps to improve the way we promote our surgeries and implementing a new online process which will make it quicker and easier for customers to book and receive confirmation of their appointments. We will also be introducing a new process to survey their satisfaction with the service we provided.

Not all of the customers and ICPs who benefit from this service will have the time or ability to travel to our offices and so we made a commitment to trial 'virtual' surgeries. It took time to identify the right digital platform for us and our customers, resulting in us delivering this action later that forecast. However, we have successfully delivered six¹⁷ 'virtual' surgeries, all of which were very well received, and stakeholders can now choose whether they want to take part in a surgery at our offices, over the telephone or via WebEx.

¹⁷ Figure correct to 30 April 2020

ACTION 3.3

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Local Authority forums

M DG UM ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will deliver a series of connections forums aimed at Local Authorities where they can come together to discuss emerging connections issues and access specialist advice.	Local Authorities will have a forum where they can explore common approaches to emerging connections topics. They will have a better understanding of how to engage with us and have access to specialist advice and support.	Three Local Authority forums delivered in the 2019/20 ICE plan year.	Number of Local Authority stakeholders taking part and feedback from attendees. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the sessions held.	LV	<div> <div></div> <div>Complete</div> </div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We established a Local Authority forum where stakeholders can come together to explore emerging energy issues and how we can support them.
- ✓ We delivered three forums in the year, attracting 71 stakeholders and all those taking part said the found the sessions 'very useful' or 'useful'.

With two-thirds of Local Authorities in our region declaring climate emergencies and increasingly looking to us to collaborate with them on their plans, we established a Local Authority forum to better understand their priorities and challenges and how we can best support them.

Recognising that many of our Local Authority stakeholders were facing similar challenges in relation to decarbonisation, these sessions focused on EVs and the associated charging infrastructure and future energy scenarios.

We engaged with stakeholders and gave them opportunities to help shape the content and format of these events. We learned that facilitating peer-to-peer learning would be beneficial and so each forum featured a presentation from local government representatives who shared their insights and experiences with attendees.

We successfully delivered three Local Authority forums in the year and a total of 71 stakeholders took part. We were encouraged by the engagement and the response from stakeholders, with 100% of those who took part in our forums telling us the sessions were 'very useful' or 'useful'.

These Local Authority forums were always intended to be a springboard for on-going and closer engagement and so, acting on feedback we received from stakeholders, we will be focusing on local energy planning issues at future sessions and extending an invitation to other public sector bodies who we think may benefit to take part.

Our stakeholders said...

In Kirklees we have invested in introducing up to an additional 100 electric vehicle charging points over the next few years. To have the opportunity to come along to this forum, meet my local authority peers and hear about their plans was really valuable. I was delighted to be able to set the context for the day about the need for action against the backdrop of the escalating climate breakdown.

Cllr Naheed Mather
Kirklees Council



ACTION 4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Supporting the uptake in EVs

M DG UM ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will engage with stakeholders to inform them about the steps that are being taken to facilitate the roll-out of electric vehicles (EVs) in our region.	Stakeholders will have a greater understanding of what we are doing to prepare for the expected growth in EVs. They will have a platform to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead and the actions we are taking to accommodate the electrification of transport.	Two dedicated engagement sessions delivered in the 2019/20 ICE plan year.	Number of stakeholders attending. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the sessions held.	LV	<div> <div></div> <div>Complete</div> </div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We engaged with stakeholders and set out the steps we are taking to support the electrification of transport in our region.
- ✓ We held two dedicated engagement events and reached more than 170 stakeholders.

Decarbonising the energy system and the electrification of everything from vehicles to heating, is an important step on the journey towards achieving the UK target of net zero emissions by 2050.

We are committed to supporting the electrification of transport in a way that minimises the need for new network infrastructure and reinforcement and delivers maximum value for our customers.

We set out our plans in our 'Maximising the value of electric vehicles for our customers' EV readiness document that was published last year and have continued to engage with stakeholders on the steps we are taking to support and accelerate the uptake of EVs.

The first dedicated engagement event we hosted was a webinar in October 2019 and more than 140 stakeholders registered to take part. We used this webinar as an opportunity to discuss our role in the low carbon transition and explore current EV uptake and future projections. We talked about the new commercial and technical solutions we are developing and explained how we can support our stakeholders in achieving their net zero targets. When participants were asked if the webinar

had improved their understanding of what we are doing to support the electrification of transport in our region, 77% of those who responded agreed it had, 14% were neutral and 9% disagreed.

Our second engagement event took place in February 2020. This took the form of a workshop and was attended by a range of stakeholders, including local government representatives, consultants, installers, Community Energy stakeholders and other interested parties. As part of the feedback, 81% of those who responded said they found the workshop 'very useful' or 'useful', the remaining 19% were neutral, such that no-one was dissatisfied with the experience.

As the UK continues its transition towards a fully decarbonised transport system, we will continue to play our part, hosting engagement events that focus on how we are supporting the continued uptake of EVs and other low carbon technologies.

Our stakeholders said...

Good to understand NPg's views around EVs and how you are planning for it.

Fiona Appleton
Energy Saving Trust

Understanding NPg's current outlook on demand and the impact of EVs was really useful.

Peter Leonard
BWB consulting

It was a brilliant event and very well organised. Well done to the team!

Danny Carey
Energy Assets Networks

- Our 'Maximising the value of electric vehicles for our customers' report is available at: northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/5043.pdf
- A recording of our webinar is available on our YouTube channel at: youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid

ACTION

4.2

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Updates on Statement of Works and Appendix G

M

DG

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will provide updates on developments in the Statement of Works (SoW) process and progress of the Appendix G trials.	Stakeholders will be better informed about how we manage new connections that are affected by the Transmission network.	Briefings held at our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars.	Updates delivered. Number of stakeholders engaged.	EHV HV	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓

We kept our stakeholders informed with updates delivered at relevant engagement events throughout the year.
- ✓

Stakeholders are now better informed about how we manage new connections that are affected by the Transmission network.

We have been proactive in our efforts to keep our stakeholders up to date with national developments around the Statement of Works process and Appendix G trials.

We understand that this is an important topic – particularly for generators – as it identifies constraints on National Grid’s Transmission network and any associated liabilities or requirements that may impact on customers wishing to connect to our network.

Our stakeholders told us that they wanted us to keep them informed about the progress of the national trials and about any transmission issues or works that could affect them when securing a new connection to our network. We did this by providing briefings at relevant

events throughout the year, including our Connections Customer Forum and DG Owner Operator forum, reaching 65 interested stakeholders.

Last year, in response to a challenge from one of our stakeholders, we began publishing Appendix G data as part of the detailed data sheets that accompany our network availability heat maps. Appendix G is a process whereby we provide the Electricity System Operator with a list of all generators who are already connected or contracted to connect to a specific grid supply point on our network.

The purpose of the Appendix G process is to enable customers and stakeholders to receive guidance from National Grid on the availability of headroom on its transmission network, before a Statement

of Works modification application is required. As there are associated costs that fall to the customer making the application, Appendix G is designed to help those seeking a new connection to make more informed decisions, potentially helping them to mitigate for increased connections costs.

Understanding the importance of the issue, we will continue to engage closely with our stakeholders on this topic and will use their feedback to inform our future service improvement plans.

ACTION

5.1

ENABLING COMPETITION

Extending the scope of contestable works

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will develop a new process that will allow accredited ICPs to undertake street lighting overhead pole transfers as contestable works.	The new process will allow accredited ICPs to undertake this work, extending the scope of the works they can offer to unmetered clients.	New process developed and implemented.	Application forms updated to include unmetered overhead transfers. ICP activity post-implementation.	LV	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓

We introduced a new end-to-end process that allows accredited ICPs to undertake overhead street lighting transfers as contestable works.
- ✓

This action has opened up a significant new market for ICPs and extended the scope of services they can offer their clients.
- ✓

We have received 20 applications using the new process, for a total of 369 street lighting overhead transfers that have been carried out by ICPs.

Our stakeholders said...

“

A key part of my role is overhead street lighting transfers and I've made several applications to Northern Powergrid for these connections using their new process. I've had no issues at all. It's very straightforward and easy to use and it's a valuable service we can offer to our customers. I'd also add that the connections team at Northern Powergrid have been very pleasant and helpful whenever I've needed to contact them.

”

Rachel Barnett

Linbrooke

We are not the only company that can provide a new connection to our network. Our customers are free to compare our prices and levels of service with ICPs who can also deliver some, or all of the work.

The work that ICPs can undertake is described as 'contestable', and we are committed to fostering and continuously developing an environment in which they can compete freely with us to undertake this work.

We acted on requests from ICPs and our unmetered customers by developing and trialling a new end-to-end process that allows suitably accredited ICPs

to undertake overhead street lighting transfers as contestable works. This means that customers are now able to obtain that work from them, should they wish.

Following the successful outcome and lessons learned from the trial, we rolled out the new process and informed ICPs who attended our ICP Seminar in November 2019 about the change we were making. We also updated our connections application forms to include unmetered overhead transfers to streamline this process for ICPs.

Delivery of this action means that we have further extended the scope of contestable works for ICPs, so increasing the range of services they can provide for new and existing unmetered clients.

This change been positively received. We have received 20¹⁸ applications using the new process, for a total of 369 overhead street lighting transfers that have been carried out by ICPs.

¹⁸ Figure correct to 30 April 2020

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact/success	Voltage	Status
We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we transition to a Distribution System Operator (DSO).	Stakeholders will be involved as we transition to a DSO. They will be able to inform our strategy and approach and be kept informed about opportunities arising, including the provision of flexibility services.	Two dedicated engagement sessions held in the 2019/20 ICE plan year. Stakeholders will have opportunities to provide feedback and help shape our DSO transition plans.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div> </div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓

We continued to engage with connections stakeholders and gave them opportunities to help shape and inform our DSO transition plans.
- ✓

We invited almost 200 customers to take part in a flexibility trial.

As a DNO, we already play a central role in enabling a low carbon energy system by making connections to wind and solar power generation. However, as we continue on our journey towards becoming a DSO, our role and responsibilities will change and it is important that we transition openly and transparently and in dialogue with our customers and wider stakeholder groups. To ensure we are keeping our connections stakeholders informed, we held a number of engagement events during the year.

We provided updates on our DSO and flexibility strategies at our Connections Customer Forums and at our DG Owner Operator forum. DSO was also a key theme at our Stakeholder Summit and we have used our social media channels to engage with an estimated 5,000 customers on this topic.

Our DSO development plan V1.1 was published at the end of 2019 and we hosted a webinar shortly afterwards, inviting our connections customers and stakeholders to take part. This strategy – as with versions before it – has been shaped and informed by stakeholder feedback.

A significant step forward came towards the end of last year, when we identified almost 200 customers with significant assets, sited at seven key locations on our network and invited them to take part in a trial where they would be asked to flex their energy usage, in return for financial incentives.

Whist we now offer flexible connections solutions like Active Network Management as business as usual, this is the first time we have sought to enter into contracted flexibility arrangements with our customers.

Our flexibility trial provided us with a unique opportunity to make customers and stakeholders aware of some of the opportunities our DSO transition could offer for them. Importantly, we are working hard to make sure our connections stakeholders are kept informed and have opportunities to help shape our future vision, direction and business priorities.

A recording of our DSO webinar is available on our YouTube channel at: [youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid](https://www.youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid)



Annex: Explain Research

Executive Summary



Executive summary

As part of their Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) programme, Northern Powergrid commissioned Explain to conduct a research program to gather stakeholder feedback in relation to the current and future connections service. Fieldwork was undertaken in April 2020.

As part of the programme, major connections customers were interviewed from market segments covered by the ICE incentive – metered, unmetered, distributed generation and Independent Connection Providers (ICPs).

Interviews were conducted through a telephone and online survey; Northern Powergrid sent the online link to directly to respondents in advance of the telephone survey to allow opportunity for feedback and to ensure the consultation was broad and inclusive.

The survey consisted of the following key sections:

- Looking back – a review of the impact of changes made by Northern Powergrid over the last 12 months
- Looking forward – a review of Northern Powergrid’s proposed 2020/21 connections work plan, measuring endorsement for each action
- Communication and engagement – gathering feedback on the overall level of communication and engagement with Northern Powergrid in relation to connections
- ED2 additional questions – assessing customers priorities going forward into ED2 and areas of priority for Northern Powergrid for the next five years and beyond

Explain conducted 118 telephone interviews and 38 online surveys. Engaging with the following stakeholder groups through the telephone survey:

Overall	Generation	ICP	Metered	Unmetered
118	14 (12%)	8 (7%)	84 (71%)	12 (10%)

*Please note stakeholder group was not recorded for the general online survey.



Looking Back

Respondents who had been dealing with Northern Powergrid’s connection service for more than 12 months were asked key questions to ‘Look Back’ overall on any changes to the service provided by Northern Powergrid in their connections offering, and whether improvements had been made to the service during the last 12 months.

- When asked their satisfaction with the connection service received from Northern Powergrid in the last 12 months, telephone respondents demonstrated a high level of satisfaction scoring 4.1 out of 5.0.
 - o This was lower amongst online respondents with a satisfaction score of 2.8 out of 5.
- The majority of telephone respondents felt the connection service in the last 12 months had stayed the same – 55%.
 - o In comparison 40% of online respondents felt the service had stayed the same.
- In terms of communication and engagement with Northern Powergrid, 59% of telephone respondents and 37% of online respondents felt this had stayed the same.

Looking Forward

All respondents were asked to review each action from Northern Powergrid’s Incentive on Connections Engagement Research for 2020/2021 and indicate their endorsement or otherwise. Overall endorsement for all actions (agreement that action was a good idea) suggested by Northern Powergrid ranged from 74% to 100% amongst both telephone and online respondents.

Please note, actions were presented to respondents in themes of focus, for example information sharing or electrification, so they do not appear in a numerical order.

The table overleaf shows the proportion of respondents who endorsed each action in the survey. Remaining respondents explicitly stated they did not endorse the action. (‘Don’t know’ responses have been excluded from the analysis.)



Explain Research

Northern Powergrid
Incentive on Connections Engagement Research
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Action	Overall telephone	Metered	Unmetered	DG	ICP	Online only
Action 5: AutoDesign tool	98%	99%	91%	100%	100%	90%
Action 2: Generators trial	99%	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Action 10: Local working group for loss of mains change programme	98%	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Action 1: Adding more data to heat maps	99%	100%	88%	100%	100%	100%
Action 7: Pre-application surgeries for developers, local authority planners and consultants	96%	99%	83%	86%	100%	97%
Action 4: Online changes to make it easier apply for low carbon technologies	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Action 6: Streamline online repeat applications	97%	97%	91%	100%	100%	92%
Action 14: Alternative providers register	91%	90%	83%	100%	100%	88%
Action 15: Remove requirement for link boxes on IDNO connections	74%	69%	75%	50%	100%	75%
Action 3: Document to signpost for help, support and tools	97%	97%	100%	100%	83%	100%
Action 8: Local energy planning forums	97%	97%	92%	100%	100%	93%
Action 9: Community energy webpage	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



Northern Powergrid
Incentive on Connections Engagement Research
May 2020



Action 11: Electrification of transport	99%	99%	100%	100%	100%	96%
Action 12: Electrification of heating	96%	95%	100%	92%	100%	95%
Action 13: Engaging with low carbon technology installers	99%	100%	100%	93%	100%	100%
Action 17: Engage with stakeholders to inform DFES and future planning	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Action 16: Engage with stakeholders on transition to DSO	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents were then asked to consider the work plan overall and 96% of respondents agreed that Northern Powergrid had a comprehensive Looking Forward work plan of service improvement activities that met the requirements of its connections stakeholders, across both the online and telephone survey:

	Overall	Metered	Unmetered	DG	ICP	Online only
Base size	106	75	11	13	7	28
Yes	96%	96%	91%	100%	100%	96%
No	4%	4%	9%	-	-	4%





Communication and engagement

89% of telephone respondents agreed that Northern Powergrid engaged in joint discussions with its’ stakeholders. Agreement was lower amongst online respondents (73%) but remained high.

	Overall telephone	Metered	Unmetered	DG	ICP	Online only
Base size	103	72	20	11	8	33
Yes	89%	92%	75%	91%	88%	73%
No	11%	8%	25%	9%	13%	27%

48% of telephone respondents felt the connections service provided by Northern Powergrid was better than others they interacted with and 43% felt it was the same. For online respondents, 37% felt Northern Powergrid were better, while 32% felt they were similar.

	Overall telephone	Metered	Unmetered	DG	ICP	Online only
Base size	101	71	10	12	8	38
Better	48%	52%	20%	50%	38%	37%
Similar	43%	38%	60%	42%	63%	32%
Worse	10%	20%	20%	8%	-	32%



ED2 additional questions

Respondents were asked two additional questions in relation to ED2 business planning, key themes highlighted for each question were as follows:

What are your main priorities and future challenges? And what role can Northern Powergrid have in enabling you to address these?

Connections process should be faster
(23)

Improve the network and provide greater network visibility
(19)

Deliver cost efficient connections
(17)

Thinking about the connections services you currently receive from Northern Powergrid, how would you like to see that evolve and improve? As we look to 2023 and beyond.

Provide faster connections
(23)

Maintain current service levels
(21)

Provide quicker response to customers
(13)



Contact us



0800 011 3433



ICE@northernpowergrid.com



www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected