

Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement

Northern Powergrid looking
forward submission 2015–16



Our linesman working to maintain the connection to Spurn Point Lifeboat Station, Humber Estuary



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Who we are and what we do



Who we are and what we do

Northern Powergrid runs the only major electricity distribution network that provides power to customers in the Northeast, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire. We move electricity to and from homes and businesses over our network. We don't sell electricity, nor do we operate power stations.

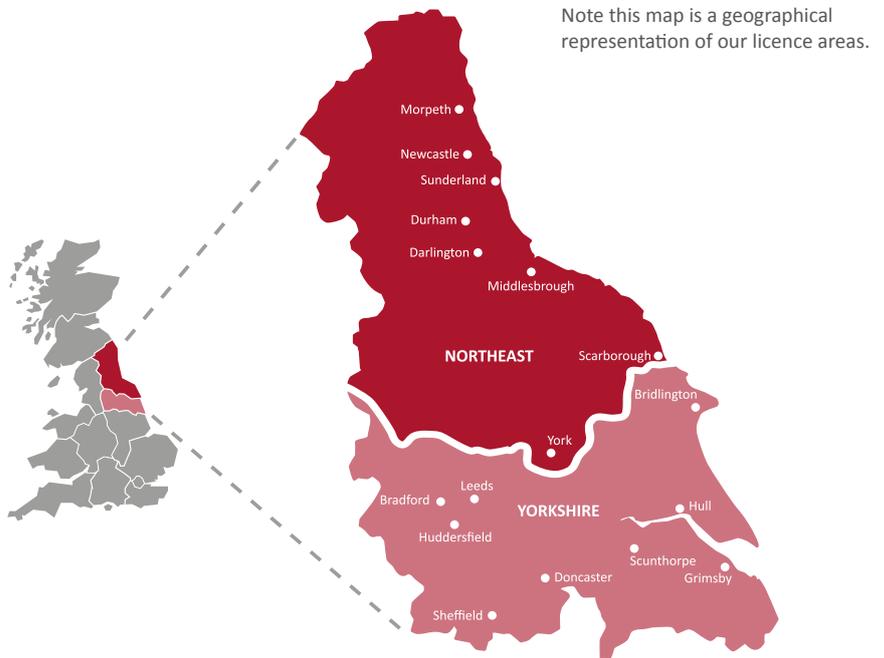
We operate a network of more than 61,000 substations and around 91,000km of overhead power lines and underground cables that takes electricity from National Grid's transmission network and from smaller generators and delivers it to homes and businesses throughout the region.

Keeping the network running safely, reliably and efficiently, and enabling new customers to get connected is our business. We are open for business every hour of every day of the year – no matter what the circumstances.

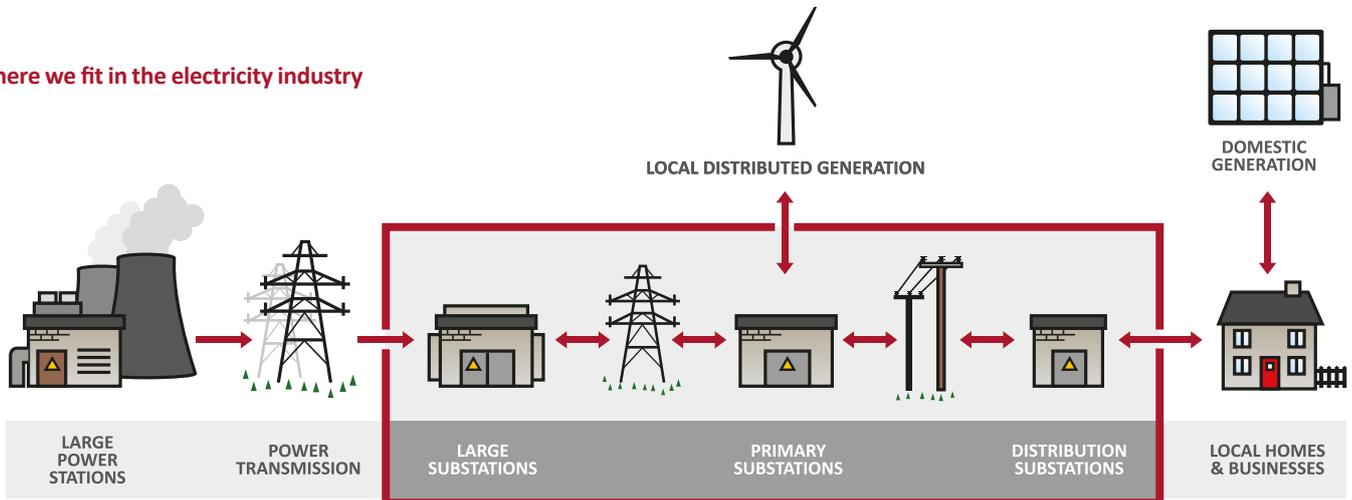
As a customer receiving electricity across our network, you pay an energy supplier for the electricity that you use. Your bill includes an amount that we charge energy suppliers for using our network. This covers the cost of running, maintaining and investing in our network.

If you are a new customer wanting to get connected to the network the price we charge predominantly reflects the cost of extending our network to reach your new premises. In many cases other companies can also offer you a price and carry out this work too, so alternative choices may be available to you.

We operate as one company but we are regulated by the energy regulator, Ofgem, as two licensed businesses: Northern Powergrid (Northeast) Ltd and Northern Powergrid (Yorkshire) plc.



Where we fit in the electricity industry



Executive summary



“The comments and issues our customers have raised have directly driven the actions we are taking to improve our service experience and, when reviewing our proposed plan, our stakeholders have agreed with our actions and endorsed the service that we are aspiring to deliver.”

John Barnett, Commercial Director

I’m very pleased to provide this summary of our first ‘looking forward’ submission under the new Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE). The improvement commitments that we published in our 2015–2023 business plan align with the objectives of the scheme and we’re already making progress to deliver them.

It is vitally important to us that our plan to improve our connections service remains founded on what our customers and other stakeholders tell us they would like to see. We applied our tried and tested stakeholder engagement strategy to engage with connection stakeholders. Our comprehensive processes were successfully audited in April 2015, for the third year running, against the requirements of AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard.

We’ve sought the views of over 3,200 customers during the preparation of our submission, receiving 47 responses to our consultation. Our engagement ranged from small regional installers of domestic PV to large national developers of wind and solar technology, demand and unmetered customers. To gather more feedback, and check if our plans were shaping up to address the right issues, we commissioned independent researchers Explain to contact over 300 customers and ask for their views. The results from the research were positive with 11 from 15 areas achieving an action plan approval rating of more than 70%.

The outcomes from our engagement link directly to the 108 actions we have set out across the metered, unmetered and distributed generation (DG) market sectors. Some of them are particularly challenging and ambitious, reflecting our intention to aim high and not settle for a weaker plan that would only go part way to achieving what our customers would really like to see. With this approach some actions may not ultimately turn out as we currently anticipate, or may take longer than we currently think to deliver.



This is not a case of immediately starting to make excuses but to recognise that with the degree of ambition comes a degree of uncertainty. Whatever the outcome we will be keeping our stakeholders regularly informed of our progress, checking with them when think something is done, and seeking to collaborate on alternative solutions if something isn’t going to work out for good reason.

We have also benefited greatly from the pilot project last year covering our 2014–15 action plan for DG customers. We’ve retained the action plan (Gantt chart) style layout that you’ve told us was useful including within that our full listing of actions, target measures, the voltage levels affected, and current progress status.

Our tailored approach to providing connections will mean that all our customers will benefit from service improvements that provide them with the information and tools to:

- ▶ carry out feasibility studies for their projects;
- ▶ have easy access to hold exploratory discussions with our technical experts;

- ▶ apply easily for a quotation that suits their needs, be it a feasibility estimate or, a firm price and timescale quotation;
- ▶ benefit from flexible and innovative commercial and technical agreements; and,
- ▶ work collaboratively together to install the connection to the required timescale.

I would like to thank all of you who have engaged with us to assist us in putting this plan together. We have done our best to include all your ideas. My commitment to you is that we are now going to continue to work hard to deliver every aspect of it.

I hope you enjoy reading our looking forward submission and if you’d like to get in touch with me about this or another aspect of our connections service, my email details are just below.

John Barnett
Commercial Director

Introduction



Introduction

Connecting customers' premises to the electricity network and making modifications to those connections are an important part of our work as a distribution network operator (DNO). We see the demand for connections continuing to rise, which is more prevalent with distributed (or local) generation, with prospective customers requesting generators of all sizes to be connected and more accredited third parties wishing to design and build power networks to run for their customers or for adoption by us. Connections is an area of growing complexity and one where an increasing variety of stakeholders, not all of whom have previous experience of dealing within this sector, are involved. Northern Powergrid is keen to ensure that the needs and expectations of its stakeholders are fully met.

Introducing competition where possible into the provision of new connections is a good way to ensure an efficient, cost-effective service. Northern Powergrid has been working hard to ensure that customers are aware of the choices open to them and to facilitate the provision of competitive services. To date, Northern Powergrid has been able to demonstrate to Ofgem that effective competition has developed in the largest (by value) of the designated connections market segments in the company's service area (connections involving work at 415V/230V, but not above 20,000 Volts). However, in the remaining market segments, Ofgem concluded that effective competition has yet to develop. In the absence of effective competition and in order to encourage DNOs to provide the best possible connections service that meets the needs of all relevant stakeholders (detailed in Table 1), Ofgem has introduced the Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) to operate from 1 April, 2015.

ICE applies annually, through to 2023, to all the relevant market segments where a DNO has not passed the Ofgem competition test. For each DNO, the incentive carries a maximum penalty of up to 0.9% of base revenues to be shared evenly across the nine relevant market segments should we fail to perform to an acceptable standard. ICE will ensure that we maintain our focus on the needs of our connections stakeholders by engaging and delivering the service that they request. For all market segments, regardless of whether the competition test has been passed or not, DNOs must also comment on how they continue to promote the development of competition in connections.



Table 1: Summary of Relevant Market Segments

Metered Demand Connections	Low Voltage (less than 1000 volts) work: LV connection activities involving only LV work, other than in respect of the Excluded Market Segment ¹ .
	High Voltage (1,000 to 22,000 volts) 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 (greater than 22,000 to 72,000 volts) work: LV or HV connection activities involving EHV work.
	EHV work and above: extra high voltage (greater than 22,000 up to and including 132,000 volts) and 132kV connections.
Metered Distributed Generation (DG)	LV work: low voltage generation connection activities involving only low voltage work.
	HV and EHV work: any generation connection activities involving work at HV or above.
Unmetered Connections (Street Lighting and Street Infrastructure)	Local Authority (LA) work: new connection activities in respect of LA premises.
	Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) work: new connection activities under PFIs.
	Other work: all other non-LA and non-PFI unmetered connections work.

This document constitutes Northern Powergrid’s Looking Forward submission for the regulatory year 2015–16. It covers the activities of both our licence areas, Northern Powergrid (Northeast) and Northern Powergrid (Yorkshire), and this year, comprises a Looking Forward report covering, the ICE work plans for the three market areas of Metered Demand Connections, Distributed Generation Connections and Unmetered Connections. We have split our work plans into the three market areas, comprising the relevant market segments in order to enable us to tailor the improvement plans to the specific needs of the different customer types. Within our work plan we have also made it clear which action affects which market segment. We believe that splitting the work plan and report into three separate areas makes our document easier to understand.

All DNOs carried out a pilot ICE exercise for distributed generation connections for 2014–15, comprising both a Looking Back report and a Looking Forward report. Whilst only a Looking Forward report is formally required for 2015–16, we have compiled a Looking Back report on progress achieved against our distributed generation plan actions for 2014–15 which we will publish separately.



¹ Excluded market segments include; Single service LV jobs and Small project LV jobs up to 4 domestic connections.



Stakeholder engagement

Northern Powergrid stakeholder strategy

Northern Powergrid’s approach to stakeholder engagement is to:

- ▶ Embed stakeholder engagement in every aspect of the Northern Powergrid culture; aligning our employees and service providers to stakeholder experience and needs
- ▶ Take a holistic approach to stakeholder engagement that is tailored, multi-layered and multi-channelled to meet the needs of our large and diverse range of stakeholders
- ▶ Translate feedback from stakeholders into improved services and business performance

- ▶ Research, benchmark, and adopt best practice from other organisations
- ▶ Keep pace with new and emerging markets and developments to ensure that our stakeholder mapping reflects current and potential future stakeholders
- ▶ Listen to, communicate our response to and, most importantly, act on the feedback we receive from customers

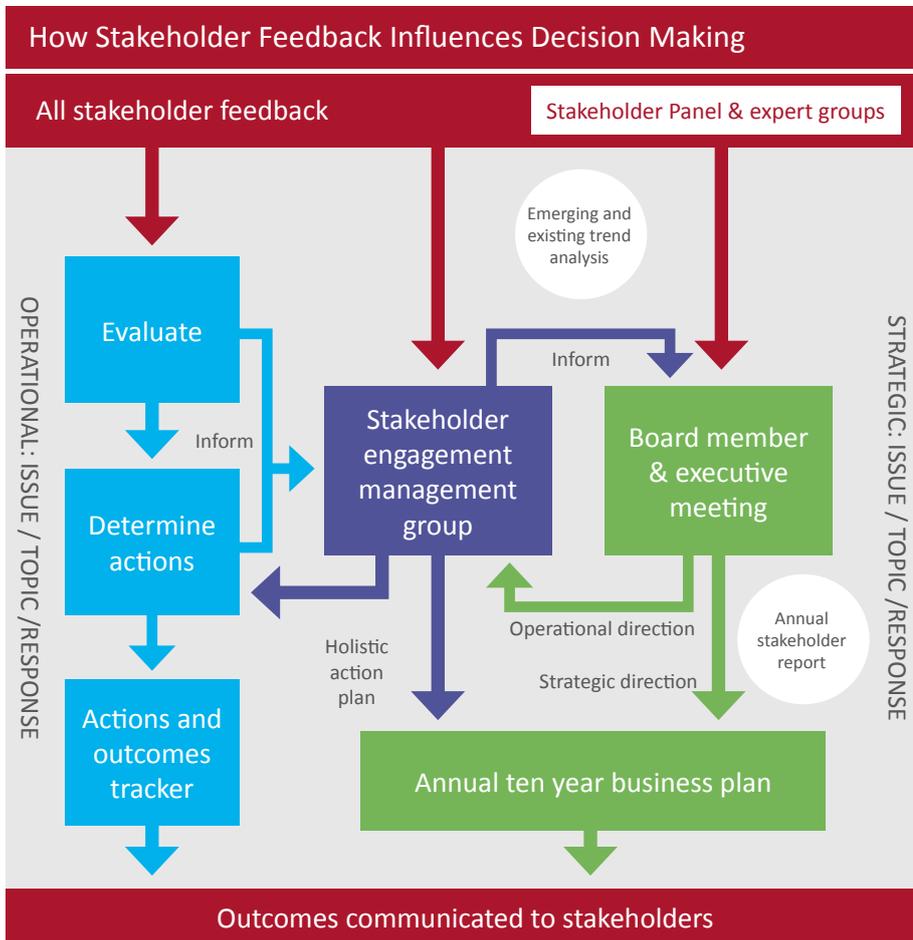
As an electricity network operator, we have a customer base of 3.9 million premises and serve a diverse population of over 8.3 million people. Many of our customers don’t know who we are until their lights go out. We’ve made it our business to increase our profile and talk to our customers, our communities and wider stakeholders, about what they require from our connections business.

As we have such a large number of potential and existing stakeholders, it’s important to not only know who they are, but to feel confident that we can categorise and prioritise them. This principle is integral to effective delivery; it’s not always desirable, or often necessary, to reach stakeholders with the same level of intensity’ but it allows us to target our stakeholders accurately and with purpose. Stakeholders are categorised according to the level of impact our plans and decisions may have on them, directly or indirectly, and the influence that they have in helping us to achieve successful outcomes. Our published stakeholder strategy places regular connections customers in our top priority stakeholder group.

We deliver our stakeholder strategy through the following groups:

Stakeholder Engagement Management Group (SEMG)

The SEMG is a monthly meeting of senior managers from across the business who are responsible for stakeholder issues, important stakeholder groups or for stakeholder feedback on which action is needed. The group’s main function is to plan and carry out the delivery of the stakeholder strategy, as well as responding to and acting on the resulting feedback. Each priority area, including connections, has a stakeholder plan in place and a lead within the business. These plans track activity, feedback and actions/outcomes. Informed by those plans, the group prepares a monthly report on engagement activity, with recommendations on key proposals. This is submitted to, and reviewed by, the monthly Executive Management Meeting.





Right hand image:

Patrick Smart of RES Ltd. contributing to open forum discussions at a stakeholder event.

Left hand image:

A local community energy customer provides his view at our Wakefield February 2015 Event.



Stakeholder Panel

Our Stakeholder Panel meets on a quarterly basis and comprises a cross section of senior stakeholders from the public, private and third sector, including representatives of organisations such as Redrow Homes, Sainsbury's supermarkets, Northumberland National Park and Leeds City Council Street-lighting. The panel hears presentations from across our business, including from Connections, on our latest work and projects, and provides valuable critical friend feedback for directors and managers to address.

Who our ICE stakeholders are

Our ICE plan is intended for any customers requiring connections at EHV, HV, or LV down to 5 domestic plots. Those customers requiring single service and up to 4 domestic connections on a project do not form part of the ICE arrangement, but are protected by other Ofgem customer satisfaction incentive arrangements and guaranteed service standards.

The stakeholders who have an interest in our connections activities are diverse. They range from large organisations such as local authorities and major house builders to community groups and private individuals. As well as customers for new connections, they include representative groups and trade bodies, engineering consultants and service providers such as independent connections providers (ICPs) and independent distribution network operators (IDNOs). Many have detailed experience and knowledge of the connections process and the options available, but there are increasing numbers of stakeholders, such as those involved in community energy projects, who may have complex requirements but have little experience or detailed technical knowledge. Our aim is to provide a service which specifically meets the needs of each one of these stakeholders.

ICE stakeholder engagement governance

As mentioned above, connections customers comprise one of our top priority stakeholder groups. As such, we apply a rigorous and intensive management approach to our stakeholder engagement and follow-up. Our stakeholder engagement project team (now the ICE project team) is made up of senior managers representing different aspects of the connections process. Members of the team update progress in their areas against the ICE work plan at the beginning of each month.

The project team itself meets regularly to discuss overall progress, cross-departmental actions, new additions to the plan and proposed responses to stakeholder engagement during the previous period. Every quarter, the updated work plan is published to our website alongside a letter that summarises the progress made, any complete actions and any new actions added.

To ensure appropriate alignment between the connections stakeholder engagement process and Northern Powergrid's wider stakeholder engagement strategy in March 2015 we reviewed our governance and reporting processes and agreed several actions. In particular, the April 2015 external audit to maintain accreditation under the Stakeholder Engagement Standard AA1000 reviewed the strategy for connections stakeholder engagement. The audit report concluded that the governance process for ICE demonstrated good practice, in line with that used throughout the business.

Connections stakeholder engagement activity

We actively engage with our connections customers and other interested parties such as community energy groups and the National Farmers Union (NFU) through multiple channels to seek their views.

In 2014–15 we held three connections stakeholder workshops, one more than the normal run of two per year for customers and other stakeholders. The additional event was in response to increased interest in the availability of DG connections to our network. We welcome the opportunity to run special topical events whenever the need arises. The key purpose of our connections stakeholder sessions is to discuss progress we are making against our service improvement initiatives, discuss issues that we face together in the sector and importantly to give customers and other stakeholders the open opportunity to candidly tell us how we are performing and how they would like us to improve further.

We have used the output from these engagements and requests received directly from our customers to inform our ICE work plan. We maintain a close working relationship with our stakeholders and an open dialogue with them. In this way we can properly understand their requirements, test our proposed responses to those requirements and ensure that the ensuing improvement plan is designed to achieve the agreed outcomes. We maintain dialogue after the action has been completed to ensure the stakeholder's needs have been met. Through this our customers can gauge whether or not what we are intending to do aligns with their requirements and can measure our performance as we deliver on our commitments.



Stakeholder engagement



Access to technical specialists

As well as the forum events in 2014–15 we have continued to operate monthly connections surgeries where customers can discuss the details of their project with our design and commercial engineers, exploring technical and commercial options to optimise the decisions to be made in respect of their project. Northern Powergrid was the first DNO to launch this service in 2011. These sessions are popular with customers, who continue to make good use of the availability of key experts to discuss opportunities and resolve issues well before they enter on to the critical path for delivery of their project. In parallel, we run our ICP surgeries, attended by 15 companies since September 2014. Our connections surgeries were attended by 61 customers from 32 companies throughout 2014.

“Ask our expert” web service

Connections stakeholders have told us that want to see us develop easy to use web technology giving easy access to information to assist with project choices. Customers who are unable to attend a surgery or prefer digital access can receive the same level of information and advice via our online “Ask our Expert” service. Customers interact with our technical or commercial engineers electronically – during 2014 we received and responded to 201 enquiries via this channel. The service also provides a useful channel for customers to provide feedback on their requirements and views about the service we provide.

Using market research to good effect

In January 2015 we approached over 3,200 customers who had received a connection price quotation from us in the previous twelve months, with three consultation work plan documents to gain their views. Alongside this we also utilised our ongoing relationships with other stakeholders such as local council meetings to ensure we gained as much feedback as possible. Across the three market areas we received a total of 47 responses; 6 from unmetered customers, 18 DG customers and 23 metered customers, a response rate of just over 1.5%. Where possible, we included actions relating to all of the comments received within our work plan. Where this was not possible, we followed up with the customer to explain why not. Our managers then sought to meet individually with all customers who had responded in order to discuss how we had interpreted their feedback. We were able to speak directly to 13 of these customers to seek endorsement and ensure that the actions we have proposed, will achieve their intended outcomes once delivered.

In order to improve the response rate, we additionally engaged Explain, an independent market research company, to contact a further 300 customers, randomly selected from those who didn’t respond to our earlier consultation (130 DG, 130 metered and 40 unmetered customers). Contacts took place in April 2015, during which Explain discussed our proposed work plan and sought further endorsement and feedback on the actions it contains to further refine our intentions. The executive summary from the Explain research is provided as an appendix to this report and the full report can be accessed at www.northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/1666.pdf

Stakeholder feedback supports our plan

From our extensive stakeholder surveys our customers gave us good support for the work plans we have proposed:

The views of our distributed generation customers:

- ▶ **92%** of DG customers felt the proposed changes to the provision of information would make the connections process better
- ▶ **77%** thought the suggested changes to the application process would improve the connections process
- ▶ **72%** of customers thought the connections process would get better with the proposed changes to communication
- ▶ **84%** of customers thought the proposed technical and commercial developments would make the connections process better
- ▶ **66%** of customers thought the proposed changes to enabling competition would improve the connections process

The views of our metered customers:

- ▶ **76%** of metered customers thought the proposed changes to the provision of information would make the connections process better
- ▶ **73%** thought the connections process would be made better with the proposed changes to application provision
- ▶ **68%** of metered customers thought the connections process would be made better by the suggested improved communications
- ▶ **68%** of customers thought the proposed technical and commercial developments would make the connections process better
- ▶ **72%** of customers thought the connections process would be made better by the proposed changes regarding enabling competition



The views of our unmetered customers:

- ▶ **87%** of unmetered customers thought the proposed changes to the provision of information would make the connections process better
- ▶ **77%** thought the process would be made better by the changes to application provision suggested
- ▶ **82%** of customers thought the connections process would improve with the proposed changes to communication
- ▶ **36%** of customers thought the connections process would be made better with the proposed changes to charging, and 64% thought the process would remain the same
- ▶ **73%** thought Northern Powergrid’s plans to further enable competition would make the connections process better

In general our unmetered customers have responded very positively to the plans that we have put in place. In terms of our plans to change our charging methodology, the views of customers differ across our region and although some have not directly asked for change we have continued to improve the process in the way others have requested, which will be of benefit to all in the sector.

Overarching themes from our stakeholder engagement

Each activity in our work plans derives either from a specific request from a stakeholder or from ideas generated within Northern Powergrid to help address more general concerns and wishes expressed to us by stakeholders. In each case, we have gone back to the stakeholder making the specific request or stakeholders more generally to ensure that our proposed actions meets their need. And, once the action is complete, we shall be consulting stakeholders again on whether, in practice, we met their expectations

Our extensive stakeholder engagement has been taking place since the beginning of 2013, initially as part of the preparation of our business plan for 2015 to 2023, covering the RIIO-ED1 price control period, and then more recently as part of ICE. As a result, we are very aware of the key elements that stakeholders believe contribute to good customer service:

- ▶ Simpler and faster application process
- ▶ Access to specialists to discuss project solutions
- ▶ A more personal tailored approach to relationship management
- ▶ Flexible quotation offers and acceptance terms
- ▶ Project delivery in line with customer’s project timescales
- ▶ Ease of access to generation specific industry information
- ▶ Improved digital communication

Sharing best practice

We recognise that, however good our dialogue with our stakeholders, they may not have told us of all possible areas for improvement and we may not have chosen the best response. We therefore work collaboratively with other network operators to share ideas for improvement.

In developing our plan we held regular conference calls with the ICE managers of other DNOs; there is a strong commitment to work together where this adds value. Areas currently under discussion include part-funded network reinforcement and standardisation of dual purpose quotations.

Our work plans

We have developed separate work plans for the DG, Metered and Unmetered market sectors. These plans take into account the individual relevant market segments that Ofgem has previously defined and indicate where an action specifically affects one or more market segments. This decision was taken in order for the plan to be understandable for our customers and to ensure that those who are only interested in a specific market segment can go directly to the work plan that they are most interested in and see the full picture.

In the sections that follow, the text describes the origin of the actions in the respective work plan. The tables give a comprehensive overview of the three plans. In each plan table the first three columns provide the areas of activity and the desired outcome. The remaining columns provide more detail on individual actions within each activity, the target measure, and timescales for completion.

Theme	Area for improvement	Outcome for customer	Sub Actions	Target Measure	W/Int Affected	RAG	Q4 2015												Progress made to date			
							Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar				
1.0 Provision of information	1.1 Provision of heat maps	Expand the information provided to include: ▶ Bulk Supply Points ▶ Distribution Substations above 200kW ▶ HV/HV underground and overhead networks & their heat data	1.1.1 Publish BSP/CSF with RAG Status*	BSP/CSF RAG Status published	ENV	2																
			1.1.2 Publish capacity availability for Bulk supply points*	BSP capacity information added	ENV	2																
			1.1.3 Publish ENV underground and overhead network on heatmaps*	ENV network maps included	ENV	2																
			1.1.4 Publish HV underground and overhead network on heatmaps*	HV network maps included	ENV	2																
			1.1.5 Include distribution substations and show the area they serve above 200kW*	Distribution substations added	HV	2																
			1.1.6 Provide heat maps heat data in spreadsheet format**	Heat data to be provided on request	HV	2																
	1.2 Substation Information	Provide better guidance for customers about wayleaves & consents.	1.2.1 Publish substation longitude and latitude information*	Substation information published	AE	2																
			1.2.2 Develop and publish a wayleave guidance document	Wayleave guidance published	AE	2																
			1.2.3 Publish Quoted capacity at primary substations	Quote information published	HV/ENV	2																
			1.2.4 Publish Contracted capacity at primary substations	Contracted information published	HV/ENV	2																
			1.2.5 Publish Connected capacity at primary substations	Connected information published	HV/ENV	2																
			1.2.6 Publish cumulative connected capacity by CSP	Cumulative information published	AE	2																
			1.2.7 Consult with local community energy groups	Consult	AE	3																
			1.2.8 Create a guidance document for community energy connections	Draft guidance document	AE	3																
			1.2.9 Review with local community energy groups	Ensure fit for purpose	AE	3																
1.3 Performance Metrics	Access online to safe dig plans	1.3.1 Publish guidance document	Public guidance document	AE	3																	
		1.3.2 Publish a monthly dashboard of performance information	Monthly dashboard published	AE	3																	
		1.3.3 Make record system to be made available to customers online	Access to mains records	AE	3																	
1.4 Community Energy	Provide community energy groups with advice on how to get connected	1.4.1 Issue consultation on interactivity process*	Consult	AE	3																	
		1.4.2 Review customer feedback*	Utilise feedback	AE	3																	
		1.4.3 Make necessary process changes to the interactivity process*	Change process if necessary	AE	3																	
		1.4.4 Develop information material on Generation applications	Develop material	AE	3																	
2.0 Improving our application process	2.1 Interactivity	To provide an industry best practice interactivity process	2.1.1 Publish webinar	Public / promote on website	AE	1																
			2.1.2 Design and implement a quote plus service*	Implement quote plus	AE	1																
	2.2 Generator Application Process	Making generation applications more understandable	2.2.1 Introduce CSP application forms split by capacity	Implement application forms	AE	2																
			2.2.2 Provide electronic CSP application forms, up to 50kW, up to 200kW, and above 200kW	Change with ENA / Other DNOs	AE	2																
	2.3 Quotation Feasibility Service	Implement a quote plus feasibility service	2.3.1 Design and implement a quote plus process*	Implement quote plus	AE	1																
			2.3.2 Introduce CSP application forms split by capacity	Implement application forms	AE	2																
	2.4 Electronic CSP Application forms	Provide electronic CSP application forms, up to 50kW, up to 200kW, and above 200kW	2.4.1 Check water adoption of electronic CSP forms with ENA *	Change with ENA / Other DNOs	AE	2																
			2.4.2 Check water adoption of electronic CSP forms with ENA *	Change with ENA / Other DNOs	AE	2																

Service improvement plan for metered connections



Overview

Metered connections comprise a significant proportion of our connections business, accounting for 9000 of the 18500 connections enquiries and around 3000 of the 9400 connection project acceptances. Meeting the wide range of customer requirements can be challenging, and our dialogue ranging from house builders to community energy groups has proved particularly useful in shaping the services we provide, as has our work with ICPs.

How we developed our strategy in response to stakeholders' needs

Having previously engaged customers through our different events, communication channels, day to day interactions, satisfaction survey feedback and customer surgeries, we were able to develop a work plan for 2015–16 based around suggestions and proposals made to us by stakeholders. We consulted on this plan in January 2015 and our work plan for 2015–16 is based on the draft work plan as amended to take account of stakeholders' views.

Our work plan actions are subdivided into five key themes that emerged as a result of the feedback we received:

- ▶ Provision of information
- ▶ Improving our application process
- ▶ Improving communications
- ▶ Technical and commercial developments
- ▶ Enabling competition

Provision of information

Wayleave guidance

The Lindum Group told us in response to the consultation on our work plan that they would welcome further information about third party wayleave agreements and consents, and what rights we have to connect onto existing cables within wayleave areas. This had not been included in our work plan and so we have included an action to develop and publish a wayleave guidance document by June 2015.

Network demand heat maps

In our work plan we said that feedback in response to our previous stakeholder interaction at our customer events had indicated that our heat maps would be more effective if they included EHV, 20kV and 11kV network demand information. We shall therefore be publishing primary substation demand information by March 2016. These actions will improve the information readily available to stakeholders and will allow them to initially identify potential connection sites and assess the viability of projects without the need to enter into formal discussions or a full application process at that stage.

Performance metrics

In our work plan, we proposed to publish regular performance metrics, in order to share more information. Throughout 2015–16, we shall publish a monthly dashboard of performance information.

Access to mains records

In our work plan, we proposed to provide access to our mains records and network information on our website. This was strongly supported by Keepmoat and Power On Connections. The latter also said that this would assist competition in connections if ICPs could also get access to this information. Provision of this information will help ICPs to design customer connections and make it easier for customers to manage site safety whilst carrying out works.

Community energy

The recent increase in interest in community energy has highlighted the fact that not every connections customer has the same knowledge of our processes and technical language. In our work plan we said that we intended to review and publish a greater range of documents intended for the community energy sector in order to foster a greater understanding. This action was supported by stakeholders at the community energy workshops we held in Newcastle and Wakefield in February 2015. We shall therefore:

1. Consult with local community energy groups about the content of this material during June 2015
2. Create a draft guidance document by July 2015
3. Review the draft with local community energy groups by August 2015
4. Publish the final guidance document in September 2015





Community energy
 Fiona Booth, Head of Community Energy, DECC opening our February 2015 Newcastle event



Community Energy delegates at our Wakefield event hosted during February 2014, taking the opportunity to network and share learning amongst the different projects

Improving our application process

Self-service quotations

Customer feedback continues to confirm that stakeholders are keen for us to develop our information services. We are developing an online system for LV customers that will automatically quote a price for up to 30 new plots or 60kVA. User friendly guidance will help ensure that, in most circumstances, the new service will provide a price straight away, and if it is unable to do this we'll step in to review the job and ensure it is quoted quickly. Once in place we will consult on whether this significant addition to our service is fulfilling customer expectations.

Plot call off process

Our previous stakeholder engagement with house builders suggested the need for greater flexibility in our offers for connecting new housing estates. We recognise that housing developments are often built over long periods of time and developers do not want to tie up significant capital having to pay up front for all of the works for electrical connections. Instead we will alter our process to enable builders to obtain a view of the price of the entire works but only commit themselves to the cost of works to match the phases of their build schedule. This was supported by a number of stakeholders including Kyoob Ltd on the grounds that on a typical multi housing development the cash flow may often be front loaded with utility costs. We have therefore confirmed our proposal in our work plan and will implement a plot call off process for house builders by September 2015.

Budget quotes and optioneering

In April 2015, we introduced a process that offers all customers considering a connection at EHV a range of technical options available to them at an early stage in the process. By January 2016, we will have extended this service to HV and LV customers. It follows feedback from our consultation respondents stating that our budget process is inflexible in providing customers with an appropriate view of the feasible options for their proposed connection. The improvement will offer a range of budget prices by varying the requested connected capacity where appropriate.

Service improvement plan for metered connections

Improving communications

Improving written communications

At the request of customers we are going to review our quotation letters for metered customers in order to make them clearer and more understandable. This will include an improved break down and explanation of the costs, together with an explanation of the next steps in the process to getting connected. We plan for this work to be completed by the end of July 2015.

Key timescales for contact

Belectric Solar asked for greater communication during the initial quotation phase to ensure that the customer receives an offer that is understandable and one which can be actioned. We therefore intend that customers receive improved information and to implement key communication timescales during the quotation stage by March 2016. In particular, by June 2015, we shall contact customers at all levels within 5 days of receipt of an application to discuss their requirements and within 5 days of them accepting a quotation.

This will ensure that customers receive greater levels of communication from our electrical design and job delivery functions, providing a better understanding of what is going to happen during our work and, where necessary, what customers need to do onsite in preparation.

Account managers

Recent stakeholder engagement reaffirmed that some customers would like a key account manager. This is consistent with the commitment we made in our 2015–2023 business plan. Delivery of our commitment was linked to securing enhanced service and efficiencies by introducing online self-service elsewhere in connections. Customers want us to keep costs down and our aim remains to deliver these improvements without adding to the overall cost of connection. Implementation of the technology required has taken longer than we thought. Consequently, we've had to delay the full set-up of the account manager service into 2016, though we will do everything possible to bring this timescale forward.

Technical and commercial developments

Wayleave timescales

We shall implement a service level target to complete legal wayleave consents within 66 days by June 2015. This was as a result of ongoing discussions with the Metered Connections Customer Group (MCCG) who requested that we work together to improve the response times when dealing with wayleaves. This will help ensure that Northern Powergrid are not on the critical path for delivery of projects when it comes to gaining the necessary wayleaves.

Releasing unused capacity

On some occasions, customer connection offers that have been contractually agreed do not progress, and in other cases a connection does not end up using the full electrical capacity originally envisaged. The amount of contracted but unused capacity can impact on the cost for other customers to connect locally. The September 2014 DG Forum picked up on this problem and our work plan has been set to consult on potential solutions in July 2015. We then intend to implement a process in September 2015 to identify customers who may have unused capacity and engage with them on this.

Electrician events

Although not included in our consultative work plan, we intend in 2015 to provide an opportunity for local electricians to be trained to use our internet application process ahead of the introduction of our self-serve quotation system. We believe this will allow local electricians to offer an enhanced service to their customers that will include them dealing with Northern Powergrid on the customer's behalf.





Siobhan Barton
(Head of Customer Experience Improvement)
speaking at our community energy event in Wakefield



Enabling competition

ICP self-determination of point of connection

We currently allow ICPs and IDNOs to self-determine a point of connection (POC) at LV up to 60kVA. In our work plan we said that we would expand this trial to include HV work between 250kVA and 315kVA. This was supported by Martin Design Associates, and also by those ICPs who have been engaging with DNOs on the development of the DNO Competition in Connections Code of Practice. We will provide access to all relevant data and standards required by ICPs by September 2015 and develop and implement an assurance process to assess and maintain standards for ICP-derived POC and design approval.

Competition information

Feedback from the Metered Connections Customer Group suggested that knowledge and understanding of competition in connections wasn't as prevalent as first hoped amongst customers in general. We have taken steps to address this including a competition in connections leaflet that has been produced and published on our website. We plan to further enhance the leaflet with more information about ICPs including:

- ▶ Implement a register of ICPs operating in the Northern Powergrid regions – completed May 2015
- ▶ Ensure all customers receive competition in connections (CinC) information as part of the connections application process by June 2015
- ▶ Promote CinC in external emails related to connection activities by June 2015
- ▶ Where possible promote the CinC message through the use of hold messages on our connections telephony system

Metered disconnections contestability

Metered disconnections are currently a non-contestable activity meaning that only the DNO can do the work. In response to a challenge from Ofgem to open up other connections activities to competition, we plan to run a pilot with an ICP to build a best practice process by December 2015. If this is successful, and supported by stakeholders, we will make this activity contestable where it impacts on new connection work by March 2016.

Dual quotations

In order to promote competition in connections and make customer's more aware that there are other options to getting a connection than the local DNO, we will be introducing a dual quotations process for all the demand and distributed generation market segments. We have issued dual quotations to HV metered demand customers since 2012, with the addition of EHV demand and EHV DG dual quotations being offered from September 2014. From September 2015 customers requesting a quotation from us will receive a full quotation for Northern Powergrid to do all the connection work and an alternative offer within the same quotation for Northern Powergrid just to do the non-contestable part of the work. Customers will be able to use the dual quote to obtain alternative price offers for the contestable element of the work from ICPs.

Part funded reinforcement

During 2015–16 we plan to implement a trial of part funded reinforcement. We will be consulting with ICPs to see if they are interested in running a trial with the aim, if successful, of developing a process that will become business as usual. This will enable ICPs to quote for, and carry out, reinforcement work on our existing network associated with providing a new connection and offer a wider turnkey package to customers.

The Northern Powergrid service improvement plan for metered connections:

Theme	Area for Improvements	Outcome for customers	Sub Actions	Target Measure	Voltage affected	RAG Progress	Q2 2015			Q3 2015			Q4 2015			Q1 2016			Progress made to date				
							Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar					
1.0 Provision of Information	1.1	Wayleave guidance	1.1.1	Develop and publish a wayleave guidance document	Wayleave guidance published	All	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2			
	1.2	Demand Heat Maps	1.2.1	Publish primary substation demand information	Publish demand heatmaps	HV/EHV	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3		
	1.3	Performance Metrics	1.3.1	Publish a monthly dashboard of performance information	Monthly dashboard published	All	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		
	1.4	Access to mains records	1.4.1	Mains record system to be made available to customers online	Access to mains records	All	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3		
1.5 Community Energy			1.5.1	Consult with local community energy groups	Consult	All	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3		
			1.5.2	Create a guidance document for community energy connections	Draft guidance document	All	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
			1.5.3	Review with local community energy groups	Ensure fit for purpose	All	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
			1.5.4	Publish guidance document	Publish guidance document	All	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2.0 Improving our application process	2.1 Plot call off process	Have a flexible quotation process for phased housing developments	2.1.1	Implement plot call off process for house builders	Implement	LV/HV	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3		
			2.2.1	Implement enhanced budget quotes at LV	Implement	LV	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
			2.2.2	Implement enhanced budget quotes at HV	Implement	HV	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2.2 Budget Quotes and Optioneering			2.2.3	Implement enhanced budget quotes at EHV	Implement	EHV	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
			3.1.1	Redesign the small works quotation letters and information pack to provide clear and more understandable information	Implement new letters	LV	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
			3.1.2	Redesign the large works quotation letters and information pack to provide clear and more understandable information	Implement new letters	HV/EHV	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3.0 Improving Communication	3.2 Key Timescales for contact	Communicate effectively with our customers	3.2.1	Contact customers within 5 days of application to ensure it is complete (LV)	Implement & Measure	LV	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6		
			3.2.2	Contact customers within 5 days of application to ensure it is complete (HV)	Implement & Measure	HV	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	
			3.2.3	Contact customers within 5 days of application to ensure it is complete (EHV)	Implement & Measure	EHV	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
			3.2.4	Contact from a project engineer within 5 days of acceptance of a quotation	Implement & Measure	All	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
4.0 Technical and commercial developments	4.2 Progress the release of unused capacity	Reduce connection charges in line with a customer's capacity	4.2.1	Identify customers with spare capacity	Identify customers	All	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
			4.2.2	Seek agreement for release of spare capacity	Contact customers	All	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Theme	Area for Improvements	Outcome for customers	Sub Actions	Target Measure	Voltage affected	RAG Progress	Q2 2015			Q3 2015			Q4 2015			Q1 2016			Progress made to date					
							Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar						
5.0 Enabling Competition	5.1 ICP self-determination POC	Enable self-determination POC by ICPs	5.1.1 Provide access to all relevant data and standards required by ICPs	Provide access	All	2																		
	5.2 ICP design approval	Enable design approval by ICPs	5.2.1 Develop and implement an audit process to assess and maintain standards for ICP derived POC and design approval	Implement audit process	All	3																		
	5.3 Competition information		Provide customers with information about available ICPs and Competition in Connections	5.3.1 Implement a register of ICPs operating in NPg regions	Implement / Maintain ICP register	All	2																	
				5.3.2 Ensure customers receive CinC information as part of the connections application process	Promote CinC	All	3																	
				5.3.3 Promote CinC in every external email related to the connections business	Promote CinC	All	3																	
				5.3.4 Where a phone has a hold function the message will promote CinC	Promote CinC	All	3																	
				5.3.5 Issue emails targeted at customers in relevant market segments	Issue Emails	All	3																	
	5.4 Metered Disconnections		Allow ICPs to carry out metered disconnections on brownfield sites	5.4.1 Design and run an ICP metered disconnections pilot*	Run pilot scheme	LV	2																	
				5.4.2 Implement metered disconnections for ICPs*	Implement	LV	3																	
	5.5 Dual quotations		Provide dual quotations for all major works applications	5.5.1 Implement dual quotes at LV	Implement	LV	2																	
				5.5.2 Implement dual quotes at HV	Implement	HV	2																	
				5.5.3 Implement dual quotes at EHV	Implement	EHV	2																	
	5.6 Part Funded Reinforcement		Enable ICPs to carry out part funded reinforcement	5.6.1 Implement and run a part funded reinforcement trial	Implement	LV/HV	3																	

Work plan key attributes

Action Progress Key	
Description	Project Plan Key
1 Completed to target	◆
2 Running to plan	—
3 On target – not started
4 Completed late
5 Overdue – target still okay	◆
6 Okay to agreed revision	—

Any item in red denotes a change that has been added for the 2014–15 plan

Description	Project Plan Key
Key milestone	◆
Projected timescale	—
Revised timescale
New key milestone	◆
New Action Timeline	—
Revised timescale for an existing action

Service improvement plan for unmetered connections



Improving our application process

Online self-service

In our work plan, we said that we would make changes and improvements to our Public Lighting Authorities (PLA) system, enhance information on our website for unmetered customers and improve online tracking of job progress. We now intend to go further and expand our online self-service system to include applying for unmetered new connections by November 2015. It will also enable jobs to be tracked more easily.

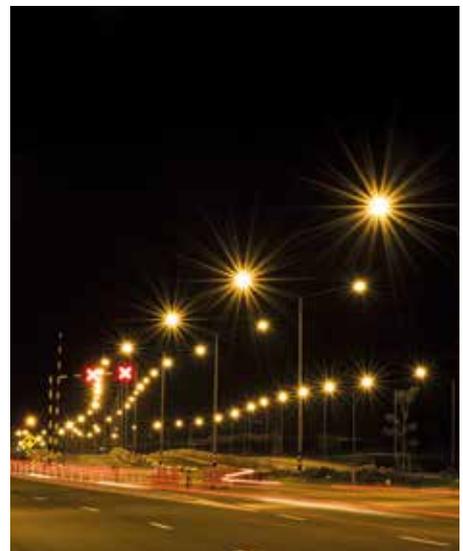
Improving communications

Measuring customer satisfaction

In our work plan we said that we would arrange a customer satisfaction survey for all unmetered customers. There was a lack of active support for this and so this has been omitted from the work plan in favour of higher priority actions.

Improving written communication

As a result of comments received on our consultation, we intend to review and revise our unmetered quotation letters for PLAs to make them clearer and easier to understand by August 2015.



Overview

Our unmetered connections activities continue to form a significant part of our overall connections work, accounting for 5400 of the total of 18500 connections enquiries. Our work plan reflects the requirements of customers and other stakeholders in this sector, who mostly have an established knowledge of their detailed requirements and of our processes.

How we developed our strategy in response to stakeholders' needs

We initially developed a work plan based on suggestions and proposals previously made to us by stakeholders who views were obtained at customer engagement events, and through direct feedback to our team during regular business meetings, surveys and customer surgeries. We consulted on this draft in January 2015 and our formal work plan for 2015 has been amended to take account of stakeholders' views.

Our work plan is subdivided into five key themes:

- ▶ Provision of information
- ▶ Improving our application process
- ▶ Improving communications
- ▶ Charging arrangements
- ▶ Enabling competition

Provision of information

Performance metrics

In our work plan we proposed to publish regular performance metrics. In response to comments made by Lindum and others, we have decided to go further by publishing on our website our service level agreement documents including information on guaranteed timescales that replaced local voluntary service levels. This will be implemented by June 2015.

Access to mains records

In our work plan we proposed to provide access to our mains records and network information on our website. This was strongly supported by Keepmoat and Power On Connections. The latter also said that this would assist competition in connections if ICPs could also get access to this information. Provision of this information will help ICPs to design customer connections and make it easier for customers to manage site safety whilst carrying out works.



Local work coordinators

In response to our consultation, Rotherham local authority and service provider, Lindum asked for a single point of contact for unmetered customers in a particular area to ensure all aspects of a project were coordinated and to deal with issues outside the norm. Our work plan had contained proposals for improved communication with unmetered customers such as regular meetings, and forums, but had not proposed a single point of contact. In response to stakeholder requests, we have amended our work plan to provide single points of contact. Our plan is to appoint and train these by July 2015 and for them to establish contact with the relevant customers by August 2015.

Stakeholder forums

In our work plan, we said that we would seek, if desired, to establish unmetered customers forum in the North East to mirror the arrangement in Yorkshire, but this was not supported by the North East PLAs. As mentioned above, our work plan also contained proposals for improved communication with unmetered customers such as regular meetings and forums, but this has been superseded by our decision to provide local work coordinators.

Key timescales for contact

We intend that customers receive adequate amounts of information and will implement key communication timescales during the quotation stage by March 2016. In particular, for customers other than street lighting authorities, by June 2015 we shall contact customers at all levels within 5 days of receipt of an application and within 5 days of them accepting a quotation.

Charging arrangements

We said in our work plan that we would work with customers to find a charging regime that works for major unmetered customer groups. There was little interest in this from stakeholders other than PLAs and so our work plan concentrates on offering PLAs a fixed set of annual prices for regular street lighting connections work. We have implemented a fixed annual price for the 12 months starting April 2015 and will review the process for the year commencing April 2016 in September 2015. This was supported by the PLAs at the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) meeting in March 2015.

Enabling competition

ICP self-determination of point of connection

Competition in unmetered connections is a major growth area which we expect will continue to expand rapidly over the next few years. We currently allow companies to self-determine a point of connection (POC) at LV up to 60kVA, well above the electrical load requirements for unmetered connections. We currently have five ICPs designing and installing unmetered connections on our network. We will continue to support other Unmetered Customer Connections Group members, self determining points of connection and further opening up competition in the sector.

Similar to metered and distributed generation connections, we will develop and implement an inspection process to assess and maintain standards for ICP-derived POC and design approval.

Competition information

In order to provide customers with improved information about available ICPs, we shall:

- ▶ Implement a register of ICPs operating in the Northern Powergrid regions – completed May 2015
- ▶ Ensure all customers receive CinC information as part of the connections application process by June 2015
- ▶ Promote CinC in every external email related to the connections business by June 2015
- ▶ Where possible promote the CinC message through the use of hold messages on our connections telephony system

In our consultation we specifically asked unmetered connections customers about their awareness of the opportunities from competition in connections. The responses showed that awareness was limited. We therefore intend to publish information on CinC specifically for unmetered customers by June 2015.



Theme	Area for Improvements	Outcome for customers	Sub Actions	Target Measure	Market Affected	RAG Progress	Q2 2015						Q3 2015			Q4 2015			Q1 2016			Progress made to date						
							Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar										
5.0 Enabling Competition	5.1 ICP self-determination POC	Enable self-determination POC by ICPs	5.1.1 Provide access to all relevant data and standards required by ICPs	Provide access	Local authority, PFI & unmetered other	2																						
	5.2 ICP design approval	Enable design approval by ICPs	5.2.1 Develop and implement an audit process to assess and maintain standards for ICP derived POC and design approval	Implement audit process	Local authority, PFI & unmetered other	3																						
	5.3 Competition information	Provide customers with information about available ICPs and Competition in Connections	5.3.1 Implement a register of ICPs operating in Npg regions	Implement / Maintain ICP register	Local authority, PFI & unmetered other	2																						
			5.3.2 Ensure customers receive CinC information as part of the connections application process	Promote CinC	Local authority, PFI & unmetered other	3																						
			5.3.3 Promote CinC in every external email related to the connections business	Promote CinC	Local authority, PFI & unmetered other	3																						
			5.3.4 Where a phone has a hold function the message will promote CinC	Promote CinC	Local authority, PFI & unmetered other	3																						
5.3.5 Publish a specific CinC leaflet for our unmetered markets	Publish leaflet	Local authority, PFI & unmetered other	2																									
5.3.6 Issue emails targeted at customers in relevant market segments	Issue Emails	Local authority, PFI & unmetered other	3																									

Work plan key attributes

Action Progress Key	
Description	
1 Completed to target	◆
2 Running to plan	—
3 On target – not started
4 Completed late	◆
5 Overdue – target still okay	—
6 Okay to agreed revision

Project Plan Key	
Description	
Key milestone	◆
Projected timescale	—
Revised timescale
Any item in red denotes a change that has been added for the 2014–15 plan	
New Key milestone	◆
New Action Timeline	—
Revised timescale for an existing action

Service improvement plan for distributed generation



Overview

Generating electricity from renewable and energy-efficient sources is a key part of government strategy to tackle climate change. The 2009 Renewable Energy Directive set a target for the UK to achieve 15% of its energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020, implying substantial growth in local (distributed) generation connected to our network and related investments in network infrastructure.

Customer enquiries about connecting generation increased from 1800 in 2010–11 to 4140 enquiries in 2014–15. We issued 2300 DG related price quotations and estimates in 2014–15, up from 700 in 2010–11.

Our service area continues to be one of the busiest in the UK for the development and connection of generation projects and through our comprehensive stakeholder strategy we continue to recognise the importance of the DG market. We work with generation companies and through the DG-DNO steering group to reflect their wishes into operational practice, where possible.

How we developed our strategy in response to stakeholders' needs

In May 2014 we ran a customer stakeholder event to focused on distributed generation. The event was very well attended by customers and feedback, together with interactions with customers at other stakeholder events and customer surgeries, has been used to develop our 2015–16 work plan. We consulted on our draft plan in January 2015 and our work plan for 2015–16 has been amended to take account of stakeholders' views.

Listening to the feedback from stakeholders, we subdivided the suggestions into five themes with associated improvement actions:

- ▶ Provision of information
- ▶ Improving our application process
- ▶ Improving communications
- ▶ Technical and commercial developments
- ▶ Enabling Competition

Provision of information

Provision of heat maps

In our work plan we said that feedback in response to our previous stakeholder interactions indicated that our heat maps would be even more effective if they included EHV, 20kV and 11kV network information. As a result of further feedback from our consultation, in particular from Fulcrum, Kyoob and Lark Energy, we intend to extend our heat maps so that they:

1. Include bulk supply points with red/amber/green status by September 2015
2. Include capacity availability at bulk supply points, by December 2015
3. Include EHV and HV underground and overhead networks, by December 2015
4. Show the areas served by distribution substations above 200kW by December 2015

In response to a request from Spec Real Estate, we shall make the base data from the heat maps available for inclusion in third party GIS systems by June 2015.



Substation information

In response to a request from Reg Wind power we will publish our substation addresses by longitude and latitude on our heat maps by June 2015. This will help customers and other stakeholders gain a clearer view of the work that may be involved in connecting a generator to our nearest primary substation with available capacity.

Wayleave guidance

The Lindum Group told us in response to the consultation on our draft work plan that they would welcome further information about third party wayleave agreements and consents, and what rights we have to connect onto existing cables within wayleave areas. This had not been included in our draft work plan and so we have included an action to develop and publish a wayleave guidance document by June 2015.

Contracted capacity

As requested by TCI Renewables and Urban Wind, we shall include within our heat maps the quoted, contracted, and connected capacities for each of our primary substations by August 2015. We shall also publish the cumulative connected capacity for each bulk supply point by August 2015. This will provide a greater range of information online to developers who are interested in early indications of the viability of their projects.

Community energy

The recent increase in interest in community energy has highlighted the fact that not every DG connections customer has the same detailed knowledge of our processes and technical language. In our draft work plan we said that we intended to review and publish a greater range of documents intended for the community energy sector in order to foster a greater understanding. This action was supported by stakeholders at the community energy workshops we held in Newcastle and Wakefield in February 2015. We shall therefore:

1. Consult with local community energy groups about the content of this material by June 2015
2. Create a draft guidance document by July 2015
3. Review the draft with local community energy groups by August 2015
4. Publish the final guidance document in September 2015

Performance metrics

In our work plan we proposed to publish regular performance metrics, in order to share more information with our customers. Throughout 2015–16, we shall publish a monthly dashboard of performance information.

Access to mains records

In our work plan we proposed to provide access to our mains records and network information on our website. This was strongly supported by Keepmoat and Power On Connections. The latter also said that this would assist competition in connections if ICPs could get access to this information. Provision of this information will help ICPs to design customer connections and make it easier for customers to manage site safety whilst carrying out works.



Service improvement plan for distributed generation

Improving our application process

Interactivity between connections projects

In our work plan we said that we intended to consult on our approach to this complex area and use feedback to inform our policies as interactivity becomes a more common occurrence. As a result of a number of specific suggestions, notably from Lightsource Renewables and RWE, we shall be issuing a consultation on interactivity by July 2015, reviewing the feedback by September 2015, with a view to making the necessary process changes by December 2015.

Generator application process

Following a request from Boston Renewables, we intended to begin running technical training sessions in August 2015 on the design requirements for DG connections applications to help ensure that the information provided is more relevant and specific. Other stakeholders pointed out that whilst events would be helpful, they wouldn't be a long term solution. As such we intend to publish increased guidance and run technical webinars for our customers from November 2015.

Quotation feasibility service

We have observed with interest SSE's quote plus service noting that there has seemed to be little take up within the industry. In our work plan we said that despite the reported lack of interest in SSE, we still intend to introduce this within Northern Powergrid, as some customers (Lark Energy, Banks Group, Lightsource Renewables) have asked for it. On that basis we propose to design and implement a quote plus process by September 2015.

Electronic G59 application forms

Following the success of our online application area, we said in our work plan that we would develop a suite of electronic G59 application forms (<50kW, <200kW and >200kW) to complement our existing service. This was generally supported, and we will introduce the new forms in November 2015. However, Bosch Thermotechnology commented on the lack of consistency in the information required by different DNOs. We therefore plan to lead a discussion via the Energy Networks Association (ENA) by January 2016 with the aim of achieving consistency on electronic G59 forms across the country.

G83 application to connect notifications

Following the April 2015 decision by Ofgem that multiple G83 installations need simply be notified to the DNO, we said in our work plan that we intended to expand our online single premises procedure to include G83/2 application-to-connect notifications in order to make the process more efficient for our customers. This was generally supported by stakeholders at our customer events who requested that we make our G83 forms less technical and speed up the process. We therefore intend to create an online account for all Small Scale Embedded Generation (SSEG) installers by September 2015 and introduce an online service for G83/2 multiple premises by December 2015.

Budget quotes and optioneering

Although not included in our work plan, several stakeholders (including Utility Partnership, Urban Wind and Green Switch Solutions) have made suggestions about being able to have a meaningful discussion including different options at the budget stage.



We therefore intend to help customers to optioneer solutions, entering into early discussions about customer's requirements, with ongoing engagement with our design team, to provide a range of options and costs that vary by generator size. This will be rolled out:

1. For EHV by April 2015 – completed
2. For HV generation by January 2016

Statement of works

In response to our work plan consultation, RWE suggested that, as the interaction with transmission systems becomes more frequent, Northern Powergrid should aim to make the DNO side of the statement of works process more efficient. (The statement of works process occurs when a connection may have an effect on the transmission network and National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) therefore needs to be advised.) Our work plan will introduce the ability to move straight to the modification application (Mod App) stage, where necessary following the acceptance of a quotation, by June 2015. Early discussions with NGET can reduce costs and also gain a definitive answer regarding reinforcement costs potentially reducing timescales by three months.





Improving communications

Key timescales for contact

Belectric Solar asked for greater communication during the initial quotation phase to ensure that the customer receives an offer that is understandable and one which can be actioned. We therefore intend that customers receive improved information and to implement key communication timescales during the quotation stage by March 2016. In particular, by June 2015, we shall contact customers at all levels within 5 days of receipt of an application to discuss their requirements and within 5 days of them accepting a quotation. This will ensure that customers receive greater levels of communication from our design and delivery functions, providing a better understanding of what is going to happen during our work and, where necessary, what customers need to do onsite in preparation.

Improving written communication

At the request of our customers, our quotation letters for metered customers will be made clearer with specific information to suit our DG customers by July 2015. We shall monitor the improvement this has on customer satisfaction.

Key account management

Recent stakeholder engagement reaffirmed that some customers would like a key account manager. This is consistent with the commitment we made in our 2015–2023 business plan. Delivery of our commitment was linked to securing enhanced service and efficiencies by introducing online self-service elsewhere in connections. Customers want us to keep costs down and our aim remains to deliver these improvements without adding to the overall cost of connection. Implementation of the technology required has taken longer than we thought.

Consequently, we've had to delay the full set-up of the account manager service into 2016, though we will do everything possible to bring this timescale forward.

Technical and commercial developments

Active network management

Active Network Management (ANM) has been introduced to our network as part of our smart grid trials. Our work plan intends that ANM offers will be a business as usual choice by quarter two, 2016. This was supported by Banks Group. We will be developing ANM connections offers by March 2016 with a view to implementing service offers, where possible, from 2016–17.

Releasing unused capacity

On some occasions, customer connection offers that have been contractually agreed do not progress, and in other cases a connection does not end up using the full electrical capacity originally envisaged. The amount of contracted but unused capacity can impact on the cost for other customers to connect locally. The September 2014 DG Forum picked up on this problem and our work plan has been set to consult on potential solutions in July 2015. We then intend to implement a process in September 2015 to identify customers who may have unused capacity and engage with them on this.

Wayleave timescales

We shall implement a service level target to complete legal wayleave consents within 66 days by June 2015. This was as a result of ongoing discussions with the Metered Connections Customer Group (MCCG) who requested that we work together to improve the response times when dealing with wayleaves. This will help ensure that Northern Powergrid are not on the critical path for delivery of projects when it comes to gaining the necessary wayleaves.



Service improvement plan for distributed generation



Enabling competition

Self-determination of Point of Connection

We plan to provide access to all relevant data and standards required by independent connections providers (ICPs) by September 2015 and develop and implement an audit process to assess and maintain standards for ICP-derived POC and design approval.

Competition information

Following feedback from the Metered Connections Customer Group that suggested that knowledge and understanding of competition in connections wasn't as prevalent as first hoped, we have taken steps to address this and improve the visibility of the concept. In order to provide customers with better information about the options available, we shall:

- ▶ Publish a register of ICPs operating in the Northern Powergrid regions – completed May 2015
- ▶ Ensure all customers receive competition in connections (CinC) information as part of the connections application process by June 2015
- ▶ Promote CinC in external emails related to the connections activities by June 2015
- ▶ Where possible promote the CinC message through the use of hold messages on our connections telephony system



Dual Quotations

In order to promote competition in connections and make customer's more aware of the options available to them, we are introducing a dual quotations process for all the demand and distributed generation market segments. We have issued dual quotations to HV metered demand customers since 2012, with the addition of EHV demand and EHV DG dual quotations being offered from September 2014. Customers requesting a quotation from us will receive a full quotation for Northern Powergrid to do all the connection work and an alternative offer within the same quotation for Northern Powergrid just to do the non-contestable part of the work.

Customers can use the dual quote format to obtain alternative price offers for the contestable element of the work from ICPs.

Part Funded Reinforcement

During 2015–16 we plan to implement a trial of part funded reinforcement. We will be consulting with ICPs to see if they are interested in running a trial with the aim, if successful, of developing process that will become business as usual. This will enable ICPs to quote for, and carry out, reinforcement work on our existing network associated with providing a new connection, offering a wider turnkey package to customers.

Work plan key attributes

Action Progress Key	
	Description
1	Completed to target
2	Running to plan
3	On target – not started
4	Completed late
5	Overdue – target still okay
6	Okay to agreed revision

Project Plan Key	
	Description
◆	Key milestone
—	Projected timescale
.....	Revised timescale
Any item in red denotes a change that has been added for the 2014–15 plan	
◆	New Key milestone
—	New Action Timeline
.....	Revised timescale for an existing action

The Northern Powergrid service improvement plan for distributed generation:

Theme	Area for improvements	Outcome for customers	Sub Actions	Target Measure	Voltage Affected	RAG Progress	Q2 2015						Q3 2015			Q4 2015			Q1 2016			Progress made to date					
							Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar									
1.0 Provision of Information	1.1 Provision of heat maps	Expand the information provided to include: ▲ Bulk Supply Points ▲ Distribution Substations above 200kW ▲ EHV/HV underground and overhead networks & share base data.	1.1.1 Publish BSPs/GSPs with RAG Status*	BSP/GSP RAG Status published	EHV	2																					
			1.1.2 Publish capacity availability for Bulk supply points*	BSP capacity information added	EHV	2																					
			1.1.3 Publish EHV underground and overhead network on heatmaps*	EHV network maps included	EHV	2																					
			1.1.4 Publish HV underground and overhead network on heatmaps*	HV network maps included	HV	2																					
			1.1.5 Include distribution substations and show the area they serve above 200kW*	Distribution substations added	HV	2																					
	1.2 Substation Information	Publish substation address information	1.1.6 Provide heat maps base data in spreadsheet format*	Base data to be provided on request	All	2																					
			1.2.1 Publish substation longitude and latitude information	Substation information provided	All	2																					
			1.3.1 Develop and publish a wayleave guidance document	Wayleave guidance published	All	2																					
	1.3 Wayleave guidance	Provide better guidance for customers about wayleaves & consents.	1.4.1 Publish Quoted capacity at primary substations	Quote information published	HV/EHV	2																					
			1.4.2 Publish Contracted capacity at primary substations	Contracted information published	HV/EHV	2																					
			1.4.3 Publish Connected capacity at primary substations	Connected information published	HV/EHV	2																					
	1.4 Contracted capacity	Publish a contracted capacity register for primary substations within our heatmaps	1.4.4 Publish cumulative connected capacity by GSP	Cumulative information published	All	2																					
			1.5.1 Consult with local community energy groups	Consult	All	3																					
			1.5.2 Create a guidance document for community energy connections	Draft guidance document	All	3																					
	1.5 Community Energy	Provide community energy groups with advice on how to get connected	1.5.3 Review with local community energy groups	Ensure fit for purpose	All	3																					
1.5.4 Publish guidance document			Publish guidance document	All	3																						
1.6.1 Publish a monthly dashboard of performance information			Monthly dashboard published	All	3																						
1.6 Performance Metrics	Access to mains records	1.7.1 Mains record system to be made available to customers online	Access to mains records	All	3																						
		2.1.1 Issue consultation on interactivity process*	Consult	All	3																						
		2.1.2 Review customer feedback*	Utilise feedback	All	3																						
2.1 Interactivity	To provide an industry best practise interactivity process	2.1.3 Make necessary process changes to the interactivity process*	Change process if necessary	All	3																						
		2.2.1 Develop information material on Generation applications	Develop material	All	3																						
		2.2.2 Publish webinar	Publish / promote on website	All	3																						
2.0 Improving our application process	Generator Application Process	2.3.1 Design and implement a quote plus process*	Implement quote plus	All	3																						
		2.4.1 Introduce G59 application forms split by capacity	Implement application forms	All	2																						
		2.4.2 Discuss wider adoption of electronic G59 forms with ENA.*	Discuss with ENA / Other DNOs	All	2																						

Appendix 1



Output metrics

Table 1 – Section 16 performance

Year ended 31 March 2015

Time to Quote (excluding days paused)¹

Market Segment	Min	Max	Average
LV Demand	0	25	17
HV Demand	0	35	24
EHV Demand	0	65	46
132kV+ Demand			
LV Generation	0	49	33
HV and EHV Generation	0	65	49
Unmetered LA	1	25	14
Unmetered PFI	-	-	-
Unmetered Other	0	25	12

Time to Quote (including days paused)²

LV Demand	0	429	32
HV Demand	0	816	52
EHV Demand	0	177	72
132kV+ Demand			
LV Generation	0	266	41
HV and EHV Generation	0	392	69
Unmetered LA	1	161	26
Unmetered PFI	-	-	-
Unmetered Other	0	516	36

Time to connect (acceptance to connection)³

LV Demand	3	1058	106
HV Demand	16	921	175
EHV Demand	470	475	473
132kV+ Demand	-	-	-
LV Generation	24	343	96
HV and EHV Generation	39	556	165
Unmetered LA	3	624	23
Unmetered PFI	-	-	-
Unmetered Other	3	719	56

Volume of quotations 2014–15

LV Demand	4462	2993	1731
HV Demand	1795	1408	727
EHV Demand	38	13	2
132kV+ Demand	-	-	-
LV Generation	1793	1254	335
HV and EHV Generation	1681	732	242
Unmetered LA		5316	5203
Unmetered PFI	5399	-	-
Unmetered Other		659	604

Table 2 – SLC 15 Performance

Year ended 31 March 2015

Time to Quote (excluding days paused)¹

Market Segment	Min	Max	Average
LV Demand	3	30	18
HV Demand	0	54	14
EHV Demand	27	50	44
132kV+ Demand	-	-	-
LV Generation	3	30	18
HV and EHV Generation	0	65	47
Unmetered Connections	-	-	-

Time to Quote (including days paused)²

LV Demand	3	268	36
HV Demand	0	474	42
EHV Demand	27	165	66
132kV+ Demand	-	-	-
LV Generation	3	266	41
HV and EHV Generation	0	392	69
Unmetered Connections	-	-	-

Time to connect (acceptance to connection)³

LV Demand	0	30	8
HV Demand	5	33	13
EHV Demand	-	-	-
132kV+ Demand	-	-	-
LV Generation	24	343	96
HV and EHV Generation	39	556	154
Unmetered Connections	-	-	-

Volume of quotations 2014–15

LV Demand	1467	876	296
HV Demand	1191	1097	203
EHV Demand	14	8	2
132kV+ Demand	-	-	-
LV Generation	63	29	13
HV and EHV Generation	603	325	36
Unmetered Connections	-	-	-

1 From receipt of an acceptable application to the date of the quotation excluding days on pause whilst we await further information

2 From receipt of an acceptable application to the date of the quotation including days on pause whilst we await further information

3 From receipt of a customer acceptance to the date the connection is jointed onto our network (though perhaps not energised)

Appendix 2

Northern Powergrid
ICE
April 2015



Executive summary

Introduction

300 telephone interviews were completed with Northern Powergrid connections customers to gain feedback on their 'Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) Work Plan'. Interviews were conducted with distributed generation (DG) customers, metered customers and unmetered customers. A further 13 face to face interviews were completed with stakeholders. In the interviews respondents were taken through the proposed changes included in the plan and asked how they felt these changes would impact on service.

Distributed generation customers

- 92% of DG customers felt the proposed changes to the provision of information would make the connections process better
- 77% thought the suggested changes to the application process would improve the connections process
- 72% of customers thought the connections process would get better with the proposed changes to communication
- 84% of customers thought the proposed technical/commercial developments would make the connections process better
- 66% of customers thought the proposed changes to enabling competition would improve the connections process

Metered customers

- 76% of metered customers thought the proposed changes to the provision of information would make the connections process better
- 73% thought the connections process would be made better with the proposed changes to application provision
- 68% of metered customers thought the connections process would be made better by the suggested improved communications
- 68% of customers thought the proposed technical and commercial developments would make the connections process better

- 72% of customers thought the connections process would be made better by the proposed changes regarding enabling competition

Unmetered customers

- 87% of unmetered customers thought the proposed changes to the provision of information would make the connections process better
- 77% thought the process would be made better by the changes to application provision suggested
- 82% of customers thought the connections process would improve with the proposed changes to communication
- 36% of customers thought the connections process would be made better with the proposed changes to charging, and 64% thought the process would remain the same
- 73% thought Northern Powergrid’s plans to further enable competition would make the connections process better

Stakeholder interviews

Feedback from the stakeholder interviews was positive. Although many of the stakeholders had suggestions for other things they would like to see included in the plan, the vast majority were happy with the actions on the plan that they had influenced, agreed with the plan, and thought the actions would achieve their desired goals.

Conclusion

Overall, feedback on the ICE work plan was very positive, with the majority of customers agreeing that the proposed changes to the connections process would make the process better. There were some customers who thought the process would stay the same following the changes, although the majority of these felt the changes wouldn’t affect them personally or that they were happy with current process. The proportion of customers who thought changes to the plan would make the connections process worse was extremely small, demonstrating that overall Northern Powergrid connections customers agree with and support the ICE work plan.

Appendix 3



Simplifying **Competition in Connections**

YOU HAVE A CHOICE

Competition in Connections

Did you know you have a choice of who provides your new electricity connection?

You have a choice when it comes to who provides your new connection . . .

- Ask Northern Powergrid and/or
- Ask an Independent Connections Provider (ICP)



Your local Distribution Network Operator (DNO), Northern Powergrid, is NOT the only company who can carry out the works to get you connected to the electricity network.

There are many Independent Connections Providers (ICP's) that are also able to carry out the design and installation works to get you connected. The works to get you connected can be done by a wide range of properly qualified companies and are referred to as 'contestable' works.

Northern Powergrid might still be involved. For example, we might need to carry out the final connection to the distribution network, the diversion or reinforcement of our existing assets. This work is known as non-contestable work.

For any type of connection you are free to approach Northern Powergrid as well as ICP's for a quotation for all of the works. If you ask an ICP, they would need to approach us for a quotation for any non-contestable work but they would then give you a single quotation.

Asking for quotations from different companies enables you to 'shop around' and find the cheapest overall connection price.

What is the difference between an ICP and a DNO?

- An Independent Connection Provider (ICP) is a nationally accredited company that is permitted to build electricity networks to the specification and quality required for them to be adopted by a Distribution Network Operator.
- A DNO is the company who owns and operates the electricity distribution network in a specific geographical area. There are fourteen licensed DNO's in Great Britain, owned by a total of six companies. When an ICP carries out connections work, the assets that it installs are adopted by the local DNO who then owns and operates those assets over their entire lifetime. Hence, end customers using ICP's to install their connection are directly connected to the local DNO's network.

Appendix 3



There is another way in which you can get a third party to install your connection and where you are not directly connected to the DNO's network - by becoming the customer of an Independent Distribution Network Operator (IDNO).

- IDNO's design, install, own and operate inset distribution networks located within the areas covered by the DNO's.
- An IDNO continues to own and operate the part of the network that it builds, carrying out any required maintenance and repair activities. Under the rules for new IDNO connections, the amounts that your energy supplier will be charged for ongoing provision of the connection are the same as those the local DNO could charge, if it provided all of the new assets needed to make a connection – so there is no hidden cost to you from becoming an IDNO customer.
- Asking an IDNO for a connection quotation is another way that you can shop around and find the cheapest connection price, alongside getting quotations from the DNO and ICP's.

Supporting competition and getting you the lowest cost connection

Northern Powergrid recognises the benefits that competition brings to you and all of our customers. We are not only committed to reducing the cost and time it takes to provide you with a connection, but we also actively promote competition in connections and are committed to maintaining an environment in which independent companies can compete freely and fairly to undertake contestable works.

We continue to work with ICP's and IDNO's to increase the amount of work that they can carry out, offering greater choice to the customer.

How can you get in touch with ICP's and IDNO's?

You can find out more about accredited Independent Connections Providers by visiting the Lloyd's Register NERS website:

www.lloydsregister.co.uk/schemes/NERS/providers-list.aspx

Dedicated Competition in Connections (CinC) Team



If you have any questions relating to Competition in Connections or want to make sure that your project can be carried out by an Independent Connection Provider before spending time shopping around, please contact our dedicated team on:

0113 2415245

or email:

cinc.connections@northernpowergrid.com

Connections Surgeries



We hold monthly surgeries at our connection offices. These are available to new and existing customers to discuss proposed or current projects. If you would like to attend a surgery session or to find out further information please visit:

www.northernpowergrid.com/customer-events-and-surgeries

Apply Online



You can apply online for a contestable and/or non-contestable works quotation using our online electronic application process. Our system is really fast and easy to use and provides you lots of help in understanding what information we require to prepare you a quotation. You will be provided with a unique online account where you will be able to monitor the progress of your application and quotation.

For further details or to apply visit: www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected

Non-contestable Services – SLC15

Non-contestable services are covered by a range of overall standards set by the electricity regulator, Ofgem. This is referred to as Standard License Condition 15 (SLC15) which covers providing quotations, responding to design submissions and completing final works. A list of these overall standards is shown below:

SLC15 REFERENCE NUMBER	SERVICE	STANDARD (Maximum timescale from receiving the request/proposed design)
1(a)	Provision of quotations for low voltage demand	15 working days
1(b)	Provision of quotations for low voltage generation	30 working days
1(c)	Provision of quotations for high voltage demand	20 working days
1(d)	Provision of quotations for high voltage generation	50 working days
1(e)	Provision of quotations for extra high voltage demand	50 working days
1(f)	Provision of quotations not covered by the categories above (other connections)	3 months
2(a)	Provision of POC information for new extra high voltage connections	30 working days
2(b)	Issuing a written response to design submissions for low voltage and high voltage connections	10 working days
2(c)	Issuing a written response to design submissions for extra high voltage and other connections	20 working days
3(a)	Completion of final works for low voltage connections	10 working days
3(b)	Completion of final works for high voltage connections	20 working days
3(c)	Issuing dates for completion of final works for extra high voltage connections	20 working days
3(d)	Completion of phased energisation for low voltage connections	5 working days
3(e)	Completion of phased energisation for high voltage connections	10 working days

Contestable and Non-contestable Activities

The table below shows which elements of the work can be carried out by who:

TASK	NORTHERN POWERGRID (NON-CONTESTABLE)	ICP (CONTESTABLE)
Carry out work to determine the point of connection	Yes	No
Obtain all legal and wayleave permissions	Yes	No
Produce detailed design for on-site works (Note: contractor designs are subject to our approval)	Yes	Yes
Project manage the connection	Yes	Yes
Provide materials to our specification	Yes	Yes
Carry out cable trenching work on-site	Yes	Yes
Install ducts on-site	Yes	Yes
Carry out substation building and civil work on-site	Yes	Yes
Carry out non-electrical work off-site (including meeting provisions of the New Roads and Street Works Act)	Yes	Yes
Carry out any reinforcement work on our existing system	Yes	No
Carry out Quality Assurance inspections of new work, test and connect to our system	Yes	No
Install metering and make internal wiring live	Your electricity supplier	

If you have any questions relating to Competition in Connections, please contact our dedicated team on **0113 2415245** or email cinc.connections@northernpowergrid.com

Contact us regarding our plan

As an essential service at Northern Powergrid we believe that our customers and other stakeholders are the best judges of our performance and we always want to hear your views and opinions on the services we provide and your ideas for what we could be doing. If you would like to comment, you can contact us in a number of ways:

By telephone

Julie Thompson, Connections Service
Improvement Manager on 0191 229 4396

By email

Yourpowergrid@northernpowergrid.com

On twitter

[Twitter@northpowergrid](https://twitter.com/northpowergrid)

Via our online community

northern-powergrid.explainonline.co.uk

And online at:

www.northernpowergrid.com

Connections enquiries

By Telephone

0845 070 2703

By Email

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