



Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

2023/24 submission

What we do

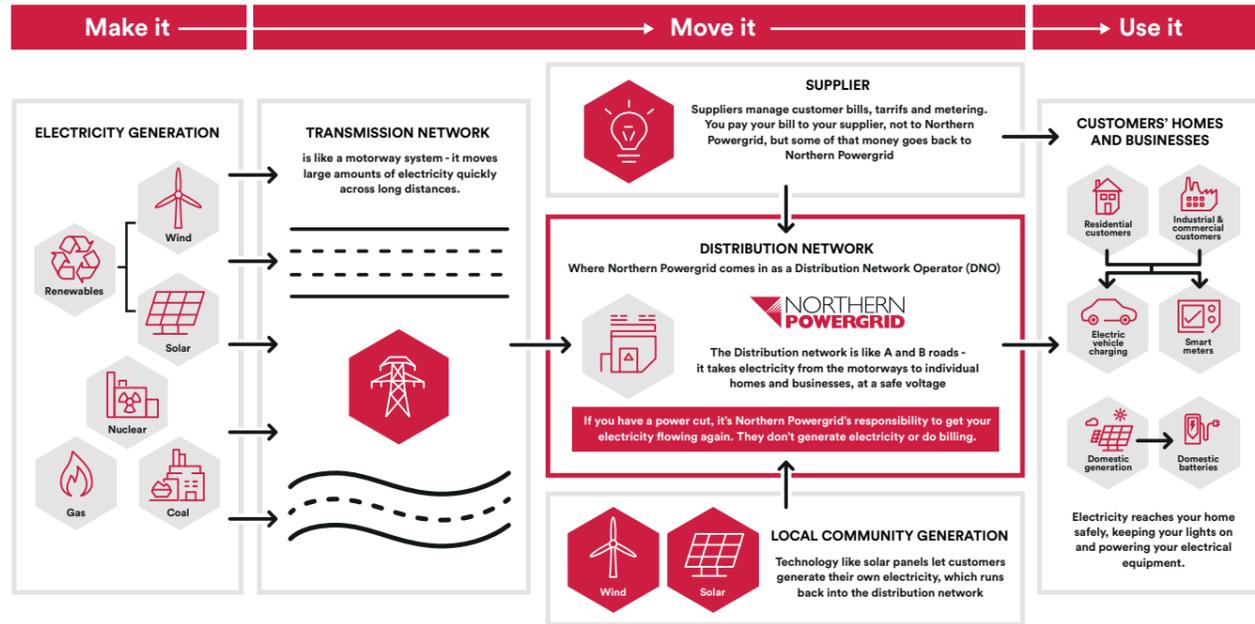
Northern Powergrid owns and operates the electricity distribution network that powers the lives of more than eight million people across the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

Our network spans from the Scottish borders to northern Lincolnshire and delivers a safe and secure supply of electricity to 3.9 million homes and businesses in our operating area.

We connect people to the electricity network and, if our customers' power supply is ever interrupted, we will be there to fix it.



Where we sit in the industry



This is our final Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) submission as the Major Connections Incentive replaces ICE in the current price control period, which runs to 31 March 2028. Consequently, this year's submission consists only of a Looking Back report.

Foreword

Our annual Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) submission is an opportunity to reflect on the previous year's activities and achievements.

The past 12 months have not been without its challenges.

The Access and Forward-Looking Charges Significant Code Review¹ required us to make changes to our processes that will enable us to deliver more flexible solutions and congestion on the transmission system continued to impact our ability to connect customers to our distribution network, with generation and storage projects facing the longest delays.

This has required us to have some frank and open conversations with our stakeholders and this is something we will continue.

It has also been a period where we can point to positive and significant changes and be proud of our progress.

We established a new distribution system operation (DSO) business unit, embedding major connections as a key pillar of this evolving area of our business. We launched our flagship Community DSO project and our new local area energy planning team has been proactively engaging with stakeholders to help accelerate their net zero plans.

Meeting our commitments

I am also pleased to report that we delivered all the commitments we made in our final 2022/23 ICE plan and whilst there is always more we can do, we can be proud of what has been achieved.

This year, we have:

- simplified the process whereby stakeholders can request network data;
- delivered 'connections 101' sessions for stakeholders unfamiliar with our process;
- updated our electric vehicle (EV) connections guidance, providing clarity on when customers can expect to connect and notify and when they should make an application to increase their electricity supply; and
- responded to stakeholder requests for engagement on network capacity and transmission congestion issues.

We delivered more than 180 service improvement actions and initiatives through ICE in the RIIO-ED1 price control period. Our ICE plans were developed together with our connections stakeholders and their insights helped shape the outcomes we delivered.

The Major Connections Incentive which replaces ICE for the current RIIO-ED2 price control period, is an opportunity to continue to work with our stakeholders to improve their experience and our levels of service.

Significant change and opportunity

We view the next five year price control period as a significant opportunity.

We can expect our focus in the next 12 months to be on continuing to support those customers who are impacted by network constraints and congestion on the transmission system.

We are taking a whole-systems approach, collaborating with the ESO², NGET³ and the wider industry to develop solutions that we are confident will start to drive improvements for our customers in terms of connections timescales and cost.

We will need to deliver timely and cost-effective connections in a smarter, more flexible way and we will need to drive forward decarbonisation and continue to be an enabler of our region's net zero ambitions, whilst balancing the need for affordability and the impact of the cost of living crisis on our customers.

These are significant undertakings that can only be achieved through continued collaboration with our customers and stakeholders. I encourage you to continue to seek opportunities to engage with us and to share your experiences. Your feedback drives change in our business, informs our plans and priorities and improves the service we can offer you.

Paul Glendinning

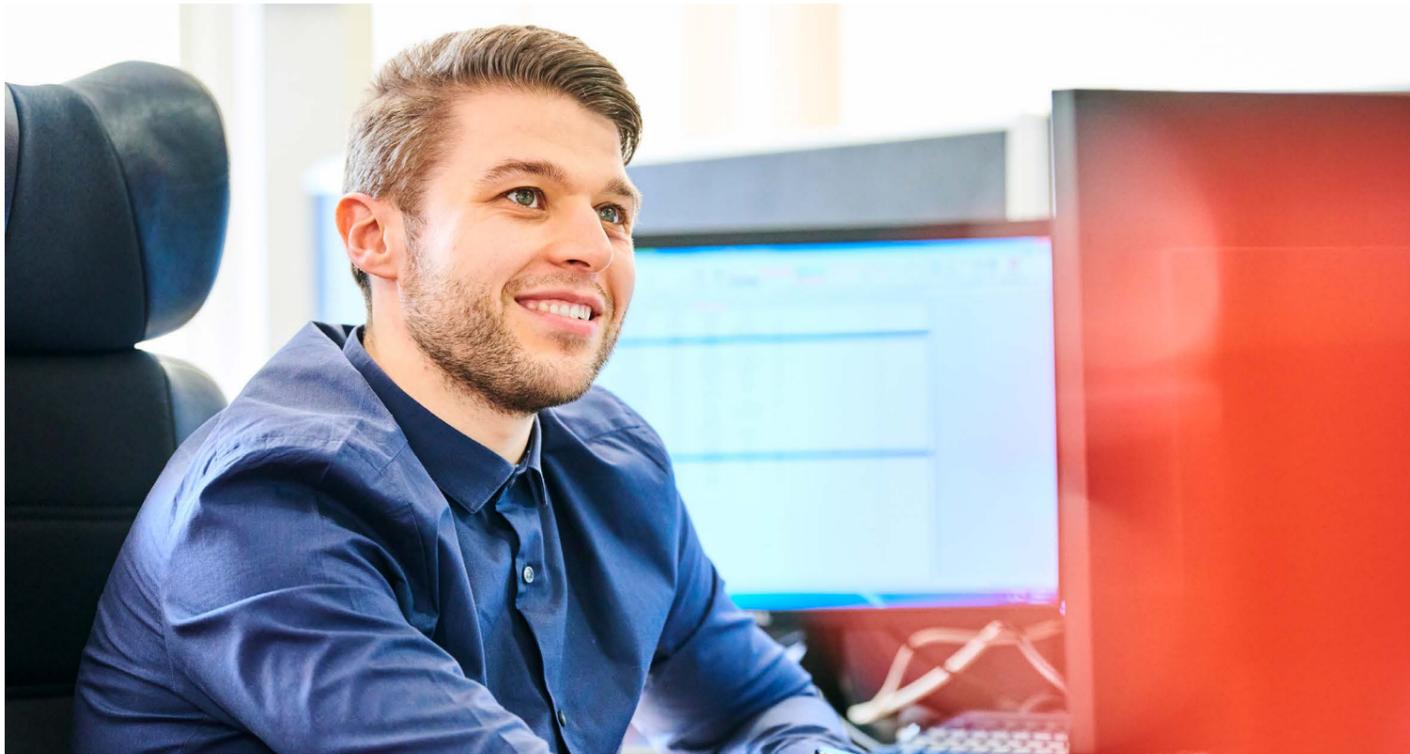
**DIRECTOR – POLICY AND MARKETS
NORTHERN POWERGRID**



² The Electricity System Operator (ESO) performs several important functions; from second-by-second balancing of electricity supply and demand, to developing markets and advising on network investments.

³ National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) own and maintain the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales.

An introduction to ICE



The purpose

In 2015, at the start of the last price control period, Ofgem introduced the Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) to encourage distribution network operators (DNOs) to deliver a consistently high level of service to customers seeking new connections.

ICE complemented the other connections-related incentives that applied during the previous RIIO-ED1⁴ price control period, such as the time to connect incentive which is designed to address the needs of smaller works connections customers, and the broad measure of customer service.

In the current RIIO-ED2 price control period which runs from 2023-2028, ICE will be replaced by the Major Connection Incentive.

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

Ofgem explains that ICE is designed to drive improvements in both the contestable and non-contestable activities that DNOs can offer customers in the relevant market segments of the local connections market, as outlined in table 1. ICE does not capture performance in the excluded market segments (LV⁵ connections of up to four domestic premises).

The aim

The aim of ICE, as outlined in Ofgem's guidance⁶ is to provide DNOs with an incentive to deliver the good customer service that is associated with competitive markets. This could be by improving the timeliness of connections, extending the provision of available information or enhancing overall customer service.

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

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

ICE gave our major works connections customers and stakeholders the opportunity to inform our service improvement plans.

In April each year, following a comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement and consultation, we published a detailed Looking Forward work plan of service improvement actions for customers operating in the relevant market segments. We also included actions that would benefit Independent Connections Providers (ICPs) and Independent Distribution Network Operators (IDNOs) where they would promote fair and open competition in connections.

Table 1: Relevant Market Segments for ICE

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

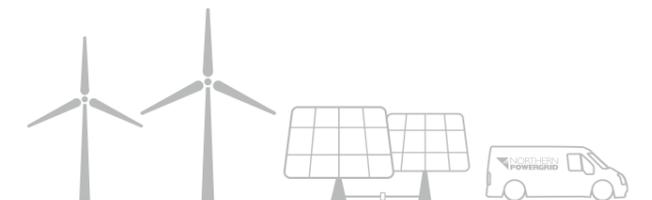
Service improvements driven by stakeholders

All our ICE work plans were developed together with our connections stakeholders and our service improvement actions and initiatives were derived from their suggestions and feedback

Our ICE submission for 2023/24 consists only of a Looking Back report.

In its final RIIO-ED2 determinations, Ofgem confirmed that it would remove ICE and replace it with a Major Connections Incentive, effective from 1 April 2023. The ICE guidance was modified to relieve DNOs of the obligation to submit a Looking Forward plan for the year 2023/24⁷. As such, our final ICE 2023/24 ICE submission consists only of a Looking Back report.

In our final Looking Back report, we explain how we have implemented our connections engagement strategy and delivered the commitments we made during the 2022/23 ICE plan year. We also share some of what our stakeholders have told us about their experience of working with us and the actions and outcomes we have delivered.



⁴ RIIO stands for 'Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs'. It is a framework used by the industry regulator to ensure that DNOs provide a safe and reliable service, value for money, maximise performance, operate efficiently, innovate and ensure the resilience of their networks for current and future customers.

⁵ Low voltage

⁶ Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) guidance document

⁷ www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/notice-under-part-c-charge-restriction-condition-crc-2e-incentive-connections-engagement-modify-incentive-connections-engagement-guidance-document

Meeting the criteria

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

In its guidance⁸, Ofgem sets out the criteria by which it will assess DNOs' ICE performance. A penalty can be applied if a DNO is deemed by Ofgem not to have met the minimum requirements. We are confident that as in previous years, we have met all of the prescribed criteria, as evidenced throughout our submission and summarised in this section. The passages in bold text are the assessment criteria for ICE, as specified by Ofgem.

 **>180**

connections service improvement actions during the RIIO-ED1 period.

 **62%**

of stakeholders surveyed said they felt they could approach us to provide feedback at any time.

Source: Connections stakeholder survey, April 2023

The Looking Forward criteria

Although not a requirement for our final 2023/24 ICE submission, for context and consistency, we have included the minimum criteria by which Ofgem assessed DNOs' Looking Forward reports and provided a summary statement to explain how we have met the criteria in all of the previous years of the incentive. The process we followed when developing our ICE plans is described in detail in our previous ICE submission⁹.

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

Through ICE, we have developed a robust and comprehensive strategy for engaging with our connections stakeholders and we use their feedback and insights to drive positive change within our business.

ICE gave us a strong foundation to build upon for RIIO-ED2 but it is critical that we continue to engage with our connections stakeholders and refine our strategy and approach to respond to their priorities, preferences and what they tell us about the ways they want to engage and interact with us.

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

We applied robust stakeholder-led process when developing our ICE Looking Forward plans that met Ofgem's criteria and gave our stakeholders plenty of opportunities to influence our plans.

Our 2022/23 ICE submission featured a comprehensive Looking Forward work plan of actions that addressed the key priorities and issues our stakeholders had identified.

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

We set measurable targets for all the actions in our ICE Looking Forward work plans, with target completion dates and stretching performance indicators that enabled us, our stakeholders and Ofgem to assess our performance and the effectiveness of our actions.

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

We applied a robust, stakeholder-led process to inform and seek endorsement of our ICE plans.



During the course of the ICE plan year, we recorded and responded to all the feedback we received from our major works stakeholders. The feedback we received originated from a number of different sources including connections events and forums, surgeries, research and bilateral discussions with our customers and stakeholders.

All the feedback was recorded and acted upon as appropriate, whether that required contact from one of our team, a change to our business as usual practices or a more significant improvement action delivered through ICE. Our stakeholder feedback log¹⁰ was the foundation on which we built our annual ICE Looking Forward plans.

The comprehensive consultation process we employed when developing our plans gives us confidence that the actions and outcomes we delivered under ICE were informed and endorsed by a broad and inclusive range of connections customers and stakeholders.

The Looking Back criteria

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

Our 2022/23 ICE submission¹¹ included a comprehensive Looking Forward report, in which we described our strategy for connections engagement and the service improvement actions we would undertake in the year.

In this, our final 2023/24 ICE submission, we report on how we have delivered the commitments we made and explain how we engaged with our connections stakeholders to ensure the improvements we were making had met their expectations and addressed the issues they had raised.

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

In our Looking Back report we explain how we have implemented our strategy for connections engagement and sought feedback from stakeholders to inform our approach and set a baseline for our performance in RIIO-ED2.

During the course of the year, we have delivered connections events, webinars and surgeries. We identified stakeholder groups who might benefit from an overview of our connections process and engaged with their trade organisations and representative bodies to reach more of these stakeholders and better understand their particular areas of interest and need.

We reviewed our existing strategy to identify the activities and initiatives that had worked well and could be scaled up and encouraged our stakeholders to tell us what others do well that we could learn from.

We engaged with stakeholders on the critical issues that are impacting them, including transmission congestion, and our newly established local area energy planning team proactively engaged with stakeholders to support their strategic net zero plans.

We invited feedback from 10,350 stakeholders to inform our strategy and approach to connections engagement and pre-application support going forward. More than 250 stakeholders responded, providing detailed feedback on their priorities, preferences and expectations.

⁸ Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) Guidance Document

⁹ Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) 2022/23 submission

¹⁰ We recorded all connections-related feedback we received in a stakeholder feedback log. We recorded the stakeholder's comment, where that feedback originated from, our interpretation of the issue, next steps and any interactions that have taken place. Our stakeholder feedback log was the foundation upon which we built our annual ICE work plans.

¹¹ 2022/23 ICE submission [northernpowergrid.com/downloads/6151](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/downloads/6151)

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

In April 2022, we published our final ICE Looking Forward work plan, which consisted of 11 service improvement actions. It was developed together with our connections stakeholders and the actions in the work plan were derived from their feedback and suggestions.

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

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

We can report that, by deadline of 31 March 2023, we had completed all of the actions in our 2022/23 ICE plan, meeting the majority of the stretching targets we had set ourselves.

One action¹² was delivered later than originally forecast but still within the ICE plan year.

Three actions¹³ required us to engage with a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders and use their feedback to inform our future engagement strategy and approach to pre-application support. This was a significant undertaking and the initial outreach took longer than anticipated but we considered it important to engage with as many stakeholders as possible and give all those who wanted to the opportunity to share their views.

By the end of March 2023, we had invited 10,350 connections stakeholders to share their views and more than 250 had responded, providing detailed feedback on their priorities, preferences and expectations. For all these actions, we said that we would use the feedback we received to inform our propositions and communicate any changes to our stakeholders.

Whilst we do not consider the feedback we received requires us to make substantive changes to our current approach, there were certain insights and aspects that we need to consider further. We will be sharing what our stakeholders have told us and how we intend to respond at stakeholder events in the coming weeks and by publishing updated strategies on our website.

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

In our ICE work plans, we clearly defined the actions and outcomes we would deliver and the targets we set that would allow us, Ofgem and our stakeholders to assess our performance.

By the end of March 2023, we had delivered all 11 actions in our 2022/23 ICE work plan and sought feedback from those stakeholders whose comments had generated the actions in the plan.

Our Looking Back report provides evidence to support the delivery of the actions in our 2022/23 ICE work plan and highlights any areas where we think we still have some work to do.

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

Our strategy was to proactively seek feedback to inform our thinking and the development of our ICE plans throughout the course of the year. Where we identified feedback that was suitable for ICE, we engaged with the stakeholder who raised the issue to agree the outcomes and included the action in our plan.

Where improvements could be made or issues resolved through a change to our business as usual practices we acted quickly to deliver the change, to the benefit of our customers and stakeholders.

Our strategy, activities and outputs have been informed by our stakeholders' feedback. The disciplines we put in place to drive our annual ICE plans delivered important insights and enabled us to deliver more than 180 connections service improvement actions during the RIIO-ED1 period.

It is critical that, in the current price control period, we continue to engage with our connections stakeholders and customers. Their feedback drives positive change in our business and helps us to improve the service we offer.



¹² ICE action 1.1 required us to create a new flexible connections webpage and was delivered later than forecast but within the ICE plan year, which was in line with the commitment we made in our 2022/23 ICE submission.

¹³ ICE actions 3.1, 3.2 and 5.1 all required us to engage with a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders and use their feedback to inform our connections engagement strategy and approach to providing pre-application support.

Our Looking Back report

Our Looking Back report provides an opportunity to discuss the service improvement actions we have delivered.

In this section, we explain how we implemented our strategy for engaging with connections stakeholders during the 2022/23 ICE plan year. We describe the activities we undertook to fulfill the commitments we made and share some of what our stakeholders told us about the actions and outcomes we delivered.

Implementing our engagement strategy

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

During the course of the ICE plan year, we engaged with our major works connections stakeholders to understand their expectations in terms of engagement, service and support.

We invited 10,350 stakeholders to provide feedback. More than 250 stakeholders responded, providing detailed feedback on their priorities, preferences and experience of our connections process to date, which gives us a benchmark for future performance.

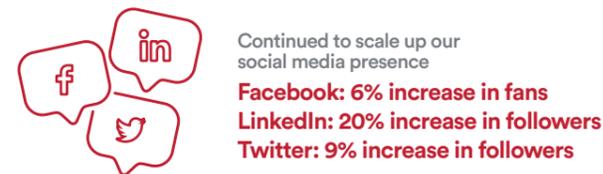
We engaged with stakeholders on the critical issues that are impacting them, including transmission congestion, and our newly established local area energy planning team proactively engaged with stakeholders to support their strategic net zero plans.

We delivered customer forums, workshops and surgeries and new 'connections 101' sessions aimed at stakeholders who are less familiar with our connections process. We identified the activities and initiatives we could scale up from previous years ICE plans and encouraged our stakeholders to tell us what others do well that we could learn from.

Our strategy is always evolving in response to our stakeholders' priorities and what they are telling us about the ways they want to engage and interact with us. We are confident however, that all our ICE plans have been informed and endorsed by our stakeholders and that their insights shaped the actions and outcomes we delivered.

Our year in summary

Period April 2022 - March 2023



ACTION
1.1

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Information on known network constraints



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will publish details of any known constraints on the transmission and distribution networks on our network availability heat maps.	Stakeholders will have better visibility and be able to make more informed choices about how, where and when to connect.	Information published and reviewed on a quarterly basis.	Number of webpage visits. Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We published details of known constraints at grid supply points across our operating area.
- ✓ Stakeholders now have better visibility and can make more informed choices about how and where to connect.

We have been engaging with our stakeholders to help them understand how congestion on the transmission system is impacting our ability to facilitate timely connections to our distribution network.

We want to ensure that anyone considering a connection to our network can make an informed choice and understands the likely impact on their project's lead time and cost.

In August 2022, we began publishing details of known network constraints at grid supply points across our operating area. The information was included as part of the downloadable datasheets¹⁴ that accompany our network availability heat maps.

The information represents our best view of which grid supply points are impacted. We also include information on the likely energisation date and nature of the constraint where this is known.

Although our commitment was to update this information on a quarterly basis, we have reviewed and updated it every month¹⁵.

We remain committed to supporting our stakeholders and to being open and transparent about what we know. We continue to work collaboratively with the ESO, NGET and the wider industry to develop solutions that should improve the situation for our customers.



¹⁴ The datasheet that accompanies our heat maps has been downloaded 24,491 times (cumulative figure). Our generation heat map was visited 3159 times, figures correct as of 30 May 2023.

¹⁵ Except in December 2022 when the updated datasheet was not uploaded, stakeholders were able to request the data during that time.

ACTION
1.2

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Network data requests



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will formalise a process whereby stakeholders can request network data and information.	Stakeholders will receive a more timely and efficient response to requests for data to help them perform their own upfront assessments.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and expectations. New process developed and published.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Number of data requests responded to. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

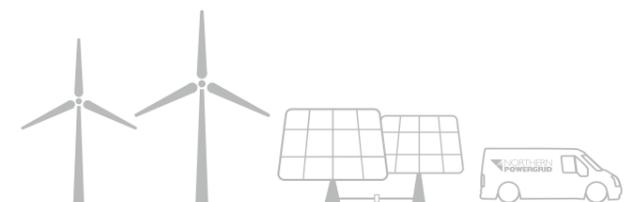
- ✓ We simplified and clarified the process whereby stakeholders can make bespoke data requests and receive a timely response to their enquiries.
- ✓ We established a local area energy planning team who are engaging with stakeholders to support their strategic objectives and data-driven needs.

We understand the importance our stakeholders place on the provision of timely and accurate data to inform local area energy plans and other strategic objectives.

In November 2022, we launched our Open Data Portal¹⁶ which helps stakeholders to understand the type of data we make available. It features a range of published datasets, which are updated regularly, enabling stakeholders to self-serve and access this information. It also features a contact form¹⁷ that stakeholders should use when requesting bespoke datasets. The new contact form simplifies the process for stakeholders making this type of request and means that they can be assured of a timely response to their enquiry.

One of the commitments in our business plan was to establish a team of local energy system planners. Since the start of 2023, our local area energy planning¹⁸ team has been proactively engaging with stakeholders to support their strategic objectives, including supplying bespoke datasets to inform local area energy plans.

We responded to more than 60 requests for data during the course of the ICE plan year and engaged with more than 80 stakeholders at a webinar we held in March to understand their expectations, current requirements and future data needs. In addition, our newly established local area energy planning team has delivered more than 50 individual engagement sessions since the start of this year alone.



¹⁶ Open Data Portal northernpowergrid.opendatasoft.com/pages/home/

¹⁷ Stakeholders can use the Open Data Portal contact form to request bespoke datasets and be assured of a timely response to their enquiry northernpowergrid.opendatasoft.com/pages/contactform/

¹⁸ Contact our local area energy planning (LAEP) team at LAEP@northernpowergrid.com

ACTION 1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Data platforms



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will publish information on different network data sources and platforms we make available, including how to access them.	Stakeholders will know what data is available, in what format and how to access it. Where appropriate, we will also state the frequency with which the data is updated so that stakeholders can be confident the information provided is accurate and up to date.	New webpage developed and published.	Number of webpage visits.	ALL	Complete

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ We developed an Open Data Portal so stakeholders can access data and information about our distribution network in an open and accessible way.

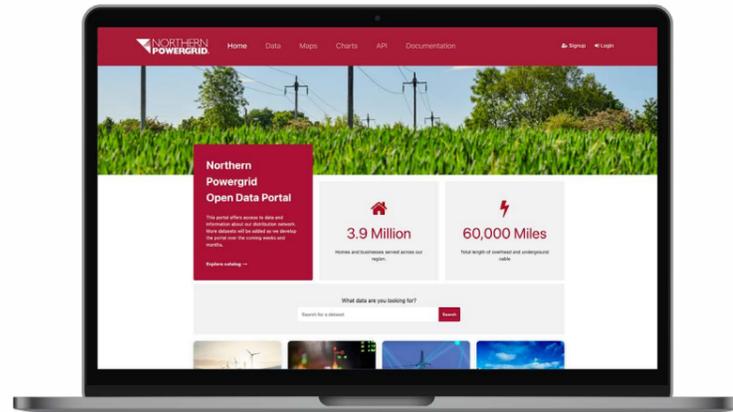
We developed an Open Data Portal which should be the first port of call for anyone looking to understand the type of network data we make available and how to access it.

It features a wealth of information on our distribution network and allows stakeholders to self-serve by accessing a range of published datasets that are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. It also provides a route for stakeholders to make more bespoke data requests.

Since the Open Data Portal was launched in November 2022, it has been visited more than 1,800¹⁹ times.

We are actively seeking feedback from our stakeholders on how they want us to develop the Open Data Portal and the type of network data and information they require.

Visit northernpowergrid.opendatasoft.com/pages/home/



ACTION 1.4

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

EV connections



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will update our guidance for stakeholders seeking EV connections.	Stakeholders seeking connections for EV charging infrastructure will be better informed about our rules and processes, and in particular the circumstances by which they can 'connect and notify' and when to make an application that could incur a connection offer expense.	Guidance updated and published. Webpage updated.	Number of downloads. Number of webpage visits. Stakeholder feedback.	HV LV	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We updated our guidance for stakeholders seeking EV connections.
- ✓ Stakeholders should now be better informed and have clarity on the connections rules and processes for different types of EV charging scenarios.

To provide clarity on our connections process for new EV connections, we updated our EV guide and webpage²⁰.

We reviewed our existing guidance and benchmarked it against the information provided by other DNOs to identify best practice.

We produced an updated guide that explains the connections process for a range of different EV charging scenarios – from domestic charge point installations to on-street and destination charging – and includes key considerations for stakeholders thinking about these types of projects.

The guide provides clarity on the scenarios when our customers can expect to connect and notify and when they may need to make an application to increase the capacity of their electricity supply, which could incur connection offer expenses²¹.

We also included a new section with guidance for fleet managers considering large-scale EV charging infrastructure projects.

The guide was uploaded to our website, where it has been viewed more than 200 times²².

Our EV guide is available on our website at: northernpowergrid.com/downloads/12297



²⁰ Our dedicated EV connections webpage northernpowergrid.com/electric-vehicles was visited 150 times, figure correct of 30 May 2023

²¹ northernpowergrid.com/connection-offer-expenses

²² The updated guide was downloaded 207 times, figure correct as of 30 May 2023

ACTION
2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Network constraints

M DG

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Forecast completion date
We will review our current process and make improvements as necessary, to ensure any stakeholders with proposed or existing connections affected by known constraints on the transmission and distribution networks will receive better and more timely communication.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the likely impact on their project's timescales and cost and be able to engage with us on this important issue.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements. Review our processes and make necessary changes. Commit to a minimum timescale for our interaction with NGESO.	Process reviewed, changes implemented and minimum timescale for interaction with NGESO communicated to stakeholders.	EHV	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✔ We engaged with stakeholders impacted by congestion on the transmission system.
- ✔ We reviewed our processes and made changes so that stakeholders can receive more timely communications and better levels of service.
- ✔ We continue to work collaboratively and seek solutions that will improve the situation for our stakeholders.

The energy system across Great Britain (GB) is becoming increasingly complex, with demand for new connections at both the transmission and distribution level growing at a significant rate.

At the start of the ICE plan year, we made a commitment to engage with stakeholders whose projects may be impacted by congestion on the transmission system, this was a relatively emerging issue for us at that time.

We have been engaging with stakeholders to help them understand the GB-wide transmission issue and the solutions that are being developed at both a national and regional level to address it. We have continued to see interest, applications and acceptances for EHV and HV connections continue to grow however, particularly for generation and storage projects.

We have been working with those customers who are directly impacted, establishing a dedicated team to review our processes and make the changes necessary to ensure they can receive more timely communication and improved levels of service.

We remain committed to supporting our customers and stakeholders and to being open and transparent about what we know. We continue to take a whole-system approach, working collaboratively with the ESO, NGET and the industry to develop and drive through solutions that will deliver improvements for our customers in terms of connections timescales and cost.

Meeting our commitments
Engagement

We said we would engage with our stakeholders. To do this we have:

- established a dedicated project team to review our processes and work with those customers directly impacted, responding to and/or escalating their issues as appropriate;
- engaged with MPs, regional leaders, local authorities and other key stakeholders to help them understand the GB-wide issue and the solutions that are being developed to resolve it and;
- hosted a webinar in March 2023, where stakeholders could engage with us, the ESO and NGET, ask questions and share their experiences.

We will continue to provide opportunities for our stakeholders to engage with us on this important issue, through bilateral discussions, webinars and in-person events held in the coming months. We will seek to include NGET and the ESO in those discussions as appropriate.



Process review and change

To ensure our customers receive more timely and meaningful communication as their project progresses, one of the key process changes we have made, is that we now issue customers with an indicative outcome letter.

The outcome letter is issued after we receive a response from the ESO and before we issue our formal re-offer letter. It provides details of the ESO's assessment and the customer's indicative connection date, capital contributions and associated cancellation charges, allowing them to make a more informed decision about whether to proceed.

Interaction with the ESO

To respond to our stakeholders' feedback on the importance of making timely submissions to the ESO, we made a commitment to review our processes and minimise our timescales for this type of interaction.

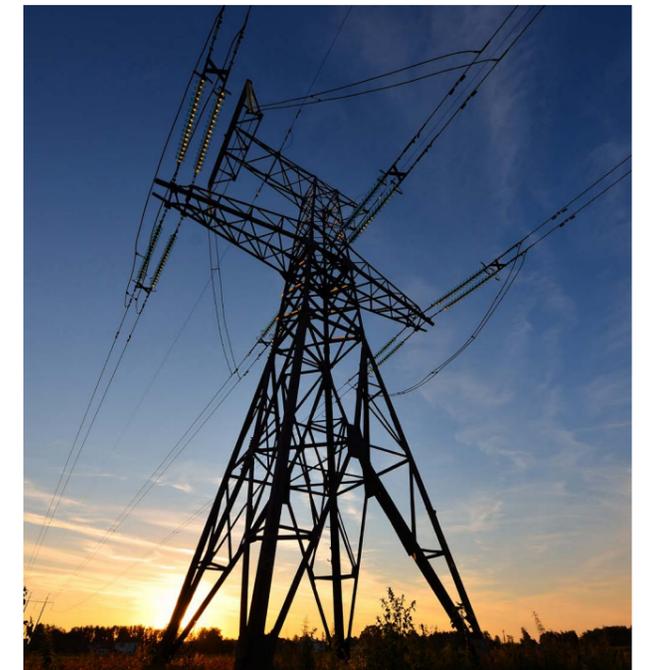
We communicated this commitment to stakeholders who took part in our March webinar, informing them that we are now making project progression and modification applications to the ESO within three months of receiving a customer's validated acceptance and that we will work to reduce this timescale further.

You can watch a recording of our webinar at <https://youtu.be/HeBNgWHd1ZQ>

Our stakeholders said...

“Thanks for the webinar, good to get engagement from NGET and ESO on the NPg call.”

“Thank you for organising the webinar. It was very interesting and informative.”



ACTION
3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Connection engagement



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Forecast completion date
We will work with stakeholders to develop and agree our connections engagement strategy to ensure it meets their needs.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to inform and shape our future engagement strategy.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements. Review our current strategy, learning from best practice and successful initiatives and activities.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Strategy developed and communicated. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We engaged with a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders to understand their priorities, preferences and experience of our connections process.
- ✓ Stakeholders had opportunities to inform our strategy and approach to connections engagement.

Our stakeholders said...

“Engagement with our network operator is important and I was glad that Northern Powergrid reached out to gather feedback from myself and industry colleagues to build an engagement strategy that continues to work for us in the years to come.”

Mark Hooton
Cymarc

We reviewed our strategy to identify the activities and initiatives that worked well and could be scaled up and encouraged our stakeholders to tell us what others do well that we could learn from.

The learning from all these activities has informed our approach to connections stakeholder engagement in the current price control period.

Whilst we still have more to do to communicate the outputs of this activity to our stakeholders, we are confident that the insights they have given will drive improvements in the levels of service and engagement they receive. We will be sharing what our stakeholders have told us and how we are responding at stakeholder events in the coming weeks and through an updated connections engagement strategy that will be published on our website.

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

We engage with our connections stakeholders through a range of different channels including workshops, webinars, customer forums and connections surgeries and are always looking to understand what works well and what we could be doing better.

We want to ensure that all the engagement we deliver is meaningful, inclusive and mutually beneficial.

During the course of the ICE plan year, we engaged with a broad and inclusive of major works connections stakeholders. This was a significant undertaking but when considering our future engagement strategy, we thought it was important to reach out to as many, and as diverse a range of stakeholders as possible.

We invited feedback from 10,350 connections stakeholders. More than 250 responded, providing detailed feedback on their priorities, preferences and experience of our connections process.

We complemented this with proactive discussions with targeted and seldom engaged stakeholder groups to understand their specific areas of interest and need.

ACTION
3.2

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Pre-application support



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will review and formalise our pre-application support and advice proposition.	Stakeholders will receive better upfront advice and support and can explore their options before making an application.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectation and requirements Review and develop our proposition, learning from best practice	Number of stakeholders engaged. Proposition reviewed and communicated. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We engaged with our stakeholders, who gave feedback on their expectations and requirements for pre-application support.
- ✓ Learning from this activity informed our approach and will ensure stakeholders can receive more timely upfront engagement and advice.

Our stakeholders continue to highlight the importance of pre-application support, as it enables them to explore their options and make more informed choices about how and where to connect.

The challenge for us is in being able to balance the demand for upfront engagement with our available resources and the levels of support our stakeholders increasingly expect.

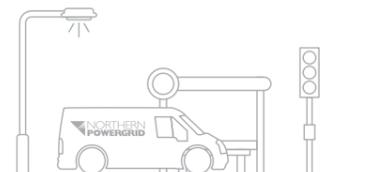
To deliver this action, we engaged with a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders to understand their expectations of pre-application support and advice.

We reviewed our current proposition and benchmarked it against other DNOs, as part of which we asked our stakeholders what others did well that we could learn from.

We included questions in a survey sent to 10,350 connections stakeholders. Of those who responded, more than half said they had received some form of pre-application support within the past 12 months and were satisfied with their experience.²³ Generation customers were the least satisfied group, suggesting we have more to do to meet the expectations of that particular group.

We invited 140 stakeholders who had booked a connections surgery to tell us about their experience and any areas where we could improve. Those who responded were generally positive, stating that our engineers were helpful and knowledgeable but also highlighting issues with the availability and the wait times for surgeries. They also encouraged us to continue to develop our online resources that would enable them to self-serve and perform their own upfront assessments.

Whilst we do not consider the feedback that we received requires us to make any substantive changes to our current approach, there were certain aspects we want to consider further with input from those colleagues who deliver our upfront engagement. We will be sharing what our stakeholders have told us and how we intend to respond at stakeholder events in the coming weeks and by publishing an updated pre-application support proposition on our website.



ACTION 3.3

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Connections 101 sessions



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will host 'connections 101' sessions to introduce stakeholders to our connections business. The sessions will be aimed at stakeholders who are new or unfamiliar with our policies and practices and will explain the end-to-end process and what stakeholders should expect.	Stakeholders will receive a comprehensive introduction and overview of our end-to-end connections process and understand our role and responsibilities and a network operator and connections provider.	Minimum of two 'connections 101' engagement sessions held.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with sessions held.	ALL	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We hosted two dedicated connections 101 sessions in the year.
- ✓ Stakeholders should be better informed and have an improved understanding of our end-to-end connection process.

Our stakeholders said...

“Northern Powergrid met their commitment to deliver an engagement session that would educate and inform our members, having hosted a dedicated session attended by subject matter experts from their team, who answered a range of queries.

In the current economic climate, the production of affordable, climate-friendly food, energy and fibre is more important than ever, and ongoing engagement with Northern Powergrid will be critical for achieving our joint commitments and goals.”

James Copeland
National Farmers Union

We discussed our role and responsibilities as a DNO and other topics that those stakeholders had told us were priorities, including grid capacity, wayleaves and safety. We also provided an overview of the changes brought about by the Access and Forward-Looking Charges Significant Code Review and explained what it could mean for them as connections customers and stakeholders.

We engaged with more than 100²⁴ stakeholders in total. Representatives from both the CLA and the NFU confirmed that their members had provided positive feedback and that all those who responded, said they were satisfied with the session they attended.

To deliver this action, we identified stakeholder groups that we deal with for new connections but may be less familiar with all aspects of our process, policies and practices.

To do this, we looked at the groups who typically approached us with questions or requests for engagement. The stakeholder groups that we identified were house builders and developers, installers of low carbon technologies, local authorities and the agricultural community.

To reach more of these stakeholders, we identified and engaged with their trade and representative bodies. We received interest from the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Countryside Land and Business Association (CLA) who represent the interests of rural landowners and businesses. We engaged with both groups in the run up to the event and invited their members to ask questions and provide feedback so that we could tailor the content of the sessions around their particular areas of interest and need.

We delivered two connections 101 sessions in the ICE plan year. The sessions provided attendees with an overview of our end-to-end connections process, covering upfront support and resources, how to make an application, the different types of connection offers that are available and typical timescales and cost.

ACTION 4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Flexible connections



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will publish information on flexible connections for stakeholders considering this type of arrangement, including any changes necessitated by the Access and Forward-Looking Charges Significant Code Review.	Stakeholders will be better informed and know what to expect when accepting this type of offer. They will know who to contact to discuss a flexible connection and how to make changes to an existing arrangement.	Guidance published. FAQs updated.	Number of webpage visits.	EHV HV	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We created a new flexible connections webpage.
- ✓ Stakeholders are now better informed, they will know how to apply for a flexible connection and what to expect when they do.

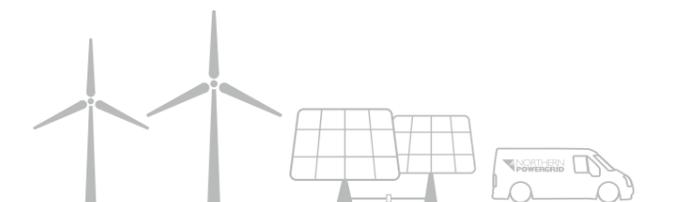
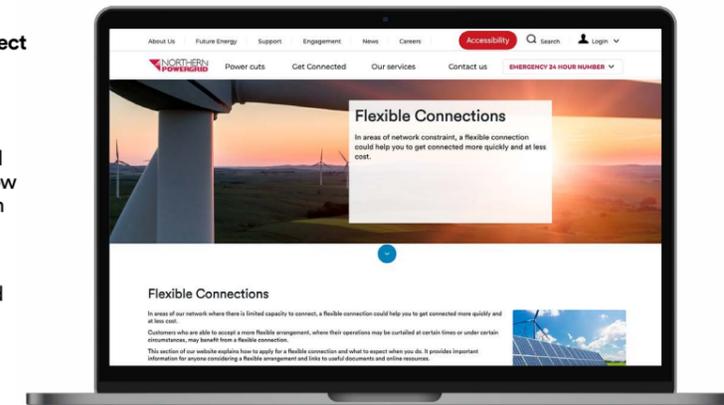
In areas of our network where there is limited capacity to connect, a flexible connection could allow customers to connect ahead of required reinforcement works.

We created a new flexible connections webpage which provides guidance and information for stakeholders who are considering this type of arrangement. It provides answers to frequently asked questions including 'what is a flexible connection?.' It explains how to apply for a flexible connection and how to make changes to an existing arrangement.

It also provides an overview of the changes to network access rights and connections charges brought about by the Access and Forward-Looking Charges Significant Code Review, which we expect to see to driving demand for this type of connection.

The action was delivered later than forecast but still within the ICE plan year. Since its launch in December 2022, the webpage has been visited 10 times²⁵.

Visit northernpowergrid.com/flexible-connections



²⁴ The first session was attended by 27 members of the CLA, the second session was attended by 82 members of the NFU. In total, 109 stakeholders took part in dedicated connections 101 sessions, the content of which was tailored to meet their particular areas of interest and need.

²⁵ Figure correct as of 30 May 2023

ACTION
5.1 **ENABLING COMPETITION**
ICP/IDNO engagement



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will develop and agree our future engagement strategy together with ICPs and IDNOs.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to inform and shape our engagement strategy. They will clearly understand how their feedback drives change in our business and how we can continue to work together to minimise input services, extend the scope of contestable works and promote fair and open competition in connections.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements. Minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions held.	Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with the sessions held. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	Complete

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ We engaged with ICP and IDNO stakeholders to help them understand how their feedback drives positive change in our business.

Our stakeholders said...



“The Competitions in Connections seminar was very well presented and involved good discussions. Furthermore, following feedback that we need to be able to complete self-determinations on works where possible, we’ve been working with the Competition in Connections team on a pilot self-determination process. We were pleased to work with Northern Powergrid to address some of the initial challenges, which delivered solutions that now work for Northern Powergrid and ourselves as an ICP.”

Damien Ireland
Geraghty’s

We hosted two dedicated competition in connections seminars²⁷ in the ICE plan year and all those who responded confirmed they were satisfied with their experience. We asked those who took part to tell us what more we could be doing to engage with them, they prioritised opportunities for senior level interaction and more timely operational updates and this feedback has informed our approach.

To further demonstrate how we are listening to these stakeholders and acting on their feedback, we agreed that we would create an actions register which captures their specific requests and how we have responded. The register is reviewed, updated and circulated to our ICP and IDNO stakeholders on a quarterly basis.

Although we do not consider the feedback we received through our engagement with ICPs and IDNOs requires any substantive changes to our current approach, we will be sharing the insights we received at our next competition in connections seminar, where those attending will be invited to further inform and endorse our strategy.

We believe our strategy for engaging with ICPs and IDNOs is effective and robust.

We have a connections input services team who engage directly with these stakeholders. We host dedicated events and connections surgeries and have an alternative providers register²⁶ on our website with contact details for ICPs who are accredited by us and the National Electricity Registration Scheme, to carry out contestable works.

However, in the current climate, it has never been more important for us to work collaboratively to deliver timely and competitive connections.

Throughout the course of the ICE plan year, we have been engaging with ICPs and IDNOs to understand their expectations and how they want to interact with us going forward.

We invited these stakeholders to provide their feedback on their priorities and preferences via an online survey and in telephone interviews we conducted. When asked about their experience, this particular stakeholder group scored us highly, suggesting they were satisfied with the engagement they have received to date.

²⁶ [northernpowergrid.com/alternative-providers](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/alternative-providers)

²⁷ We hosted two dedicated competition in connections seminars in the ICE plan year, engaging with 49 ICP and IDNO stakeholders in total. When surveyed, all those who responded (100%) said they were satisfied with the engagement session they attended.

ACTION
6.1 **NET ZERO READY**
Network capacity



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will engage with stakeholders and communicate our network investment and development plans, including how our ‘flexibility first’ approach will help more stakeholders connect to our network.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have confidence in our network’s capacity to support their net zero plans.	Engagement session held and plans communicated.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with session held.	ALL	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We hosted a network planning and local area energy planning event.
- ✓ Stakeholders are now better informed and will understand how we are investing in our network to create capacity for new connections and support their net zero plans.

Our region has big decarbonisation plans and a question we are often asked by our stakeholders is whether our distribution network has the capacity required to support their net zero ambitions.

To respond to this feedback, we hosted a network and local area energy planning event in March 2023, where we explained more about our network development strategy and how we decide where to invest in our network to create capacity for new connections.

At the event, we discussed how our ‘flexibility first’ approach can support our region’s net zero ambitions and enable the timely and cost-effective connection of low carbon technologies, generation and storage.

We introduced our local area energy planning team and explained how they can support stakeholders in delivering their strategic objectives and local area energy plans.

We discussed the GB-wide transmission congestion issue and the changes brought about by the Access and Forward-Looking Charges Significant Code Review and what this means for them as connections customers and stakeholders.

36 stakeholders attended the event and when surveyed, all those who responded said they were satisfied with their experience.

✉ The slides that were presented on the day are published here [engage.northernpowergrid.com/events/network-and-local-area-energy-planning-event](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/events/network-and-local-area-energy-planning-event)



