



Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

2019/20 Submission

Contents

03

Foreword

04

What we do

06

An introduction to ICE

08

Meeting the criteria

12

Part 1: Our Looking Forward Report

24

Our 2019/20 ICE work plan

26

2019/20 actions

38

Part 2: Our Looking Back Report

44

Our 2018/19 ICE work plan

47

2018/19 actions

69

Appendix

Foreword

As our region’s distribution network operator (DNO), it’s our job is to run a safe and secure network and keep the power flowing for the people and communities we serve. We deliver new connections and we make changes to existing ones, and if something goes wrong and your power is interrupted, we fix it.

We understand the importance of the job we do. Every new connection we deliver contributes to the economic growth and development of our region by enabling new homes to be built and occupied, new businesses to start trading, new forms of generation to produce power and new providers to offer services to help support the energy system.

Looking forward, we envisage a world where consumers can buy electricity generated by their neighbour’s solar panels more cheaply than from their energy supplier, where batteries kick in during a power cut to keep critical infrastructure running and where homeowners and businesses can generate new income by flexing their energy usage.

This is the world of the smart grid, where we are the region’s distribution system operator (DSO), responsible for the integrity of the system and operation of the wider market and are helping our customers to get best value out of their energy assets.

Clearly, new and connected customers will have an important role to play as we move towards a smarter, more flexible energy system and that’s why we have been proactively seeking their views through mechanisms including Ofgem’s Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE). We want to understand more about our stakeholders’ experience now, and how we can work together to identify the opportunities and challenges ahead.

This is the third year that I’ve been personally involved in delivering our ICE programme and I’m always impressed by the time and effort that our stakeholders

devote to the process. By working together, we have built a robust strategy for consultation and engagement that delivers meaningful results. We are grateful to all our customers and stakeholders who continue to contribute to this process, helping us to shape our service improvement plans and future business priorities.

Feedback from our connections customers and stakeholders has always been the foundation on which we build our service improvement plans. I’m pleased to report therefore that we completed all 22 actions in our 2018/19 work plan within the ICE plan year. These actions, which are discussed in detail in the Looking Back section of this submission, were developed together with our stakeholders and intended to address the emerging issues and existing challenges our connections customers had identified.

Delivering these actions has helped to make the process of applying for a connection from us more straightforward, enabled more effective engagement and extended the provision of information we make available to our customers. These actions also ensured our connections stakeholders were kept informed about the latest technical and commercial developments and could contribute to the conversation as we transition to a DSO.

Although the number of actions in our work plans has decreased year on year, from 72 in 2015/16 to 12 this year, we believe this is evidence that the ICE process is working well and that the actions we have delivered to date have improved our customers experience and the service we offer.

Last year, we hosted a full programme of events, meetings, workshops and webinars, giving our connections stakeholders and customers more opportunities to engage with us than ever before. Our engagement events homed in on the key issues that are affecting the wider energy system like the decarbonisation of heating and transport, while our expert team provided practical ‘on the ground’ support for those who need to get connected now.

We focused on facilitating better conversations so that our customers could explore their options ahead of making a formal application and we’ve been working together to develop new tools that will help them to make their own upfront assessments on the viability of their proposed project.

Finally, we have been thinking about how to deliver more targeted engagement. We’ve found that bringing together complementary stakeholders and groups is beneficial for us and them. Our DG owner operator forum for example, is a platform for generators with assets in our region to meet with our operational experts and tell us how best we can support them.

Continuous improvement is at the core of our business, as we strive to achieve our aim to be the best energy company in serving our customers and delivering sustainable energy solutions. We know we still have work to do but I cannot stress enough how important your feedback is in helping us to reach our goals.

Patrick Erwin

Patrick Erwin
POLICY AND MARKETS DIRECTOR



What we do

At Northern Powergrid it's our job to keep the power flowing for more than 8 million customers across the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

At Northern Powergrid it's our job to keep the power flowing for more than 8 million customers across the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

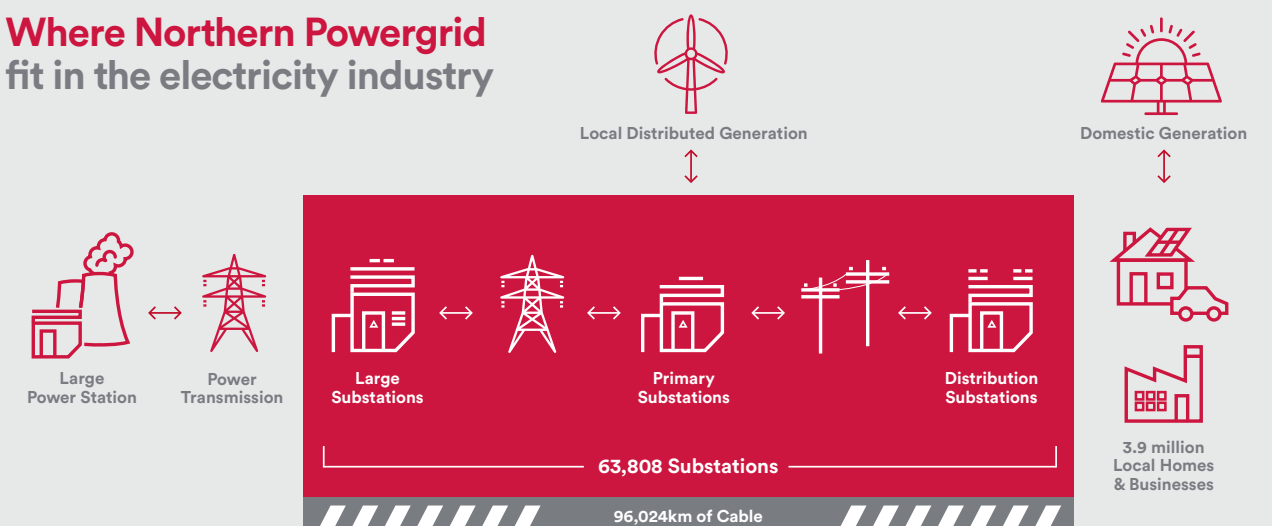
We deliver new electricity connections and if our customers' power supply is ever interrupted as a result of network issues or severe weather conditions, we're there to fix it 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Our network which spans from the Scottish borders to northern Lincolnshire and from the North Sea coast across to the Yorkshire Dales, delivers a safe and secure supply of electricity to 3.9 million homes and businesses. Our dedicated team of more than 2,700 employees are proud of the role we play in powering the lives of the people and communities we serve.



Our new regional structure will enable our team to better serve the local needs of our customers.

Where Northern Powergrid fit in the electricity industry



An introduction to ICE



The purpose

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

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

Ofgem explains that ICE is designed to drive improvements in both the contestable and non-contestable activities that DNOs can provide to 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 (Low Voltage connections of up to four domestic premises).

The aim

The aim of ICE, as outlined in Ofgem’s guidance¹ is to provide network operators with an incentive to deliver good customer service that is associated with competitive markets. This could be by improving the timeliness of connections, extending provision of available information or enhancing overall customer service.

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

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

Table 1: Relevant Market Segments for ICE

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

Service improvements driven by our stakeholders

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

All our work plans are developed together with our connections stakeholders and our service improvement actions are generated from their feedback and requests.

Our ICE submission for 2019/20 consists of two distinct sections: a Looking Forward report and a Looking Back report.

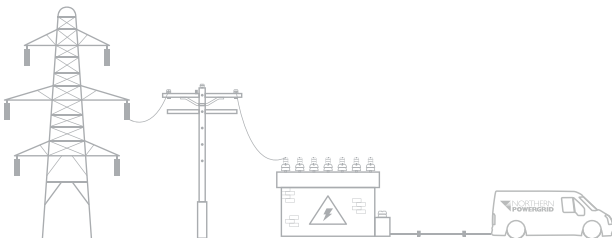
In the Looking Forward report, we describe our strategy for engaging with stakeholders and the robust process we employ when developing our ICE work plans. We focus on the service improvement activities we will deliver in the coming regulatory year and explain how they have been informed and endorsed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

In our Looking Back report, we explain how we implemented our strategy in order to deliver the commitments we made in the 2018/19 ICE plan year. We also share some of what our customers and stakeholders have told us about their experience of working with us and the various activities we have undertaken.



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

Meeting the criteria



Providing a good connection service that aligns with customers’ needs is one of the most important jobs of a DNO.

ICE is designed to drive improvements in the overall connections process and ensure customers continue to receive a high level of service. In its guidance, Ofgem sets out the criteria by which it will assess DNOs’ ICE performance. A penalty can be applied if a DNO is deemed not to have met the minimum requirements. We are confident that, as in previous years, we have met all of the prescribed criteria, as evidenced throughout this submission and summarised below. The passages in bold text are the assessment criteria for ICE as specified by Ofgem.



91% of respondents agreed that we engage with stakeholders and facilitate joint discussions
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019



96% of respondents agreed we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019

The Looking Forward criteria

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

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

Our recent customer survey provides evidence to support this, with 91%² of those who responded to the survey agreeing that we engage with our stakeholders and facilitate joint discussions.

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

We employ a comprehensive, stakeholder-led process when developing our ICE plans that meets Ofgem’s requirements and gives our customers and stakeholders plenty of opportunities to influence our plans. It also forms an important part of our wider programme of stakeholder engagement, helping us to gain customer insight that drives continuous improvement across our business and informs our long-term business priorities and planning process.

Our service improvement plans are designed to address the emerging issues and existing challenges our connections customers are facing. We have set forecast completion dates for each of our actions to ensure we remain on track, but in each case, our commitment is to deliver the action within the 2019/20 ICE plan year.

We have seen the number of actions in our work plan decrease year on year, from 72 in 2015/16 to 12 this year. We believe this provides evidence that the ICE process is working well and of the effectiveness of the service improvements we have delivered to date.

The activities we have undertaken, backed by our robust strategy for stakeholder consultation and engagement, gives us confidence that our work plan addresses those key areas for improvement our stakeholders have identified. Our customers agree, with 96%³ of those responding to our recent survey agreeing that we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities for 2019/20 that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders. However, we will continue to engage with our customers and stakeholders to ensure we are listening and responding to their needs.

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

Guided by Ofgem’s instruction to DNOs to set stretching targets and our stakeholders assertion that we should set targets that will help them to assess the effectiveness of our actions, we set performance metrics and measures of impact and success for all our ICE actions.



Our stakeholders and customers are able to track our progress and assess our effectiveness using the online work plan⁴ we developed, which is updated whenever we close an action and includes links to useful online resources and action outputs.

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

We employ a robust, stakeholder-led strategy when formulating our ICE plans. During the course of the year, we record and respond to all feedback we receive on our connections service. We proactively seek feedback from a range of different sources including our engagement events, our customer surveys and from the interactions of our team and our stakeholders.

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

This year, we recorded and responded to 207 comments from our connections stakeholders and customers, only 4% of which required an action in our 2019/20 ICE work plan. The rest of the feedback we were able to address through other channels.

To ensure our plan was endorsed by a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders, we contacted more than 5,800 connections stakeholders by email to seek their feedback on our proposed work plan via an online survey. Independent market research provider Explain, contacted more than 300 connections customers and ICPs by telephone to seek detailed feedback on our plans and their experience of our connections process.

We also presented our work plan to attendees at our Connections Customer Forum in April 2019, taking them through each of our proposed actions and outcomes in turn then asking them to vote on whether they endorsed our plans. 71%⁵ of those who responded said they did and we are proactively seeking feedback from those who responded ‘no’ or ‘don’t know’ to understand why.

Finally, our activities do not end when we publish our work plan for the year. We continue to engage with our stakeholders and customers and to seek their feedback to inform our thinking, future service improvement plans and business priorities.

² Explain telephone survey, April 2019
³ Explain telephone survey, April 2019

⁴ <https://www.northernpowergrid.com/ice-work-plan/>
⁵ Connections Customer Forum, April 2019



The Looking Back criteria

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

Our ICE submission for 2018/19⁶ featured a detailed Looking Forward section where we described our strategy for engagement and the service improvement actions we were undertaking in the year.

In this, our 2019/20 ICE submission, we report on how well we delivered against those commitments and describe how we have engaged with our connections customers and stakeholders to ensure the improvements we were making met their expectations and addressed the issues they had raised.

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

During the 2018/19 ICE plan year, we hosted numerous events, meetings, workshops and webinars, giving our customers and stakeholders more opportunities to engage with us than ever before.

We facilitated better conversations with our customers and consulted with them on the development of new tools that will enable them to perform their own upfront assessments and in most cases, avoid the costs associated with obtaining a budget estimate from us.

We identified ‘hard to reach’ stakeholders and looked for opportunities for engagement and in response to requests from our generation customers, we established a DG owner operator forum where they can meet with our operational experts on a regular basis and explore challenges and future opportunities together.

In line with our strategy, we recorded and responded to every comment we received on our connections service and this feedback formed the foundation on which we built our 2019/20 ICE Looking Forward work plan. Before finalising that plan, we consulted with our stakeholders to ensure the actions we are proposing would be of benefit to a broad and inclusive range of connections customers and stakeholders and not just the individual or group who had requested the change.

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

In April 2018, we published our ICE work plan for 2018/19, which consisted of 17 service improvement actions. The work plan was developed together with our connections stakeholders and the actions in the work plan were derived from their comments and suggestions. In October 2018, acting on our stakeholders’ feedback, we added a further five actions creating a total of 22 actions for the year.

The actions in our work plan were grouped under six key themes or areas for improvement. These are broadly the areas where our customers 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: Innovation.

We are pleased to report that we completed all 22 actions in our 2018/19 work plan by the deadline of 31 March 2019. Some actions, including our commitment to publish contact details for our team and to engage with stakeholders interested in new EV connections were delivered early, enabling customers to benefit sooner.

We targeted to improve the quality of the email communications our customers receive with action 2.2 in our 2018/19 work plan. This action took longer to deliver than we first anticipated because we had not correctly interpreted the customers request. Once we understood the requirement we acted quickly to deliver the improvement, seven weeks later than forecast, but still within the ICE plan year. We engaged with the customer who had requested the change throughout and that customer confirmed that they were not adversely affected during the delay in delivering our commitment.

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

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

By the end of March 2018, we had delivered all 22 actions in our 2018/19 ICE work plan and sought feedback from the stakeholders and customers whose feedback generated the actions in our plan. This allowed us to close the loop and ensure what we had delivered had met their expectations. The Looking Back section of this submission provides evidence to support the successful delivery of all the actions and outputs in our 2018/19 ICE work plan.

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

In line with our strategy, we proactively seek feedback throughout the course of the ICE plan year to inform our thinking and the development of future service improvement plans. During the 2018/19 ICE plan year, we added a further five actions to our work plan to address specific engagement and operational issues raised by stakeholders during Ofgem’s consultation on ICE.

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

⁶ <https://www.northernpowergrid.com/asset/1/document/4328.pdf>



Our Looking Forward report

In this section:

- 14 Introduction to our Looking Forward report
 - 16 Our strategy for engagement
 - 18 An embedded approach
 - 20 Developing our work plans
 - 22 Our stakeholders support our plans
 - 24 Our 2019/20 ICE work plan
 - 26 Looking Forward to our 2019/20 actions
-

Introduction to our Looking Forward report



Our 2019/20 ICE Looking Forward work plan consists of 12 service improvement actions we are undertaking in the year. Our work plan is endorsed by our connections stakeholders and in each case, we have sought to engage with the individual or individuals who requested the change to ensure we have fully understood their feedback and that the actions and outcomes we are proposing will address their needs.

The actions in this year's ICE plan are intended to target some of the practical application and delivery issues our customers have identified, alongside emerging challenges that are affecting the wider energy system and dominating our thinking. The electrification of transport and development of a charging infrastructure capable of supporting the transition is one of the most immediate challenges and we have an action in our plan to engage with stakeholders and keep them informed about what we are doing to prepare our network. On a more practical level and driven by the increasing number of enquiries we are receiving, we will be developing a guide for customers to help them to navigate the connections process for new and different types of Electric Vehicle (EV) connections.

Building on a commitment we made last year, we will also be publishing a guide for customers with contact details for our commercial, design and delivery teams. It will include routes for escalation for any issues and details of the new regional structure we have put in place to better serve the local needs of our customers.

We understand that the introduction of connection offer expenses, also known as A&D fees, remains an issue for some of our customers. We engaged with stakeholders before, during and after the introduction of these fees to ensure they understood our position, how we had calculated our costs and the support we make available ahead of making a formal application.

We want to reassure stakeholders that although we have not included an action in this years' ICE plan, we continue to contribute to the national debate on A&D fees and will keep them informed of any developments. We are also developing a new tool that will guide users to the most viable Low Voltage (LV) connection option and in most cases, avoid the costs associated with applying for a budget estimate from us.

Responding to feedback from Ofgem's ICE consultation, we are identifying customers who use a third party to procure connections on their behalf. Whether they appoint an agent or use an ICP we want to ensure that these customers have a say on the way we deliver

new connections, both now and in the future. We have already begun work on this action by initiating conversations with utility providers and their agents to better understand their experience of working with us and identify opportunities for efficiencies.

Building on the learning from our DG owner operator forum, we are establishing a dedicated forum for Local Authorities where they can come together to discuss common approaches to emerging connections issues and learn more about our business and who they can contact for help and advice. Those taking part will have the opportunity to shape the content of these sessions and we have already been engaging with Local Authorities representatives from across our region to survey opinion and understand more about the kinds of topics they would want this forum to cover.

Overall, the activities we have undertaken, backed by our robust strategy for stakeholder engagement and consultation, give us the confidence that the actions in our 2019/20 work plan will improve our customers' experience and address the feedback we received from our stakeholders.

However, ongoing engagement is key to the success of the ICE process and we encourage all our customers and stakeholders to continue to contribute to our service improvement plans. It is only through continued dialogue that we can ensure we understand their needs and how best we can support them and to the long-term growth and viability of their businesses.

AT A GLANCE

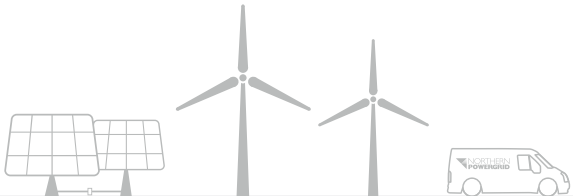


Six themes or areas for improvement

- Theme 1: The Provision of Information
- Theme 2: Improving our application and delivery process
- Theme 3: Improving our communication and engagement
- Theme 4: technical and commercial developments
- Theme 5: Enabling competition
- Theme 6: Innovation



96% of respondents agreed we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019



Our strategy for engagement



“ *Very useful to be updated on current affairs at NPg and a good opportunity to catch up with your engineers. I liked that there was a number of speakers and that each presentation was short and to the point. It was good that a number of key NPg staff were on hand. I would definitely recommend the forum to others in the industry.* ”

Robert Hitchcock, Wirsol Energy Limited
Connections Customer Forum, April 2019

We work hard to understand the views of our connections customers and stakeholders and to continuously improve the service we provide. We have a clearly defined strategy and robust process for engagement that delivers positive outcomes and meaningful results. Our approach is endorsed by our connections stakeholders whose feedback continues to inform our business plans and priorities.

Workshops, forums and events

Our Connections Customer Forums and dedicated ICP Seminars remain the bedrock of our connections engagement strategy and the source of the vast majority of feedback we receive. We continue to refine the content and delivery of these sessions in response to what stakeholders are telling us about the ways they want to engage and interact with us. Last year, we adapted the format of our bi-annual Connections Customer Forums to include practical workshops and allow more time for attendees to sit down with our team and discuss current or planned projects.

We understand that not all of our customers can take time away from their own businesses to attend our events and so we delivered more information by webinar. We also ran dedicated workshops that focus on the areas our customers told us were a priority, such as the anticipated uptake in EVs and the new charging infrastructure required to support this transition.

We made sure our connections stakeholders were kept informed and had opportunities to participate in engagement activities led by other areas of our business, including our Stakeholder Summit and Executive-led roundtable events, feedback from which is being used to drive our RII0-ED27 business planning priorities.

Acting on requests from the generation community we launched a new DG owner operator forum, where generators with assets in our region can discuss operational issues and emerging challenges with our team. Learning from this forum has informed our thinking on more targeted engagement events and we have found that bringing together groups of likeminded stakeholders and individuals is beneficial for us and them. It enables them to understand more about our business and us to understand their specific needs and how best we can support them. We look

forward to continuing to grow the membership of this forum and will be contacting generators with assets in our region, along with national trade associations and their members who we think could benefit, to invite them to take part.

Building on the learning from our DG owner operator forum, we have made a commitment in our 2019/20 ICE plan to establish a dedicated Local Authority forum where these stakeholders can come together to explore common approaches to emerging connection issues. Before finalising this commitment we contacted Local Authority representatives from across our region to seek their views and understand what they would want to achieve from this type of forum. The response was positive and their feedback is helping us to shape the content of the first session which is targeted for summer 2019.

Access to our experts

We have been focusing on delivering more upfront engagement and facilitating better conversations with our customers. Our monthly connections customer and ICPs surgeries continue to be well utilised and in line with one of the commitments in this years’ work plan, we will be talking to those who regularly take part in our surgeries to understand how we can improve their experience. We will also be trialling virtual surgeries for those customers who find it difficult to travel to our offices due to the distance or are time constrained due to their own business priorities.

In response to customer requests, we also published the telephone numbers of key contacts from our commercial, design, delivery and Competition in Connections (CiC) team on our website so that our customers always know who to contact to discuss their connection. If a face-to-face meeting or site visit is required, this can also be requested.

User experience driving change

We provide a suite of tools designed to help our customers perform their own upfront assessments and understand the viability of their proposed project before making a formal application. During the 2019/20 ICE plan year, we will be adding to this with the launch of our new LV budget estimating tool and have been engaging with stakeholders, in particular Local Authorities, to preview this tool and seek feedback to help shape the final output.

We will also be engaging with customers about our network availability heat maps and delivering the training that has been requested by some users to help them better understand the functionality and information available. We will be seeking feedback during these sessions on users’ experiences and any future developments they would like to see.

Continually striving to improve our approach

We continue to develop our strategy and approach to engagement in response to what our stakeholders are telling us. We give our customers and stakeholders plenty of opportunities to give us feedback at the events we host, during the conversations we facilitate and as part of the surveys of customer satisfaction we conduct. However, we are always looking for opportunities to do more and to do things better.

Extending the reach of our engagement activities, particularly with hard to reach stakeholders and those who choose to interact with us through a third party is a key area of focus for 2019/20. Increasing our social media presence, more frequent and targeted email communications and more webinars are all things our stakeholders have told us we should consider and we will continue to evolve and refine our approach in line with their suggestions.

⁷ RII0-2 (Revenue=Incentives+Innovation+Outputs) will be the next price controls for the network companies running the gas and electricity transmission and distribution networks: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/network-regulation-riio-model/network-price-controls-2021-riio-2/what-riio-2-price-control>

An embedded approach

We operate a robust and effective programme of connections engagement that contributes to our overarching strategy for stakeholder relations.

“ Just a quick thank you for taking the time yesterday to explain in more detail NPG’s CiC processes. It helped my understanding so hopefully future projects should go a little smoother. ”

Trevor Lowen , Contracts Governance Manager
Morrisons Utility Services

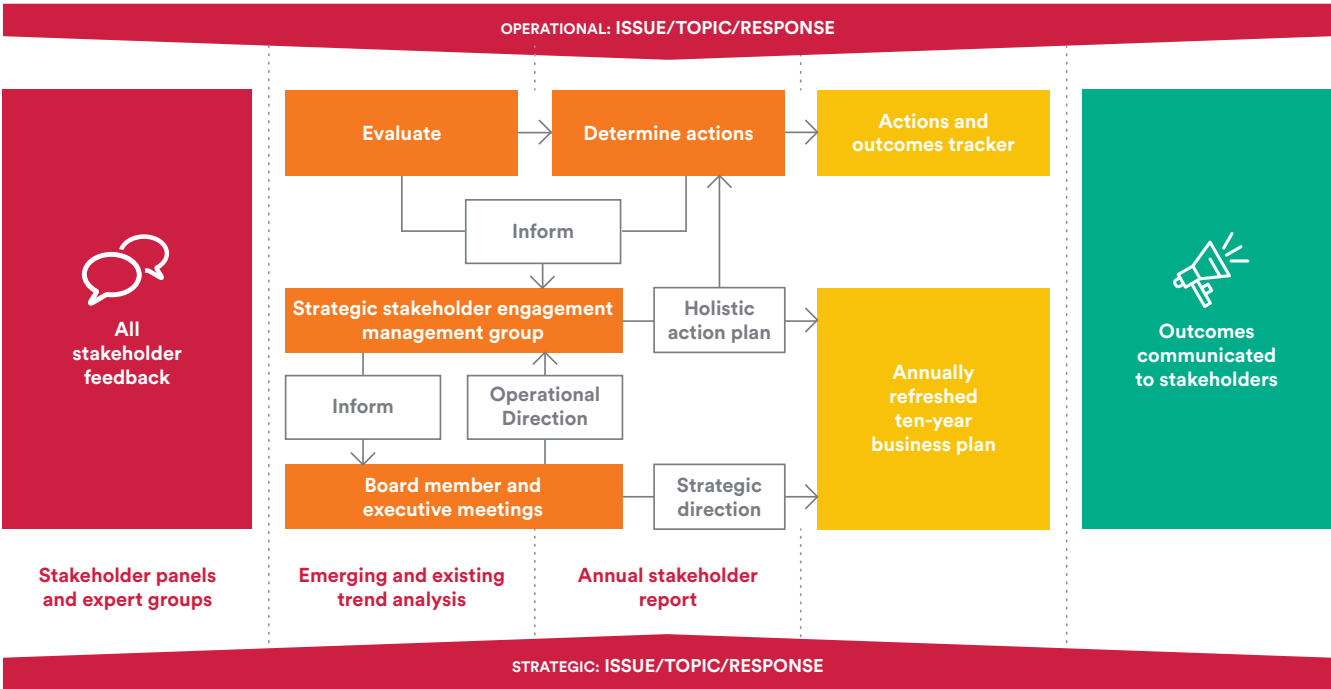
Feedback from our connections customers and stakeholders that is captured for ICE is also fed into our wider stakeholder engagement strategy via established reporting channels including our monthly Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Management Group.

Led by our Policy and Markets Director, each area of our business is required to develop an annual strategic engagement plan and report on progress against that plan each month. This group is helping to raise awareness of engagement activities taking place across our business and to identify any areas of overlap or potential for collaborative working. It also underlines the importance that we place on effective stakeholder engagement.

Membership of our Stakeholder Panel has grown again in the year. This group of critical friends provides expert challenge on our strategic business priorities and helps sets the agenda for our future direction.

In 2019, we launched a series of Executive-led roundtables focusing on key emerging energy issues. Stakeholders taking part brought valuable insight and worked together with our senior team to consider solutions and identify next steps. We are also working on the formation of our RIIO-ED2 Customer Engagement Group which will provide expert challenge and drive us to be as ambitious as possible when formulating our future plans.

Our approach to stakeholder engagement continues to align with the principles of the Stakeholder Engagement Standard Audit (AA 1000) against which we are assessed annually.



Developing our work plans

When developing our work plans, we follow the same stakeholder-led strategy and process that has proved successful in previous ICE plan years.

We proactively gather feedback throughout the course of the year from a range of different sources including our engagement events, customer satisfaction surveys and the interactions between our team and our stakeholders. All the feedback we receive is logged and acted upon as appropriate, whether that requires contact from one of our team, a change to our BAU practices or a more significant improvement delivered through ICE. Our stakeholder comments log is the foundation on which we build our annual ICE work plans.

When formulating our 2019/20 ICE Looking Forward work plan, we collated and carefully considered 207 comments received from connections stakeholders and customers; only 4% of which required an action in our work plan⁸. The majority of feedback we received did not need to be addressed through the ICE process for the following reasons:

- the issue could be addressed through contact from one of our team or a change to BAU;
- the comment related to a non-connections issue or was specific to the individuals particular connection project;
- some of the feedback we received was a positive endorsement of our engagement activities or the service we provide; or

the comment related to new technological or commercial development where we maintain a watching brief.

A small number of the comments related to new technological developments, new commercial arrangements or emerging technologies our customers want to connect. We maintain a watching brief and will engage with the stakeholders who raised these issues to agree how best and when to respond.

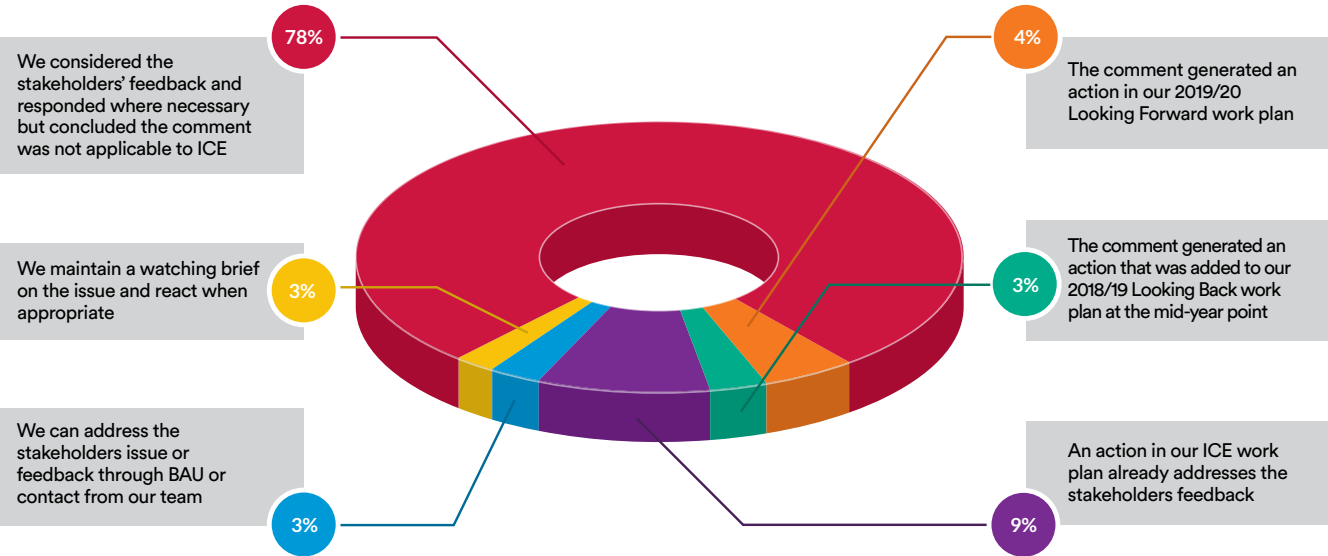
Where we think a stakeholder's feedback is best addressed through ICE, we will seek to engage with the individual or group who provided it to ensure we have understood their comments and that the activity and outcomes we are proposing will fully address their needs.

Our work plan proposal is then reviewed by senior leaders and by our Executive Team. In this way, accountability for the delivery of our ICE actions is shared across our business.

We are confident that the robust, tried and tested process we employ when forming our ICE work plans, delivers the meaningful outcomes our stakeholders expect and our customers require.

Our Looking Forward work plan

We recorded and responded to 207 comments during the course of the ICE plan year. This feedback was the foundation on which we build our 2019/20 ICE Looking Forward work plan.



⁸ We record all feedback we receive on our service in a log of stakeholder comments. We record the stakeholder's comment as verbatim feedback, where that feedback originated from, our interpretation of the issue, our next steps and any interactions that have taken place.

We employ a robust, stakeholder-driven strategy when formulating our ICE work plans, consisting of five key stages.

Stage 1

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

Stage 2

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

Stage 3

We create a work plan proposal which is then reviewed by our senior team and Executive Directors who consider the impact, resources required and whether the outcome is achievable in the ICE plan year. Each action is assigned to an Executive sponsor, embedding the responsibility for the delivery of our ICE plans with senior leaders from across our business. Accountable Directors will then assign a lead from their team who is responsible for delivery of the action.

Stage 4

We engage with the stakeholders whose feedback has generated actions in our work plan to ensure we have understood their comments and the activities and outcomes we are proposing will address their needs. We then consult with stakeholders to ensure the improvement we are proposing will benefit a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders and not just the individual or groups requesting the change.

Stage 5

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



Our stakeholders support our plans

When developing our ICE plans we consult with stakeholders to ensure the activities and outcomes we are proposing will benefit a broad and inclusive range of connections customers and stakeholders and not just the individual or group requesting the change.

We endeavour to consult with as many of them as possible to ensure that everyone who wants to has the opportunity to contribute to our service improvement plans.

When developing our 2019/20 ICE Looking Forward work plan, we contacted more than 5,800 connections stakeholders by email to seek their feedback on our proposals via an online survey.

We commissioned independent market research provider Explain to contact more than 300 metered, unmetered and generation customers and ICPs to seek their detailed feedback on our plans and their experience of working with us.

We also presented our proposed work plan to 45 attendees at our Connections Customer Forum in April 2019. We took them through each of our proposed actions and outcomes and asked them to vote on whether they endorsed our plans. The results of this activity are presented on the opposite page. We encouraged those who voted 'no' or 'don't know' to talk to us during or after the forum to help us understand why and what more they thought we could be doing.

Feedback



>5,800

stakeholders contacted by email to seek feedback on our plans



>300

customers surveyed by telephone



45

Connections Customer Forum attendees asked to vote on whether they would endorse our plans.



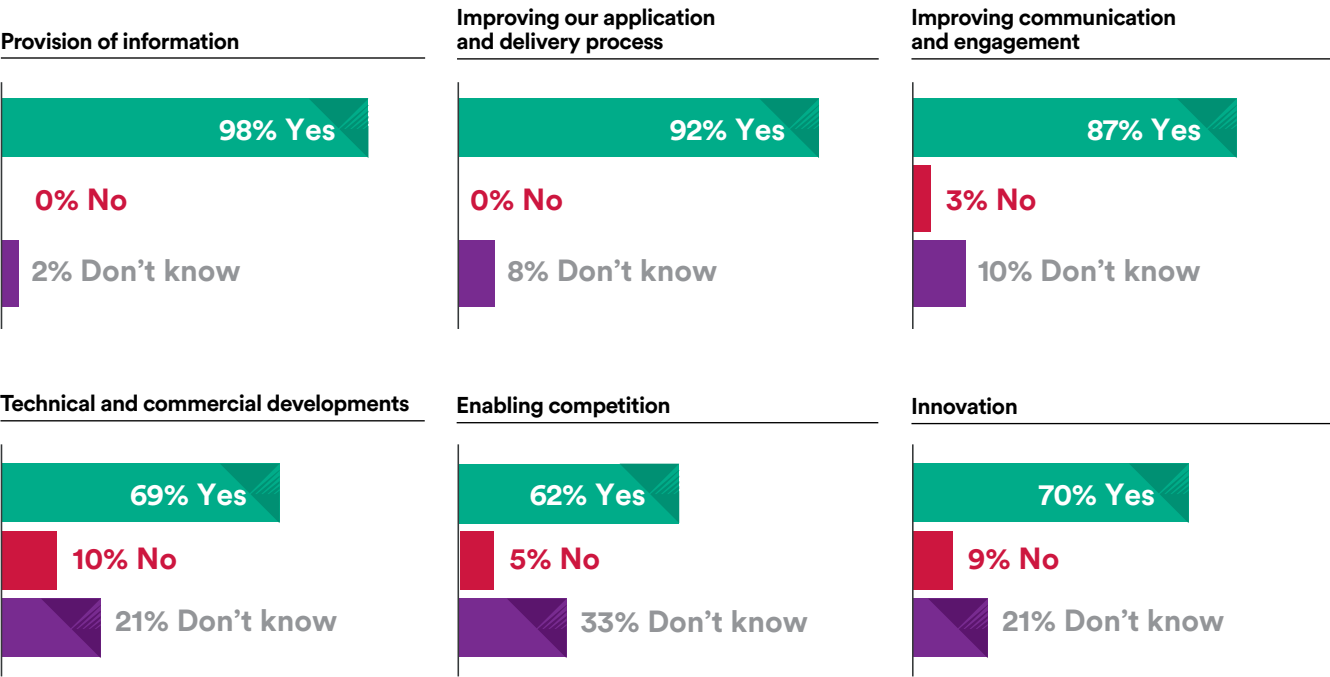
96%⁹ of respondents agreed we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders.

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019



We asked attendees at our Connections Customer Forum in April 2019

“ Do you endorse these actions and agree they would improve the connections service Northern Powergrid provides? ”



Source: Voting at our Connections Customer Forum

⁹ Explain telephone survey, April 2019.

2019/20 ICE LOOKING FORWARD WORK PLAN

[illegible]

ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO				Q2 2018			Q3 2018			Q4 2018			Q1 2019			MORE INFO
										Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
3.2 We will engage with stakeholders to understand what we could do to improve their connections surgery experience.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to give feedback and help shape our proposition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with stakeholders to seek their feedback. Review how we promote and deliver our connections surgeries and make improvements if necessary. Trial 'virtual' surgeries for customers who find it difficult to attend our offices. Introduce a new process to survey satisfaction of stakeholders attending our surgeries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of customers and ICPs who attended our connections surgeries identified and their feedback sought. Number of virtual surgeries trialled. New satisfaction survey introduced. 	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	◇												PAGE 32
3.3 We will deliver a series of connections forums aimed at Local Authorities where they can come together to discuss emerging connections issues and access specialist advice.	Local Authorities will have a forum where they can explore common approaches to emerging connections topics. They will have a better understanding of how to engage with us and have access to specialist advice and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three Local Authority forums delivered in the 2019/20 ICE plan year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Local Authority stakeholders taking part and feedback from attendees. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the sessions held. 	LV	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	◇												PAGE 33
4.1 We will engage with stakeholders to inform them about the steps that are being taken to facilitate the roll-out of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in our region.	Stakeholders will have a greater understanding of what we are doing to prepare for the expected growth in EVs. They will have a platform to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead and the actions we are taking to accommodate the electrification of transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two dedicated engagement sessions delivered in the 2019/20 ICE plan year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of stakeholders attending. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the sessions held. 	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	◇												PAGE 34
4.2 We will provide updates on developments in the Statement of Works process and progress of the Appendix G trials.	Stakeholders will be better informed about how we manage new connections that are affected by the Transmission network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefings held at our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates delivered. Number of stakeholders engaged. 	EHV HV	ON TRACK	M		DG		◇												PAGE 35
5.1 We will develop a new process that will allow accredited ICPs to undertake street lighting overhead pole transfers as contestable works.	The new process will allow accredited ICPs to undertake this work, extending the scope of the work they can offer to unmetered clients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New process developed and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application forms updated to include unmetered overhead transfers. ICP activity post-implementation. 	LV	ON TRACK		UM		ICP	◇												PAGE 36
6.1 We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we transition to a Distribution System Operator (DSO).	Stakeholders will be involved as we transition to a DSO. They will be able to inform our strategy and approach and be kept informed about opportunities arising, including the provision of flexibility services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two dedicated engagement sessions held in the 2019/20 ICE plan year. Stakeholders will have opportunities to provide feedback and help shape our DSO transition plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of stakeholders engaged. Stakeholder feedback. 	ALL	ON TRACK	M	UM	DG	ICP	◇												PAGE 37

KEY: METERED DEMAND CUSTOMERS UNMETERED CUSTOMERS DISTRIBUTED GENERATION CUSTOMERS INDEPENDENT CONNECTIONS PROVIDERS


◇ ACTION STARTS OUR FORECAST TIMESCALE FOR COMPLETION ◆ FORECAST COMPLETION DATE ◆ ACTUAL COMPLETION DATE

ACTION
1.1

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

New Electric Vehicles (EV) connection guide

M UM ICP


Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will develop and publish a new Electric Vehicle (EV) connections guide. We will also review the EV information that is currently available on our website and make updates and improvements if required.	Stakeholders will have a useful guide on how to apply for different types of EV connections and access to better online information.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their requirements. Develop and publish a new EV connections guide. Review the information available on our website and make improvements if required. Add an EV connections FAQ section to our website.	Number of guides issued or downloaded. Website information reviewed and improvements implemented if required. Stakeholder feedback.	 31/12/19

ACTION
1.2

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

New Safedig system

M DG UM ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will inform stakeholders about the launch of our new Safedig web page and provide briefings and training for users.	Stakeholders will be better informed about our new Safedig system and its benefits and have access to an automated and more user-friendly system.	Issue a communication to Safedig users regarding the launch of the new webpage. Hold briefings on our new Safedig system at our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars. Hold a 'how to' training session on the new Safedig system.	Number of users registering to use the new Safedig system. Number of stakeholders attending our briefings and training sessions. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with our training sessions.	 31/12/19

Our customers said...

“ ”

This [invite to our EV event] is extremely timely for us as I've only just this morning submitted three applications to NPg for some EV connections in our car parks. My early thoughts are that your website could be made clearer on how to apply for a new EV connection.

Craig Nattress, Electric Vehicle Charging Point Project Officer
Rydale District Council via email

“ ”

I am working on EV charging strategy for a number of Local Authorities. Happy to support your efforts on this action. Please note, not all EV connections will be at a premises e.g. no MPAN or on the high street.

Ian Goodwin, Consultant
Connections Customer Forum, April 2019

The UK energy system is in the midst of a significant transformation and the electrification of heating and transport forms an important part of these wider changes.

EVs in particular, have a significant role to play in decarbonising transport, reducing carbon emissions and helping the UK to achieve its climate change goals.

The uptake in EVs and development of a charging infrastructure capable of supporting the transition is one of the most immediate challenges facing our energy system. As a network operator, we have a responsibility to manage the impact of EVs on our network and help consumers to identify the opportunities and challenges ahead.

We are already seeing a significant increase in the number of enquiries we are receiving for new and different types of EV connections and our team is working hard

to help customers understand the technical parameters and identify sites for new EV connections.

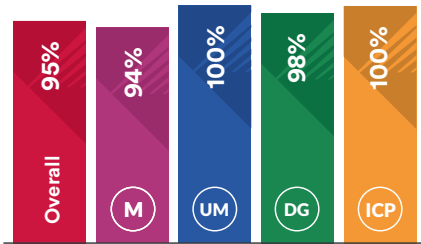
We remain committed to ensuring the process of obtaining a new connection from us is as straightforward as possible. We introduced a new fast-track process for EVs and heat pumps and will be engaging with customers as we embed this new way of working to understand their experience and inform our application processes.

We have made a commitment to develop a new EV connections guide and while being conscious that there is not a 'one size fits all approach', our aim is to provide a useful reference that will help customers to navigate through the connections process and signpost the help and support available.

Importantly, we want our EV stakeholders to help us shape the content of this guide

and so we will be engaging with them to understand their views and the kind of information they require.

Alongside this, we will be reviewing the information that is currently available on our website and making updates as appropriate. We will also be adding a new frequently asked questions section to our website on EVs.



New Electric Vehicles (EV) connection guide

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019

Companies and individuals who need to work safely around our assets require information on where electricity cables are located, particularly those looking to complete construction or development work that requires digging into the ground.

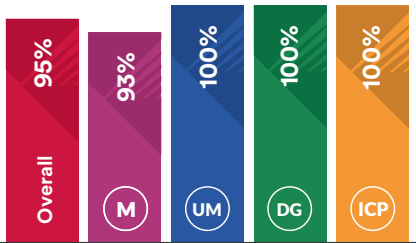
Previously, they had to request this information from us before starting work. We have been working on making this process quicker and more efficient by developing a new and more user-friendly system.

Our new Safedig system brings together our two legacy processes for the Northeast and Yorkshire into one automated and easy-to-use system that is compatible with all modern web browsers. It allows users to select the area of our network they are interested in and then download the asset data, usually within minutes.

The new system went live in April 2019 and we are already making good progress on this action. We have contacted all users of the old legacy system with an invite to register to use the new Safedig. We also held our first briefing at our Connections Customer Forum which was attended by 39 stakeholders.

We are now focusing on rolling out Safedig more widely and on communicating the benefits. We will be holding further briefings and hosting a dedicated training session that will include practical demonstrations on how to use Safedig.

You can register to use our new Safedig system at <https://myservices.northernpowergrid.com/safedig/login.cfm> and for details of forthcoming briefings and training events please email yourpowergrid@northernpowergrid.com



New Safedig system

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019



ACTION

1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION


Guide to key connections contacts

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will produce a new guide for customers with contact details for our connections team.	Customers will have access to a useful guide that tells them who to contact about new connections.	Develop and publish guide.	Number of guides issued or downloaded. Stakeholder feedback.	 31/12/19

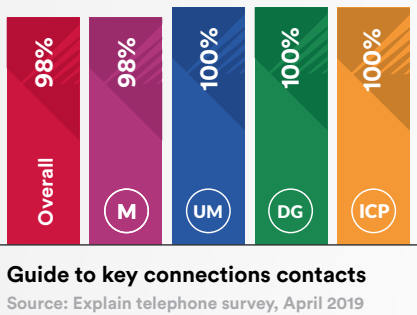
Our customers said...

“

»

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

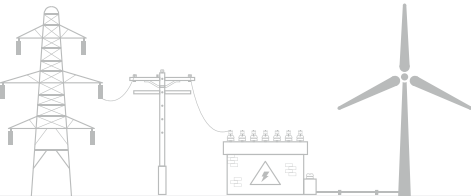
Anonymous
Explain telephone survey, April 2019



One of the commitments we made in last years' ICE plan was to publish the contact details of our connections engineers on our website. Our customers told us this was important and would help them to identify the right member of our team to connect with.

Building on this, we have made a commitment to publish a new guide for customers with contact details for our commercial, design and delivery engineers and our Competition in Connections (CiC) team. It will contain information on routes for escalation and details of the new regional structure we are putting in place to better serve the local needs of our customers.

This action will make our connections experts even more accessible and underlines our commitment to continually improve our customers' experience and the levels of service we provide.



ACTION


1.4

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Training on network availability heat maps

M

DG

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will deliver training on our network availability heat maps for users.	Stakeholders will be better informed about how to use our heat maps and the network information available. They will have opportunities to provide feedback and help inform any future developments.	Deliver a heat map training webinar. Create a 'how to' guide for heat map users.	Number of users registering for heat map training webinar. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with our training sessions. 'How to' guide developed and published.	 31/12/19

Our network availability heat maps are part of a suite of online tools that we make available to help our customers to form their own upfront assessments. These are the same tools used by our own design engineers.

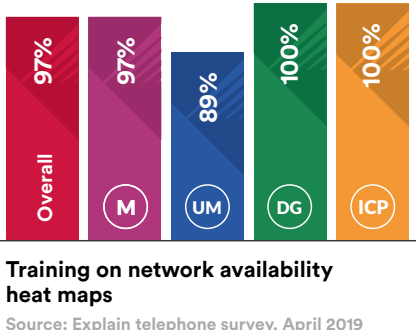
Our generation availability heat map provides easy to understand information on our network's capability to connect large-scale generation at Extra High Voltage (EHV) and High Voltage (HV). The demand availability heat map provides data on the network's capability to connect large-scale developments to major substations.

We were the first DNO to launch an interactive heat map and make this level of detailed network and planning information available to customers. Our heat maps help our customers to understand where

there is high, medium and low capacity to connect to our network and this is illustrated through a red, amber and green traffic light system. The data is refreshed every month to ensure users have the most accurate and up-to-date information.

We want to make sure that our customers can get as much value as possible from the tools we make available and so our commitment is to ensure users will be better informed about how to use our heat maps and the network information available.

We will also be actively seeking feedback from users on our heat maps functionality and usability to inform our thinking and any future developments.




ACTION
2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

New Low Voltage (LV) budget estimating tool

M DG UM ICP


Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will develop and deploy a new Low Voltage (LV) self-serve budget estimating tool.	Users will have access to a new automated tool that allows them to self-serve and generate their own LV budget estimates.	New tool developed and deployed.	Number of customers self-serving and using the new tool. Stakeholder feedback.	 31/03/20

ACTION
3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Customers who use a third party to procure connections

M DG UM

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will engage with stakeholders who use a contractor to procure multiple connections and seek feedback from those stakeholders on our service.	Customers who use a contractor to procure multiple connections on their behalf will have the opportunity to give feedback and help shape and develop our service improvement plans.	Identify customers who use a third party to procure their connections. Contact identified customers to seek feedback on our service.	Number of customers identified as using a third party contractor to procure multiple connections. Stakeholder feedback.	 31/10/19

Our customers said...

“ ”

The budget estimating tool looks very promising. If a user acceptance testing phase happens prior to the Jan 2020 release. I'd be keen to understand its application in line with SDPoC.

Simon Dawson
GTC

“ ”

Connections process is carried out by others in my organisation who are particularly keen for the new LV budget estimating tool to go live.

Joe Dottridge,
JN Bentley
Contractor for
Yorkshire Water

“ ”

The ability to generate budget estimates would greatly speed up a lot of processes so this would be very useful.

Anonymous
Explain telephone survey

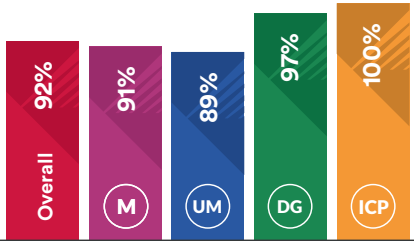
We remain committed to helping our customers understand the viability of their proposed connection, both in terms of network availability and cost and to extending the provision of information we make available to customers.

We already provide a suite of online tools designed to help our customers form their own upfront assessments, but we have pledged to take this further by developing a new LV budget estimating tool.

Once deployed, this new tool will enable customers to create their own budget estimates and guide them towards the most cost-effective and viable connection option; potentially within minutes.

We have already been engaging with stakeholders whilst developing this new resource, in particular with representatives from Local Authorities who have told us they will use LV budget estimating tool to identify the most viable locations for new EV connections.

Our aim is to launch the new tool in this ICE plan year and we will be engaging with stakeholders throughout its continued development and deployment to keep them informed.



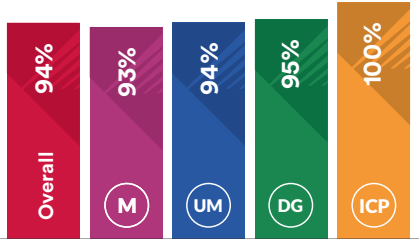
New Low Voltage (LV) budget estimating tool

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019

Learning from our experience with Openreach and in response to feedback¹⁰ from Ofgem directed at all DNOs, we have been thinking about how best to engage with customers who choose to interact with us through a third party.

We want to ensure that whether customers use an agent or ICP to procure connections on their behalf or make their own applications, all of our customers have opportunities to contribute to our service improvement plans and a say in how we deliver connections, both now and in the future.

With this in mind, we have already begun work on identifying customers who fall into this category and seeking feedback from them and their agents on their experience of working with us. Opening up more dialogue with these customers will create opportunities for efficiency and improvements and help us to better understand their short-term and long-term goals.



Customers who use a third party to procure their connections

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019



¹⁰ Outcome of our assessment under the 2018 RIIO-ED1 Incentive on Connections Engagement https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/system/files/docs/2018/10/ice_public_notice_2018.pdf

ACTION

3.2

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT


Connections surgeries

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will engage with stakeholders to understand what we could do to improve their connections surgery experience.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to give feedback and help shape our proposition.	Engage with stakeholders to seek their feedback. Review how we promote and deliver our connections surgeries and make improvements if necessary. Trial 'virtual' surgeries for customers who find it difficult to attend our offices. Introduce a new process to survey satisfaction of stakeholders attending our surgeries.	Number of customers and ICPs who attended our connections surgeries identified and their feedback sought. Number of virtual surgeries trialled. New satisfaction survey introduced.	 31/12/19

Our customer said...

“

”

The idea of virtual surgeries is brilliant. I work in the Midlands but have responsibility for sites that fall within the Northern Powergrid remit. This would make progressing connections projects a lot easier and would help to get buy in from our own internal stakeholders.

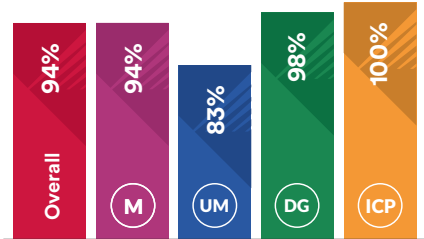
Anonymous
Explain telephone survey

Our monthly connections surgeries are an important part of our overall engagement strategy. They give customers and ICPs an opportunity to sit down with our design and commercial engineers and discuss any current or planned projects. We were the first DNO to introduce the concept back in 2011 and they continue to be well utilised, with our team delivering a total of 72 surgery sessions last year.

Our surgeries are bookable via our website¹¹ and take place at our offices in the Northeast and Yorkshire. However, in line with our commitment to continuous improvement, we are looking at ways in which we can refresh the format and improve the experience for those taking part.

One example is by changing the need to attend in person. We know that many people may find it difficult to travel to our offices because of the distance or their own business commitments and so we will be trialling 'virtual' surgeries.

We will review how we promote and deliver our surgeries and make improvements as necessary. We will be approaching customers and ICPs who have made use of this service to ask them what worked well and about any areas where we could improve. We will also introduce a new process to survey satisfaction of those attending and will be using this as a benchmark for customer satisfaction and continuous improvement going forward.



Connections surgeries
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019

ACTION

3.3

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT


Local Authority engagement forums

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will deliver a series of connections forums aimed at Local Authorities where they can come together to discuss emerging connections issues and access specialist advice.	Local Authorities will have a forum where they can explore common approaches to emerging connections topics. They will have a better understanding of how to engage with us and have access to specialist advice and support.	Three Local Authority forums delivered in the 2019/20 ICE plan year.	Number of Local Authority stakeholders taking part and feedback from attendees. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the sessions held.	 31/03/20

Local Authority stakeholders said...

“

”

I've been asked for my opinion and I support the idea of more frequent, targeted local authority forums, for the following reasons:

It was useful to make contact with representatives of NPg and hear their views/opinions on EV charging.

Holding these types of forums helps to make me more engaged than I would be if I received the same sort of information in an email or letter.

Jamie Rossi-Stephenson
Calderdale Council

We held a workshop in October last year and invited Local Authority representatives responsible for developing clean air strategies or who had a job role that meant they would have a particular interest in EVs to take part.

Feedback from our these stakeholders was that the workshop was useful but that we had covered a wide range of topics and they asked if we could provide more information specific to them, such as examples of what other Local Authorities are doing to encourage greater uptake of EVs.

With this in mind, we said we would organise forums specifically for Local Authorities, where they can come together to explore common approaches to emerging connections issues and access specialist

advice. We have made a commitment to deliver three of these forums during the 2019/20 ICE plan year.

We have been working closely with Local Authorities and that has allowed us to do much of the preparatory work required to deliver this action. We have already approached Local Authority representatives to see if they thought this forum would be valuable and gave them opportunities to help shape the content and delivery of these sessions.

We have now begun to shape the agenda for our first session in line with the feedback we received. Topics including the electrification of heating and transport; network capacity and our future infrastructure and investment programmes will all be on the agenda at our first event.

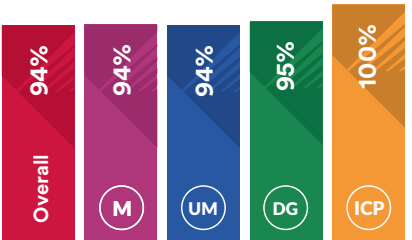
“

”

I've been asked for my opinion and I support the idea of a targeted Local Authority forum because Local Authorities are constantly making decisions about infrastructure in their local area and it would be very beneficial to know more about how Northern Powergrid expect future energy demands to shape out.

Patrick Chisholm
Darlington Borough Council

These dedicated forums will build on the strong relationships we have already established with Local Authorities and will help us to understand how best we can support them going forward.



Local Authority engagement forums
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019

¹¹ <https://www.northernpowergrid.com/customer-events-and-surgeries>

ACTION

4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS


Next steps to support uptake in Electric Vehicles (EVs)

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will engage with stakeholders to inform them about the steps that are being taken to facilitate the roll-out of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in our region.	Stakeholders will have a greater understanding of what we are doing to prepare for the expected growth in EVs. They will have a platform to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead and the actions we are taking to accommodate the electrification of transport.	Two dedicated engagement sessions delivered in the 2019/20 ICE plan year.	Number of stakeholders attending. Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the sessions held.	 28/02/20

Helping to facilitate and support the UK's transition to a low carbon economy, whilst ensuring the smarter networks of the future are resilient, flexible and affordable for all, is a key area of focus and one which is dominating our current thinking.

The electrification of heating and transport forms a significant part of these wider changes and EVs in particular have an important role to play in helping to decarbonise transport and achieve climate change goals.

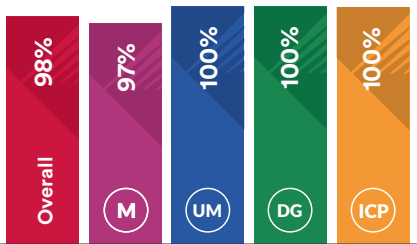
As a network operator, we are an enabler of this change and have a responsibility to engage with stakeholders and keep them informed about the steps we are taking to facilitate the uptake of EVs in our region.

Until now, our engagement activities have largely focused on the practicalities of

connecting new and different types of EV installations. We recognise however, that our stakeholders are also interested in the steps we are taking to ensure we have a network that is fit for the future.

It is important that we continue to engage and collaborate with stakeholders who have an interest in EVs. We have committed to deliver a minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions in the year, the first of which will be an opportunity to present our EV strategy and explore some of the key themes around our transition to a DSO.

Stakeholders will have an opportunity to shape the content of these sessions and we will be actively seeking their feedback to contribute to the agenda for these events.



Next steps to support uptake in Electric Vehicles
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019



ACTION


4.2

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Updates on the Statement of Works process and Appendix G trials

M

DG

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will provide updates on developments in the Statement of Works process and progress of the Appendix G trials.	Stakeholders will be better informed about how we manage new connections that are affected by the Transmission network.	Briefings held at our Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars.	Updates delivered. Number of stakeholders engaged.	 31/03/20

Our customer said...

“

”

My feedback on action 4.1 is that the outcomes and performance metrics are too vague given the length of time this has been an issue – please commit to a timeline for publishing Appendix G results, adding transmission constraints to heat maps and publishing details of Mod Apps when received from NGET.

Catherine Cleary, Tomcat Engineering
Connections Customer Forum, April 2019

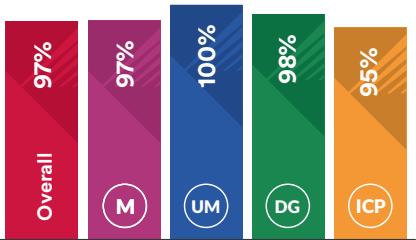
We play an active role in the national working group tasked with transforming the Statement of Works (SoW) process that identifies constraints on the National Grid's transmission network and any associated liabilities or requirements for customers connecting to regional distribution networks.

Trials are underway at a national level to understand how to provide more accurate and timely information for customers affected by transmission issues. Our customers told us that they want us to keep them informed about the progress of these trials and any transmission issues or grid works that could affect them when it comes to securing a new connection.

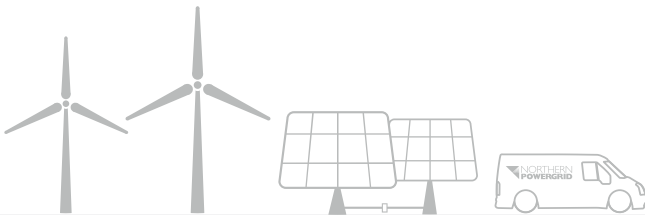
We have made a commitment to do this and provide regular updates at our Connections Customers Forums and other relevant engagement events.

During our last Connections Customer Forum, where we presented our proposed work plan for 2019/20, we received a challenge from one of the attendees who called upon us to do more.

All constructive feedback we receive is used to inform our thinking and future iterations of our ICE plans and so we will be engaging directly with this stakeholder and others affected to understand their views and agree timescales for any additional actions we undertake.



Updates on the Statement of Works process and Appendix G trials
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019



ACTION


5.1

ENABLING COMPETITION

Extending the scope of contestable works for ICPs

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will develop a new process that will allow accredited ICPs to undertake street lighting overhead pole transfers as contestable works.	The new process will allow accredited ICPs to undertake this work, extending the scope of the works they can offer to unmetered clients.	New process developed and implemented.	Application forms updated to include unmetered overhead transfers. ICP activity post-implementation.	 31/12/19

ACTION

6.1

INNOVATION


Our transition to a Distribution System Operator (DSO)

M

DG

UM

ICP

Action	The outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Target completion date
We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we transition to a DSO.	Stakeholders will be involved as we transition to a DSO. They will be able to inform our strategy and approach and be kept informed about opportunities arising, including the provision of flexibility services.	Two dedicated engagement sessions held in the 2019/20 ICE plan year. Stakeholders will have opportunities to provide feedback and help shape our DSO transition plans.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Stakeholder feedback.	 31/03/20

Our customer said...

“

”

Increased competition for provision of services nearly always benefits the customer so this should drive improved services.

Anonymous

Explain telephone survey, April 2019

Our customers said...

“

”

It would be interesting to see what the flexibility looks like.

Anonymous

Explain telephone survey

“

”

I think DSOs are the future.

Anonymous

Explain telephone survey

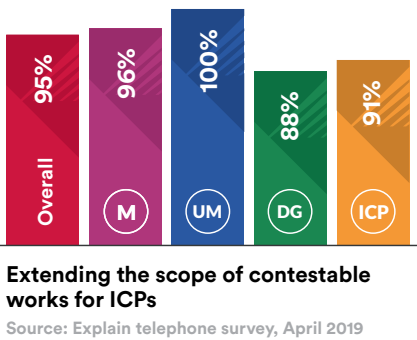
We are not the only company who can provide a new connection to our network. Our customers are free to compare our prices and service with ICPs who can also deliver some or all of the work.

The activities ICPs can undertake is known as contestable work and we are committed to maintaining and continuously developing an environment in which they can compete freely to undertake these works.

We actively promote fair and open competition in connections to ensure our customers have a choice in who delivers their new connection. Our dedicated Competition in Connections (CiC) team works closely with the ICPs and IDNOs that are active in our region to minimise the input services we are required to and extend the scope of work they can offer to their clients.

In line with that commitment, we are trialling a new process that will allow suitably accredited ICPs to undertake street lighting overhead pole transfers as contestable works. This action opens up a significant new market for ICPs and extends the scope of the works they can offer to unmetered customers.

Building on the lessons learned from the trial, we will implement a new process to enable all suitably accredited ICPs to undertake this work. We will ensure ICPs are kept informed on our progress with briefings delivered at our ICP Seminars and monthly CiC surgeries.



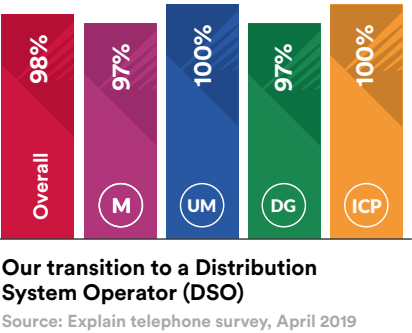
Our customer-led journey towards becoming a DSO is already underway and at every stage, we have engaged with our connections customers and stakeholders to ensure sure they understand our vision and have opportunities to help shape our strategy.

Our responsibilities as a DSO will extend far beyond the traditional role of a DNO. In the world we envisage, it will be our job to protect the integrity of the system and facilitate the operation of energy markets. We will be exploring ways to balance demand and generation and offer new solutions that include customer flexibility.

Just as we have involved our stakeholders up until this point, we will maintain our focus on engagement during the 2019/20

ICE plan year. We will host a minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions, feedback from which will be used to inform our next steps and provide opportunities for stakeholders to let us know whether we are on the right track.

Flexibility forms a crucial part of this transition. We are working hard to develop a deeper understanding of what we need to do to facilitate the continued growth of distributed energy sources and to ensure that both new and connected customers are aware of the opportunities that our DSO will bring, including the provision of flexibility services.





Our Looking Back report

In this section:

- 40 Introduction to our Looking Back report
- 42 Implementing our strategy
- 44 Our 2018/19 ICE work plan
- 47 Looking back at our 2018/19 actions

Introduction to our Looking Back report



AT A GLANCE



Six themes or areas for improvement

- Theme 1: The Provision of Information
- Theme 2: Improving our application and delivery process
- Theme 3: Improving our communication and engagement
- Theme 4: Technical and commercial developments
- Theme 5: Enabling competition
- Theme 6: Innovation

22 
22 actions completed

04 
Four actions completed ahead of target

01 
One action completed later than target but within the ICE plan year

In this section, we look at how we have implemented our strategy for engaging with our connections customers and stakeholders and sought their views to improve the service we provide.

We focus on the actions in our 2018/19 ICE work plan and describe the activities we undertook to deliver these commitments. We explain how we engaged with our stakeholders and customers throughout the course of the ICE plan year to ensure we were meeting their expectations and share some of what they told us about their experience of our connections process and the improvements we made.

We are pleased to report that we completed all 22 actions in our 2018/19 work plan within the ICE plan year. These actions addressed the emerging issues and existing challenges our stakeholders had identified and were grouped under six key themes or areas for improvement.

Delivering on our commitments

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

We are also guided by Ofgem’s instruction to all DNOs to set stretching targets in relation to ICE and to be ambitious in the improvements we propose. Ensuring our stakeholders are aware of these targets is important to us and so we set clear and measureable targets to allow them to assess the effectiveness of our actions.

Ongoing consultation and engagement

We included actions in our 2018/19 work plan at the mid-year point to address the specific operational and communications issues our stakeholders highlighted during Ofgem’s consultation on our ICE performance in 2017/2018.

We endeavour to keep in touch with all those stakeholders whose feedback has generated actions in our ICE work plans and informed our longer term thinking. First, to ensure that we have understood their comments and that the outcomes we are proposing will address their needs and then to ensure what we have delivered meets their expectations and that the outputs we have delivered fully address the issue they raised.

Key commitments

This year, we hosted more events, pre-application meetings, workshops and webinars than ever before, giving our stakeholders more opportunities to engage with us. We continue to survey the satisfaction of our customers to understand their experience of our connections process and identify emerging issues and opportunities for further improvement.

We are committed to making the process of obtaining a new connection as simple and straightforward as possible. We introduced a new fast-track application process for EVs, heat pumps and certain energy storage devices. We will work with our customers as we embed these new ways of working and use their feedback to inform our application and delivery processes.

In areas of constraint, we will continue to increase the flexibility and reduce the

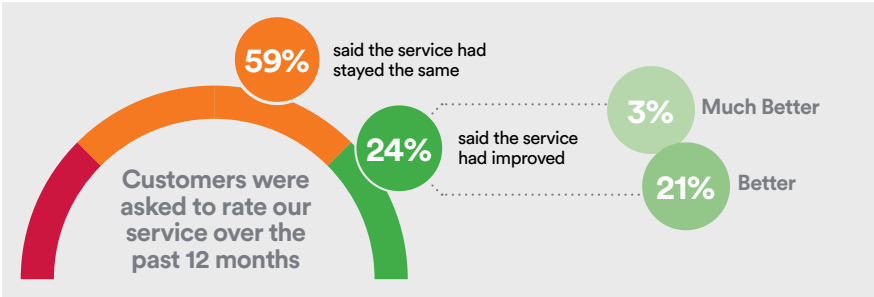
cost of connecting to our network by deploying Active Network Management (ANM) solutions. We engaged with stakeholders throughout the development and deployment of our first replicable ANM scheme in Drifffield, East Yorkshire. This year, in response to specific requests, we also identified areas for future ANM roll-out across our region.

Our customer-led journey to becoming a DSO is now well underway and we have been engaging extensively with our connections customers and stakeholders to ensure they are kept informed and are aware of the opportunities our transition will create, including the provision of flexibility services.

Another key commitment was to establish more targeted engagement forums. For example, our quarterly DG owner operator forum gives generators with assets in our region the opportunities to discuss operational and emerging issues with our experts.

All of the activities we have delivered, backed by our robust strategy for stakeholder consultation and engagement, gives us confidence that we have delivered the service improvement actions our large works connections customers expected from us this year.

Our plans for 2019/20 continue to build our strategic areas for improvement and include a number of actions and initiatives to address the issues our stakeholders told us are important.



Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2019

Implementing our strategy

We continued to build on our robust strategy for engagement, refining our approach in response to what our stakeholders were telling us about the ways they want to interact with us.

We responded to requests from our stakeholders for more engagement on EVs and connection offer expenses. We introduced more targeted workshops and forums and continued to deliver information by webinar for stakeholders who find it difficult to attend our events.

Our team continues to facilitate the early phase engagement and discussions that can help customers to understand the feasibility of their projects ahead of making a formal application. We published details for key connections contacts so that our customers can pick up the telephone and speak to our experts. Our monthly surgeries also continue to be well utilised with more than 75 connections customers and ICPs making use of this service during the 2018/19 ICE plan year.

“

We're at a relatively early stage of our relationship with NPg and as a relatively inexperienced organisation and department when it comes to grid and connections issues; I've been very impressed with the levels of engagement from NPg and the very proactive nature of your connections colleagues when working with us on potential schemes.

”

Paul Taylor, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Connections Customer Forum, April 2019

Snapshot of activities APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019



>58,900
connections enquires answered by our contact centre



>5,800
connections stakeholders kept informed with regular email communications



48,000
website hits

www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected



Twice-yearly
Connections Customer Forums and ICP Seminars



Deliberative round-table events focusing on emerging energy issues



14,048 Facebook
23,083 Twitter
9,294 LinkedIn



Quarterly
Stakeholder Panel meetings

Monthly Connections Customer and ICP surgeries



4
webinars



5
Monthly major works customer satisfaction surveys

Engagement highlights	Q2 2018			Q3 2018			Q4 2018			Q1 2019		
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Northern Powergrid Stakeholder Panel	✓		✓								✓	
Northern Powergrid Stakeholder Summits								✓		✓		
Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Management Group	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Connections Customer Forums	✓							✓				
ICP Seminars			✓					✓				
Connections Customer Surgeries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ICP Surgeries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engagement with Community Energy stakeholders						✓						
DG owner operator forums			✓			✓		✓				✓
Connecting EVs workshops							✓	✓				
Consultation on our LV budget estimating tool i												✓
Webinar and webcasts	✓										✓	✓
Briefings on the T/D interface and Statement of Works	✓											✓
Briefings on Connection Offer Expenses (A&D fees)	✓		✓					✓			✓	
Early phase engagement and customer meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Briefings on DSO and the provision of flexibility services	✓						✓	✓				
Connections email updates	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Attendance at major agricultural shows and meetings with the NFU				✓	✓		✓		✓			
Low Carbon Network and Innovation conference								✓				



2018/19 ICE LOOKING BACK WORK PLAN

[illegible]

ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO		Q2 2018			Q3 2018			Q4 2018			Q1 2019			MORE INFO
								Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
3.1	We will create a new web based process to enable customers to register as an interested stakeholder by connections customer type.	We can deliver more targeted communications and engagement, tailored to different types of customers.	Web form created and published on our website.	ALL	COMPLETED EARLY	M	DG	◆			◆		◆							PAGE 56
3.2	We will hold dedicated engagements with hard to reach stakeholders with specific connection needs including NFU members, Community Energy groups and off-grid customers.	Stakeholders will be better informed about our connections processes and can engage with our experts. We will be able to better understand their specific needs and help them get connected in a quicker and more efficient way.	Two dedicated stakeholder engagement sessions delivered in 2018/19.	ALL	COMPLETED TO TARGET	M	DG	◆								◆				PAGE 57
4.1	We will conduct a review of the provision of network constraint and curtailment information.	A better understanding and agreement of what the provision of what constraint and curtailment information entails.	Business review conducted.	HV	COMPLETED TO TARGET	M	DG	◆											◆	PAGE 58
4.2	We will continue to engage with stakeholders about our ANM strategy including where and when we will be deploying future flexible solutions.	Customers will be better informed about our strategy for flexible connection solutions and how and where we propose to roll-out those solutions.	Progress communicated.	EHV HV	COMPLETED TO TARGET		DG	◆											◆	PAGE 59
4.3	We will continue to work with the Open Networks Project to develop the Statement of Works process and, if required, make changes to our current practices to better support our customers.	Customers will be better informed about the T/D and Statement of Works process.	Progress reported and new policy/process implemented as necessary.	EHV HV	COMPLETED TO TARGET	M	DG	◆											◆	PAGE 60
4.4	We will engage with those stakeholders who are interested in new EV connections by delivering a minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions.	Stakeholders will be better informed about our approach to EV connections and our associated processes.	Two engagements sessions held.	LV	COMPLETED EARLY	M	UM						◆		◆		◆			PAGE 61
4.5	We will continue to engage with stakeholders about the Connection Offer Expenses we charge.	Stakeholders will be better informed about all the A&D fees we charge, including how we apply those charges and the information that is available to them to consider before making a quotation application.	Two engagements sessions held.	ALL	COMPLETED TO TARGET	M	DG						◆					◆		PAGE 62
4.6	We will develop a more efficient process in respect of the reconnection of "knocked down" telecommunications street furniture.	Faster reconnection of "knocked down" telecommunication street furniture.	New process developed.	LV	COMPLETED TO TARGET	M	UM						◆						◆	PAGE 63

ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO				Q2 2018			Q3 2018			Q4 2018			Q1 2019			MORE INFO
										Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
5.1 We will develop, trial, and if the trial is successful, implement a new self-service adoption agreement process for ICPs.	ICPs will be able to create their own asset adoption agreements using simple agreement templates and submit them to Northern Powergrid for legal completion, further minimising the connection input services we are required to provide.	New ICP self-service adoption agreements implemented.	Number of self-service adoption agreements completed and ICP feedback.	ALL	COMPLETED TO TARGET				ICP	◆				◆								PAGE 64
5.2 We will implement a new process to enable Independent IDNOs to accept a Bilateral Connection Agreement by signing it electronically.	The process will become quicker and more streamlined for IDNOs.	New process implemented.	Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	COMPLETED EARLY				ICP						◆		◆	◆				PAGE 65
6.1 We will publish technical guidance for generators on how to go about making a connection application for hybrid generation-storage sites.	Generators will have access to improved technical guidance and be better informed about how to make a connection application for hybrid generation-storage sites.	Guidance published.	Document downloads and feedback received.	EHV HV	COMPLETED TO TARGET				DG	◆											◆	PAGE 66
6.2 We will continue to engage with stakeholders on our vision and strategy for our transition to a DSO.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have the opportunity to engage, share their views and shape future outputs.	Vision and strategy shared.	Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	COMPLETED TO TARGET	M			DG	◆											◆	PAGE 67
6.3 We will engage with flexibility service providers to understand any improvements to our connections process that are required to support the continued growth of distributed energy resources such as storage, flexible generation and demand side response.	Stakeholders will be able to engage with our experts and can influence and inform changes to our connection process.	Stakeholder engagement session delivered.	Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	COMPLETED TO TARGET	M			DG	◆							◆					PAGE 68

KEY: M METERED DEMAND CUSTOMERS UM UNMETERED CUSTOMERS DG DISTRIBUTED GENERATION CUSTOMERS ICP INDEPENDENT CONNECTIONS PROVIDERS

◆ ACTION STARTS OUR FORECAST TIMESCALE FOR COMPLETION ◆ FORECAST COMPLETION DATE ◆ ACTUAL COMPLETION DATE

ACTION

1.1

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Better access to network information

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will develop a new process to provide customers who request it with access to more detailed network information.	Customers will have access to more detailed network information and asset records to support and inform their own design activity.	New process implemented. Customer feedback.	EHV HV	M DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

✓ **We developed a new process to provide all our customers with access to detailed network information.**

✓ **20 customers have requested and been supplied with bespoke network information since the new process was introduced.**

In line with our commitment to facilitate fair and open competition in connections, we make our network design standards and data available to ICPs that request it. This information is useful because it provides information on assets across our network, everything from a substation to an overhead line or underground cable, allowing ICPs to create their own designs and third parties to create their own feasibility studies for securing a connection to our network.

Consultants told us that they too would benefit from access to this information to carry out their own preliminary feasibility studies and to validate the work completed by ICPs. So we said we would make our network data available to all our customers who request it and also make it quicker and easier to access that information.

Now, customers can contact us directly to request network information by emailing records.information@northernpowergrid.com, clearly stating their requirements. Our team will then get in touch to confirm their specific requirements and supply the information they require.

Then, using a bespoke feature manipulation engine (FME) tool, we extract the data from our system and make it available to the customer via a secure portal, with an individual login and password.

We introduced this new process at the end of September 2018 and informed attendees at our Connections Customer Forum in November. Since then, we have supplied network data to 20 customers using the new process.



ACTION

1.2

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Network Records

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will develop a new process to provide customers who request it with access to network information in KMZ and GIS formats.	Customers will have better access and the ability to work with our network data.	New process implemented. Customer feedback.	EHV HV	M DG ICP	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

✓ We developed a new process to provide customers who request it with network information in a range of formats, including KMZ and GIS¹² that are compatible with the IT platforms and applications they use.

We understand that customers requesting our network data will also want it supplied in a format that is compatible with the different IT platforms and applications they operate.

The bespoke FME tool that we now use to extract data from our network allows us to provide that data in a range of different formats, including KMZ, GIS and others. Depending on the IT specifications of the customer, we can now provide our network design standards and network information in a format that they require. This data is made available via a secure portal and accessed using a unique login and password that allows customers to download the information directly to their systems.

Our customers said...

“It’s good to see that Northern Powergrid has made network information available in KMZ and GIS formats in line with our feedback. The connections team have kept us informed about this improvement to the service, and they are continuing to engage with us to ensure we get maximum value from it and best access the key information we need.”
Lucy Taylor MRICS, Operations Director
Roadnight Taylor



¹² KMZ - Keyhole Markup language Zipped, GIS - Geographic Information Systems.

ACTION

1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

DG owner operator forums

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will hold a DG owner operators forum each quarter.	DG customers will have a forum to discuss operational issues and obtain accurate and up-to-date outage information enabling them to plan more efficiently and strategically.	Four DG owner operator forums held during 2018/19. Feedback received from DG owner operator forum members.	EHV	DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

✓ We established a DG owner operator forum and held four meetings in the year, one per quarter.
✓ Generators taking part told us they appreciate our open approach and the opportunity for face-to-face engagement.

Setting up a DG owner operator forum was something our generation customers told us was important and so we made it a priority.

The aim was to give generators with assets in our region a forum where they could come together and explore their specific needs with our team. It is also an opportunity to learn more about our business and for us to understand more about theirs.

These forums provide a platform to explore new developments and emerging technologies and, importantly, for generators to gain information on forward constraints and outages that will allow them to plan more effectively and strategically. Part of the day is delivered in a surgery format, giving those taking part the opportunity to discuss any specific projects or network issues they may be experiencing with our operational experts.

We recognise the importance of regular dialogue with all our customers and so, in line with our commitment, we hosted four forums in the year, one per quarter.

Throughout the year, we were proactive in identifying generators and developers and inviting them to take part in our forum. As a result, membership of this group has

grown steadily. Those taking part told us that these forums are useful; that they appreciate the senior representation at these events and value all opportunities for face-to-face interaction. Each of these forums has allowed us to better understand the specific needs of the generation community and build stronger, mutually beneficially relationships.

Going forward, we will continue to host these quarterly forums, integrating them into our wider programme for engagement. We have found that bringing likeminded individuals and groups together to explore opportunities and challenges has been beneficial for us and them.

After our last forum in March 2019, we asked members of our DG owner operator forum to tell us what they thought about their experience and to help us to shape the agenda for future events. We also

Our customers said...

“I am pleased to see Northern Powergrid listen and respond to customer’s specific concerns, such as launching a DG Owners & Operators Forum to better engage with operational generation on its network. I was happy to receive a personalised response to the suggestions our company had proposed.”
Graham Pannell, RES
via email
Banks Renewables have really appreciated the Northern Powergrid DG owner operator forums. We have found them an excellent opportunity to discuss operational issues and future plans with technical leaders and senior managers from Northern Powergrid. As an owner and operator of 6 wind farms connected to Northern Powergrid’s networks the forums help us to ensure efficient co-ordination and take opportunities for the future.”
Dan Banks
Banks Group

approached generators who had been invited to take part but had chosen not to participate to understand why that was and if there was anything we could to make it more beneficial for them.

We continue to proactively approach other members of the generation community who we think could benefit from membership of this forum. We are aware of the recommendations of the Solar Trade Association and we are keen to engage with them through this forum to better understand their specific needs and how best we can support them.

ACTION
1.4

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION
Updates to the ENA's Distributed Generation connections guides

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will work with the ENA to update the DG connections guide and incorporate new technologies like storage and export limiting devices.	Customers will have more accurate and up-to-date information on the requirements for connection of distributed energy resources.	Completion of a revised ENA DG connection guide. Number of downloads of the revised ENA guide. ¹³	All	DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓ We worked with the Energy Networks Association to update its Distributed Generation Connection Guides.
- ✓ The guides were published on the ENA's website and have been available to download since September 2018.

In line with feedback we received from generators, we said we would work collaboratively with other network operators and the ENA to revise its suite of Distribution Generation Connections Guides and include technologies like storage and export limiting devices. Collaborating with the ENA and the wider industry on this ensured we could provide our customers with the most up-to-date information and incorporate some of the emerging technologies that our customers are looking to connect into these guides.

In total, there are six separate guides now available, each of which provides a valuable source of information for generators and developers. The ENA has also provided a quick-reference summary document for each of the guides, providing some of the most useful information in a condensed and easy to understand format.

The target outcome for this action was the completion of a revised set of guides and the action was completed to target in September 2018. Our team played an active role in the development of the new guides and provided expert input throughout to ensure they remain a useful resource and provide clarity for our generation customers at each stage of the connections process.

- ✚ The Distributed Generation Connections Guides are available on the ENA website at www.energynetworks.org/electricity/engineering/distributed-generation/dg-connection-guides.html



¹³ The ENA's website does not record how often an individual document is viewed or downloaded, so we have been unable to determine the number of downloads of the revised ENA guides.

ACTION
2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES
Contact information for connections engineers

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will create a new web page where customers can find the contact details for our regional connections engineers.	Customers will be able to access the contact details of our connections engineers quickly and easily.	New web page created and published on our website. Web page usage and customer feedback.	All	M UM DG	Completed early

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓ We created a new webpage with contact details for our connections team.
- ✓ Since it went live, the webpage has been visited 549 times.

Our customers said...

“ That link with the contact details is brilliant! ”
Catherine Cleary
Tom Cat Engineering

Our connections customers told us they wanted us to make it easier for them to pick up the telephone and talk to our team about their connection. We listened and made a commitment to publish the details of key contacts from our connection team on our website, alongside the areas of our network those contacts are responsible for.

Enabling these upfront conversations is especially important following the introduction of connection offer expenses, as we understand that many of our customers will want to explore their options with our team before making a formal application.

Customers told us this action was important to them and so we acted quickly, making the new page live on our website in August 2018, which was ahead of our original target.

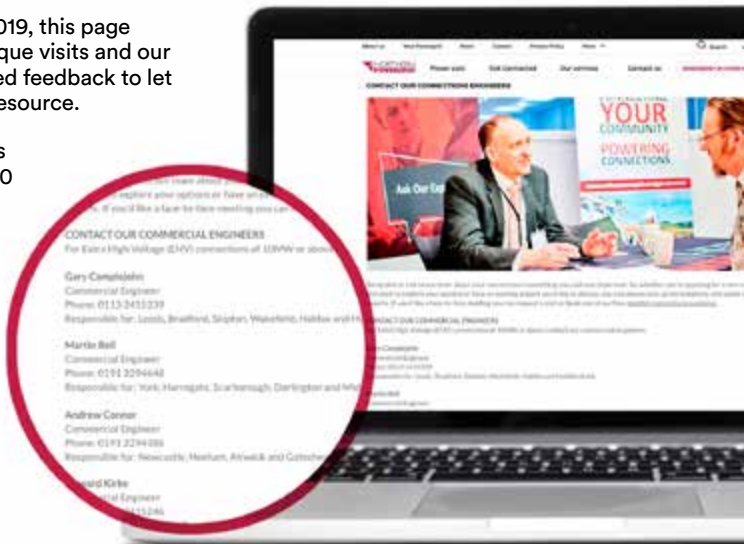
Now, whether our customers are thinking of applying for a new connection or have an existing project they would like to discuss, they can easily locate the telephone number of the commercial, design or delivery engineer best placed to help and speak to them directly. If a face-to-face meeting is preferred, they can request a visit or book a place at one of our monthly surgeries. This action underlines our commitment to provide our customers with a personal service and to continuously improve their experience of our connections process.

At the end of March 2019, this page had received 549¹⁴ unique visits and our customers had provided feedback to let us know it is a useful resource.

We are building on this commitment in 2019/20 by producing a new

downloadable guide with contact details for all our team, so that our customers always know who to get in contact with to discuss their connection.

- ✚ The new webpage featuring the contact details for our connections engineers and our dedicated Competition in Connections (CiC) team is available online at www.northernpowergrid.com/contact-our-connections-engineers



¹⁴ Figure correct as of March 2019

ACTION

2.2

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Improving customer communications

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will include a description of the connection project as well as the enquiry reference at the beginning of all our customer correspondences.	Customers with multiple connections will be able to identify the project we are referring to more quickly and easily.	Customer correspondence reviewed and new standards applied. Customer feedback.	All	<div>M</div> <div>DG</div> <div>UM</div>	<div>✓</div> Completed later than target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓ We engaged with the customer whose feedback generated this action to ensure we had fully understood their comments and that the outcomes we were proposing would address their issue.
- ✓ Following feedback, we made changes to our automated email communications to make it easier for customers to identify the connection project we are referring to.

Our customer said...

“

I reported an issue with the connections service and this was acknowledged and implemented. My feedback was sought which enhanced my confidence in the service provided. Thanks for the great service.

Philip Matthews
East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Following some feedback we received from one of our customers on the content of our email communications, we said we would review our communication standards and brief our team on the importance of including all relevant information in every customer email we send.

We will always seek to engage with stakeholders whose feedback generates actions in our ICE plans. It is only through this interaction that we can ensure we have fully understood their feedback and that the action we are proposing will address the issue they have raised. We sought to engage with the customer whose feedback generated this action and subsequently, we were able to have a more detailed discussion with him and better understand the issue. We were able to establish that the customer was referring to the

information that is included as standard in the automated emails that are issued when an application is made via our website and not those issued by our team.

The customer told us that he would like these emails to include more detail to help him quickly identify the project in question and that this should include the full site address, the name of the project or site if provided and our ENQ¹⁵ number. Once we correctly understood the request, we acted swiftly to implement the changes required to our back office IT systems and the automated emails we issue. These improvements took slightly longer than we first anticipated and we delivered this action seven weeks after our original target.

Now, the automated emails customers receive when they make an online application for either a new connection,

an unmetered connection, a large-scale generation connection or when they ask us to move our equipment, includes the full site address including the first line of the address, street, city and postcode, our ENQ number and the customer’s own internal reference, if applicable.

This action highlights the importance of continued dialogue with our customers to ensure we have correctly understood their feedback and that we are delivering the outcomes they need, and not those we think they need. We informed the customer who requested this change that there would be a short delay in delivering this action and he confirmed that neither he nor his business would be adversely affected during that time.

¹⁵ ENQ – Enquiry reference number.

ACTION

2.3

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Updates on the status of our connections offers

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will provide customers with an update on the progress of their connection quotation midway through its preparation, where a 65-day guaranteed standard applies.	Customers will be better informed on the status and timescales of their expected offer.	Feedback being delivered. Customer feedback.	EHV HV	<div>M</div> <div>DG</div>	<div>✓</div> Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓ We introduced a new process to ensure customers requesting a quotation with a 65-day guaranteed standard were updated on the progress of their offer mid-way through its preparation.

Our customers said...

“

I am delighted with the proposal to ‘feedback’ to the customer on the progress of connection offers. It should help address expectations on our side, as hopefully, discussion will ensue on any potential issues with the proposed connection.

Jim Caldwell
YELM

At our Connections Customer Forums, we always ask attendees what we can do to improve our connections service. One of the customers attending told us it would be useful to have an update on the status of their connection offer. This was particularly important for EHV and HV applications, where a 65-day guaranteed standard applies.

We listened and introduced a new process whereby our team will contact customers and provide them with an update on the status of their offer mid-way through its preparation. This is in addition to the contact we make five days after receiving their application, where one of team will get in touch to acknowledge receipt of the application and introduce themselves as the customers single point of contact.

Updates are now being delivered, typically over the telephone unless otherwise requested by the customer, whenever a 65-day guaranteed standard applies. As a minimum, we will provide an update on the work we have undertaken on the scheme so far and the date when the customer can expect to receive their connection offer. The call will be made by the customer’s single point of contact who is responsible for managing their application through to the delivery stage.

Since implementing this change, our customers are now better informed about the status and expected timescales of their connection offers.



ACTION

2.4

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

New self-service LV budget estimating tool

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will mobilise a project to build a self-service budget tool and keep our customers informed and involved.	Customers will have the opportunity to influence and contribute to the development of a new tool.	Project mobilised and customers engaged. Customer involved in development of the new tool.	LV	<div>M</div> <div>DG</div> <div>ICP</div>	<div>✓</div> <div>Completed to target</div>

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓

We engaged with our stakeholders and kept them informed about the development of our new LV budget estimating tool.
- ✓

They had opportunities to provide feedback on functionality and to contribute to the development of this new resource.

An important part of our role as a new connections provider is to help customers understand the viability of their proposed project, both in terms of network availability and cost.

We know that receiving an indicative view as quickly as possible is important and we already provide a suite of self-serve online tools to help our customers to assess the likely costs, timescales and viability of securing a connection.

However, we have been exploring ways to make this even easier by developing a new LV budget estimating tool, which will guide users to the most viable and cost-effective connection option and in the majority of cases, allow them to avoid the costs associated with applying for a budget estimate from us.

We made a commitment to involve our stakeholders in the development of this new resource and to give them opportunities to shape the final output.

To do this, we previewed a prototype version at our Connections Customer Forum and ICP seminar in November 2018 and sought feedback from those attending.

We then proactively contacted Local Authorities representatives and invited them to take part in a workshop at our offices in March 2019. It was important for us to involve Local Authorities as we recognise they have decarbonisation targets and that this tool would be particularly useful to them when identifying sites for new EV connections.

Eight representatives from six Local Authorities in our region attended two workshops at our offices in Leeds and Peshaw. We linked both sites via WebEx so that all those attending could interact and share their opinions.

We were then invited by one of the individuals attending to present to the Sustainable Transport Group in May 2019, a meeting of the seven North East Local

Authorities who come together to discuss important regional issues.

Once deployed, this new valuable new resource will enable users to self-serve and generate their own budget estimates, whatever the nature of their LV connection. It will guide them towards the most cost-effective and viable connection option, potentially within just a few minutes.

We plan to deploy our LV budget estimating tool during the 2019/20 ICE plan year and will continue to engage with interested stakeholders during this time to keep them informed and seek their feedback on what we are developing.

ACTION

2.5

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Quotation expiry dates

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will include the actual date on which a quotation will expire in each quotation we issue.	Customers will have firm confirmation of the date on which their quotations expire.	All new quotations will include the expiry date of the offer. 100% of new quotation offers.	All	<div>M</div> <div>DG</div> <div>UM</div> <div>ICP</div>	<div>✓</div> <div>Completed to target</div>

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓

All new connections quotations we issue now include the exact date on which the offer will expire.

It is important that we make the process of obtaining a new connection from us as straightforward as possible for our customers. One of our design team managers highlighted that his team were receiving a significant number of calls from customers wanting to check the date on which their quotation expired and so we made a commitment to address this issue and moved quickly to implement the change.

Under the current process, a connections offer will expire 90 days after it is issued, after which the customer will have to make a new application. We decided it would be beneficial to customers to include the exact date on which their offer expires on all the connections quotations we issue.

We implemented a new process and as of end of February 2019, every new connection offer we make now includes the exact date on which the quotation will expire. We also took the opportunity to review and rationalise the number of quotation letters we have.

These changes underpin our commitment to simplify and improve our application and delivery processes and to act on all relevant feedback we receive.



ACTION
3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT
More targeted communications

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will create a new web based process to enable customers to register as an interested stakeholder by connections customer type.	We can deliver more targeted communications and engagement, tailored to different types of customers.	Web form created and published on our website. Number of customers registering to receive targeted updates.	All	M DG	Completed early

Outcomes and target measures

✔ We created a new web based sign up process, so that stakeholders can register to receive email updates from us and select the topics they want to about.

We received a lot of enquires from connections stakeholders asking where they could sign up to receive email updates from us.

When they sign up to join our connections email distribution list, stakeholders can typically expect to receive priority invites to our connections events and webinars, industry updates and other Northern Powergrid news.

We understand, however, that some communications are more relevant than others and that not all our stakeholders will have an interest in every piece of information we have to share. That is why we introduced a new web-based process to allow stakeholders to sign up online and then select the topics they want to hear about.

We understand the importance of keeping our stakeholders informed and so we acted quickly, creating a new webpage with a downloadable form that they could use to register and tell us about their particular areas of interest. This webpage was made available in July 2018, which was ahead of our original

target of September 2018. We then replaced this webpage in February 2019, with a pop-up that appears whenever someone visits our connections homepage making it more visible and the sign up process quicker and easier to follow.

Delivery of this commitment has given our stakeholders more choice and has improved the quality of the email communications we issue. We take the handling of our stakeholders' information extremely seriously and to ensure full GDPR compliance, once registered all stakeholders will receive an email confirmation with a link to our privacy policy explaining how we will use their data. They are also free to unsubscribe at any time.

By end of March 2019, more than 140 connections stakeholders had registered to receive targeted email updates from us using the new web based process we introduced.

✔ Stakeholders can sign up to receive connections email updates at: www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected



ACTION
3.2

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT
Hard to reach stakeholders

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will hold dedicated engagements with hard to reach stakeholders with specific connection needs including NFU members, Community Energy groups and off-grid customers.	Stakeholders will be better informed about our connections processes and can engage with our experts. We will be able to better understand their specific needs and help them get connected in a quicker and more efficient way.	Two dedicated stakeholder engagement sessions delivered in 2018/19. Number of stakeholders engaged and feedback received.	All	M DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

✔ We identified 'hard to reach' stakeholder groups and proactively sought feedback to help us understand their specific needs and how best we can support them.

We have a diverse range of connections stakeholders, some of which could be considered as 'hard to reach' because although they may not interact with us directly or on a regular basis, they will still have an interest in our connections process. We have worked hard to identify and engage with these groups in order to better understand their needs and how best to support them through our connections process.

The hard to reach stakeholder groups we identified were members of the agricultural community, community energy groups and off-grid customers.

During the course of the ICE plan year we hosted our own dedicated engagement events and utilised channels suggested by these stakeholders to increase their awareness and our reach. It has been an ongoing strategy of proactive engagement that has helped us to better understand the priorities of these stakeholders and they ways in which they want to interact with us.

When targeting the agricultural community, we approached the National Farmers Union (NFU), a group who had previously expressed interest in engaging with us. They told us that their existing programme of regional board meetings and local events was the best channel for us to engage with them and their members. Our Director of Safety, Health

and Environment and Head of Connections Services attended the NFU's regional meeting in October 2018 where they sought feedback from attendees on their priorities and concerns around safety and new connections. Twelve board members were in attendance, alongside the NFU regional team. This was a followed by an invite for us to attend two further county meetings, attended by approximately 30 members of the farming community.

We continue to participate in agricultural shows across our region, including established events like the Great Yorkshire Show (circa. 130k attendees). Our team is always on hand at these events to provide advice on new connections, safety and explain more about our business.

In September 2018, we invited 11 community energy groups to participate in a dedicated connections surgery we hosted that was aimed at anyone involved in developing small-scale community energy projects. The workshop was also promoted by Community Energy England.

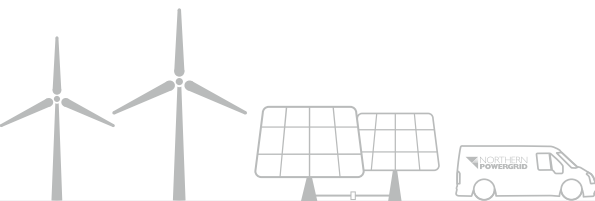
Our customers said...

“Northern Powergrid has been very supportive of our work, backing the establishment of the national Community Energy Hub and supporting the State of the Sector report over the last couple of years. They understand the challenges and opportunities facing the sector and I'm pleased that they remain committed to delivering education events and specialist engineering support for community energy groups across their area I found the sessions today very informative and they stimulated a range of questions going forward in terms of planning ahead for more EVs in the city which will help our air quality.

Emma Bridges, CEO
Community Energy England

Two community energy groups met with our team to discuss connections projects they are considering or were part way through delivering. In June 2018, we were also invited to present at the Community Energy England Conference in Manchester.

We are commissioning a partnership with Green Doctors and part of their remit will be to engage with off-grid customers to better understand their priorities and concerns. We are also working in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University and VONNE¹⁶ to bring together fledgling and experienced community energy groups and connect them with DNOs.



¹⁶ VONNE (Voluntary Organisations' Network North East)

ACTION
4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

The provision of network constraint and curtailment information

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will conduct a review of the provision of network constraint and curtailment information.	A better understanding and agreement of what the provision of constraint and curtailment information entails.	Review conducted. Customer feedback.	HV	M DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✔ We consulted extensively with stakeholders to seek feedback and better understand their requirements.
- ✔ Following a comprehensive consultation and review we agreed our approach to the provision of constraint and curtailment information.

Network constraints is an important issue for network operators and customers alike and at both a national and regional level, a significant amount of work is being undertaken to understand how best to deliver new connections to areas of the electricity network that are constrained.

We recognise that this is an important issue for generation developers who, when assessing the feasibility of any proposed project, need to understand the possible levels of curtailment they could experience. We remain fully committed to working with our customers and supporting them both prior to and following connection.

Before accepting a connection offer, generators need to understand the potential levels of curtailment they could experience and how it could affect the viability of their proposed project. Our design and commercial engineers will work with customers to support them during this period, making themselves available for upfront and ad hoc pre-application discussions. They will provide network information to enable customers to make informed decisions and signpost the tools to help them make their own upfront assessments, including our long-term development statements, our network availability heat maps and our contracted capacity register. These are the same tools our design engineers use when developing assessments for our customers.

Post-connection, we know that generators need to be able to mitigate for the risk of network outages as far in advance as possible. Through the dedicated DG owner operator forum we have established, we can provide generators with valuable information on our future capital investment programme and planned outages on both National Grid's and our network. Our operational experts are on hand to discuss any site specific problems or network issues they are experiencing and we have published their contact details on our website to allow customers to engage with them outside this quarterly forum.

We understand that our customers place a lot of importance on this type of information and so we made a commitment to consult with them to better understand their specific requirements.

During the course of the ICE plan year, we took every opportunity to engage with stakeholders. We discussed network constraints with attendees at our DG owner operator forums and asked those attending to tell us about their specific requirements. We held a workshop at our Connections Customer Forum in November 2018 and sought feedback from national stakeholders via the Distributed Energy Resources (DER) forum. This comprehensive consultation exercise has informed our thinking and approach to the provision of constraint and curtailment information to customers.

Based on the feedback we received, our review concluded that the approach we

have outlined below will work well for our customers.

- Generators are encouraged to make use of the pre-application support and tools we make available to understand the likely levels of curtailment they could experience.
- Our engineers will provide a certain level of network data ahead of a customer making a formal application that will help them to form their own upfront assessments.
- Post-connection we encourage generators to participate in our DG owner operator forum to obtain for up-to-date and accurate outage information. Our operational experts are also willing to support and provide information outside of this quarterly forum.

We understand that this remains an important topic for generators alike and we continue to contribute to the debate on industry best practice.

We believe our current approach is aligned with the ENA's Open Networks Project's recommendations published in December 2018¹⁷. We are aware of the recommendations of the Solar Trade Association and look forward to the opportunity to discuss these further at one of our DG owner operator forums, where there will be an opportunity for continued and constructive debate.

¹⁷ Energy Networks Association, Work stream 2, Product 7, Provision of Constraint Information
<http://www.energynetworks.org/assets/files/Provision%20of%20Constraint%20Information%20-%20VPublished.pdf>

ACTION
4.2

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Active Network Management (ANM)

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will continue to engage with customers about our ANM strategy including how, when and where we will be deploying future flexible solutions.	Customers will be better informed about our strategy for flexible connection solutions including how, when and where we propose to roll-out those solutions.	Progress communicated. Customer feedback.	EHV HV	DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✔ We held briefings at our connections events and hosted a webinar where we identified areas on our network for future ANM roll-out.
- ✔ Stakeholders agreed the information we shared had had improved their understanding of our strategy and approach.

We engaged with stakeholders throughout the development and roll-out of our ANM solutions. The continued development of these solutions is important because it will enable network operators to deliver more new connections in areas of the network where the capacity is constrained but there is potential for network flexibility.

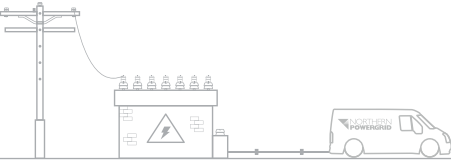
We are committed to developing new and innovative solutions that address any constraints on our network and to helping as many customers as possible to get connected. In 2019, we will deploy of our first, replicable ANM scheme on our network in Driffield, East Yorkshire.

Many of our customers expressed an interest in how the Driffield ANM solution could be applied to other areas of our network. We listened and acted on that feedback, keeping our stakeholders informed at various engagement events throughout the course of the ICE plan year. We gave a presentation at our Connections Customer Forum and provided updates at our ICP Seminars and DG owner operator forum.

In February 2019, we held a webinar with a live Q&A session where we identified areas of our network that have been selected for future ANM roll-out. A total of 47 stakeholders registered to take part and all of those who responded to a poll we ran during the webinar said it had improved their understanding of our strategy and approach to ANM.



✔ You can watch our ANM webinar on our YouTube channel at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5ldDaCSy2E



ACTION
4.3

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Transmission/Distribution (T/D) interface

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will continue to work with the Open Networks Project to develop the Statement of Works process and, if required, make changes to our current practices to better support our customers.	Customers will be better informed about the T/D and Statement of Works process.	Progress reported and new policy/ process implemented as necessary Revised process, if required, applied to relevant connection applications.	EHV HV	M DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✔ We continue to actively participate in the national working party that is seeking to reform the Statement of Works process.
- ✔ We kept our stakeholders informed about the outputs of this group and the progress of the SoW and Appendix G trials with updates given at our connections events and a dedicated webinar.

We continue to play an active role in the national working group tasked with transforming the Statement of Works (SoW) process that identifies constraints on the National Grid network and any associated liabilities or requirements for customers connecting to regional distribution networks.

Trials have been taking place at a national level to understand how to provide generators with better upfront information on grid work implications which may affect them.

Our customers told us they wanted us to keep them informed about the activities of the national working group and any transmission issues that could affect their ability to apply for a new connection and so we have been reporting on progress at our connections events.

Updates were delivered at our Connections Customer Forums in November 2018 and in March 2019 we hosted a live webinar and Q&A session. During the webinar we gave an indication of SoW volumes and progress in the Northern Powergrid region and presented our proposed solutions and next steps. 24 stakeholders registered to take part and all of those who responded to a poll we ran during the webinar said it had improved their understanding of SoW and how Northern Powergrid is managing the process.

During the course of the year we worked with National Grid to determine how the trials could be rolled out in the Northern Powergrid region and in advance of any formal changes to the Connections Use of System Code (CUSC). As a result we are now applying a modified procedure whenever a SoW is required.

We continue to participate in the CUSC working group and to drive forward the formal changes that are required to the SoW process. We will revise our processes to meet national recommendations in the CUSC, as and when they are approved. Any changes would then be applied to all relevant new connections applications on our network for the benefit of our customers.

We understand this remains an important issue for those customers who are affected and so we have also made a commitment to continue to engage with stakeholders and to keep them informed of any developments. During the 2019/20 ICE plan year, we will be seeking to engage with those customers who are directly affected by the SoW process to better understand their views and priorities and what we can do to support them.



You can watch our Statement of Works webinar on our YouTube channel at: <https://youtu.be/zWNxr6gAaqw>

ACTION
4.4

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

New Electric Vehicle (EV) connections

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will engage with those stakeholders who are interested in new Electric Vehicle connections by delivering a minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions.	Stakeholders will be better informed about our approach to EV connections and our associated processes.	Two engagements sessions held. 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate.	LV	M UM	Completed early

Outcomes and target measures

- ✔ We held a dedicated EV connections workshop. 68 stakeholders took part and 97% of those who responded to our survey said they were satisfied by their experience.
- ✔ We followed this with a workshop at our Connections Customer Forum and all those taking part said they were satisfied with their experience on the day.

The UK government has a goal that the majority of cars sold by 2040 should be electric or hybrid.

The anticipated uptake in EVs and the requirement for a charging infrastructure to support this growth is already driving a significant number of enquiries for new and different types of connections. We are an enabler of this change and are ready to support the transition.

We added an action in our ICE plan at the mid-year point to engage with stakeholders with an interest in EVs to ensure they were informed about our connections processes and knew who to contact for support and advice.

Our first workshop took place in York in October 2018. We welcomed 68 stakeholders on the day including Local Authorities, housing developers, ICPs and consultants. Feedback from this event was very positive with 97% of those who responded to a survey on the day telling us they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ by their experience.

We followed this up with a second workshop at our Connections Customer Forum in November 2018. Approximately 15 stakeholders representing Local Authorities, their agents and other customers with an interest in EVs, took part in this practical session. The workshop was kept intentionally informal to encourage open discussion and debate and at the end of the session all those who took part indicated by a show of hands that they were satisfied by their experience and had found the workshop useful.

Our customers said...

I found the sessions today very informative and they stimulated a range of questions going forward in terms of planning ahead for more EVs in the city which will help our air quality.

Cllr Andrew Waller
Deputy Leader City of York Council, Liberal Democrat Councillor Westfield Ward and Executive Member for Environment

Excellent, informative and engaging.

Matt Gladstone, Executive Director
Barnsley Council

Very useful and informative.

Sheridan Paterson
Calderdale MBC

We delivered our commitment to hold two dedicated EV engagement sessions ahead of our original target of February 2019. The first workshop revealed a clear appetite for further engagement and so we acted quickly, integrating the second workshop into the programme of activities at our Connections Customer Forum the following month. There were however, plenty more opportunities for customers to engage with us on the topic during the remainder of the ICE plan year, including at our Stakeholder Summit where EVs were an important part of the discussions on the day.

Building on this action, we have made a commitment in our 2019/20 ICE work plan to continue to engage with stakeholders on this topic and keep them informed about the actions we are taking to prepare our network for the anticipated uptake in EVs.

ACTION

4.5

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Connections offer expenses

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will continue to engage with stakeholders about the Connection Offer Expenses (A&D fees) we charge.	Stakeholders will be better informed about all the A&D fees we charge, including how we apply those charges and the information that is available to them to consider before making a quotation application.	Two engagements sessions held. 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate.	All	M DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓

We engaged with stakeholders before, during and after the introduction of connection offer expenses to ensure that they understood our position, how the fees we charge were calculated and the support available to them ahead of making a formal application.

Our customer said...

“

“

I have no issues with charging for connections applications. This is a good idea and for me has improved the service.

Philip Matthews, East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Connections Customer Forum

We introduced connection offer expenses (also known as A&D fees) for all new budget estimates and connections offers with effect from 6 April 2018. We did this to drive efficiencies in the connection quotation process and improve the levels of service our customers receive.

Previously, the costs associated with preparing a budget estimate or connection offer were not charged directly to the individual making the request. They were recovered from only those customers who accepted the connection offer and proceeded with the work. This led to high numbers of applications being made and network operators spending significant periods of time on work that did not proceed.

We began engaging with our customers and stakeholders well in advance of the introduction of connection offer expenses. We communicated the change

in good time and worked with customers to answer their questions and understand their views. However, during Ofgem’s consultation on ICE, a very small number of stakeholders who responded described the way we introduced fees as ‘harsh’.

As a result, we made a commitment to continue to engage with our customers on this topic. We wanted to ensure our customers understood our position and what the fees we charge go towards. We also wanted to signpost the tools, resources and support we make available.

We held a briefing at our Connections Customer Forum in November 2018 where we explained the rationale behind the connection offer expenses we charge and highlighted the pre-application support we make available.

Our second engagement session was a webinar in February 2019 where we reaffirmed our position and asked those

taking part what more they wanted us to do to engage with them on this topic. We also asked them whether the webinar had informed their understanding of our approach. 100% of those who responded agreed that it had.

We have been able to charge connection offer expenses for more than a year. Already, we are seeing how this is driving better upfront conversations with customers and improving efficiencies in our connections quotation process and the levels of service we provide.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders at both a national and regional level on this important topic and will keep them informed of any developments.

ACTION

4.6

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Knocked down telecommunications street furniture

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will develop a more efficient process in respect of the reconnection of knocked down telecommunications street furniture.	Faster reconnection of knocked down telecommunication street furniture.	New process developed. Customer feedback.	LV	M UM	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓

We worked with Openreach to develop a new process to make the reconnection of damaged telecommunications street furniture quicker and more efficient.
- ✓

The process was successfully implemented and we will now seek to roll-out it out to all telecommunications providers with assets in our region.

During Ofgem’s consultation on ICE, telecommunications provider Openreach called upon all DNOs to be more proactive in their approach to engagement and highlighted a specific operational issue they were experiencing.

Openreach will typically require unmetered connections for Fibre to the Cabinet installations, part of the infrastructure that is required to deliver broadband to their clients’ homes and businesses. These cabinets can sometimes be damaged through road traffic accidents or vandalism.

Openreach told us that they can usually complete their repair work in two to three days but that securing a reconnection from us was taking much longer, forcing them to use an interim battery solution that needed to be replaced up to three times per day.

We made a commitment to work together to develop and trial a new process that would see us reconnect these units in a timeframe that was more acceptable to Openreach.

The trial was successful and we now have a process in place to ensure that reconnections are completed more quickly. We plan to roll this process out for all telecommunications providers with assets in our area during 2019.

Openreach has indicated that they are pleased with the response they received from all DNOs via the ICE process. We invited a representative from Openreach to share their experience at our Connections Customer Forum in April 2019, where they commended the actions we have taken to resolve their issue. We look forward to building closer relationships with Openreach and customers like them and to working together to understand how best we can support them.

Openreach said...

“

“

It’s critical for Openreach to have an open and constructive relationship with Distribution Network Operators (DNOs). We’re extremely pleased with the proactive engagement we’ve had with NPG over the last year. Working together, we’ve identified a new process for dealing with knockdowns of Telecoms Fibre Cabinets which should improve electrical reconnection times and therefore reduce telecoms end customer outages. We welcome the steps NPG has taken to recognise Metered and Un-Metered cabinets require the same level of support for our CPs and end customers.

Rob Williams, General Manager
Openreach, at our Connections Customer Forum, April 2019



ACTION

5.1

ENABLING COMPETITION

Self-service adoption agreements for ICPs

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will develop, trial and if the trial is successful, implement a new self-service adoption agreement process for ICPs.	ICPs will be able to create their own asset adoption agreements using simple agreed templates and submit them to Northern Powergrid for legal completion, further minimising the connection input services we are required to provide.	New ICP self-service adoption agreements implemented. Number of self-service adoption agreements completed and ICP feedback.	All	ICP	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓

We created a new template that allows ICPs to self-serve and create their own asset adoption agreements.
- ✓

The new process reduces our input services and streamlines the process for ICPs.
- ✓

29 asset adoption agreements have been submitted to us for legal completion using the new self-service process.

We remain committed to supporting fair and open competition and our dedicated team continues to work with ICPs to minimise our input services and extend the scope of work they can offer their clients.

In line with this commitment, we developed a new process where ICPs can complete their own asset adoption agreements and submit them to us for legal completion.

For every new site, whether it is a single street light connection or a new housing development, ICPs are required to enter

into an adoption agreement with us. Previously, we would create adoption agreements and supply them to ICPs on request. To streamline and speed up the process, we created a new template which allows ICPs to produce their own asset adoption agreements.

Using the new template, ICPs need only to complete a few details bespoke to the site concerned and make a declaration that the works have been completed in such a way as to meet our adoption standards. The agreement can then be submitted to us for legal completion.

Following a successful trial with GTC, the ICP who requested the change, we rolled out the process to all ICPs and IDNOs in our region. We introduced the process at our ICP Seminar and then followed this up with a brief to ICPs active in our region.

Since August 2019, 29 asset adoption agreements using the new template and self-service process have been submitted to us for legal completion. ICPs agree that it has streamlined and simplified the process of entering into an asset adoption agreement with Northern Powergrid.



ACTION

5.2

ENABLING COMPETITION

Legal Agreements for IDNOs

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will implement a new process to enable IDNOs to accept an agreement by signing it electronically.	The process will become quicker and more streamlined.	New process implemented. Number of documents submitted electronically.	All	ICP	Completed early

Outcomes and benefits

- ✓

We implemented a process that allows not only IDNOs but also ICPs to submit legal agreements to us electronically rather than sending them through the post.
- ✓

110 bilateral connection agreements and 112 adoption agreements have been submitted to us electronically for signature.

In line with our strategy, we seek to engage with all stakeholders whose feedback generates an action in our work plan to ensure what we have delivered has met their expectations. When we contacted GTC to discuss the activities we had taken to deliver action 5.1, GTC made a further request, asking us to allow them to submit agreements to us electronically for signature.

We added a commitment to our 2018/19 ICE work plan at the mid-year point to implement a new process that would allow both IDNOs and ICPs to complete, scan and submit bilateral connection agreements, adoption agreements and any other

legal agreements to us electronically, rather than sending printed copies through the post. This action makes the process quicker and easier for both ICPs and IDNOs by minimising the input services that we are required to provide and so we acted quickly to deliver this benefit as early as possible.

We briefed attendees at our ICP Seminar about the change and since the action was delivered in November 2018, a total of 222 legal agreements have been submitted to us electronically.



ACTION

6.1

INNOVATION

Better technical guidance for generators

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will publish technical guidance for generators on how to go about making a connection application for hybrid generation-storage site.	Generators will have access to improved technical guidance and be better informed about how to make a connection application for hybrid generation-storage sites.	Guidance published. Document downloads and feedback received.	EHV HV	DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓ We developed a new guidance note for generators on how to apply for a connection for a hybrid generation/storage site.
- ✓ Since its publication the technical guidance note has been downloaded 122 times.

Customers are increasingly looking to connect new types and different combinations of technologies to our network. We have a responsibility to keep up-to-date with emerging technologies and new commercial arrangements and to give our customers the tools and information they need to navigate the connections process.

Our team is working hard to understand the needs of our customers and to support them whatever their requirements. In response to a request from one of our stakeholders, we said we would develop a new technical guidance note for generators which explains how they should go about making an application for a connection to a hybrid generation/storage site.

This includes the technical parameters so that when customers decide to apply for this type of connection, they have a clearer understanding of the process and the information they are required to provide to us.

The guidance note was completed to target and published on our website in March 2019. Throughout its development, we engaged extensively with the stakeholder whose feedback generated the action. That stakeholder reviewed the document and provided valuable feedback, which further informed both our approach and the information we included in the final version of the document.

✎ The technical guidance note is available on our website at: www.northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/4769.pdf



ACTION

6.2

INNOVATION

Our transition to a DSO

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will continue to engage with stakeholders on our vision and strategy for our transition to a DSO.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have the opportunity to engage, share their views and shape future outputs.	Vision and strategy shared. Stakeholder feedback.	All	M DG	Completed to target

Outcomes and target measures

- ✓ We have engaged with our connections stakeholders to ensure they are kept informed about our DSO transition and the opportunities it will bring.
- ✓ We sought feedback to inform our strategy and approach and gave them opportunities to shape our plans.

Our stakeholders said...

“Northern Powergrid has done a really good job of explaining what DSO actually means in practice for its customers - the DSO v1.0 publication was a useful explanation of your plans and Northern Powergrid customers should have a clear idea of what they can expect and when, in key areas.”

Graham Ault, Executive Director
Smarter Grid Solutions

The UK energy industry is going through a significant period of change and moving towards a smarter, more flexible energy system.

Our customer-led transition to become a DSO is now well underway and we are committed to keeping our stakeholders informed and involved as our vision and strategy continues to evolve.

Historically, DNOs have been responsible for facilitating connections and keeping the lights on. However, the responsibilities of a DSO will extend far beyond that and, in the world we envisage, we will be responsible for the integrity of the system and for facilitating the operation of energy markets. It is important that we look at ways in which we can balance demand and generation to offer new solutions that include customer flexibility alongside more traditional options of network flexibility and reinforcement.

Throughout the 2018/19 ICE plan year, we ensured our connections customers and stakeholders were involved and had opportunities to share their views with us and help shape our strategy and approach. Our DSO transition has been on the agenda

at all our Connections Customer Forums. We held a Stakeholder Summit in December 2018, which included a stakeholder validation phase for our DSO development plan with the opportunity to provide feedback.

Following this consultation, we published version 1.0 of our DSO transition plan in December 2018. The plan sets out what we are doing now to become a DSO, our immediate plans and what we are going to do next. It also covers our emerging thinking on the potential pathways out to 2030 that will enable us to build a smarter, more flexible grid designed around the needs of our customers. We asked for feedback from stakeholders to help challenge our thinking and help address the outstanding questions that will ultimately influence our approach.

There was also a dedicated DSO stakeholder event in January 2019 in London. We published a report summarising the feedback we received at this event and it is being used to inform the next iteration of our DSO plan, which is scheduled for release in summer 2019.

The work we have completed so far has seen us engage with a broad range of connections stakeholders and customers and their feedback has been fundamental to the development of our initial plans. Going forward we will ensure they are kept informed and have opportunities to contribute to the conversation as we transition to a DSO.

✎ Version 1.0 of our DSO transition plan is available on our website at: www.northernpowergrid.com/asset/0/document/4682.pdf

Our engagement with flexibility service providers

Action	The outcome	Measures of performance, impact and success	Voltage	Market segments	Status
We will engage with flexibility service providers to understand any improvements to our connections process that are required to support the continued growth of distributed energy resources such as storage, flexible generation and demand side response.	Stakeholders will be able to engage with our experts and can influence and inform changes to our connection process.	Stakeholder engagement session delivered. Stakeholder feedback.	All	<div>M</div> <div>DG</div>	<div>✓</div> <div>Completed to target</div>

Outcomes and target measures

✓ We engaged with our connections stakeholders and held a workshop where we informed them about our approach to the provision of flexibility services and the opportunities it could bring.

We recognise the important role new and connected customers will play in our transition to becoming a DSO, in particular their ability to provide flexibility services.

With an increasing number of flexibility service providers cultivating new ideas and bringing new technologies to the market, it is important that we understand what we need to do to facilitate the continued growth of distributed energy resources, including demand side response (DSR), energy storage and flexible generation.

In line with the commitment we made, we hosted a dedicated flexibility workshop at our Connections Customer Forum in November 2018. We wanted to ensure our connections stakeholders were aware of our approach and next steps and had opportunities to inform that approach, if appropriate. We provided those who took part with a full explanation of how flexibility fits into our DSO development plan. We gave a high level overview of our 2019 flexibility plan roadmap and initiated a discussion on any changes required to our connections process to support the continued growth of DER. We also explained how we could help customers to access the on-boarding process, should they wish to provide flexibility services at some point in the future.

During the latter part of the ICE plan year, we also engaged directly with six of our largest customers to explore how they might be able to provide DSR and engaged the services of a flexibility provider platform. The platform acts as an introductory service between us and any potential flexibility service providers, helping them to navigate through the on-boarding process of becoming a provider.

Our stakeholders said...

“

KiWi attended a number of NPg stakeholder events over the course of 2018 where we were able to gain a good understanding of their plans to implement flexibility services across their network. The provision of DSO flexibility services will provide an additional revenue stream to the business case of prospective connectees, allowing a greater amount of flexible generation to come onto the system.

Quentin Scrimshire
KiWi Power

We engaged with other flexibility service providers and worked with them to progress our end-to-end process roadmap and ensure our flexibility procurement method is optimised for both providers of flexibility and our wider customer base. These are the first steps towards a much bigger objective, which is to create a roadmap that will ensure flexibility operators can provide these services successfully. It is critical that we keep our connections customers involved in this process, so they are aware of the potential opportunities and can make expressions of interest whenever suitable for them.

We also launched our Customer Flexibility Plan in this year, which is our first step towards integrating customer flexibility into our business as an alternative to network solutions.

📄 More information on flexibility and the work we are currently doing can be found at <https://www.northernpowergrid.com/DSO>

Explain Market Research



Executive summary

As part of their Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) programme, Northern Powergrid commissioned Explain to conduct a research program to gather stakeholder feedback in relation to the current and future connections service. Fieldwork was undertaken in April 2019.

As part of the programme, 317 major connections customers were interviewed from market segments covered by the ICE incentive – metered, unmetered, distributed generation and Independent Connection Providers (ICPs).

Interviews were conducted through a telephone and online survey; those who were not contactable over the telephone were emailed an online version of the survey to ensure the consultation was broad and inclusive.

The survey consisted of the following key sections;

- Looking back – a review of the impact of changes made by Northern Powergrid over the last 12 months
- Looking forward – a review of Northern Powergrid’s proposed 2019/20 connections work plan, measuring endorsement for each action
- Communication and engagement – gathering feedback on the overall level of communication and engagement with Northern Powergrid in relation to connections

Explain conducted 301 telephone interviews and 16 online surveys engaging with the following stakeholder groups;

Overall	Generation	ICP	Metered	Unmetered
317	44 (14%)	23 (7%)	232 (73%)	18 (6%)

Looking Back

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



First of all, respondents were asked to consider whether the connections service provided by Northern Powergrid had seen any change during the last 12 months;

- 59% of respondents stated that their connections service had stayed the same
- 24% felt that connection service had improved with 21% stating it had gotten better and 3% stating it had gotten much better

Respondents were also asked whether the way Northern Powergrid engaged and communicated with its customers had seen any change over the last 12 months;

- 55% of respondents stated that Northern Powergrid’s communication and engagement had stayed the same
- 36% felt that the communication and engaged had gotten better (30%) or gotten much better (6%)

Looking Forward

All respondents were asked to review each action from Northern Powergrid’s Incentive on Connections Engagement Research for 2019/2020 and indicate their endorsement or otherwise. Overall endorsement for all actions suggested by Northern Powergrid was high ranging from 92% to 98%.

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

	Overall	Generation	ICP	Metered	Unmetered
1.1 EV charging guide	95.40%	97.60%	100.00%	94.10%	100.00%
1.2 Launch SafeDig webpage	94.90%	100.00%	100.00%	93.00%	100.00%
1.3 Connections contact details	98.40%	100.00%	100.00%	97.80%	100.00%
1.4 Training on network availability heat maps	97.00%	100.00%	100.00%	96.80%	88.90%
2.1 LV self serve budget tool	92.10%	97.30%	100.00%	90.60%	88.90%
3.1 Engage with stakeholders who deal with NPg via a contractor	93.60%	95.20%	100.00%	92.60%	94.10%
3.2 Improvements to connections surgery experience	94.30%	97.60%	100.00%	93.90%	83.30%
3.3 LA connections forums	94.40%	94.90%	100.00%	93.80%	94.40%
4.1 Engagement around roll out of EV	97.90%	100.00%	100.00%	97.10%	100.00%



Explain Market Research



4.4 Updates on developments in Statement of Works process and Appendix G trials	97.30%	97.60%	95.20%	97.20%	100.00%
5.1 Allow ICPs to undertake street lighting overhead pole transfers	94.80%	88.20%	91.30%	95.90%	100.00%
6.1 DSO transition engagement	97.50%	97.40%	100.00%	97.00%	100.00%

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

	Overall	Generation	ICP	Metered	Unmetered
Base size	294	39	23	214	18
Yes	95.58%	87.18%	100.00%	96.26%	100.00%
No	4.42%	12.82%	-	3.74%	-

Respondents were also asked to consider the customer service provided by Northern Powergrid in comparison to other organisations in relation to connections;

- Overall 37% felt they received a better customer service from Northern Powergrid
- 48% found the customer service to be similar

Findings were reflective of results collected by Northern Powergrid through the Connections Customer Forum, with endorsement ranging from 62% to 98%, and overall 71% stating that Northern Powergrid had a comprehensive Looking Forward work plan.

Overall endorsement for the work plan was also found in the additional online survey responses, with 86% stating overall Northern Powergrid had a comprehensive Looking Forward work plan, and endorsement for individual activities ranging from 88% to 100%.

Communication and engagement

Overall, 91% of respondents agreed that Northern Powergrid engaged in joint discussions with its' stakeholders.

	Overall	Generation	ICP	Metered	Unmetered
Base size	271	40	20	193	18
Yes	90.77%	87.50%	100.00%	89.64%	100.00%
No	9.23%	12.50%	-	10.36%	-



Considerations

There was a clear sense amongst customers that the proposed work plan is comprehensive, with a majority endorsement for each action within the plan across core fieldwork and additional online surveys.

- It is therefore recommended that Northern Powergrid continue with the 2019/20 work plan, knowing it has underpinned the needs and requirements of customers

Consideration must also be made to the customer experience over the last 12 months

- From customer reflection areas for improvement mainly focused on overall communication and response from Northern Powergrid in relation to connections; there was particular comment around the need for the provision of a single point of contact
- Northern Powergrid must ensure these are key areas of focus in day to day operations, but that these are addressed and maintained areas in delivering the 2019/20 work plan

A small number of customers also provided suggestions of additional activities to include in the 2019/20 work plan, these included; considerations for costing (particularly in regards to avoiding costs relating to obtaining a quote), additional information sharing during connection projects and a single point of contact for connections projects

- Therefore Northern Powergrid should consider the implementation of activities to tackle these key areas

In terms of engagement and communication, it was clear customers expect and support the plans for continued enhanced engagement

- Customers who were less satisfied with communication and engagement to date would like to see greater responsiveness and proactive communication from Northern Powergrid. Some respondents also commented that they were unaware of connections surgeries but would find them useful and there were several comments in direct support of virtual surgeries going forward
- Metered customers also demonstrated a desire for more discussion with Northern Powergrid in relation to the connections process and pricing



Contact us about our plans



0800 011 3433



ICE@northernpowergrid.com



www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected