



Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

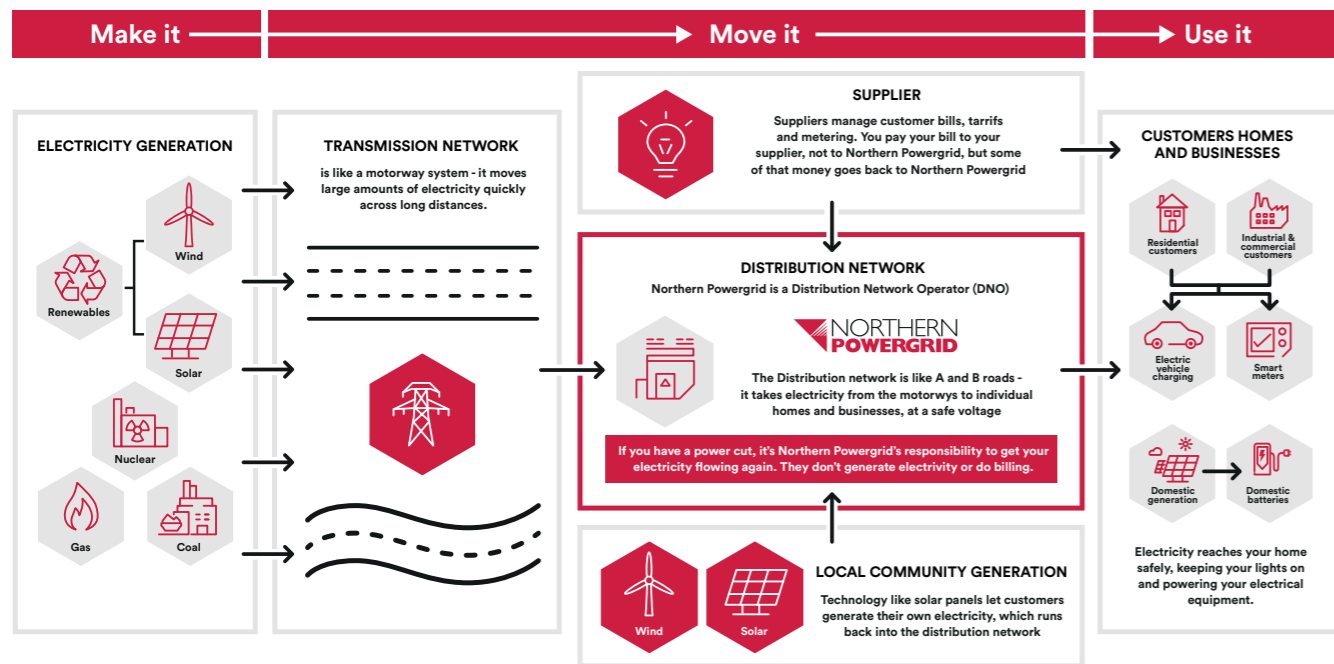
2021/22 submission

What we do

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

Our network of more than 60,000 miles of overhead power lines and underground cables spans from the Scottish borders to northern Lincolnshire and delivers a safe and reliable supply of electricity to 3.9 million homes and businesses.

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



Foreword



A lot has happened since our last Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) submission.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant and long-lasting changes, highlighting how essential it is to connect digitally to friends, family and colleagues. As the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire, we believe one of our most important jobs is connecting people to the electricity network and to each other.

At the same time, action on climate change has accelerated, with the UK ban on petrol and diesel vehicles brought forward to 2030,¹ a record year for renewables,² the longest stint the UK has gone without generation from coal since the industrial revolution³ and a comprehensive set of Government policies, as set out in the Ten Point Plan, Energy White Paper and most recently, the commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 78 per cent by 2035.⁴

Locally, we've seen climate coalitions form in the North East and in Yorkshire and the Humber,⁵ 80 per cent of our region's councils declare a climate emergency⁶ and many of our stakeholders setting ambitious decarbonisation targets, with some looking to reach net zero as early as 2030.

New connections will be critical to achieving our decarbonisation goals and to enabling a whole-system approach – where electricity, gas, heat and transport infrastructure act in a coordinated way, to underpin a sustainable energy transformation that can contribute to our region's economic growth.

As the DNO, today's decisions will decide our region's net zero future.

To be an enabler of this change, we will need to invest in the capability of our network and deliver smarter, more

flexible solutions that support the net zero transition. We need to do this while delivering a cost-effective and efficient connections service that meets the needs of all our customers, including those who are vulnerable.

We recently announced that we will invest an additional £53m in the remainder of this RIIO-ED1 business plan period as part of a national green recovery scheme to create additional network capacity, bring forward green growth projects and stimulate the post-pandemic economy.

Our progress

I am proud to work with a team who have continued to focus on service improvement and being there for our customers and, in what has been a challenging year for all of us, I'm pleased to report that we delivered all the actions in our 2020/21 ICE plan. In particular we:

- established a local working group for customers affected by the Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme (ALoMCP), playing our part in ensuring network resilience in the years to come;
- engaged with stakeholders on the decarbonisation of heat and transport;
- supported growth of our region's Community Energy projects;
- worked with our stakeholders to develop a Charter in partnership with Northern Gas Networks (NGN), setting out our joint commitments to help them develop and implement local area energy plans; and
- embarked on a comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement to inform our Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES).

Looking to the future

To shape our plan around our customers' priorities, we have undertaken a broad and inclusive programme of engagement. This has enabled us to develop an ICE Looking Forward work plan that we are confident addresses our stakeholders' needs. Some highlights include:

- establishing a Low Carbon Technology (LCT) local working group to provide clarity on the rules and processes for low carbon connections as they evolve;
- helping to address a recognised knowledge gap in the LCT installer market (which could affect net zero targets) by developing technical guidance and resources; and
- engaging with stakeholders on our Connection Offer Expenses (CoE) to help them understand how, when and why these fees are applied.

This has been an intense year of engagement and I thank all who have contributed. Your feedback holds us to account, informs our business priorities and ultimately, improves the service we provide.

Patrick Erwin
Patrick Erwin
 POLICY AND MARKETS DIRECTOR

¹ UK government, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, November 2020
² International Energy Agency, Renewables 2020, November 2020
³ Record-breaking 2020 becomes greenest year for Britain's electricity, National Grid ESO
⁴ UK enshrines new target in law to slash emissions by 78% by 2035, GOV.UK
⁵ North East England Climate Coalition and Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission formed in 2021
⁶ Northern Powergrid A Framework for Decarbonisation

An introduction to ICE



The purpose

At the last price control review, our regulator Ofgem introduced a new mechanism, the Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE), to encourage DNOs to deliver a consistently high level of service to customers seeking new connections.

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

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

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




The aim

The aim of ICE, as outlined in Ofgem's guidance⁷ is to provide DNOs with an incentive to deliver good customer service that is associated with competitive markets. This could be by improving the timeliness of connections, extending the provision of available information or enhancing overall customer service.

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

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

Table 1: Relevant Market Segments for ICE

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

Service improvements driven by stakeholders

ICE gives our connections customers and stakeholders the opportunity to drive our service improvement plans.

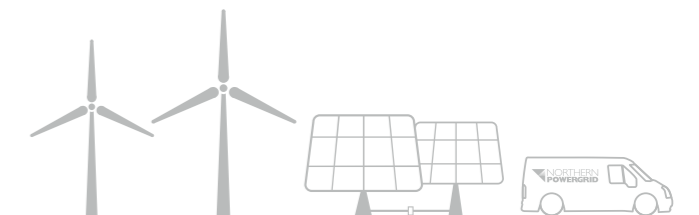
In April each year, following a comprehensive programme of stakeholder consultation, we publish a detailed work plan of service improvement commitments for customers operating in the relevant market segments. We will also include actions that benefit Independent Connections Providers (ICPs) and Independent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

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

Our ICE submission for 2021/22 consists of two distinct sections: a Looking Forward report and a Looking Back report.

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

In our Looking Back report, we explain how we implemented our engagement strategy and delivered the commitments we made during the 2020/21 ICE plan year. We also share some of what our stakeholders have told us about their experience of working with us and the actions and outcomes we have delivered.



Meeting the criteria

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

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

 **93%**

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

Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April/May 2021

 **84%**

of connections customers surveyed agreed that we engage effectively with our stakeholders and facilitate joint discussions.

Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April/May 2021

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

Our annual ICE survey provides evidence to support this, with 84 per cent of those who responded agreeing that we engage effectively with our connections 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 apply a stakeholder-led process when developing our ICE work plan that meets Ofgem's requirements and gives our stakeholders plenty of opportunities to influence our plans. It also forms a key part of our wider stakeholder engagement activities, providing us with important insights that are helping to shape the future priorities and plans of our business.

Our ICE Looking Forward work plan is intended to address the key priorities and challenges our major works connections customers have identified. We set forecast completion dates for each of our ICE actions to ensure we remain on track but, in each case, our commitment is to deliver all of those actions within the course of the 2021/22 ICE plan year.

We have now delivered more than 160 service improvement actions through ICE and believe that this proves the incentive is working well and continues to add value.

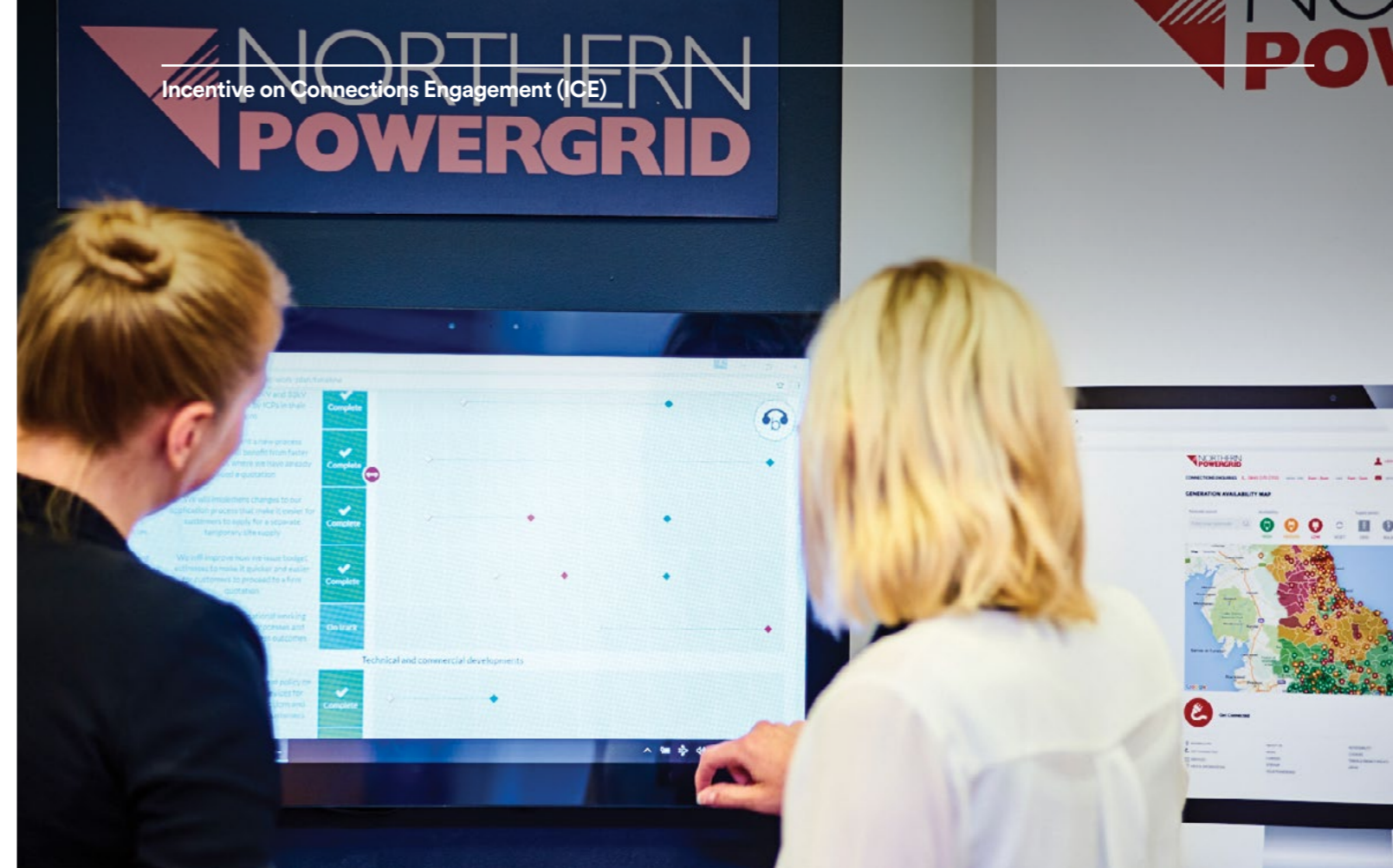
The activities we have undertaken, backed by our robust strategy for connections stakeholder engagement, gives us confidence that our ICE Looking Forward work plan will address the key areas for improvement our stakeholders have identified.

Our customers agree, with 93 per cent of those who responded to our survey stating that we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities for 2021/22 that meets the needs of our connections stakeholders.

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

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

Our stakeholders are able to track our progress and assess the effectiveness of our actions using our online ICE work plan⁹, which is updated whenever we close an action and provides links to useful online resources and outputs.



Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

NORTHERN POWERGRID

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

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

This year, we recorded 107 comments from our connections customers and stakeholders. This was less than in previous years but still represented a significant amount of stakeholder feedback that was addressed through this process. Only 18 per cent of that feedback led to an action in our 2021/22 ICE work plan, as we were able to address the rest through other channels.

To ensure we had correctly understood their comments and that the action and outcomes we were proposing would address the issue they had raised, we contacted all those stakeholders whose feedback had generated an action in our ICE Looking Forward work plan. All those we were able to speak to confirmed that they supported our proposals and endorsed our actions.

This year, as we received less direct feedback from stakeholders to inform our ICE Looking Forward plan than in previous years, we added an extra layer of engagement activity and assurance to our already robust process.

In March 2021, we issued a short, online survey to >6,500 connections stakeholders, inviting their feedback on our connections service and any service improvement actions they would like to see included in our 2021/22 ICE plan.

Explain, an independent market research provider, conducted in-depth interviews with thirteen major works connections customers who were willing to provide feedback on our service and any potential areas for improvement. These interviews were also an opportunity to explore the topics highlighted by Ofgem during its ICE consultation¹⁰ with our customers. Learning from this activity has informed the actions in our ICE Looking Forward work plan.

We finalised our ICE Looking Forward plan and consulted with our stakeholders to seek endorsement of our actions and any further feedback that could inform this, or future iterations of our ICE plan. We contacted >6,200 connections stakeholders via email and conducted telephone interviews with 125 connections customers.

This comprehensive consultation exercise gives us confidence that our 2021/22 ICE Looking Forward work plan has been informed and endorsed by a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders. However, we will continue to engage with them to ensure we are meeting their expectations and delivering the actions and outcomes they expect.

⁸ Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) Guidance Document

⁹ northernpowergrid.com/ice-work-plan/

¹⁰ ofgem.gov.uk/system/files/docs/2020/12/final_ice_decision_letter_2020_1.pdf



The Looking Back criteria

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

Our 2020/21 ICE submission¹¹ included a detailed Looking Forward section where we described our strategy for connections engagement and the service improvement commitments we were undertaking in the year.

In this, our 2021/22 ICE submission, we report on how well we delivered the commitments we made and explain how we 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.

In what proved to be an intensive year for engagement, we implemented our robust strategy to ensure the views of our connections stakeholders were heard and acted upon.

With more customers and colleagues working from home, we scaled up our digital engagement and delivered connections forums, events and working groups online. We also delivered our first co-creation workshop, where those attending had the opportunity to help shape the functionality and future use cases for our AutoDesign¹² tool.

Our engineers continued to deliver the pre-application conversations that our customers tell us are so important to them when making decisions about how and where to connect and we introduced more surgery appointments to allow more of these discussions to take place.

We continued to facilitate the targeted engagement forums that allow our stakeholders to focus on the topics that are most important to them and proactively sought feedback on our customers' current and future connections needs to inform our ICE plan and longer-term RIIO-ED2 plans and priorities.

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 2020, we published our ICE work plan for 2020/21, which consisted of 17 service improvement actions. It was developed together with our connections stakeholders and the actions in the work plan were derived from their feedback and suggestions. In October 2020, we added one further action to our 2020/21 ICE work plan, making a total of 18 service improvement commitments for the year.

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

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

We are pleased to report that we completed all 18 actions in our 2020/21 ICE plan by the deadline of 31 March 2021, and in line with our forecast completion dates.

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 actions and outcomes we will deliver and the targets we have set that will allow us, Ofgem and our stakeholders to assess our performance.

By the end of March 2021, we had delivered all 18 actions in our 2020/21 ICE work plan and sought feedback from those stakeholders whose comments had generated the actions in the plan. This allowed us to close the loop and ensure the outcomes we had delivered met their expectations.

The Looking Back section of this submission provides evidence to support the successful delivery of the 18 actions in our 2020/21 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.

We proactively seek feedback throughout the course of the year to inform the development of our ICE plans. Where we identify feedback that is suitable for ICE, we engage with the stakeholder who raised the issue to agree the outcomes and include the action in our ICE plan at the mid-year point.

Where improvements can be made or issues resolved through a change to our BAU practices or by contact from our team, we do not wait to include it as an action in our ICE plan, we deliver the change as soon as possible to the benefit of our customers.

 **160**

service improvement actions delivered through ICE

Figure correct May 2021

¹¹ [northernpowergrid.com/downloads/5550](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/downloads/5550)
¹² [northernpowergrid.com/auto-design](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/auto-design)

Introduction to our Looking Forward report



In this section:

Our engagement strategy

Developing our ICE plan

Our stakeholders support our plans

Our 2021/22 ICE Looking Forward work plan

Our 2021/22 actions

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

In a year that saw us embark on an ambitious and far-reaching programme of engagement to inform our RIIO-ED2 business plan and shape the future connections service we offer, our stakeholders encouraged us to focus our efforts for this year's ICE plan on actions that would improve our current service.

Looking forward

Our ICE Looking Forward work plan consists of 12 service improvement actions intended to address the key priorities and areas for improvement our stakeholders have identified. We have set forecast completion dates and performance targets for these actions but in each case, our commitment is to deliver all those actions during the course of the 2021/22 ICE plan year.

We have actions in our plan to improve the provision of information we make available, including developing an end-to-end major connections process guide and updating our guidance on unmetered connections. We will also be engaging with our stakeholders on our Connection Offer Expenses to help them understand how, when and why these fees are applied.

Supporting the low carbon transition

Net zero targets are driving a significant increase in the uptake of heat pumps and Electric Vehicles (EVs) and we want to make it as easy as possible for customers to connect these LCTs to our network.

One of the actions in our ICE plan this year is to establish a working group where our stakeholders can seek clarity on the rules and processes for new low carbon connections as they evolve. It will also equip us with the information we need to feedback the views of local stakeholders to the national working group, should they require us to do so.

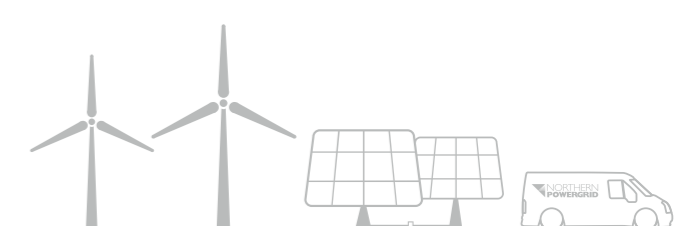
We will be helping to address an issue highlighted by stakeholders during our engagement this year. LCT installers told us they needed our support to bridge a recognised knowledge gap that could affect their ability to reach net zero targets. We are responding with a commitment to develop a technical reference library and online knowledge-sharing platform, where they can ask questions and receive answers from us and their peers.

We will also continue to engage with our stakeholders on our transition to becoming a Distribution System Operator (DSO) and what it will mean for them as connections customers.

Stakeholder-drive service improvements

To develop an ICE plan that was shaped around our customers' priorities, we undertook a broad and inclusive programme of engagement. We sought feedback to inform our ICE plan and then refined our propositions in line with our stakeholders' feedback.

The robust process we employed gives us confidence that the actions we are proposing this year will address the key areas for improvement our stakeholders have identified. However, we are always looking at how we can do things better and so we will be continuing to engage with them and, if necessary, will develop our ICE plan in line with their feedback.



Our engagement strategy

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

We encourage our stakeholders to tell us what we do well and what we could be doing better. We give them plenty of opportunities to do so at the events we host, the monthly surveys and customer service research we commission and directly, through their interactions with our team. Our strategy is always evolving however, and this year we had to adapt our approach to respond to challenges presented by the pandemic.

Scaling up

With more of our colleagues and customers working from home, we scaled up our digital engagement. Online workshops and discussions replaced our usual face-to-face meetings and customer events and surgeries were delivered digitally or over the telephone.

We stepped up social media presence to reach more stakeholders, increasing followers across all channels. We also launched a new website portal to give stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to our RIIO-ED2 business planning process.

Visit: engage.northernpowergrid.com

Innovation at the forefront

Our Innovation Festival showcased some of our most innovative projects including AutoDesign and our DFES data visualisation tool. The sessions were well received with more than 275 stakeholders taking part in a series of events that took place throughout August and September 2020.

Targeted engagement

A key part of our engagement strategy is facilitating the targeted engagement forums that enable our stakeholders to focus on the issues most important to them.

We were pioneering in our approach to supporting customers affected by the ALoMCP, establishing a local working group



We scaled up our social media presence to reach more stakeholders.¹³



that gave stakeholders a channel to seek clarity on the process. Together, we developed a suite of materials that have been used by us, National Grid and other DNOs to raise awareness and drive applications to the scheme.

Participation in our DG Owner Operator forum has increased two-fold since we began delivering the sessions online. These forums give generation owners the opportunity to engage with our operational experts on a regular basis and continue to be well received by all those taking part.

A series of targeted workshops held in the year gave LCT installers an opportunity to get on their 'soapbox' and tell us what is working in the connections process and what is not. Learning from those sessions informed our approach to engaging with these stakeholders and some of the actions in our ICE Looking Forward plan.

We have been engaging with our stakeholders on decarbonisation of heating and transport, two of the most important changes required to meet net zero targets and we hosted a series of Community Energy focused workshops where we signposted the support that is available to these stakeholders when seeking a connection to our network.

User experience driving change

We hosted our first co-creation workshop and invited regular users of our award-winning AutoDesign¹⁴ tool to take part. The workshop was an opportunity to engage with a diverse group of AutoDesign users and stakeholders that included Local Authorities, consultants from the Highways Agency, low carbon installers, installers and ICPs. Learning from this workshop and our engagement with stakeholders on AutoDesign throughout the course of the ICE plan year is informing our thinking on future functionality and use cases for the tool.

A collaborative approach

We hosted a series of local energy planning forums this year with Northern Gas Networks (NGN). Our stakeholders told us that they appreciated the opportunity to engage with both network operators and one of the key outputs from these sessions was a Charter with NGN that sets out our joint commitments to support stakeholders in developing and implementing their local energy plans.

Upfront support and advice

Our customers continue to tell us how much they value the ability to talk to our engineers before making an application and we have extended the scope of our monthly connections surgeries to enable more of these conversations to take place. We will also be updating our connections contact guide so that customers can identify the right person to talk to and benefit from our engineers local knowledge of the network, when making decisions about how and where to connect.

Continually working to improve our approach

We will continue to develop our engagement approach in response to what our stakeholders are telling us about the ways they want to engage and interact with us.

With restrictions beginning to lift, we have been talking to our stakeholders to understand their views and preferences. Whilst some told us they prefer online interactions, it is clear there is still an appetite for in-person meetings and events and we will look to restart them as soon as we are able to do so safely.



An embedded approach



We have a clearly defined strategy for engaging with our connections stakeholders that aligns to our overarching strategy and approach.

Our approach to engagement is proactive and purposeful. It leads to meaningful actions that we report on regularly so that our stakeholders can assess our success and, if necessary, hold us to account.

We set clear objectives and targets for any commitments we make and engage with our stakeholders throughout the process to ensure we have met their expectations and can continually improve. Our connections engagement strategy and the process we employ when forming our ICE plan aligns to this overarching approach.

Stakeholder principles

Our stakeholder principles guide our approach to engagement. Our connections strategy is underpinned by these core principles:



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



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



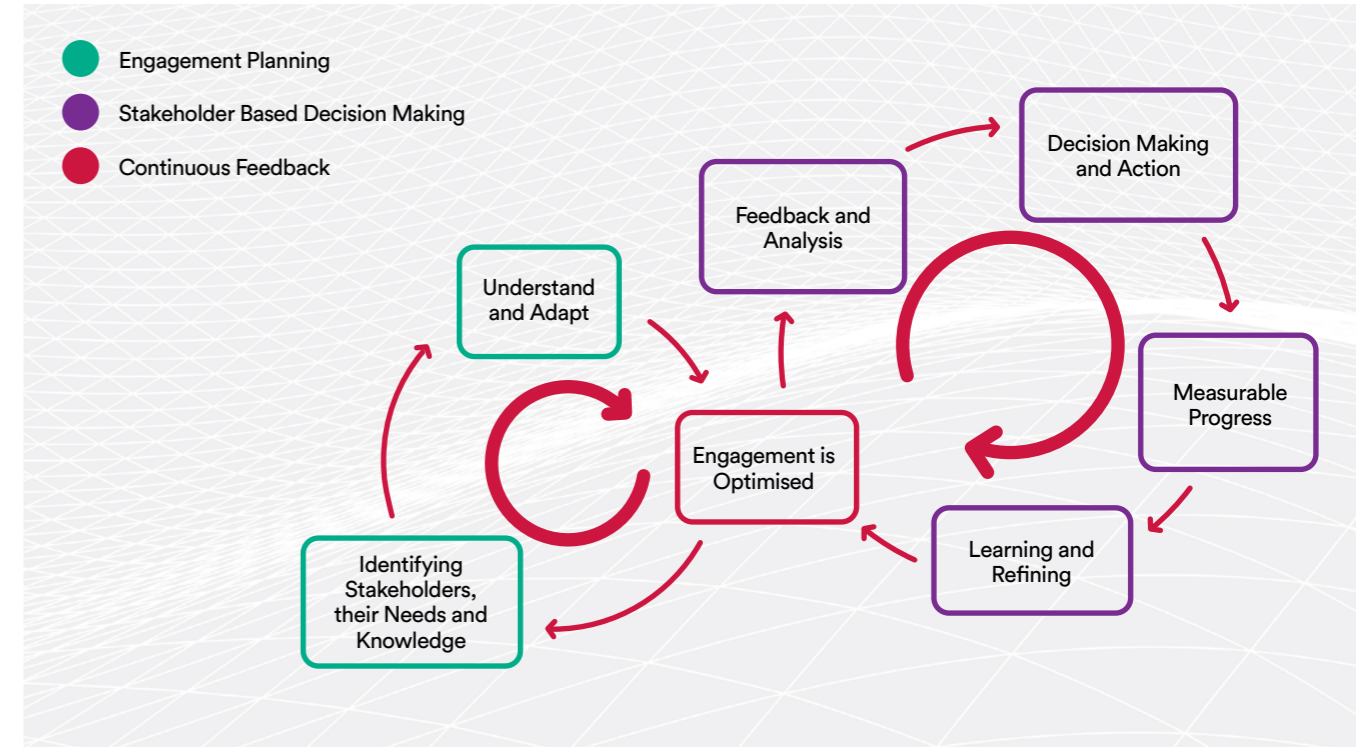
Open and transparent – explaining what, why and how we work. Encouraging active participation from customers and stakeholders to aid planning and decision making.



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



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



Enduring engagement channels

Our enduring engagement channels are embedded and form the backbone of a strategy that seeks to be as inclusive as possible.

Now in its third year, our Stakeholder Summit is a key date in our annual engagement calendar. COVID-19 restrictions meant that the summit was delivered digitally this year. However, the event was still a resounding success with more than 250 stakeholders joining virtually to hear from industry experts and energy leaders, including Lord Debden, Chair of the UK's Climate Change Committee.

Our Stakeholder Panel and Social Issues Expert Group have been in place for a number of years now and continue to challenge and add value to our strategic plans and specific programmes of work.

This year, we introduced a number of new stakeholder panels including a Citizens Panel, Future Energy Users Panel and a Community Energy Panel to ensure the views of these stakeholders are heard and integrated into our RIIO-ED2 business plan.

Overseeing all of this activity is our Consumer Engagement Group¹⁵ who are playing a key role in developing and quality assuring our RIIO-ED2 business plan. The Group's independent scrutiny and challenge (including the quality of engagement undertaken to inform the plan) is helping us to develop a RIIO-ED2 business plan that is truly customer-focussed and reflects their current and future needs.

External assurance and benchmarking

Delivering effective engagement requires us to continually monitor and assess our progress. We are proud to have achieved measurable growth this year through these awards and assessments:

- Assuring ourselves against the AA1000 stakeholder standard for the eighth year; and
- ISO55000 Accreditation, which includes assessment of our stakeholder engagement strategy.

Developing our ICE plan

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

We seek feedback throughout the course of the year, from a range of different sources including events, customer surveys, surgeries and the interactions of our team.

All the feedback we receive is recorded and acted upon as appropriate, whether that requires contact from one of our team, a change to our BAU practices or a more significant improvement action delivered through ICE. This stakeholder comments log¹⁶ is the foundation on which we build our annual ICE work plan.

We recorded 107 comments from our connections stakeholders and customers. This was less than in previous years but

still represented a significant amount of stakeholder feedback that was addressed through this process. Only 18 per cent of that feedback led to an action in our 2021/22 ICE work plan, the rest we were able to address through other channels.

The majority of feedback we recorded did not need to be addressed through the ICE process because:

- the issue could be addressed through contact from one of our team or a change to our BAU practices;
- the comment related to a non-connections issue or was specific to the individual's 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 a new technological development or commercial arrangement over which we maintain a watching brief.

Where we think a stakeholder's feedback can be addressed through ICE, we will seek to engage with the individual or group who

provided the feedback, to ensure we have understood their comments and that the action and outcomes we are proposing will fully address their needs.

We produce an ICE work plan proposal which is reviewed by senior managers and our Executive Leadership Team, who provide constructive challenge. In this way, responsibility for the delivery of our ICE commitments is shared across all our business functions.



We employ a stakeholder-led process when formulating our ICE Looking Forward plan, consisting of five key stages.

Stage 1

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

Stage 2

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

Stage 3

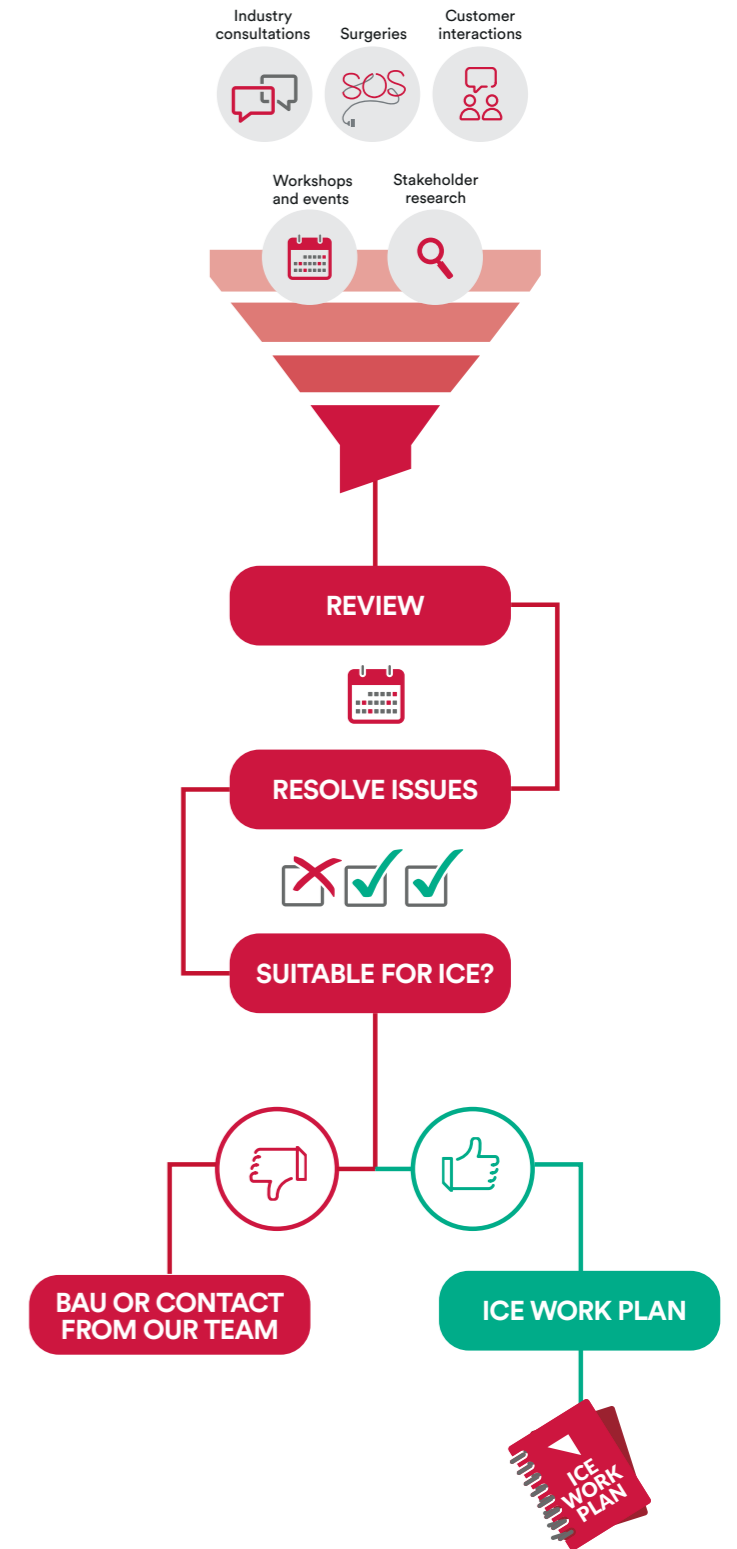
We create an ICE work plan proposal which is reviewed and challenged by senior managers and our Executive Leadership Team. Each action is assigned to an Executive sponsor, ensuring that responsibility for the delivery of our ICE commitments sits with leaders from across our business. Accountable members of our Executive Leadership Team will then assign a lead who is responsible for delivery of the ICE action.

Stage 4

We seek to engage with those stakeholders whose feedback has generated the actions in our ICE work plan to ensure we have understood their comments and that the actions and outcomes we are proposing will address their needs. We then consult with a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders to further inform and seek endorsement of our proposals.

Stage 5

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



¹⁶ We record all feedback we receive on our service in a stakeholder feedback log. We record the stakeholder's comment, where that feedback originated from, our interpretation of the issue, next steps and any interactions that have taken place. This is the foundation upon which we build our annual ICE work plans.

Our stakeholders support our plans



Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

We work hard to ensure that all our connections customers and stakeholders have opportunities to contribute to our ICE plans.

This year, we added a further layer of engagement activity and assurance to our usual process to ensure that our ICE Looking Forward work plan was informed and endorsed by a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders.

When developing our ICE plan, we first seek to engage with the stakeholders whose feedback has led to an action in our proposed work plan. We want to ensure that we have understood their feedback and that the actions and outcomes we are proposing will address the issue they have raised. These discussions help us to refine and develop our propositions.

We then consult with our stakeholders to ensure the actions we are proposing will be of benefit to a broad and inclusive range of connections stakeholders and not just the individual or group who suggested the change.

This year, in recognition of the fact we received less direct feedback from stakeholders to inform our ICE plan than in previous years, we added an extra layer of engagement activity to ensure all our customers and stakeholders had opportunities to contribute to our service improvement plans.

In March 2021, we issued a short, online survey to >6,500 connections stakeholders, inviting them to provide feedback on our

 **93%**

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

Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April/May 2021

service and any service improvement actions they would like to see included in our 2021/22 ICE plan.

We also conducted interviews with key major works customers who were willing to provide feedback on our connections service and any potential areas for improvement. These interviews were also an opportunity to explore the topics highlighted by Ofgem during its consultation on ICE with our customers and the learning from this activity informed the actions in our ICE Looking Forward work plan.

Informing our plan

- We sought **feedback** throughout the course of the ICE plan year.
- We recorded **107 comments** from stakeholders that led to actions in our proposed 2021/22 ICE plan.

NEW Refining our plan

- We **engaged** with those stakeholders whose feedback had generated actions in our ICE plan.
- We invited **>6,500** connections stakeholders to provide feedback via an online survey.
- We conducted **13 interviews** with major works customers.

Endorsing our plan

- We contacted **>6,200** connections stakeholders to notify them about publication of our ICE plan and seek further feedback.
- We conducted telephone interviews with **125** major works customers to seek endorsement of our ICE actions.

ACTION
1.1

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

End-to-end connections process guide

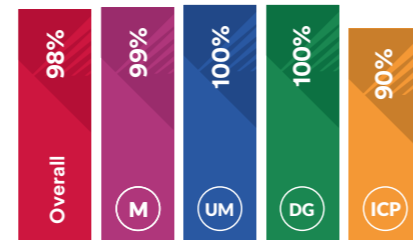


Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will develop an end-to-end connections process guide for major works customers.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the connections process, what to expect and in what timescale and know how to contact us should they need to.	Guide developed and published.	Number of guides distributed. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	31/03/22

To improve the provision of information we make available and ensure our customers have access to comprehensive and user-friendly information, we will be creating a major works connections process guide.

The guide will clearly explain the end-to-end connections process, what our customers can expect and in what timescale and how to contact us, should they need to. It will include a clear description of the responsibilities of the DNO, the customer and any third-party involved in the connections process and explain how any issues that arise can be raised and resolved.

We will be working with our stakeholders to develop the guide to ensure that it contains all the information they require and is easy to understand. The guide will be published on our website and distributed to our major works connections customers.



End-to-end connections process guide

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021



ACTION
1.2

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Get connected webpage

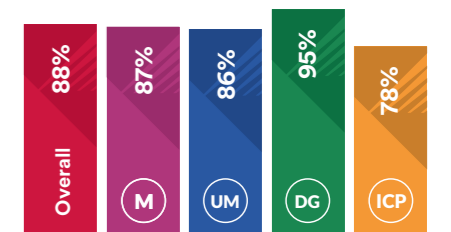


Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will make changes to our get connected homepage to improve the functionality and usability for customers.	Stakeholders will find it easier to locate and access connections information and services online.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and requirements. Website changes implemented.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	31/03/22

The get connected section of our website is the first port of call for anyone who is seeking a new connection to our network or making changes to an existing one.

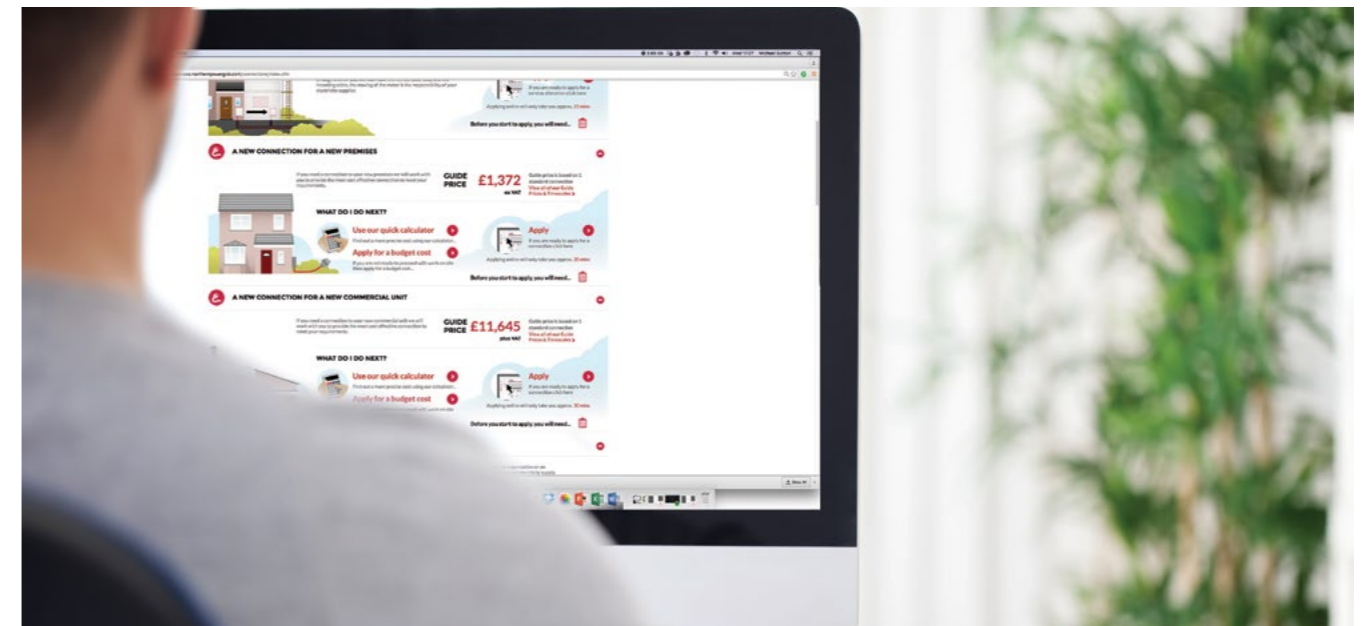
Customers can use our get connected webpage to apply for different types of connections, get a guide price and likely timescale for their project, access online tools and resources, including AutoDesign and our network availability heat maps and find information on a range of connections related topics. It is important therefore, that this online platform is simple to navigate and that the information available is comprehensive and easy to understand.

We will be engaging with stakeholders to understand their experience and requirements. We will make changes to our get connected webpage in line with their feedback that should make it quicker and easier to access connections information and services online.



Get connected webpage

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021



ACTION
1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Unmetered connections guide



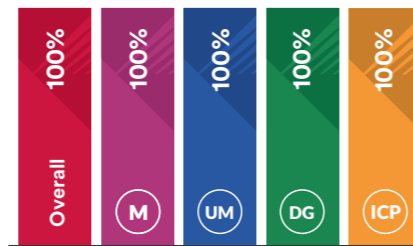
Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will update our unmetered connections guide.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the unmetered connections process, know what to expect and in what timescale and know how to contact us should they need to.	Guide updated and published.	Number of guides distributed. Stakeholder feedback.	HV LV	31/12/21

We will be updating our guidance on unmetered connections so that customers applying for this type of connection will be better informed and have clarity on the process.

An unmetered supply can be provided when installing a meter is not practical and/or the cost to do so would be disproportionate to the cost of the electricity used by the equipment installed.

The type of equipment that typically requires an unmetered supply includes street lights, traffic signals, illuminated road signs or advertisements and telecoms cabinets. However, we know that the market is evolving and we will be engaging with stakeholders to ensure that we can continue to provide a cost-effective and efficient unmetered connections service.

Our updated guide will provide clarity for customers on the end-to-end process and what to expect when applying for an unmetered connection. It will also explain the circumstances in which a supply of electricity may be unmetered, in accordance with the Unmetered Supply Regulations.



Unmetered connections guide

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021



ACTION
1.4

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Updates to our connections contact guide

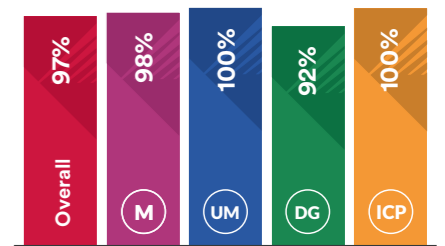


Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will update our connections contact guide to include regional contacts and signposts to available support and online resources.	Stakeholders will have a useful guide that provides contact details for our connections and customer service teams and signposts available support and online resources.	Guide updated and published.	Number of guides distributed. Stakeholder feedback	EHV HV LV	31/12/21

Our stakeholders said...

“I think that sounds like a good commitment, this will enable customers to speak to the right person the first time and avoid hold-ups and delays. It will also ensure the person most qualified to answer will respond.”

Charles Deacon
Renewable Connections



Updates to our connections contact guide

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021

Our customers continue to tell us how important it is to be able to talk to our engineers before making an application for a new connection.

We publish the telephone numbers for our Commercial Engineers and Design Team Managers on our website, alongside the areas of our network they are responsible for. Contact details for our Competition in Connections team who work with ICPs and IDNOs are also available on that webpage¹⁷.

We have a customer guide that includes this information but will be responding to our stakeholders' requests by updating the document and including additional information and guidance.

We will include contact details for our Customer Service Managers to respond to stakeholders' requests for regional contacts and will signpost the online tools and resources available to those seeking a connection to our network.

Updating this guide will further extend the provision of information we make available and help our customers to identify the right person to talk to when making decisions about how and where to connect.




¹⁷ northernpowergrid.com/contact-our-connections-engineers

ACTION 1.5

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Training on online resources

M DG ICP CE

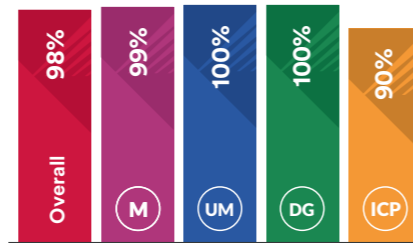
Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will provide training and tutorials on how to use our network availability heat maps and AutoDesign tool.	Stakeholders will be better informed about how to access, use and interpret the data available via these online tools and resources.	Minimum of four training sessions / tutorials held in the ICE plan year.	Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with sessions held.	EHV HV LV	 31/03/22

Our stakeholders said...



“AutoDesign and Heat Map tools offer us valuable information on network availability, but understanding how these tools work varies from person to person. I am glad Northern Powergrid are responding to requests I have made, by offering dedicated training on both Heat Map and AutoDesign tools. It will help us to better understand, access and harness the information available to us as we bring more low carbon technologies online.”

Andy Wilson
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council



Training on online resources

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021

We have developed online tools like AutoDesign and our network availability heat maps to help our customers perform their own upfront assessments and make more informed decisions about how and where to connect.

Many of our customers use these tools to optioneer and narrow down their options before talking to our engineers or making a connection application.


These tools are only really valuable however, if those using them understand how to access and interpret the data that is available and so we will be responding to our stakeholders' requests for more support by delivering training and developing online tutorials so that they can be better informed about the tools available and information they provide.

ACTION 2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Connections information

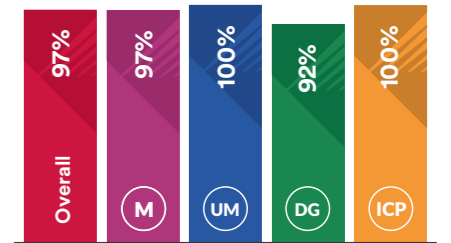
M DG ICP CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will provide information on different types of connections including G98/99 and flexible arrangements and on the connection charges regulations.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the different types of connections available, how to apply and the implications of accepting different types of offers. They will have a better understanding of the connections charges regulations.	Guidance developed and published.	Information disseminated.	EHV HV	 31/10/21

To ensure our customers are better informed and that there is clarity throughout the application process, we will be providing clear explanations on our website of the different types of connection products that are available.

We will provide information on the different types of offers available, including firm and flexible arrangements and in respect of G98/99. We will explain what customers need to know before applying for these types of connection, the typical costs and timescales and the implications of accepting different types of connection offers.

We will also include information on the Electricity Connection Charges Regulations, also known as 'second comer' regulations, so that customers have a better understanding of what this means and how they may be affected.



Connections information

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021



ACTION 3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

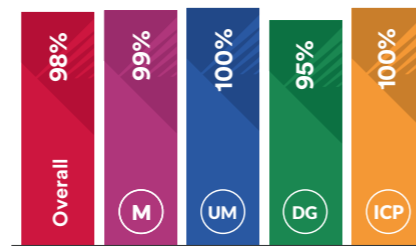
Local Authority engagement



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will host regular engagement sessions with Local Authorities to support their pipeline of connections projects and discuss their long term strategic development plans.	Local Authority stakeholders will have a channel to discuss their immediate connections requirements and longer term strategic plans.	Invitations issued to all Local Authorities in our region. Minimum of four engagement sessions held.	Number of stakeholders engaged Target of 85% satisfaction rate with the engagement sessions held. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	31/03/22

Our stakeholders said...

“Having the facility to book a one to one session would be a positive step for improving the quality of our engagement with Northern Powergrid. Our public sector decarbonisation programme means we have dozens of connections applications with Northern Powergrid, and the opportunity to share our challenges and experiences in a dedicated meeting would be welcome.”
Joe Callin
Leeds City Council



Local Authority engagement
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021

Engagement with local stakeholders regarding the national Green Recovery Scheme¹⁸ that will see us unlock some £53m in accelerated network investment in the remainder of the RII0-ED1 period revealed an opportunity for on-going engagement with Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

With Local Authorities in our region setting ambitious net zero targets, as early as 2030 in some cases, they are increasingly looking to us for advice and to support them in achieving their decarbonisations goals.

We issued a call for evidence for the Green Recovery Scheme. We offered short 20 minute surgery sessions and were inundated with responses from Local Authorities and LEPs who wanted to discuss both their immediate requirements and longer-term strategic plans with us. This information helped inform our thinking on where network capacity could be best utilised.

We recognised the benefit of continuing these discussions, both for us and our stakeholders. Having early visibility of their pipeline of connections projects means we can manage the application and delivery process more effectively. Our Local Authority and LEP stakeholders will also benefit from better information, closer relationships and upfront support and advice to identify the most viable connection options.

We will be running regular surgery sessions and inviting all Local Authorities and LEPs in our region to take part. Stakeholders will be able to book an appointment to discuss any upcoming connection projects or their longer-term plans and we will ensure the right team is in place to support those discussions.

ACTION 4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

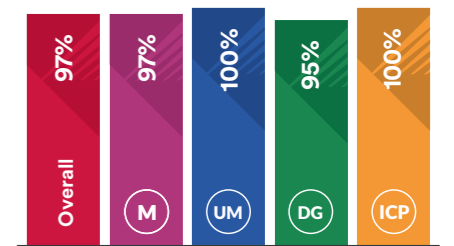
Connections Offer Expenses



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will engage with stakeholders on our Connection Offer Expenses (CoE).	Stakeholders will be better informed about our CoE including why, how and when they are applied.	Stakeholder updates delivered. CoE guide and webpage updated.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Website and guidance updated.	ALL	31/12/21

Our stakeholders said...

“As the more expensive of the DNOs, it would be good to get more of a breakdown to understand the rationale for the charges we incur. We would welcome more comprehensive information, both around the reason for the charges and where they will be incurred along the connections process, being shared with us.”
Neil Mitchell
RES



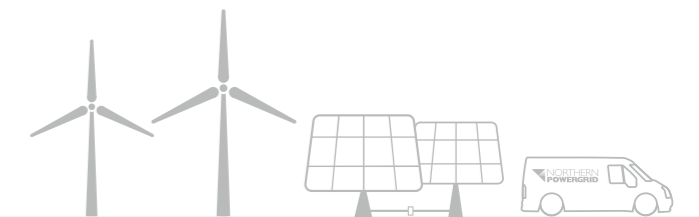
Connections Offer Expenses
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021

In 2018, all DNOs introduced Connection Offer Expenses (also known as Assessment and Design or A&D fees) to drive efficiencies in the connection process and ensure fairer allocation of costs.

We charge a fee for all budget estimates, quotations and feasibility studies we produce for our large works customers. We only recover the costs that we have reasonably incurred when completing the detailed design work required and we do not make a profit on the fees we charge.


We understand however that the differences in the way DNOs charge for CoE could be confusing for customers and so we will be engaging with our stakeholders to help them understand why, how and when our fees are applied. We will update our CoE guide and webpage to ensure customers have the most comprehensive and up-to-date information.

We will also be signposting the available support and resources that customers can access before making an application, including our monthly connections surgeries and our AutoDesign tool that allows users to produce their own budget estimates, free of charge.



ACTION TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS
4.2 LCT local working group

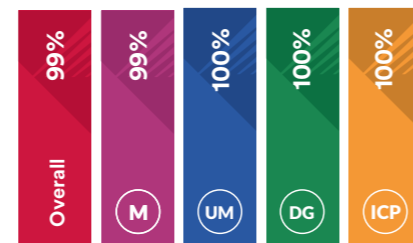
M DG UM ICP CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will establish a Low Carbon Technology connections local working group.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have clarity on rules and processes for low carbon technology connections as they evolve.	Local working group established. Minimum of four engagement sessions held.	Number of stakeholders taking part. Stakeholder updated delivered. Stakeholder feedback.	HV LV	 31/03/22

Our stakeholders said...

“A regular meeting between Northern Powergrid and low carbon technology installers such as ourselves could offer an important engagement opportunity. As providers of EV charge points, DNO’s network capacity is often the ultimate limiting factor as we seek to scale charge point provision. Likewise, the growth of our home charge point installations presents challenges for DNOs as they form clusters on the low voltage network. We welcome a regular working group that offers opportunities to share experiences and challenges we have experienced with the Northern Powergrid team alongside our fellow low carbon technology installers and peers.”

James McKinney
PodPoint



LCT local working group
 Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021

Net zero targets are driving a significant increase in the uptake of heat pumps and EVs and we want to make it as easy as possible for our customers to connect these LCTs to our network.


One of the actions in our ICE plan this year is to establish a working group where our customers can seek clarity on the rules and processes for low carbon connections as they evolve. It will also equip us with the information we need to feedback the views of local stakeholders to the national working group, should they require us to do so.

We will be holding regular meetings throughout the course of the year and anyone interesting in taking part can express their interest by emailing:

yourpowergrid@northernpowergrid.com

ACTION TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS
4.3 Technical guidance and online knowledge base

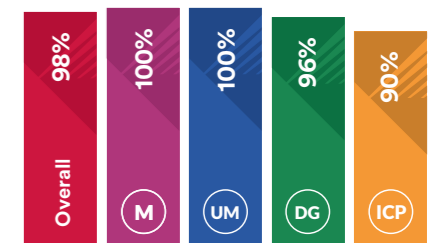
M DG UM ICP CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will develop an online knowledge base for installers and electrical contractors with practical guidance and technical information.	Stakeholders, will be better informed and have a useful reference library of technical information, resources and guidance.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their requirements. Technical information and resources developed and published.	Stakeholder feedback. Number of downloads.	LV	 31/03/22

Our stakeholders said...

“It would be good to see Northern Powergrid expand their online offering further by developing an online knowledge base for installers and contractors that provides practical guidance, technical information and online tutorials to help installers better understand Northern Powergrid’s connections processes and ensure that we are aligned and ready to facilitate a wave of low carbon technology uptake together.”

Paul Rawlinson
E-vei



Technical guidance and online knowledge base
 Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021

We hosted a series of targeted workshops during the last ICE plan year that gave LCT installers an opportunity to ‘get on their soapbox’ and tell us what was working in the connections process and what was not. Learning from these workshops has informed some of the actions in this year’s ICE plan.

LCT installers told us that there was a recognised knowledge gap in their industry that could affect their ability to reach net zero installation targets. They told us they needed more support and technical advice from us.

We are responding with a commitment to work with these stakeholders to develop a technical guidance reference library and other useful resources, including an online knowledge sharing platform where they can ask questions and receive answers from us and their peers.

We will also facilitate a local working group¹⁹ where they can seek clarity on the rules and processes for connecting LCTs, including heat pumps and EVs, as they evolve.

¹⁹ ICE action 4.2 – Low Carbon Technology local working group

ACTION
5.1

ENABLING COMPETITION

Competition in Connections webpage



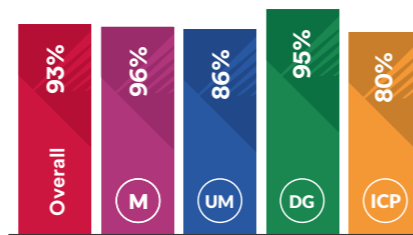
Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will make changes to our Competition in Connections webpage to improve the functionality and usability.	Stakeholders will find it easier to locate and access information, documents and services online.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and requirements. Website changes implemented.	Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	31/03/22

We have a dedicated Competition in Connections page on our website²⁰.

Like our get connected webpage, this dedicated page is the first port of call for ICPs and IDNOs looking to access connections services and any relevant documents, policies and reporting online.

It is also used by our customers to identify ICPs who are accredited by us and the National Electricity Registration Scheme (NERS) to carry out contestable works²¹. Publishing contact details for these independent providers on our website is one of the ways in which we promote fair and open competition and ensure our customers have a choice in who delivers their connection.

It is important that this webpage is easy to navigate and that the information and documents available are easy to access. We will be engaging with ICPs, IDNOs and our connections customers to understand their experience and making changes to improve the functionality and usability of the webpage in line with their feedback.



Competition in Connections webpage
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021



²⁰ northernpowergrid.com/get-connected/competition-in-connections

²¹ northernpowergrid.com/alternative-providers

ACTION
6.1

INNOVATION

DSO transition

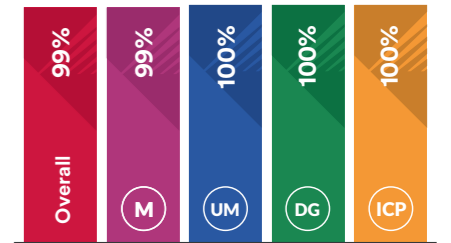


Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will engage with stakeholders to help them to understand about how connections processes and customers could be affected by our developing new role as a Distribution System Operator (DSO).	Stakeholders will be better informed and have a platform to discuss our developing DSO role and topics including flexibility services.	Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the ICE plan year.	Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rating with the sessions held. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	31/03/22

Recognising the impact that our emerging role will have on their activities, we have had a commitment in our ICE plan to engage with connections stakeholders on our DSO transition for the past three years. We wanted to ensure that the views of our connections stakeholders were taken into account as we transition and that they had opportunities to shape our strategy and approach.

We will continue to engage with our stakeholders, specifically on our evolving DSO role and functions to help them to understand what it will mean for them as connections customers and stakeholders.

We will keep them informed and provide opportunities to discuss topics including our developing flexibility services proposition.



DSO transition
Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021



Introduction to our Looking Back report



In this section:

Implementing our engagement strategy

Our 2020/21 ICE Looking Back work plan

How we delivered our 2020/21 actions

Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

Our Looking Back report provides us with an opportunity to discuss the service improvements we have delivered over the past year.

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

A year of significant, stakeholder-led improvements

Last year saw us embark on an ambitious programme of stakeholder engagement that will shape the future direction of our business and the connection service we can offer. Alongside that important activity, we focussed on supporting our customers and delivering the commitments we made in our 2020/21 ICE plan.

We are pleased to report that we delivered all 18 actions in our 2020/21 ICE plan. The actions in our ICE plan covered a range of identified areas for improvement and set out to address the priorities and challenges our stakeholders had raised in the previous ICE plan year.

We were pioneering in our approach to supporting customers affected by the Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme (ALoMCP) and this was acknowledged by our peers and National Grid.



“John and his team have been at the forefront of industry when it comes to ALoMCP and NPg’s example is an excellent one to follow.”

Graham Stein
Network Operability
Manager, National Grid ESO

We engaged with stakeholders on the electrification of heat and transport, two of the most important transitions needed to achieve net zero targets and took an active role in supporting the growth of Community Energy projects in our region.

We continued to facilitate the targeted engagement forums that enable our stakeholders to focus on the issues most important to them.

We hosted three local energy forums in the year aimed at Local Authority representatives and other interested stakeholders. These forums were jointly hosted with Northern Gas Networks (NGN) and gave us the opportunity to test our thinking on how to support

those stakeholders in developing and implementing local area energy plans. One of the key outputs from these sessions was that we established a Charter with NGN that sets out our joint commitments in this area.

We continued to engage with connections stakeholders on our role taking on Distribution System Operator (DSO) functions. We also embarked on a comprehensive programme of engagement to inform our Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES) gaining valuable data and insight that we are using to drive our network planning and investment.

Developing our ICE plans

When developing our ICE plan, we have always been guided first and foremost by our stakeholders’ feedback and customers’ insights. We believe they are best placed to tell us what we do well and what we could be doing better.

Our robust process for consultation gives us confidence that we delivered the actions and outcomes our connections stakeholders expected from us in the ICE plan year. However, we will continue to engage with them to understand their views on any emerging issues or challenges and how best we can address them.

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

Source: Explain telephone survey, April 2021



Implementing our engagement strategy

In what proved to be a challenging year in terms of engagement, we adapted our approach to ensure our stakeholders' views were heard.

With more customers and colleagues working from home and unable to travel for meetings and events, we adapted and scaled up our digital engagement to reach more of our stakeholders.

We were innovative in our approach, using social media tagging to recruit for events and creating a series of 'What is' videos that explain complex topics like DFES and what is meant by a whole system approach in the form of short, easily understandable animations that were shared via our social media channels.


We delivered forums, working groups and our flagship Stakeholder Summit online. We also delivered our first ever co-creation workshop, where those attending had the opportunity to help us shape the functionality and future use cases for our AutoDesign tool.

With restrictions lifting and as we begin to think about a future where COVID-19 has less of an impact on our day to day lives, the lessons learned over the past year will inform our engagement strategy and approach.

 **250**

stakeholders took part in our online Stakeholder Summit

We have already been talking to our stakeholders to understand their views and preferences. Whilst some prefer online interactions - we saw attendance at our DG Owner Operator forums double when we switched to using an online platform - we know there is still an appetite for in-person meetings and events and will look to restart them as soon it is possible to do so safely.

 You can watch our 'What is' video series on our YouTube channel at: youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid

Our year in summary



1,400

recorded connections stakeholder interactions



53,500

connections related enquires answered by our contact centre



Three local area energy forums. 70+ stakeholders took part.

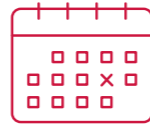


14
'What is' explainer videos

>15,600
impressions



Scaled up our social media reach more stakeholders:
Facebook: 15% increase
LinkedIn: 31% increase
Twitter: 57% increase
in followers



Monthly connections surgeries



Monthly major works customer satisfaction surveys



Our first co-creation workshop



Two dedicated ICP / IDNO Seminars



Three DG Owner Operator forums



151,000 views

www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected

Period April 2020 - April 2021



ACTION

1.1

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Heat map data

M DG

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will publish data on transmission constraints and Mod Apps on our heat maps.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have access to more timely and accurate data.	Data published as part of the detailed datasheets that accompany our heat maps.	Data published and updated on a monthly basis. Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	Complete

Outcome delivered:

- Our customers have better visibility on any likely transmission constraints and can make more informed decisions about how and where to connect.

Our customers told us that having early visibility on the likely impact of transmission issues was important when considering a new connection to our network.

They told us that understanding whether a project was likely to require a Mod App with National Grid early in the process was

critical, as this can significantly impact on the cost and timescales to deliver a project.

We already publish Appendix G and Statement of Works information as part of the detailed data sheets that accompany our network availability heat maps.

Since November 2020, we have also included data on the transmission constraints that we have been notified about by National Grid as part of the Mod App process. The data is updated every month to ensure our customers have access to the most up-to-date information.

Our downloadable datasheets contain a wealth of useful network data, which is not currently available via the interactive 'web view' version of our heat maps. The web

view of our heat maps provides a high level indication of available network capacity. We would always recommend that our customers talk to us before performing any feasibility studies, to discuss the options and benefit from our engineers' local knowledge of the network. Customers can do this by booking one of our monthly connections surgeries²².

Publishing this data further extends the provision of detailed network data we make available to our customers, to help them to make more informed decisions about how and where to connect.



ACTION

1.2

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Information on planned outages

DG

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

Outcomes delivered:

- We worked with a small number of generators to trial a process that would see them better informed about any planned outages affecting their EHV assets.
- The learning from the trial will inform our approach to the provision of information on EHV planned outages going forward.

Our stakeholders said...

“Brilliant process, I’ve been very happy with the test notifications for the outages and clarity of information.”

Shane Jury
RES

To run a safe and secure network, we sometimes need to undertake essential inspection and maintenance works. For generators, particularly those with single circuit connections, the operational and financial impact of service interruptions caused by planned outages can be significant.

Our DG Owner Operator forum was established to give generation owners the ability to meet with our team on a regular basis and discuss a range of issues, including the impact of planned outages.

Stakeholders who take part in the forum can access forward looking information on outages that will help them to plan more strategically. This information is also published on our website²³. Feedback from these stakeholders however, was that they would like more bespoke information and, if possible, on a site-by-site basis.

To respond to this feedback, we made a commitment to run a trial with a small number of generators. Learning from the trial would inform our approach to the provision of information on planned outages going forward.

We engaged with stakeholders throughout the course of the ICE plan year to understand their requirements. We agreed with forum members to limit the scope of the trial to EHV outages initially, as these were seen as having the most significant financial and operational impact.

Independent consultancy, Regen, worked with our network operations team to assess our current process and identify any areas for improvement.

Following the independent review and feedback from stakeholders, who told us we should focus on standardising our method of notifying customers and provide more comprehensive information - specifically, the reason for the outage and likely impact on the sites affected - we redesigned our outage notification forms to include this information.

We then identified two generators to take part in a trial of an enhanced notification process that saw us issue weekly automated reports to them on any planned EHV outages affecting their assets.

We shared the outcomes of the trial and agreed the next steps with stakeholders who attended our DG Owner Operator forum in March 2021, where 100 per cent of those who responded agreed the actions we had taken would improve our provision of information on planned outages. We also heard from representatives from Banks Renewables and RES, the generators who took part in the trial, who both gave a positive endorsement of their experience.

The agreed next steps are that we will continue to engage with stakeholders and provide them with information on planned outages via our DG Owner Operator forum. In parallel, our network operations team will look to implement the learning and successful outcomes from the trial as part of our business as usual processes.

ACTION
1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Local Authority and LEP guide



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will produce a guide aimed at Local Authorities and LEPs which signposts the support and tools we make available.	Stakeholders will have a useful reference that signposts the help, support and online tools we make available to those seeking a new connection to our network.	New guide developed and published. Guide issued to all Local Authorities and LEPs in our region.	Number of guides issued. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✔ We created and published a guide that signposts available support and online resources.
- ✔ The guide was issued >370 times and sent to all our Local Authorities and LEP contacts.

Our stakeholders said...



“We are pleased that Northern Powergrid have produced and shared a connections guide, specifically focussed on signposting resources available to Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. As a key driver of decarbonisation across all our communities, it is important we understand how we can work with Northern Powergrid to enable net zero in York.”

York City Council



Our connections guide for Local Authority stakeholders is available online at: [northernpowergrid.com/downloads/5818](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/downloads/5818)

With many of the Local Authorities in our region setting ambitious targets for net zero, they are increasingly looking to us to support them in delivering their decarbonisation plans.

At the request of local government stakeholders, we created a simple guide aimed at Local Authorities and LEP representatives that signposts the support and online resources that are available to those seeking a connection to our network.

The new guide provides information on what to expect when booking one of our monthly connections surgeries and includes a link to contact details for our connections engineers which are published on our website.

It features links to useful online resources like our generation and demand heat maps and AutoDesign tool that is already being used by Local Authorities in our region, primarily to help them identify the most cost-effective locations to connect EV charge points.

There is also a link to our DFES data visualisation tool that provides our forecasts for growth of generation and LCTs in each of our Local Authority areas. The guide explains how each of these tools can be used to make more informed decisions about how and where to connect to our network and how to contact us, should they need further support or advice.

The guide was completed in line with our forecast and sent to 30 Local Authority stakeholders, including the stakeholder who requested the action, to seek their feedback on what we had produced. We then issued the guide via email to all our Local Authority and LEP contacts. The guide was issued >370 times in the ICE plan year.

ACTION
2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Low Carbon Technologies



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will make changes to our online application process to make it easier to apply to install different types of Low Carbon Technologies (LCTs).	Stakeholders will be better informed and find it quicker and easier to make applications for different types of LCT projects.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and requirements. Make improvements to our online application process as required.	Website improvements delivered.	ALL	Complete

Outcome delivered:

- ✔ We made changes to our website to make it easier for customers to apply online to connect LCTs.

Net zero targets are driving a significant increase in the uptake of EVs and heat pumps and we want to make it as easy as possible for our customers to apply to connect these LCTs.

We heard from some of our customers that they found it difficult to navigate our website and find the right form to use when making a new application. We responded to that feedback with a commitment to make changes to our website, so that it is easier for our customers to locate this information.

We asked stakeholders who took part in our LCT installer workshops about their experience of our online application process and any improvements we could make.

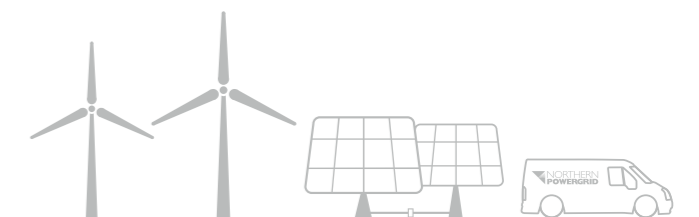
We then implemented the following changes to improve our websites functionality and provision of information we make available:

- we introduced new application forms that follow the format of the Energy Networks Association's (ENA) forms, to ensure a consistent approach across all DNOs for customers making new LCT applications;
- we published the ENA's combined EV and heat pump process document on our website, to help installers understand when to notify us and when they will need to make a new application to connect different types of LCTs;
- we made updates to our get connected²⁴ webpage to make it easier for customers to find information on LCTs and navigate to the new application forms;
- we updated our guide prices to include information on the likely costs and timescales relating to EV and heat pump connections;

— we updated our search engine functionality so that customers searching for information on connecting EV charge points and heat pumps can find it more easily; and

— we updated our online applications²⁵ page so that it now includes options for connecting EV charge points and heat pumps. This includes information on when to notify us and when to make a new application, the information customers will need before starting an application and direct links to our new ENA-style forms.

The changes we have made should make it easier for customers who are applying to connect LCTs to access the information they need. However, we are continuing to engage with our stakeholders and will be implementing further developments to our get connected webpage in line with their feedback. This is one of the actions we will be delivering as part of our 2021/22 ICE Looking Forward work plan.



²⁴ www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected


²⁵ [northernpowergrid.com/connection-service](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/connection-service)

ACTION
2.2

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

AutoDesign



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



Outcome delivered:

✔ **By working with our stakeholders, we were able to co-create and shape the future functionality and use cases for our AutoDesign tool.**

We launched our industry award-winning AutoDesign tool in January 2020, and since that time the tool has been used to generate more than 2,000 free of charge budget estimates.

AutoDesign helps users to identify the most viable and cost-effective locations to connect to our low voltage (LV) network and can reduce the time it takes to get an indicative cost for the connection, from 10 working days to just 10 minutes. During lockdown, our stakeholders told us they found AutoDesign particularly useful, as it enabled them to progress projects whilst working remotely.

Our stakeholders have been involved at every stage in AutoDesign's development, taking part in user acceptance testing prior to the launch, and providing valuable feedback over the past 14 months that has helped us to continually improve the functionality of the tool.

We have been proactively seeking feedback from our stakeholders throughout the course of the ICE plan year, to ensure we are developing

Our stakeholders said...



“The tool has been very good and the quick turnaround has helped us especially when we need to get quotations.”

Highway Service Provider

“I think we mapped about 250 EV potential sites during lockdown and we could use the AutoDesign tool to say no we're definitely not going there, it's far too much money, so that was a bonus for us.”

Local Authority stakeholder

“I think from my point of view, this tool its already broken ground, no other DNO is even close to being able to do this. So I think, congratulations to NPG. I know we're here today to help them improve it even further, but no other DNO is close.”

IDNO representative

AutoDesign in line with their current and future needs. This activity included:

- we sent an email to stakeholders in April 2020, reminding them that they could use AutoDesign to progress projects while working from home;
- we hosted a dedicated AutoDesign workshop for ICPs and IDNOs where we discussed developing the tool's functionality to meet their specific requirements;
- we hosted an AutoDesign demonstration and Q&A as part of our Innovation Festival in August 2020;
- we hosted our first co-creation workshop and invited frequent AutoDesign users and those stakeholders who participated in user acceptance testing to take part; and
- we issued an email to connections stakeholders, explaining the benefits of using AutoDesign and seeking feedback to inform the future development of the tool.

Our first co-creation workshop was an opportunity to engage with a diverse group of AutoDesign users, seek their informed feedback and give them the opportunity to shape the next stages of AutoDesign's development.

Feedback from this session was that most were using AutoDesign as an optioneering tool and saw benefits in being able to self-serve and perform their own upfront assessments. They told us they wanted to be able to map multiple scenarios and would like to be able to use AutoDesign for new generation connections and to make modifications to existing ones.

Local Authority users were also interested in whether AutoDesign could be used to drive forward their decarbonisation plans and specifically, whether it could be used assess the feasibility of retrofitting heat pumps in existing domestic and social housing properties.

In total, we estimate that we engaged with >6,600 stakeholders during the ICE plan year. The insights we received informed our thinking on future use cases for AutoDesign and will shape development of the tool now, and into the RIIO-ED2 period.

We continue to engage with stakeholders and encourage their feedback on AutoDesign's functionality and usability.

Following requests from stakeholders, we will be delivering training and developing online tutorials on how to use, access and interpret the data that is available from AutoDesign. This action is being delivered as part of our 2021/22 ICE Looking Forward work plan.



ACTION 2.3

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES Streamlining our application process



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

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ We identified 40 customers who made repeat applications and contacted them to let them know we could streamline their application process.

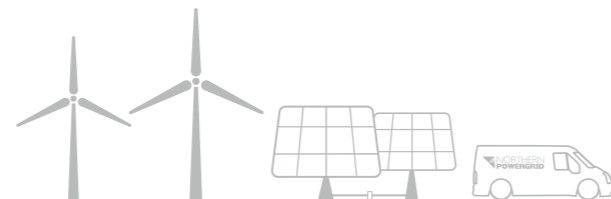
Some customers who make multiple, repeat applications told us that our application forms can be time-consuming and resource intensive to complete.

We can and will accept connections applications in a different format, as long as it contains all of the information that we require to process the application.

To ensure our stakeholders are aware of this, we contacted 40 customers who made repeat applications for connections or disconnections, to inform them that we will accept connection applications in a different format, should they prefer not to use our standard forms or online application process.

We told them what information we would require from them to process the application and invited them to contact us, should they want to discuss streamlining of their application process further.

Only one customer took us up on our offer during the course of the ICE plan year but we remain open to discussions and have briefed our connections set-up team to ensure any new applications that are received of this kind can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.



ACTION 2.4

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES Pre-application surgeries for planners and developers



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

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ Local Authority officers and developers can now access pre-application support and advice to help them achieve the low carbon ambitions.

Feedback from some Local Authorities' officers with whom we work, was that they were encountering an issue with developers telling them they could not integrate EV charge points and other LCTs into their plans because the connection costs were too high.

We will always encourage our customers to talk to us if they find the cost of a connection prohibitive, as our engineers' expertise and local knowledge of the network often means we can help them identify a more cost-effective solution.

However, to respond to this specific feedback, we began offering surgeries for Local Authorities and large-scale developers in March 2021 to provide pre-application support and advice.

We contacted >170 Local Authority representatives, house builders and developers in our region to inform them about the new service we were offering and what they could expect when booking a surgery.

Our dedicated Local Authority and developer surgeries are held on the last Wednesday of every month and are being delivered over the telephone or via a digital platform due to current restrictions. These new surgeries are in addition to the monthly surgeries for connections customers and ICPs/IDNOs that we already run.

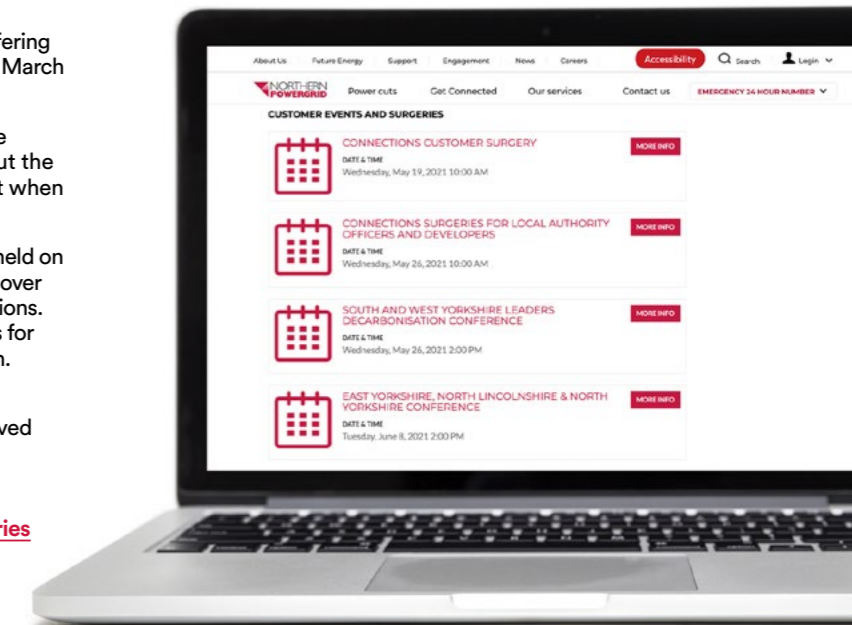
We have delivered three dedicated Local Authority and developer surgeries to date²⁶, which have been well received by all those attending.

- 📄 To find out more and book an appointment visit: northernpowergrid.com/customer-events-and-surgeries

Our stakeholders said...

“I am pleased to see Northern Powergrid offering dedicated pre-application surgeries to help local authorities and developers identify the most cost effective solutions for installing low carbon technologies and supporting our development strategies.”

Paul Muir
Sunderland City Council



ACTION
3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Local energy planning forums



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

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We hosted three local energy planning forums in the ICE plan year.
- ✓ We engaged with >70 stakeholders and those who responded gave an overall satisfaction rate of 93 per cent with the sessions held.

Last year, we hosted a series of forums for Local Authority representatives that enabled us to focus in on the topics most important to them.

Feedback from these forums was positive, with all those taking part telling us that they appreciated the opportunity to help shape the agenda of the sessions and that they had benefitted from hearing about the experiences of other Local Authorities in our region.

We will always seek feedback from stakeholders on the actions we deliver through ICE to ensure what we deliver has met their expectations. During these discussions, one of our stakeholders asked us if we could facilitate a forum that focused on local area plans, as this was a key area of focus for Local Authorities and more engagement with network operators was needed on this topic.

We responded to that feedback with a commitment to host three forums in the ICE plan year aimed at Local Authority representatives and other interested stakeholders that focused on local area energy planning and related topics.

Our first forum took place in September 2020 and was jointly hosted with NGN, giving those taking part the opportunity to engage with two local network operators. The session was themed around how to support the Government's 'build back better' agenda. It also gave us an opportunity to discuss our emerging strategy for local area energy plans and seek the views of stakeholders on our approach.

We invited representatives from West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Newcastle City Council to share their views and the session was very well received by all those taking part.

Our stakeholders said...



"I am glad Northern Powergrid have hosted forums for local authorities, providing an opportunity to share our views and experiences with local area energy plans and the green recovery. It is good to see these events hosted with Northern Gas Networks, offering an important engagement opportunity with both of our energy network operators."

Paul Muir
Sunderland City Council

Our second forum in January 2021 was themed around how to support a local green recovery. Representatives from Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council and Durham City Council shared their experience of implementing net zero initiatives in their areas.

Our third forum took place in March 2021 and stakeholders took part in a lively discussion on the actions required to meet net zero targets. There were presentations from Northumberland County Council and the North East LEP and an expert panel Q&A session with these stakeholders and representatives from Northern Powergrid, NGN and the York and North Yorkshire LEP.

The three forums we hosted in the ICE plan year laid the foundations for our approach to supporting our stakeholders' local energy plans. One of the key outputs from these forums is a Charter with NGN that sets out joint commitments to support Local Authority stakeholders in developing and implementing local energy plans.

ACTION
3.2

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Community Energy



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

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We played an active role in supporting the growth of Community Energy projects in our region.
- ✓ We created a new Community Energy hub on our website.
- ✓ Community Energy stakeholders are now better informed and will be better supported when seeking a connection to our network.

Recognising the important role these projects will play in driving forward the low carbon transition, last year we published a strategy which featured several actions and initiatives intended to support the growth of Community Energy in our region.

One of the commitments we made was to better support our Community Energy stakeholders when seeking a connection to our network. Our experience with these stakeholders is that they tend to have great ambition and worthwhile ideas, but limited knowledge of our connections process. We set out to address this.

We hosted three dedicated Community Energy forums in the ICE plan year and sought feedback from stakeholders taking part on the support they needed from us when seeking a connection to our network. Those who responded prioritised free technical advice, better visibility of the network's capacity to connect new projects and help to identify the most cost-effective solutions.

We responded with signposts to our monthly connections surgeries and online tools, including our network availability heat maps and AutoDesign.

During the course of the ICE plan year we:

- created a new Community Energy webpage which has been visited more than 14,000 times since it was launched in May 2020;
- engaged with >160 Community Energy stakeholders via our online dedicated forums;
- delivered connections surgeries for Community Energy stakeholders and consultants working on their behalf;
- developed a factsheet for Community Energy stakeholders with answers to frequently asked connections related questions; and

Our stakeholders said...



"We are pleased that Northern Powergrid have provided support to community energy stakeholders seeking a new connection with an online community energy portal and dedicated engagement events throughout the year. Information and engagement on connections is vitally important for community energy groups as they seek to bring new renewable generation online for the benefit of local communities."

Jon Hall
Community Energy England

— established a Community Energy Stakeholder Panel so that the views of these stakeholders are considered as we develop our RIIO-ED2 business plan for 2023-28.

We will continue to play an active role in supporting the growth of Community Energy projects and have just published our updated engagement strategy²⁷ which provides an overview of the actions and initiatives we have delivered to date.

📄 Visit our Community Energy webpage at: northernpowergrid.com/community-energy

ACTION 3.3

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

IDNO forum



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
We will host a connections forum for Independent Distribution Network Operators (IDNOs) .	IDNO stakeholders will have a forum to engage with us on the issues that are important to them and their customers.	Deliver an IDNO connections forum in the 2020/21 ICE plan year.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Forum delivered in Q1, 2021.	ALL	Complete

Outcome delivered:

✓ **We hosted a forum for IDNOs and invited these stakeholders to share their views on any current challenges and future priorities.**

We received a challenge during Ofgem's 2020 consultation on ICE from one stakeholder who said we could be doing more to engage with IDNOs.

We believe our approach to engaging with ICPs and IDNOs is established and robust. We host monthly surgeries and twice-yearly seminars and have a dedicated

Competition in Connections team whose role it is to engage with these stakeholders and feedback their views. This feedback is addressed through ICE or our business-as-usual practices, where appropriate.

Our approach to engagement is always evolving and to address the comments made by the stakeholder, we included a new action in our ICE mid-year update to host a dedicated forum for IDNOs.

We identified ten IDNOs in our region and invited them to take part in a dedicated forum that took place in January 2021.

The forum was led by our Policy and Markets Director and representatives from

four IDNOs took part in the meeting where they discussed a range of topics, including our emerging role as a DSO and what that would mean for them as IDNOs and their customers.

To ensure the views of these stakeholders are considered as we develop our plans, representatives from all ten IDNOs we identified were invited to provide feedback to inform our 2021/22 ICE Looking Forward work plan and to discuss our longer term RIIO-ED2 plans and priorities.



ACTION 4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme



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

Outcome delivered:

✓ **We established an ALoMCP working group so that local stakeholders had a channel to seek support, advice and clarity on the process.**

One of our most notable achievements in the ICE plan year was our pioneering approach to supporting customers through the ALoMCP.

The ALoMCP is a joint initiative between National Grid ESO, the ENA, the DNOs and the IDNOs.

Network resilience will become even more important as we become reliant on electricity to heat our homes and power our transport. The ALoMCP incentivises owners of non-domestic generation to make changes to their equipment's hardware to ensure compliance with new Distribution Code requirements. Funding is available for those who do so before September 2022, after which, those who have not made the mandatory changes could be subject to an enforcement programme.

At our DG Owner Operator forum in March 2020, many of those who attended were looking for clarification about the scheme and the funding available.

In response, we established a local working group that gave those affected a channel to seek clarity on the process, and gave us the ability to feed back the views of local stakeholders to National Grid.

Feedback from our early meetings was that there was a general lack of awareness and that DNOs could be doing more to promote and lend credibility to the scheme.

We hosted four meetings in total and by working with our stakeholders, were able to develop a suite of communications materials that were used by us, National Grid and other DNOs to raise awareness about the programme.

We were proactive in our approach, delivering a range of additional outputs that have helped drive applications to the scheme:

- we produced a suite of targeted mailers aimed at the diverse range of generation owners impacted including the farming community, schools and colleges and NHS health care trusts;
- we developed case studies, press releases and social media content to promote the scheme;
- we identified generators connected to our network and kept them informed on the ALoMCP requirements and available funding windows; and

Our stakeholders said...

“Thanks to Northern Powergrid’s support with the ALoMCP working group and subsequent communications about the programme, we have gone from strength to strength, it has been very positive. The working group provided an opportunity to voice any challenges and to ensure that we were aligned with the DNOs and fellow contractors when it came to engaging with people about the ALoMCP.”

Colin Lockwood
Windcare

— we established a recognised contractor scheme and played an instrumental role in the establishment of a national ALoMCP electricity supplier working group.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders and support them through the process. Anyone wanting to know more about the ALoMCP can visit our website or contact our team.

For more information visit: northernpowergrid.com/ALoMCP

Contact our team at: G59protectionsettings@Northernpowergrid.com

ACTION TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS
4.2 Electrification of transport

M DG UM ICP CE

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

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We engaged with stakeholders on the electrification of transport at two dedicated engagement sessions held during the ICE plan year.
- ✓ Stakeholders are now better informed about the actions we are taking to support the low carbon transition and we have a better understanding of their future priorities and plans

Our stakeholders said...

“I have been involved with the roll out of electric vehicles for over 10 years and during that time I have found that public engagement has been critical. Forums which are cross disciplinary, such as the Northern Powergrid electrification of transport event, add more substance to the discussion. This engagement is very timely as EV uptake is expected to accelerate over the next decade. Northern Powergrid’s decarbonisation of transport event was a good example of such an event to gather stakeholders from different backgrounds together to discuss some of the challenges and opportunities of this transition.”

Dr Colin Herron
Zero Carbon Futures

To meet net zero targets, the UK electricity system must facilitate a significant number of new connections for LCTs, including EVs.

If the region follows our expected planning scenario, we could see more than 1.84 million electric vehicles on our roads by 2030, which would require approximately 32,000 new connections for EV charging infrastructure alone. We are getting ready to support this significant new demand.

In January 2021, we hosted a decarbonisation of heating and transport workshop that explored opportunities and barriers to the low carbon transition. There was a mix of stakeholders with representatives from Local Authorities, low carbon installers and other interested stakeholders taking part.

Learning from this event shaped the agenda for our second event in March. The event was led by our Policy and Markets Director, who set out our vision and described the actions we are taking to support electrification of transport in our region and ensure a whole system approach.

We heard from Durham County Council on the challenges of electrifying their refuse collection fleet and representatives from Zero Carbon Futures and EV charge point specialists PodPoint took part in an expert panel session, which gave those taking part the opportunity to hear a range of views from different types of stakeholders.

We engaged with >60 stakeholders at two dedicated engagement sessions held during the ICE plan year and those who responded gave an overall satisfaction rating of 85 percent with the sessions we delivered.

ACTION TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS
4.3 Electrification of heating

M DG UM ICP CE

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

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We engaged with stakeholders on the electrification of heating at two dedicated engagement sessions held during the ICE plan year.
- ✓ Stakeholders are now better informed about the actions we are taking to support the low carbon transition and we have a better understanding of their future priorities and plans.

Our stakeholders said...

“It has been encouraging to see Northern Powergrid hosting engagement events on the electrification of heat. It is important that all stakeholders in the decarbonisation of heat have these platforms to come together and explore opportunities, share experiences and highlight challenges.”

Tim Rippon
Newcastle City Council

With 80 percent of Local Authorities in our region declaring a climate emergency, the decarbonisation of heating is the next critical step on the road to the UK achieving net zero emissions.

Having set ambitious net zero targets, Local Authorities are keen to work more closely with us to ensure the network has capacity to support their strategic plans. We have been facilitating these conversations with bilateral discussions and a net zero leaders conference that provided a platform to explore our collective decarbonisation priorities.

We have also been engaging with those on the front line, hearing from installers about the challenges they are facing regarding government funding and a lack of clarity on the rules and processes for low carbon connections.

We made a commitment in our ICE plan to engage with our connections stakeholders on this important topic and to hold a minimum of two engagement sessions in the year.

Our first engagement session took place in January 2021 and focused on the opportunities and challenges, and the support stakeholders will need from network operators.

Our second event net zero heating event took place in March 2021. The event proved extremely popular with more than 100 stakeholders signing up within the first 24 hours demonstrating significant interest in the topic.

The event was led by our Sustainability Manager. There were presentations by Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council and the Tees Valley Combined Authority and representatives from NGN and Kensa Heat Pumps took part in an expert panel session.

We engaged with >75 stakeholders via our two dedicated engagement sessions and those who responded gave an overall satisfaction rating of 83 percent with the sessions we delivered.



ACTION **TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS**
4.4 **Installers of Low Carbon Technologies**
 M DG UM CE

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

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We hosted two workshops that gave installers the opportunity to get on their 'soapbox' and tell what is working in the connections process and what is not.
- ✓ Learning from these sessions has informed our approach to engaging with these stakeholders and the actions in our 2021/22 ICE plan.

Our stakeholders said...

“Great to see Northern Powergrid listening and taking comments on board.”
 Paul Rawlinson
 E-vei

Installers are on the front line in terms of delivering net zero targets.

We want to make it as easy as possible for customers to connect LCTs including EVs, heat pumps and solar PV to our network. Recognising that they will have significant experience of the connections process, both at a local and national level, we set out to engage with LCT installers and seek their feedback on what is working and what is not.

We made a commitment to host a minimum of two engagement sessions during the ICE plan year.

Our first event in September 2020, gave installers a 'soapbox' to share their views on the low carbon connections process. During that session, we demonstrated AutoDesign and sought their feedback on how the tool could be developed and other automated processes they would like to see introduced. We also encouraged a discussion on real-life barriers to LCT adoption and the support that these stakeholders will need to overcome them. 16 stakeholders took part.

Our second event took place in February 2021 and there was significant interest in the run up to the event, with stakeholders liking and sharing our targeted social media posts. We also contacted a number by telephone to give them an opportunity to shape the agenda for the event.

On the day, we heard from E-ON about the challenges they faced when delivering a pilot project to install 250 heat pumps in properties across Newcastle City Centre. We gave an update on actions from the LCT national working group and asked those taking part to provide feedback on our online application processes.

With only 17 of the 50 individuals who had booked a place at the workshop attending on the day, we were keen to understand why. When we contacted them, most installers told us that business commitments had prevented them from joining the live webinar. Others said they wanted more practical and technical advice and to hear from us during these sessions on how we could support them.

These insights have informed our thinking on how to engage with these stakeholders going forward and we have included actions in our 2021/22 ICE plan to address their specific feedback and requests.

We will be creating an online knowledge base for installers and electrical contractors where they can ask questions and receive a response from us or their peers. We will be creating a technical reference library and establishing a local working group so that these stakeholders can be better supported and will have a channel to seek clarity on the rules and process for low carbon connections as they evolve.

ACTION **ENABLING COMPETITION**
5.1 **Alternative provider register**
 UM ICP

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

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ We made changes to our Alternative Provider Register so that customers can easily identify ICPs who are accredited to self-determine points of connection and self-approve designs.

We are not the only company that can provide customers with a connection to our network. Our customers are free to compare our prices and service with ICPs who can deliver some, or all of the work. The work ICPs can undertake is known as contestable and we are committed to fostering an environment where they can compete freely with us to deliver this work.

During a seminar we hosted in 2019, one ICP highlighted an issue whereby some Local Authorities will not accept self-approved designs from ICPs, unless those designs had also been approved by a DNO.

They asked us to make changes to our Alternative Providers Register so that any ICPs who are accredited by us and the National Electricity Register Scheme (NERS) to self-determine points of connection and self-approve designs, would be more easily identifiable to customers. The request was to add more work categories to the register so that customers could easily see the scope of the works that accredited ICPs can carry out.

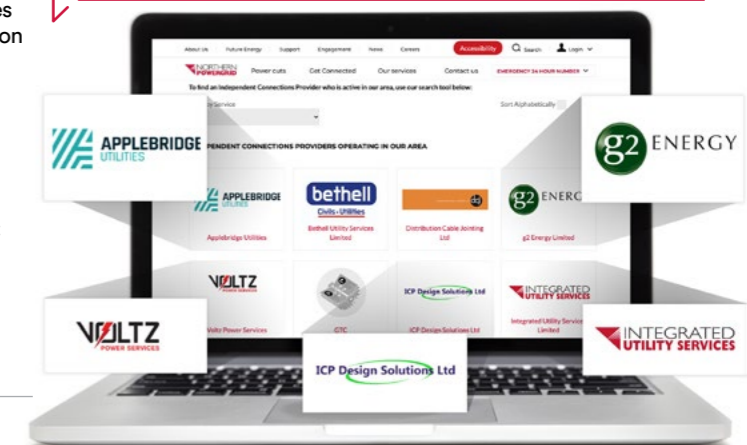
Following this feedback, we engaged directly with the stakeholder who requested the action and agreed the outcomes and timescales to deliver it. We made the required changes and delivered the action in line with our forecast of December 2020.

We updated stakeholders on the progress of this action at our ICP seminars held in June and November 2020. Since the change was made several ICPs have updated their details on our Alternative Providers Register.

Our Alternative Providers Register is available on our website: northernpowergrid.com/alternative-providers

Our stakeholders said...

“I’ve developed a good working relationship with the team at Northern Powergrid over the years and have always found them receptive to our questions and feedback. We attend as many of their engagement events as possible and find them informative, but also really good for networking and sharing best practice with others.”
 I’m pleased that the changes to the Alternative Services Register have been made in line with my feedback and it is now much easier for people to understand more about the scope of works ICPs on the register can do.
 Shortly after the changes were introduced, we received an enquiry from a customer that had found our details on the register and wanted us to quote for the contestable works aspect of their connection application. This just reinforces how important this simple change could be for opening up more competition in the market.”
 Bill Robertson
 ICP Design Solutions Ltd



ACTION
5.2 **ENABLING COMPETITION**
Link box policy

ICP

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

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ We reviewed our policy on the requirement for link box installations for certain types of smaller, non-domestic IDNO connections.

We have reviewed our policy regarding the installation of link boxes for smaller, non-domestic IDNO connections - specifically EV charge points - following requests from IDNOs who want to adopt, operate and own these smaller, single service connections.

We completed our review in line with our forecast and our revised policy²⁸ was published on our website. We kept stakeholders informed on the progress of this action with updates given at our ICP seminars held in June and November 2020.

Now, where practical and by utilising other means of physical electrical protection, the requirement to install link boxes may not be required for certain types of small works connections.



ACTION
6.1 **INNOVATION**
Our DSO transition

M DG UM ICP CE

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

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We engaged with a wide range of connections stakeholders on our emerging new role as a DSO.
- ✓ Stakeholders are now better informed and had opportunities to help shape our transition.

As we transition to a DSO, it is important we do so in a transparent and inclusive way. Recognising the impact our emerging role could have on our connections customers, we have included a DSO commitment in our ICE plans for the past three years.

Our DSO transition is about operating a smarter, more flexible network that is built around the needs of our customers. It is important that we continue to engage with all our stakeholders, including our connections customers and help them to understand what it could mean for them in terms of future processes and the service we offer them.

We made a commitment to hold a minimum of two engagement events in the year and to give our connections stakeholders' opportunities to inform and help shape our DSO strategy and approach.

We discussed our DSO transition at two net zero workshops held in autumn 2020 and a total of 63 stakeholders took part.

We hosted a series of net zero conferences for regional energy leaders in October 2020, where we discussed DSO and their future energy needs and priorities.

Our Head of Policy Development led a session at our DG Owner Operator forum in December 2020, where we discussed DSO and our developing flexibility service propositions and sought feedback from stakeholders to inform our RIIO-ED2 business plan.

Our stakeholders said...

“The transition from DNO to DSO is essential for distributed generators. We are glad to see that Northern Powergrid have continued to engage with stakeholders at a variety of events on the DSO transition.”

Dan Thomas
Banks Renewables

DSO was also one of the key themes on the agenda at our IDNO forum held in January 2021, where the four IDNO representatives who attended had the opportunity to explore what our transition could mean for them and their customers, during a meeting led by our Policy and Markets Director.

We have engaged with a range of different connections stakeholders throughout the course of the ICE plan year and we will continue to do so.

We have made a commitment in our 2021/22 ICE plan to help our connections stakeholders understand how our emerging role could affect them. To do that, we will be talking to a wide range of stakeholders and have plans to introduce an expert working group, should our connections stakeholders agree this is something that would be useful and worthwhile.

To find out more about our DSO transition, visit: [northernpowergrid.com/DSO](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/DSO)

ACTION 6.2

INNOVATION

Distribution Future Energy Scenarios



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

Outcomes delivered:

- ✔ We engaged with >11,300 stakeholders and sought their feedback to inform our DFES.
- ✔ Connections stakeholders had opportunities to contribute intelligence and our scenarios have been updated to reflect their net zero plans.

The UK energy system is evolving. Net zero is driving a significant shift in the way our customers are choosing to generate, consume and engage with electricity. We need to understand and forecast for our customers changing needs, to ensure our network has the capacity to support their long-term plans and aspirations.

One of the ways we can do this is through DFES, which provides intelligence on the credible future energy pathways for our region. Local Authorities and other stakeholders can use DFES to view our future projections on the growth of generation and LCTs in their areas. It is also one of the tools we use to make important decisions about where to invest in our network.

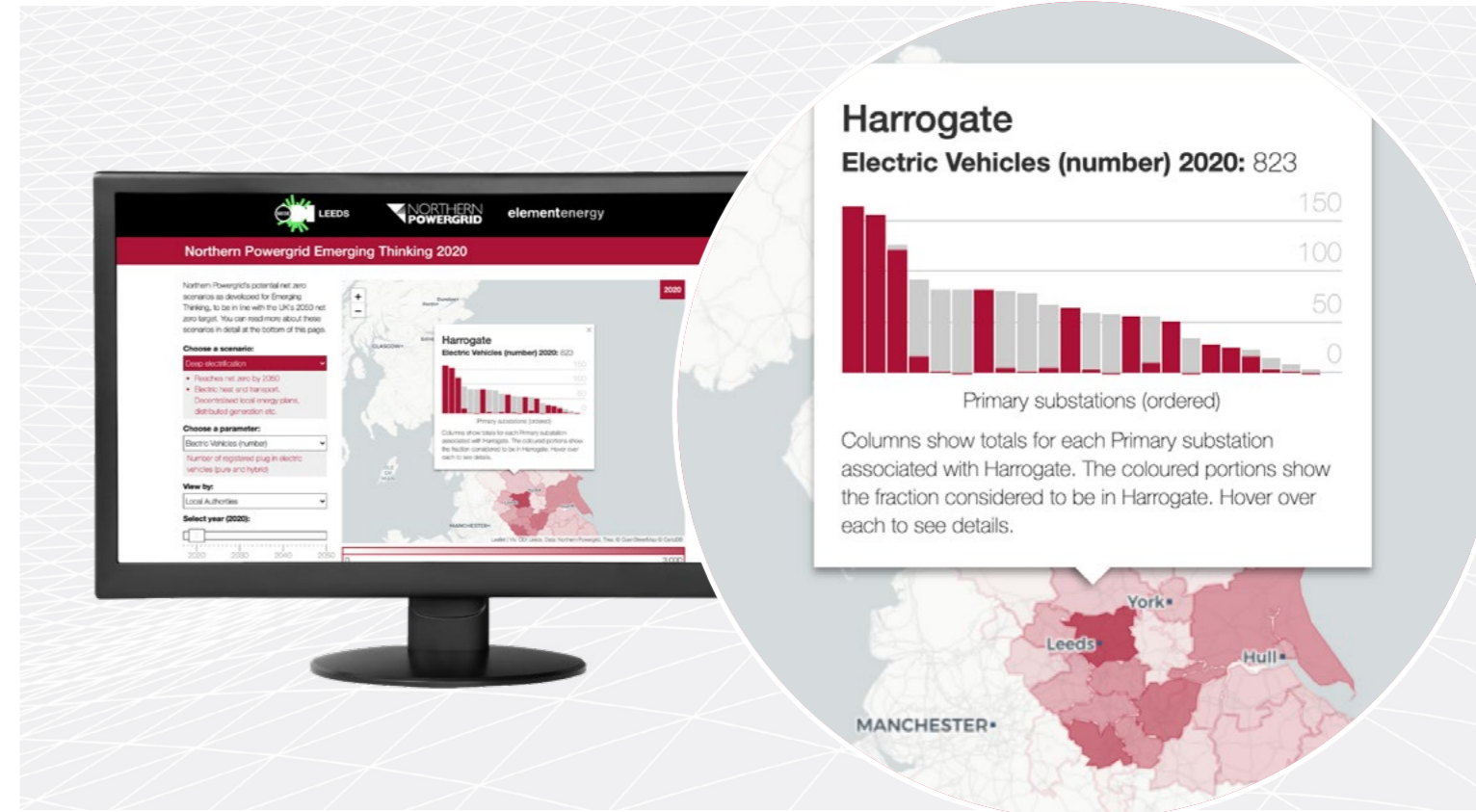
Our DFES is driven by stakeholder intelligence and is regularly updated to ensure it reflects the most accurate data and credible scenarios.

Our connections stakeholders told us they wanted us to keep them informed about DFES and so we have been engaging with them through the course of the ICE plan year.

We hosted a 'What is DFES?' session as part of our Innovation Festival in August 2020 and delivered a 'lightning talk' as part of the Leeds Digital Festival in October 2020. DFES was on the agenda at all three of our local area energy planning forums and those who responded gave an overall satisfaction rating of 93 per cent with those sessions.



We used DFES to identify locations across our region that would benefit from accelerated network investment to bring forward green growth and stimulate post pandemic economy.



Our stakeholders said...

“We are pleased that Northern Powergrid have been engaging with key stakeholders like local authorities on their Distribution Future Energy Scenarios and seeking our feedback on how the projections align with Newcastle City Councils own plans.”

Tim Rippon
Newcastle City Council

“Distribution Future Energy Scenarios are another example of valuable information being shared with us by Northern Powergrid and have been demonstrated well during public sessions we have attended.”

Andy Wilson
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

In December 2020 we published our latest DFES which featured a new 'net zero early' scenario. Our data visualisation tool was also updated to reflect our latest projections.

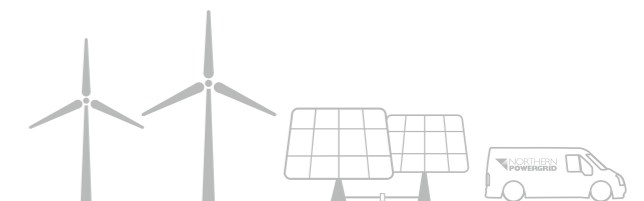
We contacted more than 11,000²⁹ stakeholders to inform them about the publication of our 2020 DFES. We encouraged them to tell us about their plans so that we could feed that information into our DFES and inform our scenarios.

In January 2021, we begin laying the foundations for the next iteration of our DFES. We identified a range of different stakeholder groups who we thought would provide valuable insights. We wanted to know more about their net zero plans to inform our future scenarios and forecasts.

We approached 100 individuals from identified stakeholder groups to take part in online surveys and telephone interviews. This included car manufacturers and dealerships to understand their current and projected uptake of EVs, house builders and developers to understand how they are integrating LCTs into their plans, low carbon installers and Local Authorities.

Intelligence from these interviews has informed our projections and we will be publishing a revised report with updated scenarios at the end of May 2021.

DFES engagement is now firmly embedded in our business as usual activities and we will continue to engage with stakeholders to inform our scenarios and ensure our network planning and investment can support their low carbon ambitions.



Contact us

 0800 011 3433

 ICE@northernpowergrid.com

 www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected