



Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

2022/23 submission

What we do

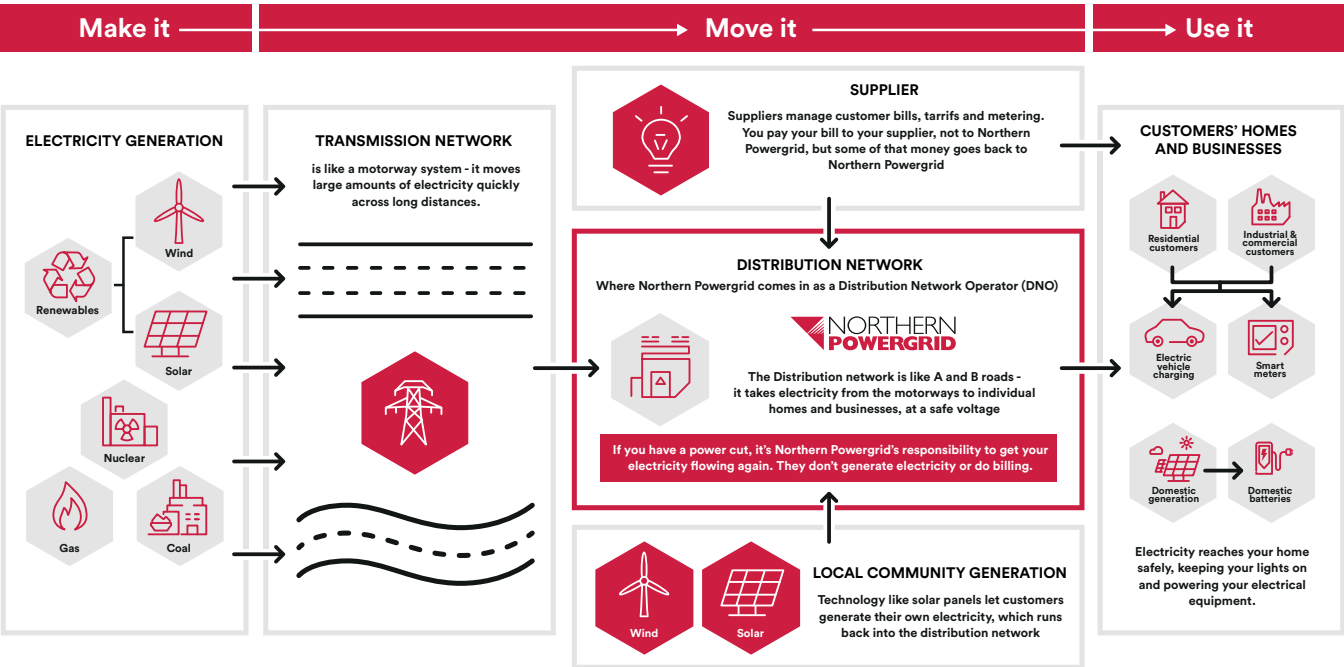
Northern Powergrid owns and operates the electricity distribution network that powers the lives of more than 8 million people across the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

Our network of more than 96,000 km of overhead power lines and underground cables spans from the Scottish borders to northern Lincolnshire and delivers a safe and secure 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.



Where we sit in the industry



Foreword

It has been a year of intense activity and at times challenges.

The pandemic continued to impact our operations, albeit to a lesser extent than in previous years, and Storm Arwen caused widespread devastation, severely testing our network's resilience and our ability to respond.

Net zero targets and changing consumer preferences accelerated the drive towards decarbonisation and we published our business plan for 2023-28, bringing to a conclusion the most ambitious programme of engagement we have ever undertaken to ensure our plan was informed by the stakeholders, consumers and communities we serve.

To be able to respond effectively to all of the above has required us to have some open and frank conversations with our stakeholders and this is something we must continue to do.

Our progress

I am pleased to report that we delivered all the actions in our 2021/22 ICE plan. Two actions were delivered later than forecast due to Storm Arwen but all the actions were delivered within the ICE plan year. I am proud to work with a team that continues to prioritise service improvement and the commitments we have made to our stakeholders, even when it has not been easy to do so. This year we have:

- improved the provision of information we make available with new and updated guides that explain the end-to-end connections process;
- engaged directly with local authorities to discuss their pipeline of connections projects and longer-term plans and any associated impact on the network;

- established a Low Carbon Technology (LCT) connections local working group where stakeholders can seek clarity on the rules and processes for LCT connections as they evolve;
- created a new connections knowledge hub featuring useful guidance and resources; and
- engaged with our stakeholders to help them understand how, when and why our Connection Offer Expenses (COE) are applied.

Looking to the future

Our ICE Looking Forward plan acknowledges the critical issues affecting our major works customers, while scaling up the activities and initiatives from previous years' plans.

The plan was developed together with our connections stakeholders and their insights have shaped the actions and outcomes we will deliver. Some highlights include:

- our commitment to work with customers with existing or planned projects affected by constraints on the transmission and distribution networks to ensure they receive better communication and more timely information;
- formalising a process whereby stakeholders can request network information to inform local area energy plans and other data-driven requirements;
- facilitating 'connections 101' sessions for stakeholders who are unfamiliar with our connections process and policies; and
- responding to requests for more engagement on our network investment and development plans.

The next twelve months

As we look forward to the next 12 months, we can expect another year of significant developments, particularly within our connections business.

Ofgem's conclusions in respect of its Access and Forward-looking Charges Significant Code Review¹ is set to revolutionise the way in which the costs associated with new connections are charged and how access to the network is managed, with the aim of accelerating development of a net zero energy system, capable of delivering clean and affordable energy.

We will need to work with customers whose projects are affected by constraints on the transmission and distribution networks and offer smart, flexible solutions. We will also need to be open and transparent about what we know, so that those looking to connect can make more informed choices.

We will also need to be an enabler of our region's net zero ambitions, whilst balancing the need for affordability and the impact of the current energy and cost of living crisis on our customers.

These are significant undertakings that can only be achieved through continued dialogue and collaboration with our stakeholders. I encourage you to continue to engage with us and to contribute to stakeholder engagement initiatives, including ICE. Your feedback holds us to account, informs our plans and priorities and ultimately helps to improve the service we offer.

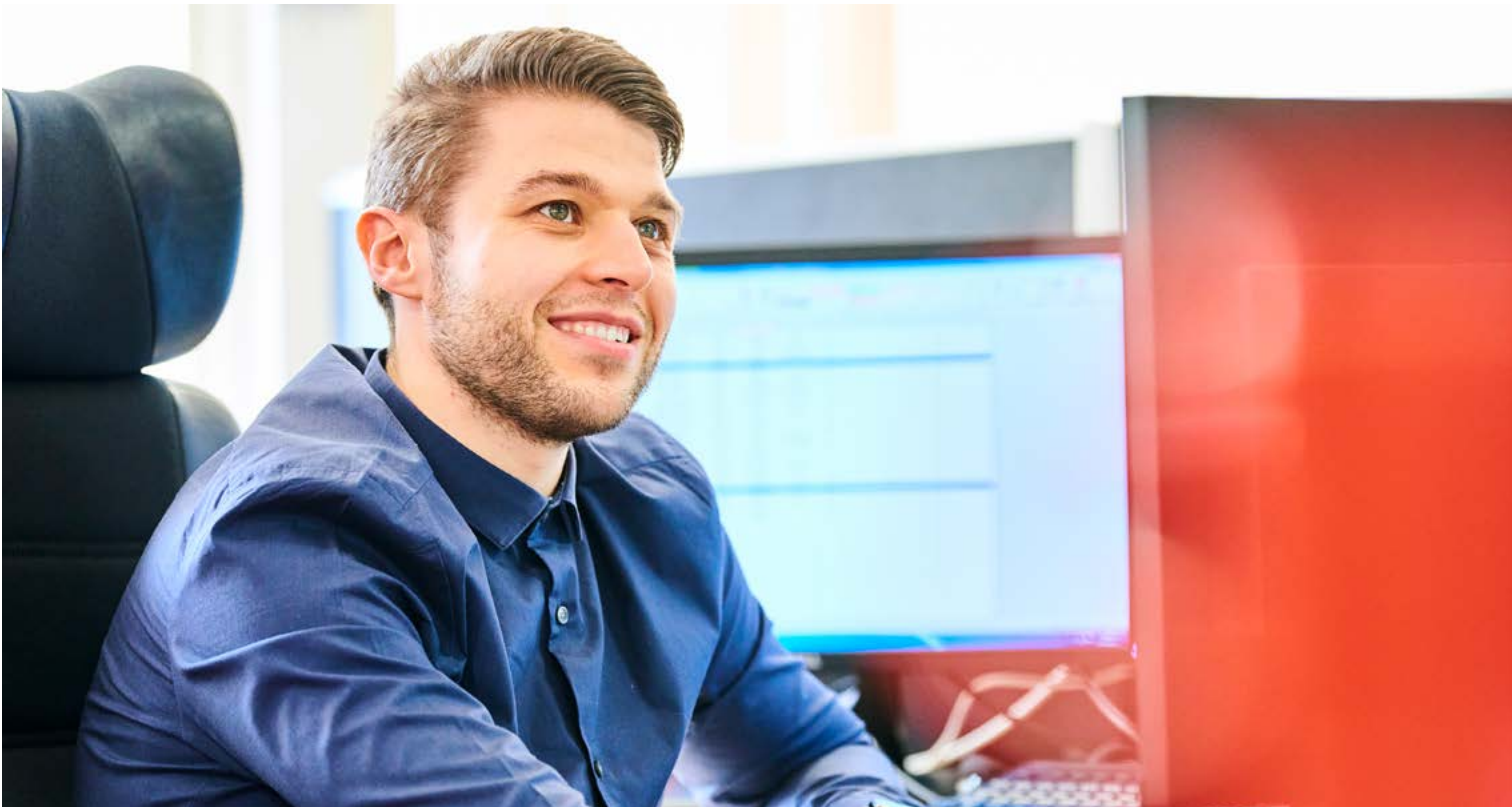
P. Glendinning

Paul Glendinning
DIRECTOR – POLICY AND MARKETS
NORTHERN POWERGRID



¹ <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/access-and-forward-looking-charges-significant-code-review-decision-and-direction>

An introduction to ICE



The purpose

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

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

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 (LV² connections of up to four domestic premises).

The aim




The aim of ICE, as outlined in Ofgem’s guidance³ 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.

² Low voltage
³ [Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement \(ICE\) Guidance Document](#)

Table 1: Relevant Market Segments for ICE

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

Service improvements driven by stakeholders

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

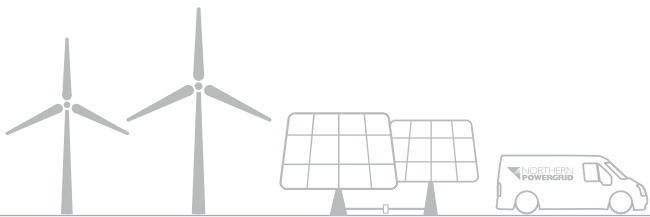
In April each year, following a comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement and consultation, we publish a detailed work plan of service improvement actions for customers operating in the relevant market segments. We will also include actions that benefit Independent Connections Providers (ICPs) 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 and feedback.

Our ICE submission for 2022/23 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 plans. 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 our stakeholders.

In our Looking Back report, we explain how we implemented our engagement strategy and delivered the commitments we made during the 2021/22 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 guidance⁴, 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.

 **96%**

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 2022

 **84%**

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

Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April 2022

The Looking Forward criteria

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

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

Our annual ICE plan endorsement 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 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 engagement activities, providing important insights from connections stakeholders that can inform the priorities and plans of our business.

Our 2022/23 ICE Looking Forward work plan acknowledges the critical issues affecting our major connections customers, while scaling up actions and initiatives from previous years’ plans to the benefit of our stakeholders. We have set forecast completion dates for each of the 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 2022/23 ICE plan year.

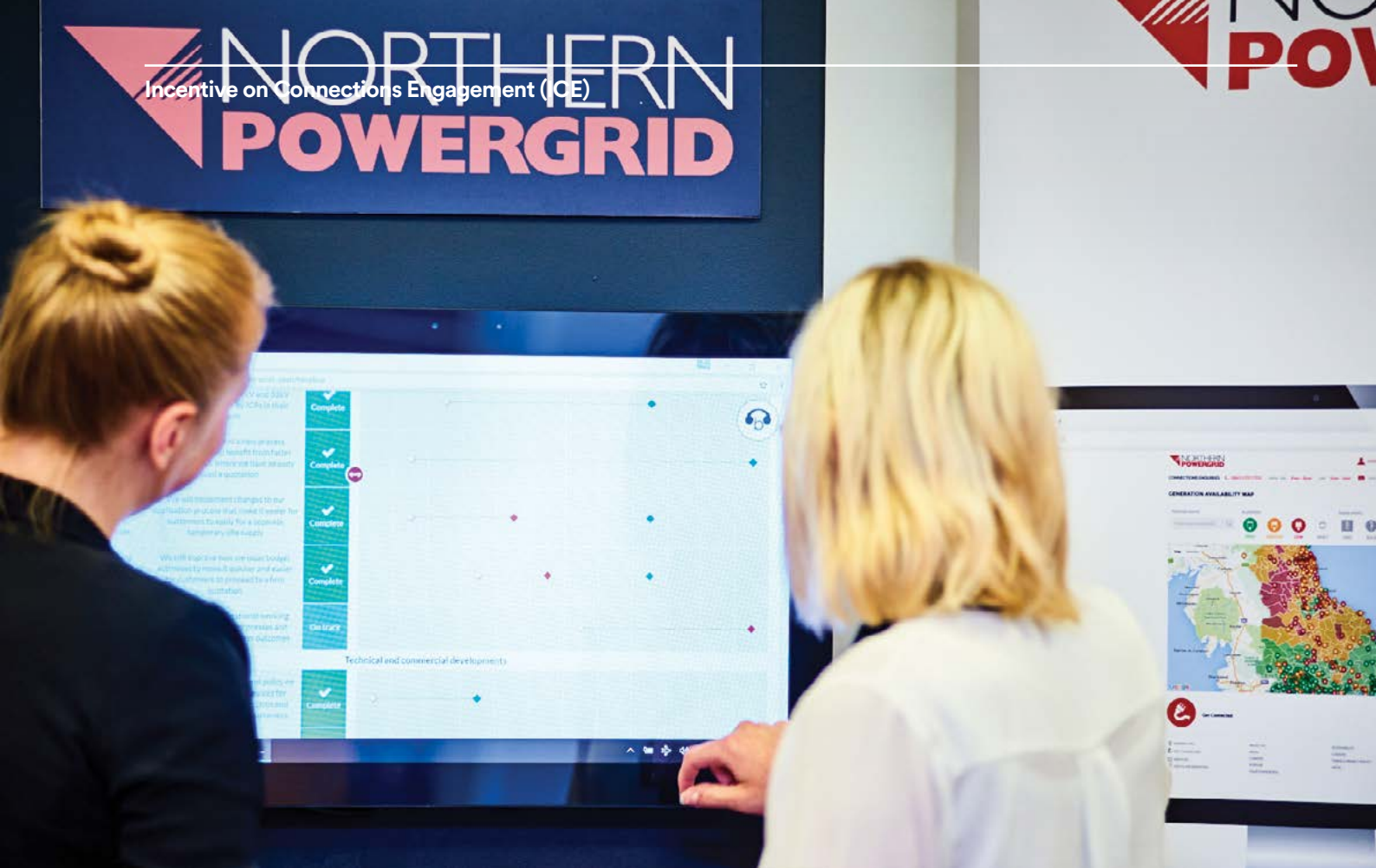
The activities we have undertaken, backed by our robust strategy for connections stakeholder engagement and consultation, gives us confidence that our ICE Looking Forward plan addresses the key issues and areas for improvement our stakeholders have identified.

Our customers agree, with 96 per cent of those who responded to our survey agreeing we have a comprehensive work plan of service improvement activities 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 include measurable targets that will enable them to assess the impact of our actions, we set forecast completion dates and 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 plan⁵, which is updated whenever we close an action and provides links to useful online resources and outputs.



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

We apply a comprehensive 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 and research, connections surgeries and our interactions with our customers and 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 practices or a more significant improvement action delivered through ICE. Our stakeholder feedback log⁶ is the foundation on which we build our annual ICE work plan.

This year, we recorded 172 comments from our connections customers and stakeholders. Only 22 per cent of that feedback led to an action in our 2022/23 ICE Looking Forward 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 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.

Informing and refining our plan

In February 2022, we issued a survey to more than 8,900 connections stakeholders via email, inviting them to provide feedback on our connections service and any service improvement actions they would like to see included in our 2022/23 ICE Looking Forward plan.

In addition, Explain, an independent market research provider, conducted interviews with a small number of major works connections stakeholders who were willing to provide feedback on our service and any potential areas for improvement. Learning from this activity informed the actions in our ICE Looking Forward plan.

Endorsing our plan

In April 2022, we finalised our ICE Looking Forward plan and consulted with our stakeholders to seek endorsement of the proposed actions and any further feedback to inform this, or future iterations of our ICE plan. We contacted more than 8,500 connections stakeholders via email and conducted telephone interviews with 105 major works connections customers.

This comprehensive two-step consultation process gives us confidence that our 2022/23 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.

⁴ Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) Guidance Document
⁵ northernpowergrid.com/ice-work-plan/

⁶ We record all connections-related 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.



The Looking Back criteria

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

Our 2021/22 ICE submission⁷ included a detailed Looking Forward report where we described our strategy for connections engagement and the service improvement actions we were going to undertake in the year.

In this, our 2022/23 ICE submission, we report on how we delivered the commitments we made and explain how we engaged with our connections 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 the year where we concluded the most ambitious and far-reaching programme of engagement we have ever undertaken to inform our business plan for 2023-28, we also implemented our robust strategy for engaging with connections stakeholders and used their feedback to inform our service improvement plans.

We delivered our business as usual connections events, forums and surgeries online and to respond to feedback from some stakeholder groups, we are now planning for more in-person events later in the year.

We continued to scale up our social media presence, delivered animated tutorials and guides and worked with our stakeholders to develop a connections knowledge hub.

We established a local LCT connections working group and proactively engaged with more than 50 per cent of local authorities in our region, discussing their pipelines of connections projects and longer-term plans.

We have adapted our approach over the past few years to respond to external influences like the pandemic and what our stakeholders are telling us about the ways they want to engage and interact with us.

It is now appropriate that we review our strategy together with our connections stakeholders to ensure it meets their current and future needs. We have included a commitment in our ICE Looking Forward plan to do so.

This will enable us to go forward into the next price control period with a strategy that is truly stakeholder-led. It will equip us with the information we need to scale up the activities that worked well during the current period and develop tailored communication plans to suit different stakeholder and customer needs.

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 2021, we published our ICE work plan for 2021/22, which consisted of 12 service improvement actions. It was developed together with our connections stakeholders and the actions in the work plan were derived from their feedback and suggestions.

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

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



We are pleased to report that we completed all 12 actions in our 2021/22 ICE plan by the deadline of 31 March 2022.

Two actions⁸ were delivered later than anticipated due to the need to prioritise our Storm Arwen response. However, in line with the commitment we made in last year's ICE submission, we delivered all our actions within the ICE plan year.

One of the actions, to update our connections contact guide, had been requested by a stakeholder and so we contacted that individual to explain the reasons for the delay and agree a new completion date. As contact details for our connections engineers are published on our website, we do not consider that any stakeholders were disadvantaged by the delay in delivering the updated guide.

The other action was not requested by a stakeholder and, similarly, there was guidance on our website for anyone seeking an unmetered connection - our commitment being to review and update that guidance. Our website also clearly signposts how to contact us for help and advice.

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 2022, we had delivered all 12 actions in our 2021/22 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 12 actions in our 2021/22 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 will proactively seek feedback to inform our thinking and the development of our plans throughout the course of the year. Where we identify feedback that is suitable for ICE, we will engage with the stakeholder who raised the issue to agree the outcomes and include the action in our plan at the mid-year point.

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

Introduction to our Looking Forward report

In this section:

- Our engagement strategy
- Developing our ICE plan
- Our stakeholders support our plans
- Our 2022/23 ICE Looking Forward work plan
- Our 2022/23 actions

In our Looking Forward, we describe our strategy for engaging with connections stakeholders and how their feedback drives our service improvement plans.

We describe 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.

Our ICE Looking Forward plan consists of 11 actions. Developed together with our connections stakeholders, the plan acknowledges the critical issues facing our major works connections customers, while scaling up actions and initiatives from previous years' plans to the benefit of our stakeholders.

It also takes into account the guidance from Ofgem on the areas where it expects to see all DNOs focusing their efforts going forward.

We have set performance measures and forecast completion dates for each of the actions in our plan but in each case, our commitment is to deliver all those actions during the course of the 2022/23 ICE plan year.

Network constraints

One of the biggest issues affecting customers is the potential for delays to the delivery of major connections projects caused by constraints on the transmission and distribution networks.

This is an issue impacting most DNOs. We have a project team tasked with identifying improvements to our current processes and will be working with the customers affected to offer smart, flexible solutions.

We will also be publishing information on known network constraints and any likely impact on connections timescales on our network availability heat maps, so that those looking to connect can make informed choices.

Provision of information

Understanding the importance our stakeholders place on open and accessible data and to respond to feedback we received during last year's ICE consultation, we will be formalising a process whereby stakeholders can request network information and receive a timely response.

We will also be publishing information on the various data platforms and information sources we make available and how to access them.

We will be updating our guidance on electric vehicle (EV) connections. The guide will be developed with input from our LCT connections local working group and will provide clarity on the end-to-end process, including when customers can connect and notify and when they will need to make a new application that could incur connection offer expenses.

Engagement

Learning from the engagement sessions we held with local authorities in the previous year, we will be hosting 'connections 101' sessions for any stakeholders who are unfamiliar with our connections process and policies.

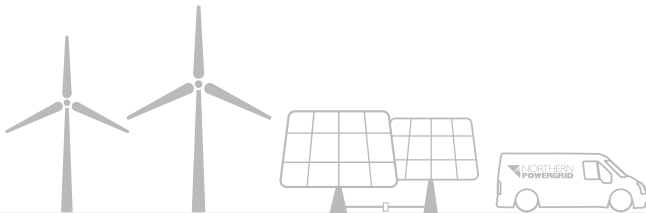
There is also a commitment to work with stakeholders to review our connections engagement strategy and pre-application support package, ahead of the next price control period.

Stakeholder-led plan

To develop an ICE plan that is shaped around the needs of our connections customers and stakeholders, we undertook a broad and inclusive programme of engagement. We sought feedback to inform our plan and then refined the proposed actions and outcomes in line with our stakeholders' needs.

The robust process we employ when forming our ICE plan gives us confidence that our plan addresses the key priorities and areas for improvement our stakeholders have identified this year.

However, we are always looking at how we can do better and so we will be engaging with them throughout the year and if necessary, we will add actions to our ICE plan at the mid-year point to address their feedback.



Our engagement strategy

We work hard to understand the views of our connections stakeholders, using their feedback and insights to continually improve the service we provide.

We encourage our stakeholders to tell us what we could be doing better and give them plenty of opportunities to do so at the connections events and forums we host, through the monthly customer satisfaction surveys and research we commission and by contacting us directly with any questions or concerns.

Our strategy is continually evolving to respond to external influences and what our stakeholders are telling us about the ways in which they engage and interact with us.

As we approach the next price control period, it is appropriate that we should review our strategy together with our stakeholders, to ensure it meets their expectations and current and future needs. We have included a commitment in our ICE 2022/23 Looking Forward plan to do this.

In-year engagement

During 2021/22, we focused on delivering our comprehensive programme of in-year connections engagement, while building upon the initiatives that were successful in previous ICE plan years.

For the significant number of connections customers and stakeholders still working from home or who prefer online engagement, we continued to offer virtual meetings and connections surgeries. For those who prefer to meet with us in-person, we are planning for more of those events later in the year.

Going forward, our strategy is likely to include a mix of in-person and virtual events but we will be engaging with our stakeholders to understand their preferences and how this would work in practice.

Local authority engagement

Net zero targets and available funding have driven a significant increase in requests for engagement and support from local authorities. These stakeholders are keen to understand how to work with us to ensure we can input into their plans at an early stage and support them in delivering their decarbonisation targets.

We responded by proactively reaching out to all local authorities in our region with an invitation to discuss their pipelines of connections projects and longer-terms plans and engaged with more than half⁹ as a result.

The sessions were well received with all those who responded stating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the session they took part in and encouraging us to do more. We are now considering how to integrate these sessions into our business as usual engagement plans.

One of the most interesting observations from these sessions was that there were varying degrees of experience and understanding of our connections business and in some cases, our role and responsibilities as a DNO and new connections provider.

We are setting out to address this issue with a commitment in our ICE plan to host 'connections 101' sessions for any stakeholders who are unfamiliar with our connections process and policies.

LCT connections

Building on the success of last years' ALoMCP¹⁰ working group and to respond to feedback received during Ofgem's consultation on ICE, we established a local working group where stakeholders can seek clarity on the rules and processes for LCT connections as they evolve.

The LCT connections working group also provides us with the information we need to feed back the views of local stakeholders to the national LCT working groups and advocate on their behalf, should they require us to do so.



⁹ We reached out to 124 named contacts in all 35 local authorities in our region. We hosted 20 meetings, engaging with 63 stakeholders who represented over half the local authorities in our region.
¹⁰ Accelerated Loss of Mains Change Programme - <https://futureproofyourpower.co.uk>

We hosted four meetings in the year, discussing a range of topics including the need for more standardisation across DNOs' connections processes and safety concerns over unauthorised installers pulling fuses when installing LCTs. These are both issues that we have promised to raise with the ENA¹¹ and national working groups.

Working group members encouraged us to continue to facilitate these meetings and to increase the scope and membership of the group. We will be working with our stakeholders to do this in the coming months.

Pre-application support

Our connections customers continue to tell us how important it is to be able to speak to our engineers before making an application and how much they benefit from their local knowledge of the network.

We have made a commitment to engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations in this area and review our pre-application support proposition, including connections surgeries.

Provision of information

This year we have taken steps to improve the provision of information we make available by developing animated guides that explain the connections process and tutorials for users and potential users of AutoDesign and our network availability heat maps. We intend to develop more of these and will be working with stakeholders to prioritise what comes next.

We also developed a connections knowledge hub, aimed primarily at electrical contractors and installers but which our stakeholders have told us could be of benefit to a range of different connections stakeholders and customers.

Our LCT connections working group members acted as a steering group for this project, helping us to identify more than 20 topics to prioritise when creating content for the hub.

An embedded approach

Our strategy for engaging with connections stakeholders is informed by our overall engagement approach. It adds value by ensuring the views of connections stakeholders are heard and can influence our decision-making process.

Our approach to engagement is proactive and purposeful, leading to meaningful actions with clearly defined outcomes that can enable our stakeholders to assess our impact. As we prepare for the next price control period, we have transformed our governance to embed consumer voice into all areas of business change.

Our Stakeholder Panel and Social Impact Engagement Group will continue to provide expert challenge and we have introduced new and enduring forums, including a Citizens Panel, to ensure the views of current and future stakeholders are taken into account.

We have also defined and made permanent the role of our Customer Engagement Group (CEG). The CEG will continue to scrutinise our activities and hold us to account, which will be critical in helping us to develop and improve as an organisation.

We review our approach and accreditation annually against the stakeholder engagement standard AA1000SES, which we have held continuously since 2012. We continually monitor our progress and are proud to have achieved measurable growth this year through these assessments:

- Annual audit against the A1000 standard;
- ISO55000 accreditation, including assessment of our stakeholder engagement strategy; and
- BSI assessment of our approach to consumer vulnerability.



Developing our ICE plan



When developing our work plans, we follow the same stakeholder-led process that has proven successful in all previous ICE plan 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 business as usual practices or a more significant improvement action delivered through ICE. This stakeholder comments log¹² is the foundation on which we build our annual ICE plan.

We recorded 172 comments from our connections stakeholders and customers in the year and 22 per cent of that feedback led to actions being included in our 2022/23 ICE work plan. We were able to address the rest through other channels.

The majority of feedback 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 business as usual practices;
- the comment related to a non-connections issue or was specific to the individual's particular project;

- some of the feedback we received was a positive endorsement of our engagement activities or connections service; or
- the comment related to a new technological or commercial development where 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 address their needs.

We produce an ICE work plan proposal which is then reviewed by senior managers and our Executive Leadership Team to provide constructive challenge. In this way, responsibility for the delivery of our ICE actions 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 reviewed and acted upon, whether that requires contact from one of our team, a change to business as usual or a more significant improvement delivered through ICE.

Stage 3

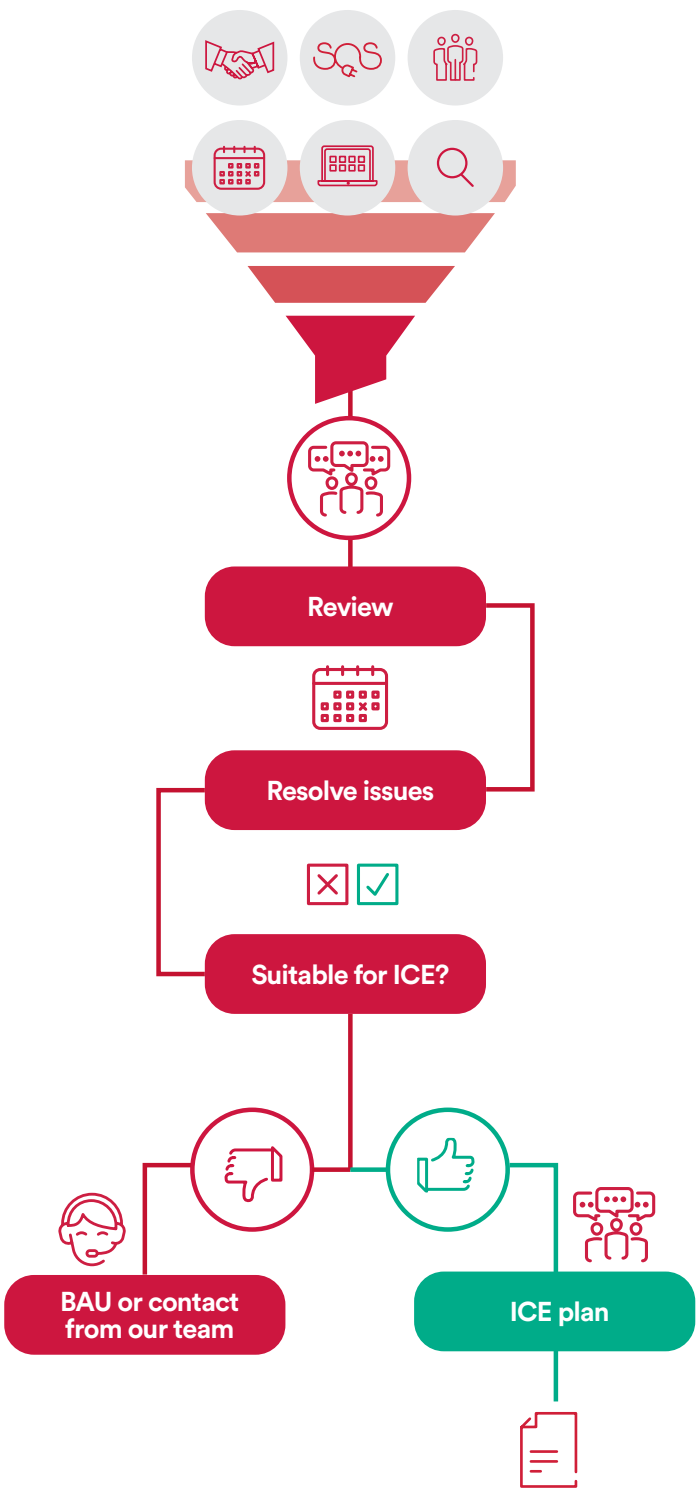
We engage with stakeholders and develop an ICE work plan proposal which is reviewed and challenged by senior managers and our Executive Leadership Team. Each action is assigned to an Executive sponsor, ensuring that responsibility for the delivery of our ICE actions sits with leaders from across our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

Stage 4

We seek to engage with those stakeholders whose feedback has generated the actions in our 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 plan which is published by the end of April each year.



¹² We record all connections-related feedback we receive on our service in a stakeholder feedback log. This is the foundation upon which we build our annual ICE work plans.

Our stakeholders support our plans



We work hard to ensure that all our connections stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to our ICE plans.

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

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, as well as the individual or group who suggested the change.

Informing and refining our plan

To ensure all our stakeholders had the opportunity to contribute to our service improvement plans, in February 2022 we issued a survey via email to more than 8,900 connections stakeholders,

inviting them to provide feedback on our connections service and any actions or initiatives they would like to see included in our 2022/23 ICE plan. To further inform our thinking, we conducted interviews with a small number of major works customers who were willing to provide feedback on our service and any potential areas for improvement.

We also took into account guidance from our regulator on the areas where it expects all DNOs to focus on in the coming ICE plan year¹³.

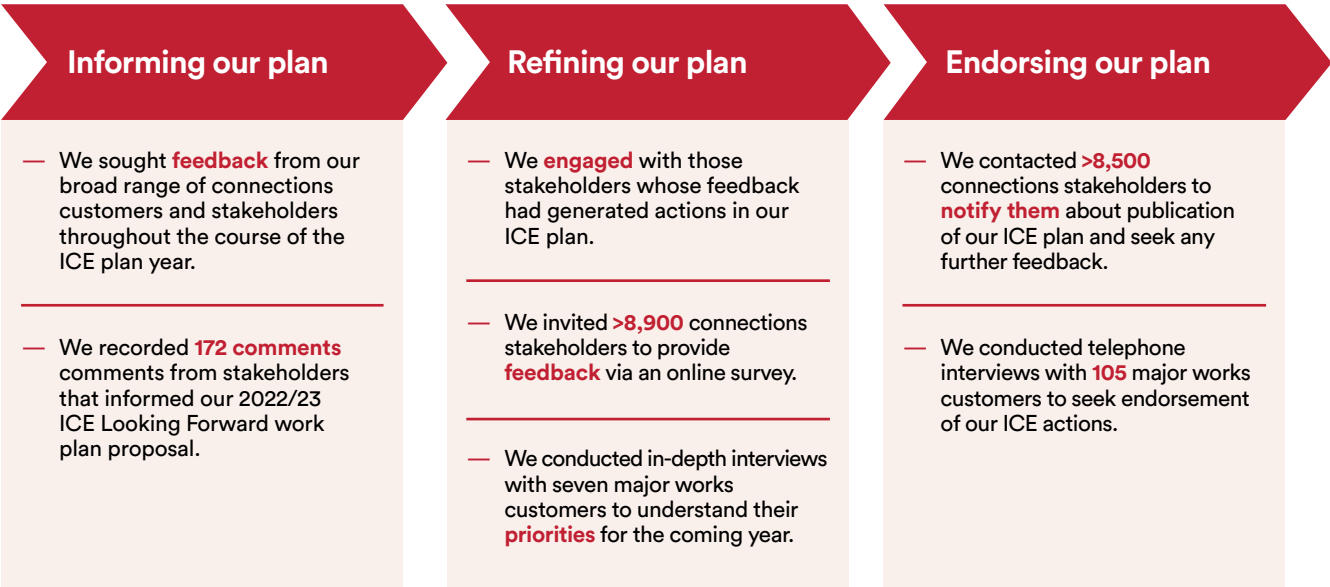
Endorsing our plan

We consulted with stakeholders to seek endorsement of the actions and any further feedback, this activity provided us with an overall stakeholder endorsement of our 2022/23 ICE Looking Forward plan and all the actions in it, such that we were then able to finalise that plan.



of 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 2022



¹³ Outcome of our assessment under the 2021 RIIO-ED1 Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)

Incentive on Connection Engagement (ICE)

2022/23 ICE LOOKING FORWARD WORK PLAN

ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO	2022												2023		
							Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
1.1	We will publish details of any known constraints on the transmission and distribution networks on our network availability heat maps.	Stakeholders will have better visibility and be able to make more informed choices about how, where and when to connect.	<div>Information published and reviewed on a quarterly basis.</div>		<div>Number of webpage visits.</div> <div>Stakeholder feedback.</div>	EHV HV	On track	M		DG											
1.2	We will formalise a process whereby stakeholders can request network data and information.	Stakeholders will receive a more timely and efficient response to requests for data to help them perform their own upfront assessments.	<div>Engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and expectations.</div> <div>New process developed and published.</div>		<div>Number of stakeholders engaged.</div> <div>Number of data requests responded to.</div> <div>Stakeholder feedback.</div>	ALL	On track	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE									
1.3	We will publish information on different network data sources and platforms we make available, including how to access them.	Stakeholders will know what data is available, in what format and how to access it. Where appropriate, we will also state the frequency with which the data is updated so that stakeholders can be confident the information provided is accurate and up to date.	<div>New webpage developed and published.</div>		<div>Number of webpage visits.</div>	ALL	On track	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE									
1.4	We will update our connections contact guide to include regional contacts and signposts to available support and resources.	Stakeholders seeking connections for EV charging infrastructure will be better informed about our rules and processes, and in particular the circumstances by which they can 'connect and notify' and when to make an application that could incur a connection offer expense.	<div>Guidance updated and published.</div> <div>Webpage updated.</div>		<div>Number of downloads.</div> <div>Number of webpage visits.</div> <div>Stakeholder feedback.</div>	HV LV	On track	M	UM		ICP	CE									
2.1	We will review our current process and make improvements as necessary, to ensure any stakeholders with proposed or existing connections affected by known constraints on the transmission and distribution networks will receive better and more timely communication.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the likely impact on their project's timescales and cost and be able to engage with us on this important issue.	<div>Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements.</div> <div>Review our processes and make necessary changes.</div> <div>Commit to a minimum timescale for our interaction with NGESO.</div>		<div>Process reviewed, changes implemented and minimum timescale for interaction with NGESO communicated to stakeholders.</div>	EHV	On track	M		DG											
3.1	We will work with stakeholders to develop and agree our connections engagement strategy to ensure it meets their needs.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to inform and shape our future engagement strategy.	<div>Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements.</div> <div>Review our current strategy, learning from best practice and successful initiatives and activities.</div>		<div>Number of stakeholders engaged.</div> <div>Strategy developed and communicated.</div> <div>Stakeholder feedback.</div>	ALL	On track	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE									
3.2	We will review and formalise our pre-application support and advice proposition.	Stakeholders will receive better upfront advice and support and can explore their options before making an application.	<div>Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectation and requirements</div> <div>Review and develop our proposition, learning from best practice</div>		<div>Number of stakeholders engaged.</div> <div>Proposition reviewed and communicated.</div> <div>Stakeholder feedback.</div>	ALL	On track	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE									
3.3	We will host 'connections 101' sessions to introduce stakeholders to our connections business. The sessions will be aimed at stakeholders who are new or unfamiliar with our policies and practices and will explain the end-to-end process and what stakeholders should expect.	Stakeholders will receive a comprehensive introduction and overview of our end-to-end connections process and understand our role and responsibilities and a network operator and connections provider.	<div>Minimum of two 'connections 101' engagement sessions held.</div>		<div>Number of stakeholders engaged.</div> <div>Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with sessions held.</div>	ALL	On track	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE									

KEY:

- M

 METERED DEMAND CUSTOMERS
- UM

 UNMETERED CUSTOMERS
- DG

 DISTRIBUTED GENERATION CUSTOMERS
- ICP

 INDEPENDENT CONNECTIONS PROVIDERS / INDEPENDENT DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OPERATOR
- CE

 COMMUNITY ENERGY GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS
- ◇

 ACTION STARTS
-

 OUR FORECAST TIMESCALE FOR COMPLETION
- ◆

 FORECAST COMPLETION DATE

Incentive on Connection Engagement (ICE)

2022/23 ICE LOOKING FORWARD WORK PLAN

ACTION	THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO		2022												2023		
								Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
4.1 We will publish information on flexible connections for stakeholders considering this type of arrangement, including any changes necessitated by the Access and Forward-looking Charges Significant Code Review.	Stakeholders will be better informed and know what to expect when accepting this type of offer. They will know who to contact to discuss a flexible connection and how to make changes to an existing arrangement.	<div>— Guidance published.</div> <div>— FAQs updated.</div>	<div>— Number of webpage visits.</div>	EHV HV	<div>✓</div> <div>On track</div>			DG														
5.1 We will develop and agree our future engagement strategy together with ICPs and IDNOs.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to inform and shape our engagement strategy. They will clearly understand how their feedback drives change in our business and how we can continue to work together to minimise input services, extend the scope of contestable works and promote fair and open competition in connections.	<div>— Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements.</div> <div>— Minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions held.</div>	<div>— Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with the sessions held.</div> <div>— Stakeholder feedback.</div>	ALL	<div>✓</div> <div>On track</div>																	
6.1 We will engage with stakeholders and communicate our network investment and development plans, including how our 'flexibility first' approach will help more stakeholders connect to our network.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have confidence in our network's capacity to support their net zero plans.	<div>— Engagement session held and plans communicated.</div>	<div>— Number of stakeholders engaged.</div> <div>— Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with session held.</div>	ALL	<div>✓</div> <div>On track</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE												

KEY:

- M

 METERED DEMAND CUSTOMERS
- UM

 UNMETERED CUSTOMERS
- DG

 DISTRIBUTED GENERATION CUSTOMERS
- ICP

 INDEPENDENT CONNECTIONS PROVIDERS / INDEPENDENT DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OPERATOR
- CE

 COMMUNITY ENERGY GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS
- ◇

 ACTION STARTS
-

 OUR FORECAST TIMESCALE FOR COMPLETION
- ◆


 FORECAST COMPLETION DATE

ACTION
1.1

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Information on known network constraints

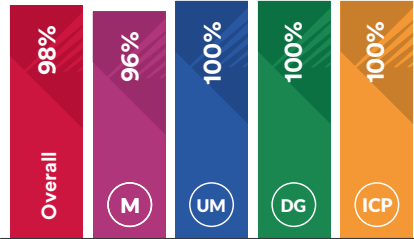
M DG

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will publish details of any known constraints on the transmission and distribution networks on our network availability heat maps.	Stakeholders will have better visibility and be able to make more informed choices about how, where and when to connect.	Information published and reviewed on a quarterly basis.	Number of webpage visits. Stakeholder feedback.	EHV HV	 31/03/23

Delays to major connections projects, in particular renewable energy projects that could help the UK to navigate the current energy crisis, caused by constraints on the transmission and distribution networks, is one of the biggest issues currently impacting DNOs and their customers.

We are committed to working with those customers whose projects are affected by constraints on the transmission and distribution networks and to being open and transparent about what we know. We want to ensure that anyone looking to connect to our network has full visibility on the likely timescales and cost and can make informed decisions about how and where to connect.

We will publish information on any known constraints at grid supply points on our network availability heat maps. This information will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and we will make sure stakeholders are kept informed of any updates.



Information on known network constraints

Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April 2022




ACTION
1.2

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Network data requests

M DG UM ICP CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will formalise a process whereby stakeholders can request network data and information.	Stakeholders will receive a more timely and efficient response to requests for data to help them perform their own upfront assessments.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and expectations. New process developed and published.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Number of data requests responded to. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	 31/03/23

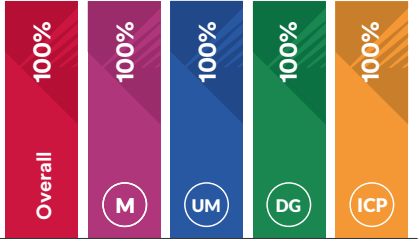
With this action, we are responding to stakeholder feedback received during Ofgem's 2021 consultation on ICE, with a commitment to formalise a process whereby stakeholders can request network data.

We want to ensure that all relevant and appropriate information is shared promptly with stakeholders so they can make fully informed decisions about how and where to connect.

Understanding the importance they place on network information to inform local area energy plans and other data driven requirements, we will engage with stakeholders to understand their experience and expectations in this area.

We will then develop and communicate a process which will enable stakeholders to make a data request via a central route and receive a timely response.

The detail of the process will be developed together with our stakeholders but they can expect to have their request assessed and a timescale to supply the information or discuss the scope of the request further, to be agreed within a minimum number of working days.



Network data requests

Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April 2022



ACTION

1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Data platforms

M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will publish information on different network data sources and platforms we make available, including how to access them.	Stakeholders will know what data is available, in what format and how to access it. Where appropriate, we will also state the frequency with which the data is updated so that stakeholders can be confident the information provided is accurate and up to date.	New webpage developed and published.	Number of webpage visits.	ALL	<div> </div> 31/03/23

Our stakeholders said...

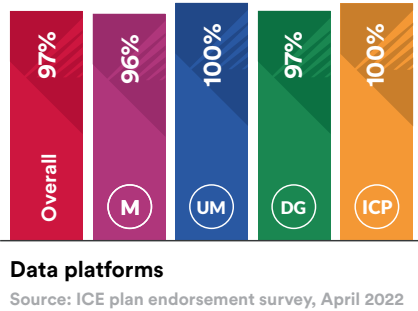
“

“Access to network data platforms is crucial to stakeholders such as ourselves and the more understanding we have of these platforms the better. Providing clarity for stakeholders is a valuable step for Northern Powergrid to take.”

”

Shay Tierney

Harworth Group



We have a number of different data platforms and information sources available to stakeholders who want to perform their own upfront assessments and to ICPs for determining points of connection.

These platforms are only really useful if those using them understand what information is available, in what format and how they can be accessed.

To improve the provision of information we make available and provide clarity for our connections stakeholders, we will be creating a new webpage that lists all the data sources we currently make available, including our long term development statement, network development plan, embedded capacity register and network availability heat maps.

The webpage will include links to all relevant platforms and clearly explain what information they provide and in what format.

Where appropriate, we will also list the frequency with which the data is updated so that stakeholders can be confident the information provided is accurate and up to date.

ACTION

1.4

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

EV connections

M

UM

ICP

CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will update our guidance for stakeholders seeking EV connections.	Stakeholders seeking connections for EV charging infrastructure will be better informed about our rules and processes, and in particular the circumstances by which they can ‘connect and notify’ and when to make an application that could incur a connection offer expense.	Guidance updated and published. Webpage updated.	Number of downloads. Number of webpage visits. Stakeholder feedback.	HV LV	<div> </div> 31/12/22

Our stakeholders said...

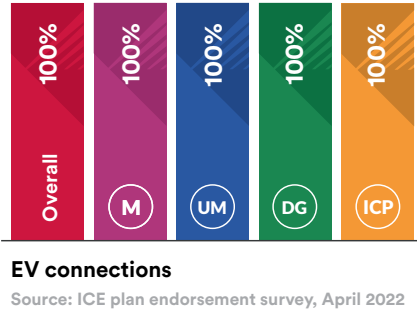
“

“Different processes between DNOs can present challenges when seeking a new connection. I am glad to see Northern Powergrid taking the positive step of updating their EV guidance which should provide us with more clarity on processes and rules.”

”

Helen Stack

Centrica



The ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles is driving significant demand for new connections for EV charge points and charging infrastructure.

We are planning for a significant increase in the number of EVs on our region’s roads by 2030 and are talking to local authorities and other stakeholders about their plans to electrify their fleets.

As an enabler of this change, we want to make it as simple and straightforward as possible to connect EVs to our network.

We will be developing our guidance for stakeholders seeking new EV connections, with input from our LCT connections working group members. We will also be developing the content of our dedicated webpage and the frequently asked questions on our website.

In particular, our guidance will clarify the circumstances in which stakeholders can connect and notify us about their installation and when they will need to make an application that could incur connection offer expenses, which is an important distinction due to the volumes of applications we are receiving.



ACTION

2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Network constraints

M

DG

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will review our current process and make improvements as necessary, to ensure any stakeholders with proposed or existing connections affected by known constraints on the transmission and distribution networks will receive better and more timely communication.	Stakeholders will be better informed about the likely impact on their project's timescales and cost and be able to engage with us on this important issue.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements. Review our processes and make necessary changes. Commit to a minimum timescale for our interaction with NGESO.	Process reviewed, changes implemented and minimum timescale for interaction with NGESO communicated to stakeholders.	EHV	<div> <div></div> <div>31/03/23</div> </div>

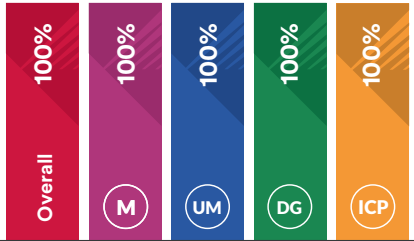
Constraints on the transmission and distribution networks and the potential for delays to the delivery of major connections, including renewable energy projects, is an issue that is affecting most DNOs and their customers.

We have a multi-discipline team in place to respond to those customers affected on a project by project basis and we are working with National Grid and the wider industry to develop and deploy solutions.

Our commitment is to work with stakeholders who are impacted and those looking to connect and give them a platform to engage with us on this important issue.

We will review and make any necessary changes to our current processes to ensure customers receive better and more timely communication as their projects progress.

We will also ensure that any customers looking to connect to our distribution network are fully informed and understand the implications, in particular the likely impact on their projects timescale and cost.



Network constraints
Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April 2022



ACTION

3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Connection engagement

M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

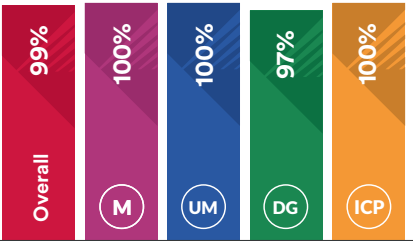
Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will work with stakeholders to develop and agree our connections engagement strategy to ensure it meets their needs.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to inform and shape our future engagement strategy.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements. Review our current strategy, learning from best practice and successful initiatives and activities.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Strategy developed and communicated. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div> <div></div> <div>31/03/23</div> </div>

We have a robust strategy for engaging with connections stakeholders and we use their feedback and the insights we gain to drive our service improvement plans.

We have had to adapt our approach over the past few years to respond to external influences like the pandemic and what our stakeholders are telling us about the ways they want to engage and interact with us.

It is appropriate that we should now review our strategy together with our stakeholders to ensure it meets their current and future needs.

This will enable us to go forward into the next price control period with a strategy we are confident is truly stakeholder-led. It will enable us to scale up those activities and initiatives that worked well during the current period and develop tailored engagement and communication plans that meet the needs of all our connections stakeholders and customers.



Connection engagement
Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April 2022



ACTION

3.2

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Pre-application support

M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

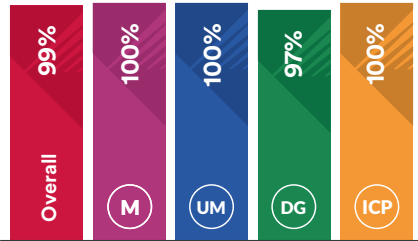
Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will review and formalise our pre-application support and advice proposition.	Stakeholders will receive better upfront advice and support and can explore their options before making an application.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectation and requirements Review and develop our proposition, learning from best practice	Number of stakeholders engaged. Proposition reviewed and communicated. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div> <div></div> <div>31/03/23</div> </div>

Our customers continue to tell us how important it is to be able to speak to our connections engineers before making an application and how much they benefit from their local knowledge of the network.

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

We have made a commitment to engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations in this area and to review our pre-application support proposition, including the provision of connections surgeries.

We will review our current proposition and make any necessary changes to ensure our stakeholders can continue to access upfront support and advice in a timely and effective manner and communicate the outcomes to our stakeholders.



Pre-application support
Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April 2022



ACTION

3.3

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Connections 101

M

DG

UM

ICP

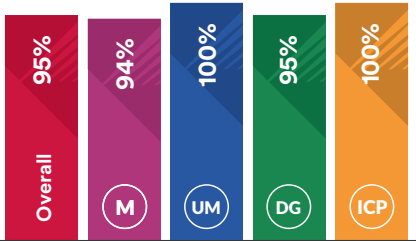
CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will host 'connections 101' sessions to introduce stakeholders to our connections business. The sessions will be aimed at stakeholders who are new or unfamiliar with our policies and practices and will explain the end-to-end process and what stakeholders should expect.	Stakeholders will receive a comprehensive introduction and overview of our end-to-end connections process and understand our role and responsibilities and a network operator and connections provider.	Minimum of two 'connections 101' engagement sessions held.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with sessions held.	ALL	<div> <div></div> <div>31/03/23</div> </div>

One of the key observations from the local authority connections engagement sessions we ran last year was that there were varying degrees of experience and understanding of our connections process and in some cases, our role and responsibilities as a DNO and new connections provider.

We are setting out to address this with a commitment to host a minimum of two 'connections 101' sessions during the ICE plan year for any stakeholders who are unfamiliar with our connections business.

The sessions will act as an introduction to our connections processes, policies and practices and cover topics raised during the local authority meetings including available pre-application support, the different types of connection offers available, connection offer expenses, what to expect at each stage of the connections process and the roles and responsibilities of all those involved.



Connections 101
Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April 2022




ACTION

4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Flexible connections

DG

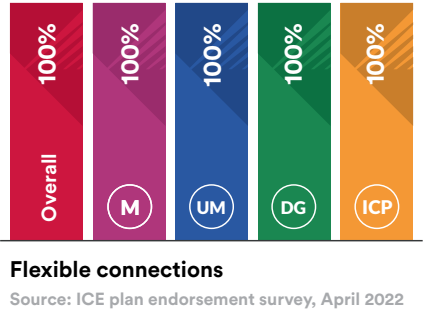
Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will publish information on flexible connections for stakeholders considering this type of arrangement, including any changes necessitated by the Access and Forward-looking Charges Significant Code Review.	Stakeholders will be better informed and know what to expect when accepting this type of offer. They will know who to contact to discuss a flexible connection and how to make changes to an existing arrangement.	Guidance published. FAQs updated.	Number of webpage visits.	EHV HV	 31/10/22

To improve the provision of information we make available, we will publish information on flexible connections for stakeholders considering this type of arrangement.

We will create a new webpage that clearly describes what customers can expect when applying for this type of connection offer and the implications of accepting it. The new webpage will also explain how to contact us to discuss a flexible connection and how customers can make changes to an existing arrangement.

The conclusions of Ofgem's Access and Forward-looking Charges Significant Code Review are set to revolutionise how the costs associated with new connections are charged. It is expected that this will drive a significant increase in the number of new and upgraded connections to our network, which will necessitate more conversations with our stakeholders regarding flexible solutions.

It is appropriate, therefore, that we ensure we have clear and concise information available for stakeholders considering this type of arrangement.




ACTION

5.1

ENABLING COMPETITION

ICP/IDNO engagement

ICP

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will develop and agree our future engagement strategy together with ICPs and IDNOs.	Stakeholders will have the opportunity to inform and shape our engagement strategy. They will clearly understand how their feedback drives change in our business and how we can continue to work together to minimise input services, extend the scope of contestable works and promote fair and open competition in connections.	Engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations and requirements. Minimum of two dedicated engagement sessions held.	Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with the sessions held. Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	 31/03/23

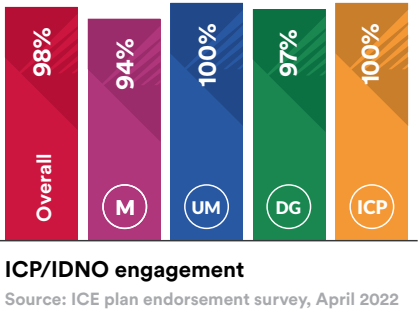
We believe our strategy for engaging with ICPs and IDNOs is robust.

We have a dedicated Connections Input Services team who engage directly with these stakeholders. We host dedicated events and connections surgeries and have an alternative providers register¹⁵ on our website with contact details for ICPs who are accredited by us and the National Electricity Registration Scheme (NERS) to carry out contestable works.

However, it is important that, as we prepare for the next price control period, we review our approach together with these stakeholders to ensure it meets their particular needs.

We will engage with ICPs and IDNOs to understand their expectations and requirements and identify any instances of best practice across DNOs.

ICPs and IDNOs will have the opportunity to shape our engagement strategy. They will clearly understand how their feedback drives change in our business and how we can continue to work together to minimise input services, extend the scope of contestable works and promote fair and open competition in connections.



¹⁵ northernpowergrid.com/alternative-providers

ACTION

6.1

NET ZERO READY

Network capacity


M

DG

UM

ICP

CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Target completion date
We will engage with stakeholders and communicate our network investment and development plans, including how our 'flexibility first' approach will help more stakeholders connect to our network.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have confidence in our network's capacity to support their net zero plans.	Engagement session held and plans communicated.	Number of stakeholders engaged. Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with session held.	ALL	 31/03/23

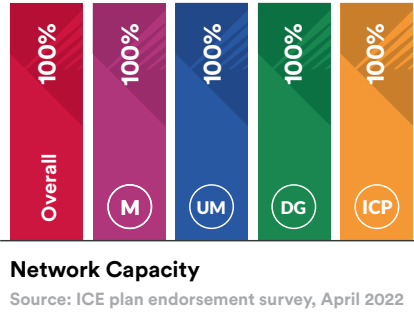
As the country moves away from a dependence on fossil fuels, there will be significant demand for electricity and other clean energy sources to power homes, businesses and transport.

A question our stakeholders often ask is whether our network has capacity to accommodate this increased demand. They want to be confident that we are investing in our network to ensure it can support their decarbonisation plans.

We have set out to address this with a commitment to host a stakeholder event where we will clearly communicate our network investment and development strategy and plans, including how our 'flexibility first' approach will enable the significant number of new connections required to support our region's net zero ambitions.

We will explain how our Planning Scenario is helping us prepare for the significant numbers of new connections of EV charge points and heat pumps we expect to see and how our distribution future energy scenarios (DFES)¹⁶ can be used to model changing energy usage in our region, up to 2050.

We will also explain how the intelligence stakeholders have shared is helping to inform our network planning and where we will invest in our network to create capacity for new connections.



Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE)



Introduction to our Looking Back report

In this section:

Implementing our engagement strategy

Our 2021/22 ICE Looking Back work plan

How we delivered our 2021/22 actions

Our Looking Back report provides us with the opportunity to discuss the service improvement actions we have delivered over the past twelve months.

In this section, we explain how we 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 our stakeholders have told us about the actions and outcomes we delivered.

A year of stakeholder-led improvements

We are pleased to report that we delivered all 12 actions in our 2021/22 ICE plan.

Two actions that were forecast for completion were delivered later than anticipated due to the need to prioritise our response to Storm Arwen but in line with the commitment we made in last year's ICE submission, all of our actions were delivered within the ICE plan year. One of the actions, to update our connections contact guide, had been specifically requested by a stakeholder and so we contacted that individual to explain the reasons for the delay and agreed a new completion date that was acceptable to them.

The actions in our 2021/22 ICE plan set out to address the priorities and challenges our connections stakeholders had highlighted in the previous year and covered a range of areas for improvement.

Many of the actions in our plan focused on improving the provision of information we

make available to ensure our stakeholders have access to the most relevant and up to date information.

To do this, we have developed new animated guides and tutorials and, together with our connections stakeholders, we created a new online connections knowledge hub that features technical articles, guidance and links to useful resources.

Net zero targets

Net zero targets, government funding and changing consumer preferences are driving a significant increase in applications to connect low carbon technologies (LCTs), including heat pumps and electric vehicle (EV) charging points. We are committed to supporting our stakeholders decarbonisation ambitions and to making it as easy as possible to connect LCTs to our network.

To help us do this, and in response to feedback from the last ICE consultation where our regulator Ofgem¹⁷ stated that it expects distribution network operators to engage with stakeholders and work together to improve and streamline connections processes, we established an LCT connections local working group.

The working group provides stakeholders with a channel to seek clarity on the rules and processes for LCT connections as they evolve and equips us with the information

we need to feedback the views and experiences of local stakeholders to the national working groups, should they require us to do so.

Upfront engagement

We have seen significant demand for our connections engineers' time and expertise this year, and the challenge for us has been in balancing demand with the time and resources required to deliver the levels of service and support our stakeholders expect.

We have included a commitment in our 2022/23 ICE Looking Forward plan to review our pre-application support proposition and to engage with stakeholders to understand their expectations in this area.

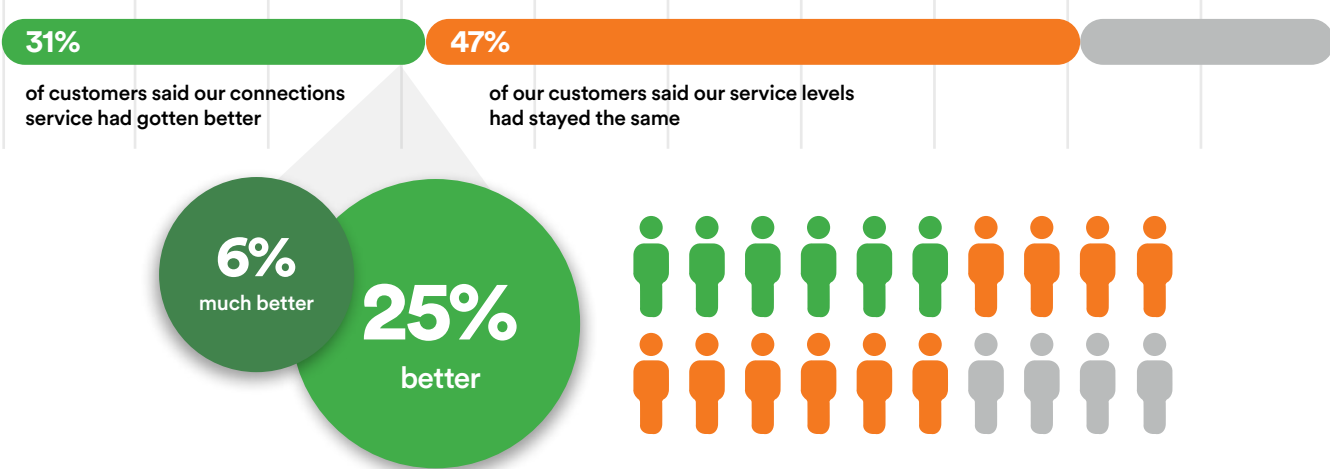
Developing our ICE plans

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 stakeholder engagement and consultation gives us confidence that we delivered the actions and outcomes our connections stakeholders expected from us in the 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.

We asked customers to tell us about our connections service over the past 12 months.

Source: ICE plan endorsement survey, April 2022



Implementing our engagement strategy

In a year that saw us conclude the most ambitious and far-reaching programme of engagement we have ever undertaken to inform our business plan for 2023-28, we also focused on delivering the commitments we made in our 2021/22 ICE plan.

We continue to refine our approach to connections engagement in line with what our stakeholders are telling us about the ways in which they want to engage and interact with us.

Members of our LCT connections working group said they wanted us to continue to facilitate our regular meetings via digital channels, while ICPs said they preferred face-to-face engagement and so we are planning for our first in-person event at the end of June 2022.

For the significant number of connections stakeholders and customers who are still working from home or who prefer online engagement, we continue to offer virtual surgeries and meetings via their preferred digital channel. We have continued to scale up our social media presence and have been developing new animated guides and tutorials.

We developed an online connections knowledge hub for installers and electrical contractors and have made a commitment to keep the content fresh and relevant. At the suggestion of our stakeholders, we intend to develop it further, so that it can be of benefit to a wide range of connections stakeholders and customers.

Alongside these new developments, we carried out our usual programme of connections engagement, hosting distribution generation (DG) owner operator forms and facilitating a significant number of connections surgeries and requests for pre-application support and advice.

You can watch our animated guides and tutorials on our YouTube channel: [youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid](https://www.youtube.com/NorthernPowergrid)

Our year in summary

Period April 2021 - March 2022




>59,800

connections related enquires answered by our contact centre



>100

connections surgeries delivered




Continued to scale up our social media presence

Facebook: 39% increase in fans

LinkedIn: 17% increase in followers

Twitter: 29% increase in followers



>170k

Page views at [northernpowergrid.com/get-connected](https://www.northernpowergrid.com/get-connected)



65

Ask the Expert online enquiries responded to




New animated tutorials and process guides


Proactive engagement with over half the local authorities in our region



New LCT connections local working group



Two DG Owner Operator forums





Monthly major works customer satisfaction surveys



Incentive on Connection Engagement (ICE)

2021/22 ICE LOOKING BACK WORK PLAN

ACTION		THE OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE METRICS	MEASURES OF IMPACT/SUCCESS	VOLTAGE	STATUS	APPLICABLE TO					2021										2022		
												Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
1.1	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 how to contact us should they need to.	— Guide developed and published.	— Number of guides distributed. — Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆											◆	
1.2	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	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆											◆	
1.3	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	<div>✓ Complete</div>		UM				◆									◆		◆	
1.4	We will update our connections contact guide to include regional contacts and signposts to available support and 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	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆								◆		◆		
1.5	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	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M		DG	ICP	CE	◆											◆	
2.1	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 connections charges regulations.	— Guidance developed and published.	— Information disseminated.	EHV HV	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M		DG	ICP	CE	◆						◆						
3.1	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% stakeholder satisfaction rate with the sessions held. — Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG			◆											◆	
4.1	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	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆								◆				
4.2	We will establish a Low Carbon Technology connections local working group.	Stakeholders will be better informed and have clarity on the 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 feedback.	HV LV	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆											◆	
4.3	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	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆											◆	
5.1	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	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆											◆	
6.1	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 role as a DSO and topics including flexibility services.	— Minimum of two engagement sessions held in the ICE plan year.	— Target of 85% stakeholder satisfaction rate with the sessions held. — Stakeholder feedback.	ALL	<div>✓ Complete</div>	M	UM	DG	ICP	CE	◆											◆	

KEY:

- M

 METERED DEMAND CUSTOMERS
- UM

 UNMETERED CUSTOMERS
- DG

 DISTRIBUTED GENERATION CUSTOMERS
- ICP

 INDEPENDENT CONNECTIONS PROVIDERS
- CE

 COMMUNITY ENERGY GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS
- IDNO

 INDEPENDENT DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OPERATOR
- ◇ ACTION STARTS
- OUR FORECAST TIMESCALE FOR COMPLETION
- ◆ FORECAST COMPLETION DATE
- ◆ ACTUAL COMPLETION DATE

ACTION
1.1

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

End-to-end connections process guide



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We developed an animated guide that explains the end-to-end major works connections process.
- ✓ Stakeholders are now better informed and will know what to expect at each stage of the process.

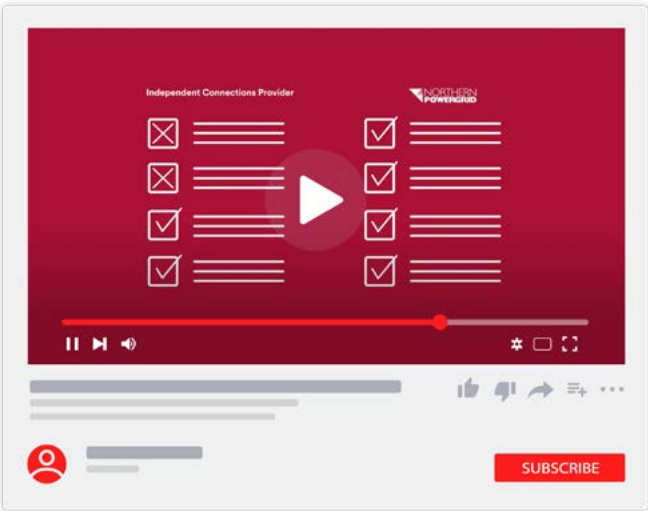
To make it interesting and engaging and understanding that information that is presented visually and audibly is often easier to absorb and retain, we developed an animated guide that explains our major works connections process.

The guide complements a wealth of written information and frequently asked questions available on our website and the support channels we make available for those customers who prefer to talk to us to understand the connections process and what is involved.

The guide clearly explains our end-to-end process, setting out the key points in the process (pre-application, application and delivery) and what customers can expect at each stage, including timescales. It explains the responsibilities of the DNO, the customer and any third parties involved and how to contact us and at each stage of the process.

The animated guide was uploaded to our YouTube site where it was viewed more than 90¹⁸ times and a link included in all relevant connections customer letters.

🔗 You can view our guide to our major works connections process at: <https://youtu.be/bTPEVBj5hdU>



ACTION
1.2

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Get connected webpage



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	Complete

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ We made changes to our Get Connection webpage that made it easier for users to access connections services and information online.

The Get Connected section of our website is the first port of call for anyone seeking a new connection to our network or information on the services we provide.

Customers can use this webpage to apply for different types of connections online and get an estimate for the work. They can access online tools like AutoDesign that can help them make more informed choices about how and where to connect, book a surgery or find information on a range of connections-related topics.

It is important, therefore, that this webpage is easy to navigate and that the information presented is easy to understand.

We said we would engage with our stakeholders to understand their experience of using our Get Connected webpage and identify any areas for improvement. We sought feedback from a broad range of connections stakeholders to inform our thinking.

We reviewed BCMS¹⁹ data from more than 50 small works customers who had given feedback on our website and our online application process. These stakeholders mainly highlighted issues with understanding what connections services were available and how to access them. Many stated that, having tried to apply online, they had called our contact centre for help completing their application.

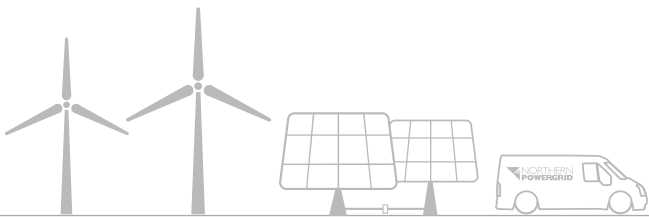
We sought feedback from our top 100 website users on the webpage and its functionality and included questions in telephone interviews and surveys conducted with major works connections customers.

Acting on the feedback we received, and following a comprehensive benchmarking exercise where we reviewed other DNOs' webpages to identify any instances of best practice, we implemented changes to our Get Connected webpage that improved its functionality and usability, so making it easier for customers and stakeholders to access connections services and information online. In making those changes, we:

- reviewed and rationalised the content of the connections services and connections information sections of the webpage;
- renamed the icons on the connections services section of the webpage so that users who want to 'connect something

- new', 'make changes to an existing supply' or 'move our equipment' can navigate to the service they require more easily;
- reviewed the connections information section of the webpage, removing legacy content and adding new information, including how to make changes to an existing ANM²⁰ or flexible arrangement and access our network records;
- ensured that the main reasons users visit our website (to get an estimate or to make an online application) were clearly signposted;
- updated the imagery throughout and developed new headline banner content that highlights useful online resources and importantly, how customers can contact us for help completing an application; and
- replaced an email subscription pop-up box that users told us was intrusive and irritating with a more discreet alternative.

The changes we made have improved the overall functionality of the webpage but we will continue to engage with our stakeholders and implement any further developments in line with their feedback and requirements.



¹⁹ Broad Measure of Customer Service.

²⁰ Active Network Management.

ACTION

1.3

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Unmetered connections guide

UM

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	<div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We updated our guidance on unmetered connections and produced a new animation that explains the end-to-end process.
- ✓ Stakeholders are now better informed about the end-to-end process, will know what to expect when applying for an unmetered connection and how to contact us should they need to.

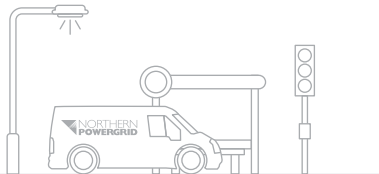
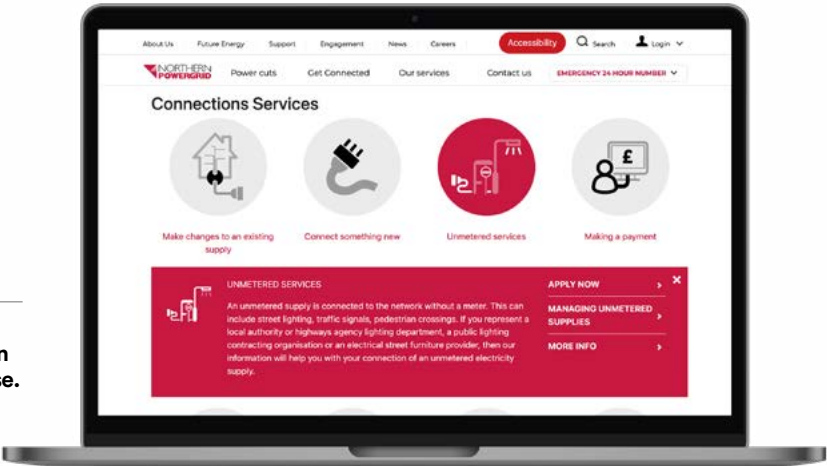
The action was delivered within the ICE plan year but later than forecast due to the need to prioritise our Storm Arwen response.

We reviewed our current guidance on managing unmetered connections and made some updates. The updates included clarifying the circumstances in which an electricity supply can be unmetered and how customers can contact us for more information, help and advice. The guide was uploaded to our website, where it was viewed more than 45²¹ times.

In addition, and to provide further clarity on the end-to-end process, we produced an animated guide that explains how to apply for an unmetered connection, the criteria, timescales and what customers should expect at each stage of the process. The guide also clearly sets out the role and responsibilities of the DNO, the customer and any third parties involved.

✎ The updated guidance is available at: northernpowergrid.com/get-connected/unmetered-services

✎ You can view our guide to unmetered connections at: <https://youtu.be/xxHYG10QA0U>



²¹ Figure correct as of 26 May 2022.

ACTION

1.4

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Updates to our connections contact guide

M DG UM ICP CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	<div>Complete</div>

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ Stakeholders have a useful guide and will know who to contact to discuss their connection.

Customers continue to tell us how important it is to be able to speak to our experts to understand the likely cost and timescales of their project.

We understand the need for upfront support and agree that the ability to explore the options before making an application can be beneficial to both us and our customers.

We made a commitment to update our connections contact guide. This action was delivered within the ICE plan year but later than forecast due to the need to prioritise our response to Storm Arwen. We contacted the stakeholder who had requested the action to explain the reasons for the delay and agree a new completion date that was acceptable to them. As contact details for our connections engineers²² are also published on our website, we do not consider that any stakeholders were disadvantaged by the delay in delivering the action.

In February 2022, we updated our connections contact guide to include telephone numbers and email addresses for our design team managers, commercial engineers and connections delivery engineers, along with the areas of our

network they are responsible for. We also included contact details for our dedicated connections input services team and regional customer service managers. We added information on available support and advice, including how to access our connections surgeries and ask the expert service and links to useful online resources like AutoDesign and our network availability heat maps.

The guide was uploaded to our website, where it was viewed more than 130²³ times.

Our stakeholders said...

“Glad to see NPg’s new customer contact guide which will make finding the right person to speak to a lot simpler.”

Charles Deacon
Renewable Connections

We will review the guide on a regular basis to ensure our stakeholders and customers have access to the most accurate and up to date information.

✎ The updated connections contact guide is available on our website at : northernpowergrid.com/downloads/6712



²² northernpowergrid.com/contact-our-connections-engineers

²³ Figure correct as of 26 May 2022.

ACTION
1.5

THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Training on online resources



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Forecast 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	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- We delivered training sessions on AutoDesign and our network availability heat maps and produced two new animated tutorials.
- Stakeholders are now better informed about how to use these tools and the information that is available.

We developed AutoDesign and our network availability heat maps to help our stakeholders make more informed choices about how and where to connect.

Many of our customers use these tools to perform their own upfront assessments and explore their options before making an application or talking to our engineers.

These tools are only really valuable however, if those using them understand how to access and interpret the information that is available.

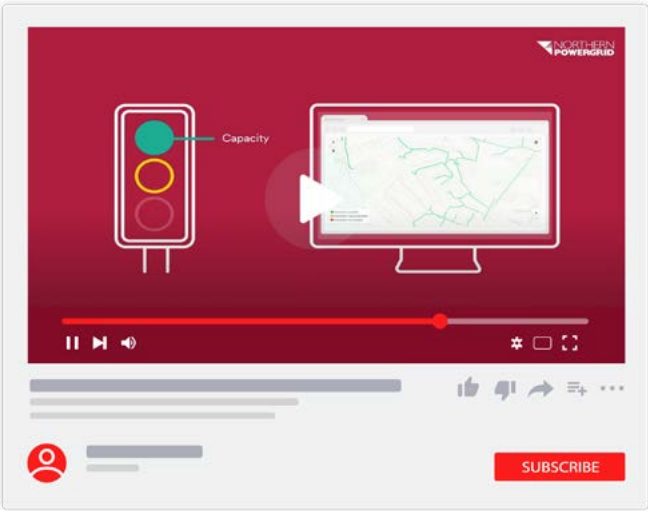
We responded to stakeholder requests for training with a commitment in our ICE plan. To deliver this action, we provided dedicated training sessions and developed two new animated tutorials.

We proactively reached out to stakeholders to offer training on how to use AutoDesign and our network availability heat maps. We delivered three dedicated training sessions in the year and all those who took part said they were satisfied with the engagement that took place.

The tutorials we developed were uploaded to our YouTube site in March 2022, where they have been viewed more than 500 times²⁴. They have also been used at events and we have promoted them via social media and included a link in relevant customer communications.

The tutorials will enable us reach more users and potential users of AutoDesign and our heat maps. They clearly explain how these tools can be used to make more informed decisions about how and where to connect, including how to access the tools and interpret the data that is available.

Any stakeholders who would like to take advantage of the offer of a free training session on AutoDesign or our network availability heat maps can contact ICE@northernpowergrid.com.



- Watch our AutoDesign tutorial at: <https://youtu.be/OT0iVCyZsqA>
- Watch our heat map tutorial at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17W0QZYUs2I>

ACTION
2.1

IMPROVING OUR APPLICATION AND DELIVERY PROCESSES

Connections information



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Forecast 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	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- We developed a new webpage with information on the different types of connection offers available, G98/99, flexible connections and the connections charges regulations.
- Stakeholders are now better informed and will understand the implications of accepting different types of connection offers.

To improve the provision of information we make available and ensure there is clarity throughout the application process, we have developed a new webpage that explains the different types of connection offers that are available including budget estimates, feasibility studies and firm offers and what customers should expect when applying for each of these offers.

The webpage also features information on G98/G99, flexible connections and the Electricity Connection Charges Regulations, also known as 'second comer' rules, so that any customers can have a better understanding of what this means and how they could be affected.

To disseminate the information, we included a link to the webpage in relevant connections customer communications and have added a link on our Get Connected webpage under the connections information and resources section.

Visit northernpowergrid.com/types-of-connections



ACTION
3.1

IMPROVING OUR COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Local authority engagement



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	Complete

Outcome delivered:

Local authority stakeholders had a channel to discuss their current and future connections needs.

Engagement with local authorities for our Green Recovery Scheme²⁵ call for evidence revealed a need for early and more strategic engagement regarding their current and future connections needs.

Furthermore, with local authorities across our region setting ambitious net zero targets, as early as 2030 in some cases, and new government funding available to support decarbonisation schemes, they are increasingly looking to us for support and advice when developing their plans.

We set out to address this with a commitment in our ICE plan to host regular engagement sessions where local authorities, combined authorities and our region's local area partnerships could discuss their pipeline of connections projects and longer-term plans.

To deliver this action, we identified more than 120 individuals in all 35 local authorities in our region and sent them an invitation to book an appointment at one of four scheduled sessions.

Invitations were issued ahead of all four of the sessions and stakeholders were asked to provide details of what they wanted to discuss so that we could ensure we had the right Northern Powergrid colleagues attending to support the discussions. The meetings were supported by our

commercial, design and stakeholder relations teams and regional customer service managers as appropriate.

In total, we delivered 25 engagement sessions in the year and engaged with 65 stakeholders.

These sessions were an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss their current and future connections needs. While some used the sessions as an opportunity to check the progress of projects, others wanted to explore their options and get a better understanding of available capacity and cost before making an application. The government's public sector decarbonisation scheme and the associated funding windows was a common theme and these meetings were useful in helping both us and our stakeholders understand the critical timescales and processes involved.

All the stakeholders who took part were keen to understand how best to work with us to ensure we can input into their plans at an early stage. Requests from stakeholders who wanted to discuss more strategic net zero and local area energy plans which fell outside the scope of the sessions were redirected to appropriate colleagues within Northern Powergrid.

Our stakeholders said...

"We are glad that Northern Powergrid have provided the opportunity for local authorities like ourselves to engage with their connections team. The opportunity to share our strategic plans and develop stronger relationships with Northern Powergrid is really valuable."

Andrew Atkinson
Sunderland City Council

All those who responded said they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the engagement session they took part in.

One of the key learnings from these sessions was that there were different levels of experience and understanding of our connections process and in some cases, our role as a distribution network operator and new connections provider.

We have included an action in our ICE Looking Forward plan to address this by hosting a series of 'connections 101' sessions for any stakeholders that are new or unfamiliar with our processes and policies.

The sessions will act as an introduction to our connections business and cover the topics and questions raised during our local authority meetings including pre-application support, the different types of connection offers available, connection offer expenses, what to expect at each stage of the connections journey and the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

ACTION
4.1

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Connections Offer Expenses



Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	Complete

Outcome delivered:

Stakeholders are now better informed about the Connection Offer Expenses we charge, including why, how and when they are applied.

In 2018, all DNOs introduced Connection Offer Expenses²⁶ to drive efficiencies in the connections process and ensure fairer allocation of costs.

We charge COE for all new budget estimates, feasibility studies and connection offers we produce. We believe this is the fairest way for us to recover the cost of the detailed design work required to produce these offers and we do not make a profit on the COE we charge.

We understand, however, that there are differences in the way that DNOs charge for COE and that this can be confusing for customers who work with more than one DNO.

In July 2021, as part of an annual review we undertake to ensure our fees remain reflective of the costs we incur, we made

Our stakeholders said...

"I am glad that Northern Powergrid takes the step to update its materials on Connection Offer Expenses [and to engage with stakeholders on the topic]. Clear information on cost and process is vital for us as a stakeholder and these materials have proved useful for our team."

Shay Tierney
Harworth Group

changes to our COE. To ensure the information we provide is accurate and informative, we updated our COE guide and dedicated webpage to reflect the new fees and latest information.

We sent an email update to more than 7,400 connections stakeholders to inform them of the changes we were making. The update explained the reasons for our decision and how to contact us should they have any questions about how the new fees had been calculated and applied. We also published an open letter for stakeholders on our website.

We set up a dedicated email address so that customers who had questions about the new fees or how they had been applied

would receive a timely response and, since July 2021, we have responded to more than 100 email enquiries from customers about our COE.

We will continue to engage with our stakeholders to help them understand how, when and why our COE are applied and this topic will be covered as part of the 'connections 101' sessions we have committed to deliver during the 2022/23 ICE plan year.

²⁵ Northern Powergrid is investing £53m in vital electricity networks as part of a national Green Recovery Scheme which aims to accelerate green-growth projects and stimulate the local economy. A total of 14 projects in 17 locations across our region are set to benefit, see northernpowergrid.com/green-recovery

²⁶ Also known as Assessment and Design or A&D fees.

ACTION 4.2

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Low Carbon Technology connections local working group

M DG UM ICP CE

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	Complete

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We established a Low Carbon Technology connections local working group and hosted four meetings in the ICE plan year.
- ✓ Stakeholders have a channel to seek clarity on the rules and processes for low carbon connections as they evolve.

Our stakeholders said...



“The fact that you can clearly see some results out of this is fantastic. I think as a forum, it’s been really refreshing to have the dialogue and to be able to throw things out there and get a better understanding of where Northern Powergrid are at. I think, certainly from our side, we regularly see the frustrations and it’s nice to see that sometimes those frustrations are also shared and that there’s a willingness to work together to find solutions.”

Luke Lobo
Engenera

Net zero targets, new government funding and changing consumer preferences are driving a significant increase in the uptake of heat pumps and EV charge points and we want to make it as easy as possible to connect these LCTs to our network.

To help us to do this, we said we would establish a LCT connections local working group where stakeholders could seek clarity on the rules and processes for LCT connections as they evolve. It would also give us the ability to feedback the views and issues raised by local stakeholders to the Energy Networks Association (ENA) and national LCT working groups, should they require us to do so.

We identified 18 stakeholders and invited them to join the group. These individuals were selected due to their expertise in low carbon connections and to provide a range of experiences and viewpoints. Working group members include LCT installers and manufacturers, low carbon consultants and those leading the EV charge point roll-out nationally. We agreed the objectives of the group and terms of reference with members ahead of the inaugural meeting in October 2021.

The first meeting was an opportunity to reiterate the objectives of the working group and hear from members about barriers to LCT uptake and any specific challenges they were facing. This formed the basis of an issues/action log that we reviewed ahead of each meeting and discussion points for future sessions. We also previewed a new additional load online application process we were developing.

The second meeting was rescheduled due to the need to prioritise our Storm Arwen response but took place in January 2022. The meeting began with an update from our Director of Policy and Markets that covered our storm response and



business plan for 2023-28. We were able to clarify our position on replacing looped service cables²⁷ and charging for fuse upgrades, both having been identified as potential barriers to LCT uptake during the first meeting.

There was a demonstration of our new online small works LCT connection application process and we presented our plans for the connections knowledge hub and asked members to act as a steering group to help us to prioritise the content we would develop for the hub.

The third meeting in February 2022 was a working session, the output of which, was a list of more than 20 topics that stakeholders wanted us to prioritise when producing articles and content for the connections knowledge hub.

The fourth meeting took place in March 2022 and focused on some key issues identified by us and our working group members. We wanted to understand how we can work with customers to better manage the volume of LCT applications being submitted using the ENA’s multi-application spreadsheet. The outcome of this discussion was a series of recommendations and an article for our connections knowledge hub drafted together with stakeholders.

We also discussed concerns raised by members about non-compliance and unsafe practices where installers and electricians are pulling fuses when installing LCTs. This is an issue we have promised to investigate further and raise via the national LCT working groups.

When assessing the impact of our ICE actions, we will always try to engage with stakeholders to understand if what we have delivered has met their expectations and addressed their needs.



“You have to be commended for this forum. I think it’s fantastic. You are well ahead of the curve compared to anyone else I’m interacting with and you’re absolutely to be commended for the fact you have gone to this length I see as a massive feather in your cap so thank you from me.”

Dominic Monaghan
British Gas

Working group members told us the meetings were useful and that the sessions had met their expectations and overall business objectives. They told us they wanted us to continue to facilitate these meetings and asked us to expand the scope to include EHV and HV connections, as well as LV²⁸ connections. They also wanted us to look at increasing the membership of the group and we will be working with stakeholders over the coming months to do this.

Any stakeholders interested in joining our LCT connections local working group can contact: ICE@northernpowergrid.com

²⁷ The cable used when two properties share a single electricity supply.
²⁸ EHV - Extra high voltage, HV – High voltage, LV – Low voltage.

ACTION

4.3

TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Technical guidance and online knowledge base

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✓ We developed a connections knowledge hub with input from our stakeholders.
- ✓ Stakeholders now have access to a useful online reference library featuring technical information, resources and guidance.

We hosted a series of workshops aimed at LCT installers during the 2020/21 ICE plan year that were billed as an opportunity for these stakeholders to ‘get on their soapbox’ and tell us about any reforms required to the LCT connections processes and what more that we could be doing to support them. One of the key learnings from this engagement informed an action in our ICE plan.

Installers told us that there was a recognised knowledge gap in their industry around DNOs’ connections processes and policies and that we could help bridge that gap by providing more upfront information and guidance.

We said we would develop an online knowledge base featuring technical information, resources and connections guidance.

To deliver this action, we developed a connections knowledge hub, aimed primarily at installers and contractors but which will provide a wealth of useful information for a range of different connections customers and stakeholders.

The connections knowledge hub acts as an online reference library and features technical articles, practical guidance and links to useful resources and support.

The members of our LCT local working group acted as a steering group for this action and provided valuable feedback that informed the development and content of the hub, as well as suggestions on how it might be utilised by other connections customers and stakeholders.

Our connections knowledge hub has been viewed more than 1500²⁹ times since its launch at the end of March 2022. We have committed to working with stakeholders to develop articles and guidance and to keep the content of the hub relevant and fresh.

Our stakeholders said...

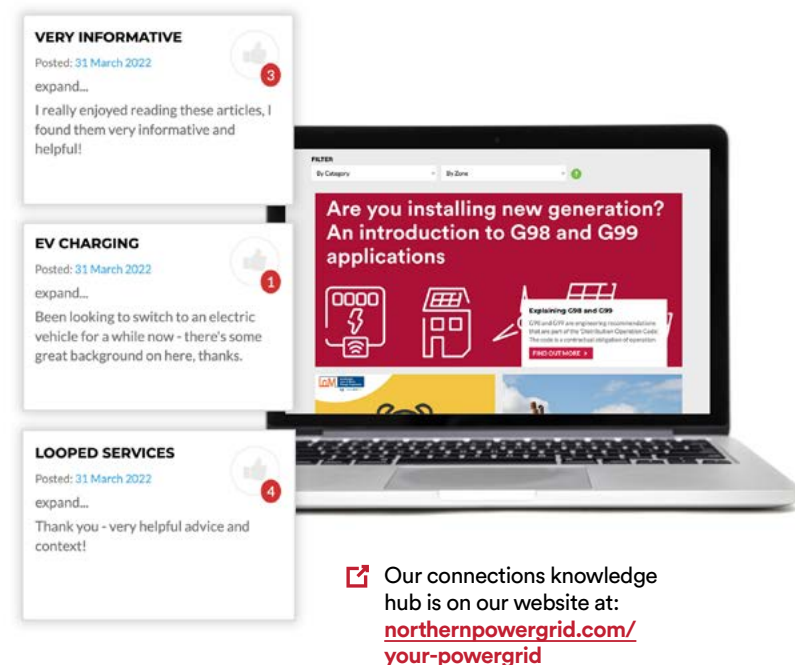
“

I think to see that the connections knowledge hub is live already, for a large organisation like Northern Powergrid to make a change like that, in a short space of time is quite impressive. It gives quite a lot of confidence that we are being listened to and there’s actual, tangible change happening as a result.”

”

Murray MacPherson

Munro Wilson



Our connections knowledge hub is on our website at: northernpowergrid.com/your-powergrid

ACTION

5.1

ENABLING COMPETITION

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ICP

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Competition in Connections webpage

Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	<div>✓</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcome delivered:

- ✓ We made updates to our Competition in Connections webpage to improve the functionality and make it easier for stakeholders to access information and connections services online.

We have a dedicated Competition in Connections page on our website. Like our Get Connected webpage, this is a useful information source for ICPs and IDNOs looking to access connections services and information 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 works. Publishing contact details for ICPs 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.

Recognising that our Competition in Connections webpage contained a lot of information and was difficult to navigate, we made a commitment to engage with stakeholders to understand their experience of using the webpage and then make changes in line with their feedback.

We endeavoured to engage with ICPs and IDNOs to seek their feedback and identify any improvements to the webpage we could make.

We wrote to all ICPs and IDNOs on our email distribution list and asked for feedback on our engagement and digital plans. We issued a survey and included questions in surveys and telephone interviews we conducted with major works stakeholders, including ICPs and IDNOs.

Following this activity, we made changes to our Competition in Connections webpage to make it easier to access connections services and information online. The changes we made were based on our own intelligence, benchmarking against other DNOs’ webpages and the limited stakeholder feedback we received. In summary, the changes we made were:

- redesigned the webpage to make it easier to navigate;
- clearly signposted information for ICPs/ IDNOs and information for customers;
- included quick links to the services ICPs/IDNOs commonly require (apply for a point of connection) and areas of our website that might be of interest (connections surgeries and our alternative providers register);
- rationalised the significant number of documents that had previously been listed on the webpage; and

— created a new online reference for those documents where application forms, policy documents, technical guidance and other resources are categorised by type, making it easier for ICPs and IDNOs to locate and access this information.

The new webpages we developed are fully editable and scalable. We will continue to engage with our ICP/IDNO stakeholders to seek feedback on what we have produced and any further improvements or developments they would like to see implemented.

ACTION

6.1

INNOVATION

DSO transition

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DG

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ICP

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Action	Outcome	Performance metrics	Measures of impact and success	Voltage	Status
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	<div>✔</div> <div>Complete</div>

Outcomes delivered:

- ✔ We engaged with a wide range of connections stakeholders on our developing DSO role.
- ✔ Stakeholders are now better informed and had opportunities to discuss what our transition could mean for them connections customers.

We have engaged extensively with connections stakeholders over the course of the ICE plan year, discussing our developing DSO role and the functions we will perform.

Recognising the impact DSO could have on their activities, we have had a commitment in our ICE plan to engage with connections stakeholders on this topic for the past four years. We wanted to ensure their views were taken into account as we transition and that they had opportunities to input into our strategy and approach.

We have continued to engage with stakeholders to help us both understand the impact that our evolving new role could have on our connections customers and how the roles and functions we currently perform could develop and change.

Their feedback has helped to inform our thinking on this action, the actions in our Looking Forward plan and the commitments we made in our business plan for 2023-28.

We made a commitment to hold a minimum of two DSO-focused engagement sessions in the year.

The first engagement session was at our DG Owner Operator forum in July 2021, where we discussed our DSO transition and our developing flexibility services proposition. We also pinpointed locations across our network where we would be looking to procure future flexibility services to support our 'flexibility first' approach.

At our second engagement session in March 2022, our Head of Policy Development led a session that focused on providing DSO insights for connections customers and we discussed our evolving DSO role and what it means for us and our stakeholders. As the provision of network information was of particular interest to the stakeholders taking part, we also discussed the open insights platform we are developing for deployment during the 2023-28 period.

Our open insights platform will provide stakeholders with access to an unprecedented level of network information. It will bring together all the analytical tools they require to self-serve, conduct their own network planning and connect more LCTs.

The stakeholders who attended both these engagement sessions gave a positive endorsement of their experience, with an overall satisfaction rating of 91 per cent received from those who responded.

Other engagement activities undertaken during the ICE plan year that supported delivery of this action included:

- our DSO role and the impact on regional stakeholders was a key topic for discussion at a series of decarbonisation leadership conferences we held in September 2021;
- at our DG Owner Operator forum in November 2021, we discussed Ofgem's minded to position on its Access and Forward-looking Charges Significant Code Review, including any future impact on connections processes and customer behaviour. This was part of a wider programme of engagement that informed our final business plan for 2023-28 that we submitted in December 2021;
- we held focus groups with major works customers where we discussed flexible connections and the scope and potential benefits of the open insights platform;
- the extensive engagement undertaken to inform our business plan for 2023-28 and, in particular, our DSO and major connections strategies. Full details of the activities undertaken can be found in the detailed engagement summary that accompanies our business plan.²⁹

🔗 To find out more about our DSO transition, visit northernpowergrid.com/DSO



