



Making a positive difference  
for energy consumers

All large connection stakeholders

Email: [connections@ofgem.gov.uk](mailto:connections@ofgem.gov.uk)

Date: 2 July 2021

Dear Stakeholders,

**Open letter consultation on the Incentive on Connections Engagement: Looking Back Reports 2020-21 and Looking Forward Plans 2021-22**

Helping new customers connect to the electricity network is one of the most critical services provided by Distribution Network Operators (DNOs). It enables new homes to be built and new businesses to start trading, as well as allowing new low carbon technologies (LCTs) and flexibility services to come on to the system. This will be crucial in helping the UK to decarbonise its economy, and move to a smarter, more flexible energy system.

We expect DNOs to provide a good service to all customers that are seeking a connection, and our Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) is designed to encourage this. Under the ICE, DNOs must provide evidence that they have engaged with their large connection customers and responded to their needs.<sup>1</sup> If they fail to do this, they could incur a financial penalty.<sup>2</sup>

We are seeking views on how well the DNOs have engaged with their large connection customers to ensure they are delivering a service that meets these customers' needs. This includes (but is not limited to) the actions listed in the annex to this letter. We are specifically interested in hearing from relatively new types of connection customer

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<sup>1</sup> For customers requiring a smaller connection there are separate incentives on DNOs to improve customer satisfaction and the time it takes the DNOs to issue quotes and make connections.

<sup>2</sup> Electricity Distribution Licence – Charge Restriction Condition 2E (Incentive on Connections Engagement) [https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2015/02/crc\\_slow\\_track\\_master\\_0.pdf](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2015/02/crc_slow_track_master_0.pdf)

categories (eg those seeking to connect electric vehicle (EV) charging points, storage facilities or flexible demand users).

### **How does the ICE work?**

The ICE works by requiring DNOs to submit evidence to us demonstrating that they have engaged effectively with connection customers to develop and deliver plans that improve their service.<sup>3</sup> This evidence is provided in two parts:

- i. a **Looking Back** report on their activities during the previous year demonstrating how they have met the needs of large connection customers
- ii. a **Looking Forward** plan for the coming year describing the activities they plan to undertake.

Using your responses to this open letter, we will assess whether the DNOs have met the needs and reasonable expectations of their large connections customers. Where we do not consider that a DNO has delivered its plan, we will issue a further consultation seeking further evidence on whether a penalty may be warranted, and seek responses from each of the DNOs in question.

We would also like your feedback on the DNOs' Looking Forward plans. We will raise any issues noted in your responses to this open letter with the DNOs, who may submit updated plans for 2021-22 by 31 October 2021 to address any issues or concerns raised.

You can read more about the process on our website [here](#), and about last year's consultation [here](#).

### **How to respond**

We have provided a template to help structure your response which can be found on the same webpage as this letter (subsidiary document).

We are seeking your views on two areas:

- i. In section 1, 'Looking Back' we ask about specific areas of the DNOs' performance in 2020-21

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<sup>3</sup> The exact scope of the ICE is confirmed in Table 1 of the ICE Guidance Document - [https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2015/03/ice\\_guidance\\_doc\\_010415\\_0.pdf](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2015/03/ice_guidance_doc_010415_0.pdf)

- ii. In section 2, 'Looking Forward' we seek your views on the plans the DNOs have developed for 2021-22.

You can either complete this template for an individual licensee or for a DNO group as a whole.<sup>4</sup> However, if you wish to provide comments for more than one DNO group, please use separate templates for each.

Please ensure that you clearly indicate the type of connection you generally require and which of the DNOs' submissions you are commenting on. The six DNO groups have published their latest Looking Back and Looking Forward submissions at the links below:

- Electricity North West Limited: [link](#)
- Northern Powergrid: [link](#)
- Scottish Power Energy Networks: [link](#)
- Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks: [link](#)
- UK Power Networks: [link](#)
- Western Power Distribution: [link](#)

Your initial submissions may feed into other stages of the ICE process and we may therefore ask you additional questions or request further information.

If you would like your response to be kept confidential, you should mark it as such on the template and outline your reasons for this. Any responses not marked confidential will be published on our website. We ask you to consider this carefully as sharing the comments with the relevant DNO may help improve their performance and ensure a transparent and effective ICE process.

The closing date for responses is 30 July 2021. You should send your responses to [connections@ofgem.gov.uk](mailto:connections@ofgem.gov.uk).

Yours faithfully,

**Patrick Cassels**  
**Head of Electricity Network Access**

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<sup>4</sup> There are 14 licensed distribution network operators (DNOs) in Britain and each is responsible for a regional distribution services area. The 14 DNOs are owned by six different groups. For example, Northern Powergrid (Yorkshire) plc and Northern Powergrid (Northeast) Limited are owned by Northern Powergrid (the group).

## Annex

We expect DNOs to continue to make improvements to the provision of connections in a number of areas. These include:

- supporting connections customers prior to application by providing accurate, comprehensive and user-friendly information, including:
  - providing access to transparent, up to date and relevant information on where to connect, including - but not limited to - network capacity and design (eg providing network data to EV connection customers to help tailor location of EV chargepoints and maximum demand capacity requirements)
  - communicating the whole connection process clearly
  - providing clear explanations of the types of connection products available and the information needed for customers to make an application
- delivering value for customers by ensuring simplicity and transparency throughout the connection process, including:
  - providing good customer service (eg handling the application process efficiently and providing prompt feedback to customers)
  - offering sufficiently flexibility to accommodate necessary changes in customers' requirements
  - ensuring that customers fully understand the implications for their connection offer of any changes that can arise, either because of changes in their requirements or because other customers are also seeking to connect in the same area
- engaging with customers to provide more clarity on how the rules and processes for connections will evolve as a result of future developments like, for example:
  - introducing new forms of LCTs such as storage and EVs
  - transitioning to Distribution System Operator (DSO)
- engaging appropriately with and responding to the needs of connection customers who are aiming to connect new LCTs (such as EV chargepoints)
- facilitating the delivery of timely and economical connections by:
  - helping customers identify how they could make changes to their connections requirements, that would meet still their needs
  - promoting certain types of customers (such as storage) in a connection queue if doing so will help others connect more quickly and or cheaply

- ensuring availability of flexible connections for all customers and providing more clarity around the conditions and circumstances of current and future curtailment associated with a flexible connection offer
- identifying where it would be appropriate for network operators to work together to improve the consistency of the connection processes across Great Britain, including collaborating to keep the approach to Assessment & Design (A&D) fees under review and provide a forum for stakeholders to raise issues.