



DG Customers: Farmers relate their experiences of network connection

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Ofgem Distributed Generation Forum

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The NFU and the UK agricultural sector

- The National Farmers' Union of England and Wales (NFU) represents the interests of some 47,000 enterprises involved in commercial agriculture, horticulture and farmer controlled businesses
- With 75 per cent of national land area in the agricultural sector (18 million hectares), farmers are in the front line of climate change, and adapt to the weather constantly on a daily and yearly basis
- Farmers are well-placed to capture renewable natural energy flows, while maintaining our traditional role in food production as well delivering other environmental and land management services
- The NFU is engaged with DECC, Defra and other government departments in directing climate change and renewable energy policy into real economic opportunities for our sector
- Independent research suggests 1 in 5 farmers have installed FIT power generation – but grid connection remains one of the major barriers

Major problems reported by NFU members

- Grid connection – a ‘postcode lottery’ with some Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) quoting very high fees (£250k for a single wind turbine!) which must then be contested – OFGEM now overseeing better standards
- NFU has demanded a transparent and timely process, with admin fees and connection costs which are proportionate and consistent, both nationally and within regions
- Planning – often the cause of unreasonable delays and excessive project development costs – PD finally available from 6th April for non-domestic PV, some heating, but not wind power
- NFU is concerned that DCLG 'localism' agenda should not unreasonably impede the diversification of farm businesses and creation of 'green' jobs
- Tight deadlines for recent FIT reviews means that grid connection, planning or weather can be ‘show-stoppers’ – need details of **pre-registration**



Feed-in Tariffs and RO – driving SSG

- Rural networks are often weak, but may be increasing in significance as a source of distributed generation
- As DG customers, farmers are not the same as developers – they are static and do not always have a choice of locations
- Socialised costs and “Connect and Manage” are clearly preferred to other models of cost sharing and network management
- Farmers are not technical experts – they need basic advice, both directly from DNOs / ENA and via professional advisers
- Electricity supply industry is notorious for its impenetrable jargon! – LV/HV, G83/G59, etc.
- Many sources of confusion: between DNOs and licensed electricity suppliers, between contestable and non-contestable work, export meter charges, etc.



Endurance 50kW turbine (Dulas Ltd.)



Progress since Autumn 2011

- Northern Powergrid staff met Yorkshire farmers with AD projects, May 2012 – NFU also contacted for face-to-face meeting with NP commercial manager, July 2012
- No direct approach received in 2012 from any other DNO (previously with SSEPD from 2008 onwards)
- NP web site now one of the best: user-friendly, jargon-free, easier to navigate, menu-driven for connection estimates
- List of pre-approved gensets, inverters (held on gated ENA web site) should be made public, or manufacturers encouraged to pre-apply for approval



Response to Ofgem open letter, Aug 2012

- A. Farmer: "Our transformer limits capacity to 4kW. Too expensive to upgrade it."
- Speed of response to enquiries should match frequency of FITs degression
- Can I connect some DG now, more later?
- Sometimes DNOs get blamed for settlement problems with Licensed Electricity Suppliers!



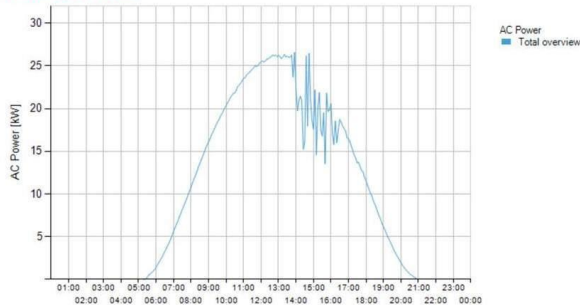


NFU Conference Centre, Stoneleigh Park

'Walking the Walk': NFU following its own advice to farmers and growers
 Installed Feb 2012 on new HQ conference building in Warwickshire
 36kW – 288 Inventux thin-film modules, each 125 watts
 Predicted output 29 MWh/year, meeting 34-45% of needs for all-electric building
 Saving about £1400/year electricity costs
 About 10% return on investment



Archive - 26 May 2012





New NFU Farm Energy Service



*Farm***Energy***Service*

Launched at NFU Annual Conference Feb 2012
Tel. 0870 844 5700 or www.nfufarmenergyservice.com



The way forward?

- Local system capacity maps – updated and publicly accessible
- Kick out the jargon! – further work across all DNOs and ENA to make web-based information simple and consistent
- ENA could host DNO connections helpline - ENA could work with REA, RenewableUK, ADBA, etc. on ‘checkmark’ list of approved kit
- Continuous feedback to Ofgem would be better than annual forum

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(Wilburton Solar Farm: photo courtesy SolarCentury)

