

## **The Questionnaire – For customers**

Hello. Thank you for taking the time to complete our questionnaire.

We hope all the questions are clear, but if you have any difficulties please email [connections@ofgem.gov.uk](mailto:connections@ofgem.gov.uk).

Once you have completed the questionnaire please send it back to us to the email address above. You need to return the completed questionnaire to us by 31 July 2014.

After we have read your answers we might want to have a chat with you to understand a bit more. We'll try and do this in August.

### Part 1 - About you

Question	Your response
What is your name?	
What is your position?	
What are your contact details?	

### Part 2 - About your business

Question	Your response
What is your company's name?	Boston Renewables
What is the nature of your company's business?	Solar PV and Wind Turbine installation and maintenance
Why do you need to make new connections to the electricity distribution network?	To complete the work on the renewable energy projects we quote for and provide.

What past experience does your business have in getting new connections to the electricity distribution network?	We work with DNOs, mainly Northern Power Grid and occasionally Electricity North West. We apply for an outline costing which is used for negotiation with our customer. If that fee is agreeable as well as our quotation we go for a firm quotation which is usually OK but on rare occasions differs and then the project is at risk.
What areas of the country does your business have facilities in that have required new connections to the electricity distribution network?	Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire
What type of connections do you make to the distribution network?	Solar PV Inverters and synchronous wind turbines

### Part 3 - About how you get a new electricity connections to the local grid.

Question	Your response
Does your business manage the process of getting a connection using your own staff, or do you use a consultant to guide you through the process?	I make the applications using the DNO's web portal.
What issues are important for you when getting a connection? Please rank in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and 7 the least important.	<div>4 The cost of connection</div> <div>5 Customer service</div> <div>2 The time it takes to issue a connection quote</div>

	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 The time in which a connection can be made <input type="checkbox"/> 3 The certainty around the cost of connection and the timetable for delivery <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Ability to offer innovative connection solutions <input type="checkbox"/> 7 Other _____(please specify)
In the past have you had quotes for connection(s) from a range of companies, or solely from the local DNO?  Please tick one box.	<input type="checkbox"/> A range of quotes – <u>please go to part 4</u> <input type="checkbox"/> X Just a quote from the local DNO – <u>please go to part 5</u>

#### Part 4 – About how you choose between a range of quotes.

Question	Your response
You've indicated that you normally receive a range of quotes for connection, both from your local DNO and other independent connection providers. When deciding which quote to accept, what factors do you consider?	
Please rank these factors that you described in the previous question in order of importance to you, with 1	1. 2. 3.

being the most important.	4. 5. Etc.
Please give an indication of who you have tended to award work to.	<p><b>Please tick one box only.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Always the DNO</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mainly the DNO</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> About half and half between the DNO and others</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mainly an ICP or IDNO</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Always an ICP or IDNO</p>
What do you think are the risks/problems with using an independent connections provider?	
How has your view on who to award work to changed with experience?	
When would you only seek a quote from the local DNO?	

## Part 5 – About why you chose to use the local DNO

Before engaging with this process, were you aware that you could use a company other than the local DNO to complete your connection?	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>
What do you think are the benefits in using a company other than the local DNO to provide a connection?	The possibility of a cheaper solution and closer working relationship with the key individuals work on our behalf.
What do you think are the risks/problems with using an independent connections provider?	I would be concerned about the DNO's acceptance. They would also have to be involved, I presume, so that might represent extra work and complexity to the process.
What would need to change in order for you to use a different connections provider?	Complete solution providers that can handle our enquiry and any subsequent work, together with a flexible approach to contestable work.

## Part 6 - About how the cost of connections informs the location of new business development

How much opportunity is there for you to freely choose the location of new business developments?	This is by customer enquiry at their site, so suitability or not is then determined by the DNO, so there is little or no flexibility in this aspect.
How big a factor is the cost of connection in your decision on where to locate your business?	The cost can be anything from £0 to many tens of 1000's and high figures regularly negate large projects and result in smaller schemes where no DNO upgrade is required.

## Part 7- Other comments

The questions we've asked are designed for you to give us important information for our review. We'd also welcome any other comments about the market for new electricity connections, or problems you've experienced.

We have a good relationship with our DNOs, but they are rather 'poacher and game keeper' which is not ideal. It is perplexing to understand their connection costs which are often just a large round figure. This also causes consternation with our customers because we cannot explain what proportion of the fee is attributable to what. Often the fee the DNO charges is just a witnessing fee for a DNO engineer to turn up and oversee the G59 commissioning. I think there should be a process where an installer can become DNO approved for certain size schemes. Most of our work is between 30 and 100kW so the ability to simply submit G59 results for connections up to 100kW would give us greater flexibility and reduce costs to the customer, promoting more renewables. Similarly there are peak periods where tariff change occurs and aligning several technical people and the hardware for a G59 connection can be extremely difficult.

It's also a challenge for the DNOs to change to a customer focussed organisation, where their generation suppliers change from just a few to 1000's of SSEG of small to medium size. This is happening well for the most part, but we also have to work hard to foster good personal relationships to make this work. As the renewable industry is now relatively mature, further work on the connection and SSEG distribution and connection needs to be considered. As well as trying to satisfy our customers aspirations, as a design engineer I must also accept that saturation and network stability are at risk. A closer working relationship between all parties to foster greater understanding is needed. We could, for example, promote renewables in areas where there is network capacity and avoid over subscribed areas.