

Open letter consultation on the Incentive on Connections Engagement:  
Looking Forward reports 2015/16  
Response received by email from Community Energy Scotland

- **Are you satisfied that SSEPD has a comprehensive and robust strategy for engaging with connection stakeholders and facilitating joint discussions where appropriate?**

*Recently I have been part of a steering group and will soon be taking part in a user group meeting which are both being organised with SSEPD. These are at an early stage but the fact that they have been set up and are being attended by SSEPD staff is a valuable thing and one which we hope will see positive results.*

*I also took part in a meeting with a number of community generators where there was an open discussion with SSEPD about issues that concerned the communities. However, following on from that meeting the actions were not followed up quickly, with some of them never having been carried out. This meeting was in February and requested that SSE provide an outage programme for 2015. We have still not received this programme (in August) and are unlikely to receive it in the near future.*

*Information on when turbines may be switched off by SSEPD for grid maintenance is extremely important for the generators to know and I would like to stress the importance of timely information and engagement on this issue. An outage programme should be produced at the start of each year with any amendments communicated at an early stage as possible to allow things like turbine maintenance to be scheduled at the same time (and save on loss of earning from downtime). At the moment I feel that communication and engagement on any planned outages is lacking.*

- **Do you agree that SSEPD has a comprehensive work plan of activities (with associated delivery dates) that will meet the requirements of its connection stakeholders? If not, has SSEPD provided reasonable and well-justified reasons? What other activities should the DNOs do?**

*We are always encouraged that SSEPD are willing to attend meetings and listen to any issues which community generators may have. However, I feel that associated dates for any actions suggested at stakeholder events are always the hardest thing to obtain from SSEPD. This is something which could be greatly improved to ensure that actions do get carried out.*

*An example of this would be that the community generators in the Western Isles want to make sure that when outages occur and they have to be islanded that there is some options to enable them to stay connected on a curtailed output. This is something which SSEPD have promised they are analysing and reporting on but is something which we have had no real feedback on as yet. This was emphasised at the February meeting as being critical to community groups and something which we have not had any real update on since.*

- **Do you consider that SSEPD has set relevant outputs that it will deliver during the regulatory year (eg key performance indicators, targets, etc.)?**

*It is positive to see that community groups have been highlighted as a commitment area in the work plan. It would be worthwhile to see if there was any way in which SSEPD, OFGEM and other relevant bodies such as CES could work together to ensure that there is more positive discrimination towards community groups that live closest to networks. This could come in the shape of allowing communities to move an existing connection slightly if there are concerns about the site (rather than have to go the end of the queue and lose their connection to a larger private developer). Some sort of*

*flexibility with existing connections, particularly in areas where the grid is at capacity, would see real and useful outputs for local people.*

*It is also becoming crucial that communities look at more localised energy and innovative options and I would hope that work on pushing these types of projects forward would be high on the list of outputs for SSEPD.*

- **Would you agree that the SSEPD's proposed strategy, activities and outputs have been informed and endorsed by a broad and inclusive range of connection stakeholders? If they have not been endorsed, has SSEPD provided robust evidence that it has pursued this?**

*SSEPD have offered seminars with CES and our members, something which we feel is worthwhile.*

*However, one of the community groups we are in regular contact with state that:*

*Consultation and engagement with distributed network (generators and consumers) is not one of SSEPD's strong points I suspect largely because historically there has not been much incentive. However, with the advent of distributed generation this needs to change not only accommodate generators but to allow consumers to benefit from the cheaper costs of distributed renewable power generation coupled with local network and storage solutions.*