

National Grid's commitments when undertaking works in the UK

Our stakeholder, community
and amenity policy



Introduction

This document describes the ten commitments we have made to the way we carry out electricity and gas works in the UK. This includes setting out how we will meet our amenity responsibilities and how we will involve our stakeholders and communities in our work.

We explain how we will meet our obligations under Section 38 and Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989. These obligations relate to the preservation of amenity and regularly reviewing how we manage those duties, including our consultation process.

Preserving amenity forms only part of our wider environmental responsibilities. You can find out more about the environmental issues not formally covered by Schedule 9 in other publications. These cover topics ranging from our role in countering climate change in electric and magnetic fields, pollution control and connecting new and renewable sources of electricity generation.

There is no equivalent to a Schedule 9 statement requirement in the provisions of the Gas Act 1986. However, we believe the principles in this document should apply equally to our electricity and gas transmission works.

About National Grid

We own the electricity transmission network in England and Wales and operate the electricity transmission system throughout Great Britain. Local distribution companies then supply electricity at progressively lower voltages to homes and businesses. Our transmission network in England and Wales covers some 7,200km of overhead line, 690km of underground cable and 337 substations.

We are also the sole owner and operator of the gas transmission system in the UK. Our gas transmission network includes 7,600km of high pressure pipeline and 26 compressor stations.

Our responsibilities under the Electricity Act

Under the Electricity Act 1989 National Grid holds a transmission licence. Under this we are required to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical electricity transmission system and to facilitate competition in the supply and generation of electricity.

Under Schedule 9 of the Act we are required to consider ways to preserve amenity in England and Wales.

What the Electricity Act states

Extracts from Schedule 9

Preservation of amenity: England and Wales

Paragraph 1(1)

1(1) in formulating any relevant proposals, a licence holder or a person authorised by exemption to generate or supply electricity (a) shall have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or geographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest; and

(b) shall do what he reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects.

Paragraph 2(1) states

A licence holder shall within twelve months from the grant of his licence prepare, and from time to time modify, a statement setting out the manner in which he proposes to perform his duty under paragraph 1(1) above, including in particular the consultation procedures.

Where this document applies

As highlighted previously this document applies to our transmission activities in the UK, for electricity and gas works.

Some definitions

Here, we explain our interpretation of some of the terms we use throughout this document.

Amenity: The natural environment, cultural heritage, landscape and visual quality. Our interpretation also includes the impact of our works on communities, such as the effects of noise and disturbance from construction.

Works: Constructing new transmission infrastructure. This includes overhead lines, underground cables, marine interconnectors, sealing end compounds and substations; pipelines, compressor stations, pressure reduction installations and other above-ground gas installations (where all are part of networks operating above 7 bar (gauge) pressure). It also includes the major refurbishment of any of these and the dismantling and removal of any parts of the system.

Stakeholders: Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by our works. We also refer to communities which includes those stakeholders (organisations and individuals, including residents) who have a particular interest in the local area affected by the works.

Engaging stakeholders and communities

Developing, maintaining and refurbishing gas and electricity networks can affect the communities through which they pass. The way we manage our relationships and work with these communities and other affected stakeholders is important to us.

We strive to engage positively with stakeholders and communities. We are committed to involving them in the work we do and recognise the benefits of doing this. We will listen to people, take their views and opinions into account and respond to them as part of the way we work.

The principles contained in our second commitment (Involving stakeholders and communities) provide the framework that will help us to develop and promote a culture of genuine and meaningful stakeholder and community engagement.



Our commitments

Here, we describe the ten commitments we have made to the way we carry out electricity and gas works in the UK to provide safe, reliable and affordable transmission networks. This includes setting out how we will meet our amenity responsibilities and how we will involve our stakeholders and communities in our works.

1. Establishing need

We will only seek to build electricity lines or pipelines along new routes, or above-ground installations in new locations where:

- our existing infrastructure can not be upgraded (technically or economically) to meet system security standards and regulatory obligations
- forecasted increases in demand for electricity or gas will not be satisfied by other means
- customer connections are required or
- where an existing electricity transmission line has been identified for replacement through our Visual Impact Provision (VIP)¹ project.

2. Involving stakeholders and communities

We will promote genuine and meaningful stakeholder engagement. We will meet and, where appropriate, exceed the statutory requirements for consultation or engagement.

We will adopt the following principles to help us meet this commitment and

- seek to identify and understand the views and opinions of all the stakeholders and communities affected by our works
- provide opportunities for engagement from the early stages of the process, where options and alternatives are being considered and there is the greatest scope to influence the design of the works
- endeavour to enable constructive debate to take place, creating open and two-way communication processes
- ensure that benefits, constraints and adverse impacts of proposed works are communicated openly for meaningful stakeholder and community comment and discussion. We will be clear about any aspects of the works that cannot be altered
- utilise appropriate methods and effort in engaging stakeholders and communities, proportionate to the scale and impact of the works
- provide feedback on how views expressed have been considered and the outcomes of any engagement process or activity.

Our commitments

3. Routing networks and selecting sites

If we need to build new infrastructure, we will seek to avoid the following areas which are nationally or internationally designated for their landscape, wildlife or cultural significance:
National Parks; Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; National Scenic Areas; Heritage Coasts; Preferred Conservation Zones; World Heritage Sites; Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

Marine Conservation Zones; Special Protection Areas; Special Areas of Conservation; Ramsar sites; National Nature Reserves; Registered Battlefields; Scheduled Monuments and Registered Parks or Gardens.

An exception to this is where an existing electricity transmission line has been identified for replacement through our VIP process.



1. The Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project represents a major opportunity to enhance the landscape within our most protected landscapes. The £500m allocated by Ofgem applies to the most protected landscapes in Great Britain. You can find out more about the project at www.nationalgrid.com/VIP

Our commitments

4. Minimising the effects of new infrastructure

When we are developing new infrastructure, we will seek to reduce the effect of our work on communities by having particular regard to safety, noise and construction traffic.

We will also seek to minimise the impact of developing new infrastructure in areas that are nationally or internationally designated for their landscape, wildlife or cultural significance as well as other sites valued for their amenity, such as listed buildings, conservation areas, areas of archaeological interest, local wildlife sites, historic parks or gardens and historic battlefields. We will take into account the significance of these, their settings and other areas through consultation with local authorities and other stakeholders who have particular interests in these sites.

5. Mitigating adverse effects of works

We will carry out relevant environmental investigations and report on these when we apply for consent for new works. We will use best practice environmental impact assessment techniques to assess possible effects of our works and identify opportunities for mitigation measures.

In the course of this we will consult with relevant stakeholders and affected landowners where works are likely to have an adverse effect on amenity.

6. Offsetting where mitigation is not practicable

Sometimes the measures we take cannot adequately mitigate against loss of amenity – or mitigation might not be viable. When this happens, we will seek to offset the impact of our work in practical and sustainable ways, which we will develop by engaging with relevant stakeholders.

Offsetting could include landscaping and planting works, contributing to heritage or community programmes or other benefits that deliver lasting value to the people and communities affected.

7. Enhancing the environment around our works

When undertaking works, we will consider what practicable measures can be taken to enhance areas in the vicinity of the works for the benefit of local communities and the natural and historic environment.

Our commitments

8. Monitoring and learning for the future

We will monitor, evaluate and review our engagement processes so that we can learn from our experiences and continue to improve in the future. We will carry out periodic reviews of the environmental impact of our works. We will seek the views of our stakeholders and communities so we can gauge the effectiveness of our assessment and any mitigation measures. We will use the results of these reviews to help us improve our environmental assessments and the way we manage our work.

9. Reviewing our commitments

We intend to review these commitments at least every five years. We will make additional revisions in response to new legislation, policy and guidance. As a responsible company practising good corporate governance, we will review the relevance of these commitments and publish case studies on our website that show how we preserve amenity and engage with our stakeholders and communities.

10. Working with others

We require other organisations working on our behalf to demonstrate these same commitments. We will continue to create an environment where we can share and deliver best practice.



Appendix

Background

The first significant revision to our Schedule 9 Statement was prepared in 2001. The statement and our performance in meeting the commitments were reviewed and modified in 2006. In preparing that revision we consulted the bodies that have statutory responsibilities for amenity as referred to in Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act. In addition, we consulted other non-government organisations concerned with amenity, representatives of other stakeholder groups and our own employees.

With the advent of the Planning Act 2008 in February 2010 we incorporated our Schedule 9 statement duty into this policy. We also incorporated gas works (above 7 bar in pressure), and new commitments to stakeholder and community engagement.

Preparing the 2015 revision

In preparing this revised version we have again consulted statutory bodies, non-government organisations and representatives of other stakeholder groups (see list below). We have also drawn on our own experiences of delivering electricity and gas projects through the provisions of the Planning Act 2008.

In 2016 National Grid will sell our majority stake in our UK gas distribution business. As a result references to gas distribution have been removed from this document.

Bodies consulted

Cadw, Campaign for National Parks, CPRE, Environment Agency, Historic England, Historic Scotland, NAAONB, Natural England, NRW, RSPB, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, The Wildlife Trusts.

For more information on National Grid policies and projects please refer to our website www.nationalgrid.com





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