

SSEN Transmission

Report on Consultation Stakeholder Webinar

Update on Themes

Context

The SSEN Transmission 'Pathway to 2030' projects will help enable the connection of renewable energy from across the north of Scotland and play a critical role in the fight against climate change and securing the country's future energy independence. Throughout 2023, we undertook extensive consultation on these projects and received a considerable amount of feedback from a wide range of stakeholders.

Following assessment of the consultation feedback and additional options analysis, we published our Reports on Consultation. These reports provide a summary of the feedback received, how it has been considered, which options we will take forward to the next stage of the development process, and any changes to the options upon which we initially consulted.

The purpose of the stakeholder webinar held on 13 December 2023 was to explain the role and purpose of our Reports on Consultation, as well as outline the next steps for our 'Pathway to 2030' projects as we enter 2024. We were pleased to see that interest in our projects is high, with over 700 individuals registering and over 500 questions submitted prior and during the webinar. Not all of the questions raised were directly related to the Reports on Consultations. Our [Pathway to 2030 FAQs webpage](#) speaks to a lot of the broader issues that were raised.

When scheduling our webinars, we understand that we won't be able to pick a time that suits all our stakeholders. We therefore record our webinars so that they can be viewed at a time that suits you. We also welcome questions from stakeholders in advance of the session to help shape the content we cover on the day.

During the live webinar, we aim to answer as many questions as possible, but this is of course limited given the large volume of questions and the time that we have. To address outstanding questions relevant to the content of the webinar, we have summarised information under the key themes listed below. If you have an outstanding query, which you would like more details on, please feel free to contact us at transmission.stakeholder.engagement@sse.com.

Delivering Our Projects

We received questions regarding timelines for our projects, potential noise levels during construction phases, and potential interruptions for local traffic.

You can find project timelines within project information on the [individual project webpages](#).

When developing overhead lines and substations, we focus on having minimal noise impact. Detailed noise assessments are conducted as part of our Environmental Impact Assessment. These include current noise levels, potential new noise relating to our infrastructure, and mitigation measures if required, to ensure noise is within acceptable levels.

In addition to this, any potential impact from construction traffic will be fully assessed as part of the EIA Report for each project and a Construction Traffic Management Plan will be developed prior to commencement of any works.

The Bigger Picture: Future Scenarios

The [Pathway to 2030](#) will help meet the UK Government's target of carrying 50GW of offshore wind energy by 2030, the UK Government has also pledged to fully decarbonise the electricity system by 2035.

To achieve that target, further infrastructure will be required. The Electricity System Operator, National Grid ESO, is expected to outline these further network infrastructure requirements in 2024.

Investment in Local Housing

We are committed to ensuring that the development of our critical national infrastructure projects have a positive impact on local people and places. SSEN Transmission are working with stakeholders across the north of Scotland to develop a comprehensive accommodation strategy that creates a positive legacy.

SSEN Transmission has also committed to contribute the development of at least 200 properties across the north of Scotland, which upon completion of the transmission infrastructure projects, will be handed over to partnership organisations to provide additional accommodation for local people across the north of Scotland, delivering a legacy for future generations. We are currently developing our accommodation strategy and are reaching out to key stakeholders across the north of Scotland to influence the development of this strategy. We expect our strategy to include new and renovated homes, as well as fully serviced sites for temporary accommodation camps for works, delivered to a standard required to support future housing and wider economic development activities.

Benefits and Compensation

In addition to our housing strategy, there will be a range of benefits that result from SSEN Transmission's planned £20bn investment by 2030 in new electricity network infrastructure. An extensive contribution from the supply chain is required to develop a modern connected national grid that will help to deliver Net Zero. Where possible, local suppliers will be used to deliver project materials, products, and services. The local multiplier effect will bring additional prosperity to areas where there is a high local spend.

In addition to the economic benefits from construction, communities will benefit directly from the works in a number of ways. Our project teams will listen to local issues and aim to make decisions that leave a long-term benefit to communities. Suppliers working on our projects will deliver a range of community benefits as part of their commitment to add local social value. SSEN Transmission will introduce a community benefit fund which is expected to be in excess of £100m (subject to UK Government guidance and Ofgem approval) to bring positive change and investment to communities. This fund will be used to deliver important projects that will bring further economic and community improvements across the north of Scotland. Finally, long-term operational jobs will be created to maintain the new infrastructure.

In the 2023 Autumn Statement, an announcement was made that households situated close to new transmission infrastructure will receive up to £10,000 discounted from their electricity bills. Further detail including guidance on community benefit funding is expected from the UK Government in the coming months.

Public Health and Electricity Infrastructure

We received questions related to our infrastructure and the associated health impacts of living near one of our assets.

The UK Government sets guidelines for exposure to electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) on advice from Public Health England (PHE). In March 2004 the UK adopted the 1998 guidelines published by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). These guidelines are designed to set conservative exposure levels for the general public to electric and magnetic fields and they are

endorsed by the UK's health protection agency Public Health England, the World Health Organisation and the UK Government.

It is the policy of the electricity industry to follow these independent guidelines. A Code of Practice, published jointly in 2012 by industry and the then Department for Energy and Climate Change (now part of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero), sets out all the practical details needed to apply the exposure limits for transmission lines. The electricity industry designs all new equipment to comply with the Government guidelines as set out in the Code of Practice. This includes measures such as adhering to statutory ground clearance requirements and ensuring optimum phasing of high voltage double circuit overhead lines.

Further information on EMFs can be found on National Grid's website on the subject (www.emfs.info).

Positive Environmental Impacts

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is delivered by incorporating biodiversity considerations into our project optioneering, design, consenting and ongoing operational activities. We work on our sites and with partners to implement projects that deliver biodiversity enhancement.

Our approach to BNG follows that which is now legally mandated in England. By using habitat as a proxy for wider biodiversity, taking into account attributes like habitat type. This is assigned a value considering the species richness, diversity, rarity and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats associated with that type; and other attributes including condition and strategic significance of the habitat in its location to produce a score.

Following the enhancement of a habitat's condition, or the creation of higher value habitats through our development of off-site projects, we quantify the difference between the habitat baseline and the post-development habitats on each habitat achieving its target condition to assess whether habitat value has increased by 10%.

Ecology

Ecology and ornithology impacts are assessed firstly using desk-based studies in which existing information about the species likely to be present is reviewed. This may be information that is publicly available, held by organisations such as NatureScot or the RSPB, by local interest groups or by other neighbouring developers. This is followed by a wide range of surveys undertaken in the correct seasonal window to target and identify the presence of the species' that we think could be affected.

In the case of ornithology surveys, these surveys can take over a year to complete to ensure we have a robust data set to allow us to make decisions such as how best to locate and build our infrastructure in a way that minimises impacts to the environment.

These ecological impact assessments identify risks to wildlife and reasonable and proportionate mitigation. This may include measures such as adding bird flight diverters on sections of overhead line to further minimise the risk of bird flight collision.

We have also developed a suite of Species Protection Plan documents in consultation with NatureScot which set out the minimum requirements for further ecology checks and mitigation during the construction phase.