



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

Regional Fund Review

Executive Summary

31st July 2026



APPROACH TO THE REVIEW

Our Consultation and Research

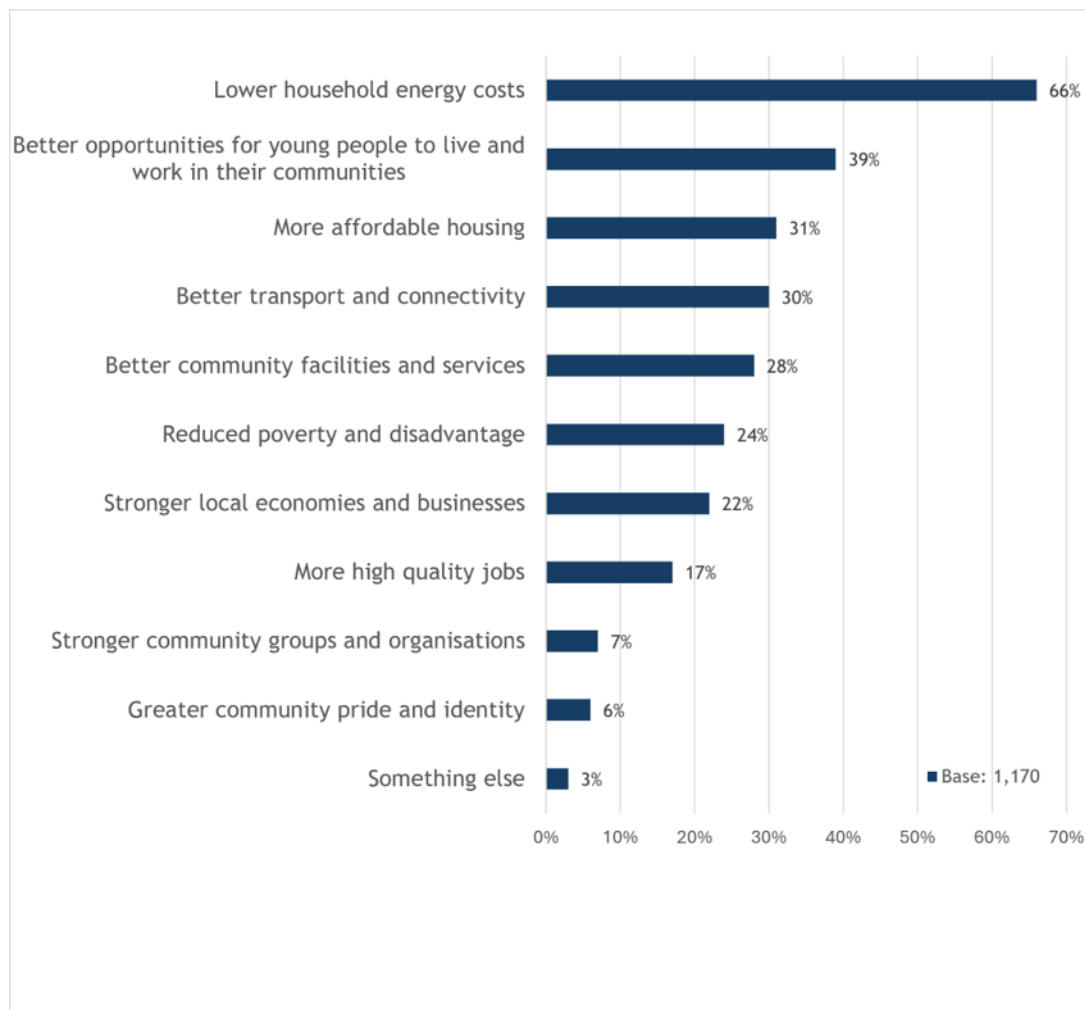
A mixed-methods approach to capture a wide range of views from across the region



APPROPRIATENESS OF CURRENT THEMES

- The consultation indicates broad support for retaining the existing three thematic headings, with little appetite for wholesale redesign of the Regional Fund's strategic framework.
- The principal challenge identified is not the themes themselves, but the need for greater clarity regarding the priorities, outcomes and types of projects sitting beneath each theme.
- Stakeholders supported an evolutionary approach, whereby detailed priorities are periodically refreshed whilst maintaining continuity in the overarching themes.
- The Place theme in particular would benefit from clearer articulation, particularly regarding community capacity, connectivity and wider economic development.
- “Additional” issues such as housing, transport, community energy and retention of young people in communities emerged as important cross-cutting priorities but were generally regarded as capable of being accommodated within the existing thematic framework.

PUBLIC SURVEY



- Residents identified lower household energy costs as the highest priority outcome by a considerable margin, followed by opportunities for young people, affordable housing and improved transport and connectivity.
- All three existing Regional Fund themes attracted strong public support, with Alleviating Fuel Poverty receiving the highest importance rating, closely followed by People, providing a strong public mandate for retaining the current thematic framework.
- Within each theme, respondents supported a balanced portfolio of activity rather than concentrating investment on a small number of priorities, reinforcing the breadth of the existing thematic framework.
- Open-ended responses identified few genuinely new strategic priorities, instead reinforcing the importance of issues already capable of being reflected within the existing themes.
- Overall, the public survey closely reinforces the findings of the stakeholder consultation, suggesting that the Regional Fund's current themes remain appropriate, with future emphasis best placed on refining priorities and outcomes beneath those themes rather than introducing entirely new themes.

DESIRED PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE REGIONAL FUND

- Stakeholders consistently recognised the Regional Fund as being distinct from place-based community benefit funding and emphasised the importance of supporting projects that deliver benefits across more than one community.
- High-quality projects were characterised by strong partnerships, clear strategic purpose, regional relevance and the potential to deliver lasting change.
- Innovation and replicability were viewed as important, although stakeholders generally considered that innovation should support practical delivery rather than be an objective in itself.
- Deliverability remained a key consideration, with support for balancing ambition with realistic implementation and organisational capacity.
- Strong regional projects were generally distinguished not by geographical scale alone but by their ability to address shared regional challenges, create wider learning and deliver benefits across multiple communities.

STRATEGIC AND TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT



No single characteristic defines a transformational project.
The strongest projects combine all of these elements.

- Stakeholders consistently interpreted transformational impact as creating lasting change in communities, systems and opportunities rather than simply delivering successful individual projects.

- Long-term legacy emerged as a central concept, encompassing sustained partnerships, strengthened organisations, improved community capacity and enduring economic and social benefits.
- Transformational projects were generally viewed as addressing root causes, influencing wider systems and creating benefits extending beyond the lifetime of individual funding awards.
- Stakeholders recognised that transformational impact requires robust evaluation focused on longer-term outcomes rather than short-term outputs alone.
- The consultation suggests that transformational impact should become an increasingly important organising principle for both project selection and the future evolution of the Fund.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- The existing assessment criteria were generally viewed as appropriate, although stakeholders suggested greater clarity regarding how they are interpreted and applied.
- Strategic fit and transformational impact were consistently regarded as the characteristics most likely to distinguish high-quality Regional Fund projects.
- Partnership working and sustainability remained important considerations, although stakeholders favoured proportionate expectations reflecting project scale and context.
- Greater emphasis was placed on achieving meaningful long-term outcomes than on introducing additional assessment criteria.
- Clearer communication of assessment expectations and stronger applicant guidance were viewed as the most effective means of improving the quality of future applications.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Stakeholders viewed the current application process positively but identified significant opportunities to strengthen communication and project development.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on communicating desired outcomes, project characteristics and examples of successful approaches rather than eligibility alone – “from themes to outcomes”.
- Stakeholders generally considered the existing eligibility arrangements to be appropriate, although clearer guidance regarding organisational eligibility and partnership-led applications would improve consistency, transparency and applicant confidence.
- There was widespread support for increased applicant engagement through workshops, case studies, webinars, partnership events and proportionate project screening.
- Supporting organisations to develop stronger strategic proposals was regarded as more valuable than making significant changes to assessment procedures.
- As the Fund grows, stakeholders increasingly envisage SSEN Transmission playing a more proactive role in shaping partnerships, stimulating strategic projects and influencing wider regional investment.

FUNDING LEVELS AND DURATION

- Stakeholders considered that future funding arrangements should evolve alongside the increasing scale and ambition of the Regional Fund.
- There was strong support for greater use of multi-year funding where projects seek to deliver transformational change.
- Development funding was widely supported as a means of strengthening partnerships and improving the quality of future strategic applications.
- Stakeholders supported developing a broader portfolio of funding mechanisms, reflecting differing stages of project development, scale and ambition.
- Overall, the consultation suggests that funding models should be refined to reflect the timescales required to achieve lasting regional impact.

ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS

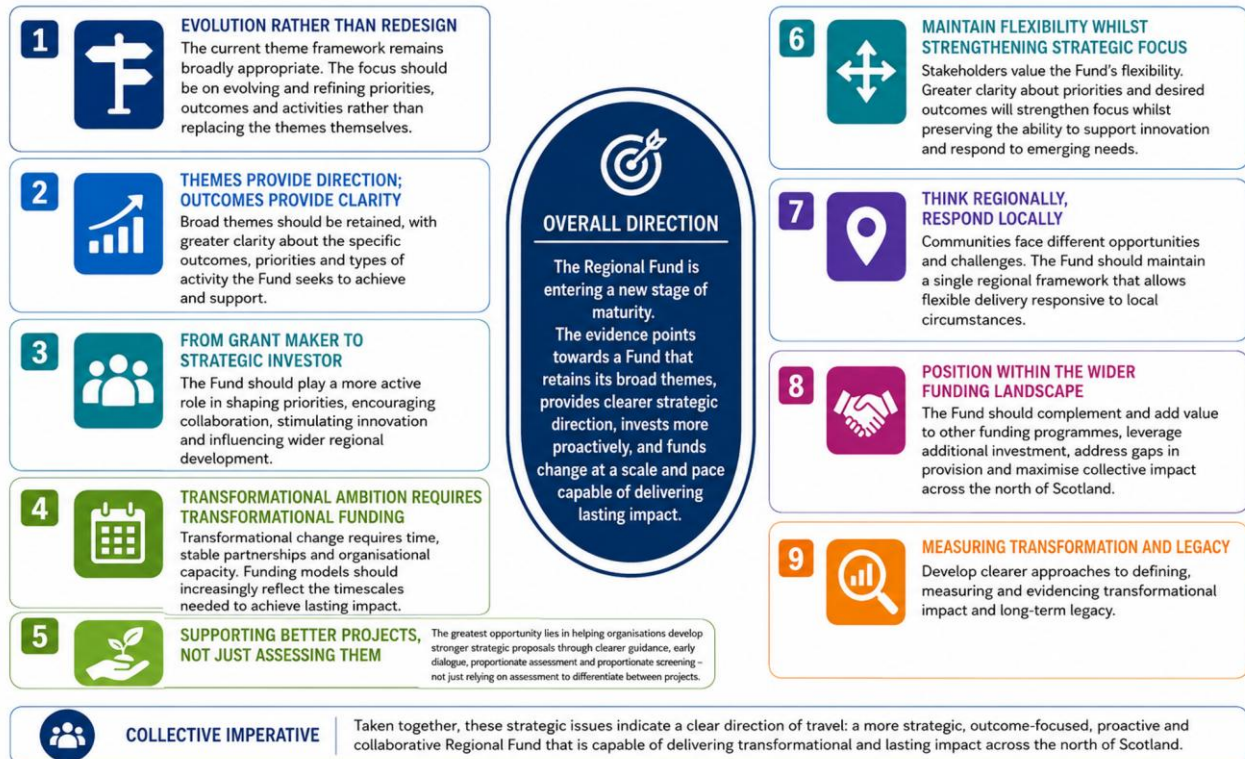
- Stakeholders felt it was important to view the Regional Fund as part of a wider regional funding and community development environment, rather than as a grant-making programme in isolation.
- The Fund was seen as having an important role in encouraging collaboration, attracting additional investment and strengthening regional capacity.
- Respondents recognised the diversity of communities across the SSEN Transmission area and supported a strategic framework capable of responding to differing regional circumstances.
- Overall, the consultation points towards an increasingly strategic role for the Regional Fund as both an investor and a catalyst for wider change.

KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

- The consultation consistently supports evolution of the Regional Fund rather than fundamental redesign.
- The strategic themes should be retained, with greater emphasis placed on clearly defined priorities and desired outcomes beneath each theme.
- Future funding models should increasingly align with the transformational ambitions of the Fund through greater flexibility, longer-term investment and support for project development.
- The Fund is well placed to adopt a more proactive role in shaping strategic regional partnerships and investment whilst retaining opportunities for innovation through open funding.
- Overall, the consultation presents a clear direction of travel towards a Fund that is increasingly strategic, outcome-focused and capable of delivering lasting regional impact.

KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE REGIONAL FUND

The consultation evidence suggests that the Regional Fund is well regarded and well placed for the future, but that it should evolve in a number of ways to enhance its strategic impact and maximise its contribution to regional development.



RECOMMENDATIONS

REGIONAL FUND REVIEW Recommendations at a Glance

