



FROM INSIGHT TO INFLUENCE

## SEEN Transmission: ISES 2025

Final report

Prepared for SEEN Transmission

Prepared by Impact

29 April 2025

Project No. 1653

## Table of Contents

1	Glossary of terms and definitions .....	2
2	Executive summary.....	2
3	Main report.....	3
3.1	Background and objectives.....	3
3.2	Methodology .....	4
3.2.1	Quantitative engagement.....	4
3.2.2	Qualitative engagement .....	5
4	Results .....	7
4.1	Awareness and contact with SSEN Transmission.....	7
4.2	Satisfaction and engagement .....	8
4.2.1	Qualitative feedback: Satisfaction with engagement and avenues for improvement .....	10
4.3	Qualitative feedback: Transparency .....	12
4.4	Methods of communication and engagement.....	14
4.4.1	Qualitative feedback: What stakeholders classify as engagement .....	15
4.4.2	Qualitative feedback: Preferred contact frequency .....	17
4.5	Materials stakeholders would benefit from .....	19
4.6	Qualitative feedback: SSENT website .....	20
4.7	Preferred engagement .....	21
4.8	Qualitative feedback: Expectations for the construction and delivery stage.....	22
4.9	Impact of recent projects .....	24
4.9.1	Qualitative feedback: Impact of recent projects .....	25
4.10	Sponsorship activities .....	28
4.10.1	Qualitative feedback: Sponsorship activities .....	28
5	Conclusions and recommendations.....	31
5.1	Key conclusions .....	31
5.2	Recommendations.....	32
6	Appendix.....	34
6.1	Appendix 1: Online survey questionnaire.....	34
6.2	Appendix 2: Interview discussion guide.....	44

All projects are carried out in compliance with the ISO 20252 international standard for market, opinion, and social research and GDPR

## 1 Glossary of terms and definitions

<b>'Top 3 Box' or T3B</b>	NET scores based on combining the percentages for 8, 9 and 10 when looking at satisfied overall
<b>'Bottom 3 Box' or B3B</b>	NET scores based on combining the percentages for 1, 2 and 3 for dissatisfied overall
<b>SSEN</b>	Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks
<b>ISES</b>	Infrastructure Stakeholder Engagement Survey
<b>TOs</b>	Transmission Operators

Please note, due to rounding, the figures for percentage-based questions which are presented in the graphs and/or the associated text in the main body of the report, may not always sum to 100%.

## 2 Executive summary

In 2021, SSEN Transmission launched its Infrastructure Stakeholder Engagement Survey (ISES). This followed guidance from Ofgem for Transmission Operators (TOs) to continually improve their stakeholder engagement, using a quantitative survey as a measurement on an annual basis.

SSEN Transmission commissioned Impact to create and implement an ISES to understand the experiences of stakeholders that could have been impacted by recent infrastructure projects and has done so every year since 2021. Due to the success of each of these projects, SSEN Transmission commissioned Impact to run the research again in 2025, with the following objectives:

- To understand stakeholder perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction of engagement, and compare with previous years.
- To understand what stakeholders impacted by new infrastructure projects think are the priorities when engaging with SSEN Transmission.
- To understand what SSEN Transmission can do to better prepare the public in the lead up to consultation events.

For the 2025 wave, Impact adopted a two-stage approach to meet the objectives. 351 online surveys were completed with stakeholders of SSEN Transmission, followed by more focussed 15-minute interviews with 49 stakeholders who completed the initial survey.

Overall knowledge of SSEN Transmission was high, and the majority of stakeholders had engaged with SSEN Transmission over the last 12 months. Engagement predominantly focused on the planning and development stages of local projects.

Satisfaction was similar to 2024 levels, with very few stakeholders satisfied with their overall engagement with SSEN Transmission. When asked for suggestions on how satisfaction could be improved overall, stakeholders gave suggestions such as:

- being more transparent
- listening to the views of stakeholders
- being available for more contact with stakeholders either by email or face to face
- acting on stakeholders' concerns.

Around 8 in 10 stakeholders who took part in the survey had been engaged by SSEN Transmission in the planning and delivery stage of a local project. Stakeholders who had been engaged by SSEN Transmission expressed that they were engaged with over 3 to 4 different channels, with the most common being consultation events and email. In future engagement, stakeholders would like SSEN Transmission to ensure transparent communication, make information easy to understand, and respond promptly to queries.

Around 9 in 10 stakeholders were impacted by an infrastructure project, with the majority stating that the impact upon them had been negative.

In the qualitative depth interviews, stakeholders acknowledged efforts by SSEN Transmission to engage, but many felt the approach was too one-way and procedural. Those living within 1 mile of infrastructure expressed the greatest dissatisfaction, citing emotional strain, a lack of influence over decisions, and limited responsiveness.

Stakeholders wanted engagement to start earlier to allow for genuine dialogue. They valued face-to-face formats, continuity of contact, and clear explanations of how feedback was used. Simply announcing decisions without context was seen as dismissive. While some used the website or email updates, others called for more local, in-person communication, especially in areas with limited digital access.

During construction, stakeholders expected regular updates, practical information, and fast responses to issues. Farmers and landowners raised concerns about biosecurity, poor notice before land access, and inconsistent contractor behaviour.

Above all, stakeholders asked for a more empathetic and responsive approach, with consistent communication and a genuine effort to understand the realities faced by those living near infrastructure.

## 3 Main report

### 3.1 Background and objectives

Under RIIO-T1, which ran from April 2013 to March 2021, Ofgem measured the stakeholder engagement progress of Transmission and Distribution Operators under the Stakeholder Engagement Incentive, and there was a small financial reward based partly on performance in this area.

Under RIIO-T2, which runs from April 2021 to March 2026, the system has changed slightly, with there now being an Infrastructure Stakeholder Engagement Survey (ISES) for Transmission Operators (TOs). Ofgem has set the requirement for TOs to continue to improve their stakeholder engagement, using a qualitative and quantitative survey as a measurement, run on an annual basis.

Ofgem's intention for this survey is to encourage engagement with stakeholders that may have been impacted by recent infrastructure projects to understand their experience, and ultimately how this can be improved. This will ensure a transparent feedback loop exists between the TO and their stakeholders. There is no financial incentive for SSEN Transmission to carry out this survey.

In early 2022, SSEN Transmission commissioned Impact to create and implement an ISES to understand the experiences of stakeholders who may have been impacted by recent infrastructure projects. Due to the success of this project, Impact was recommissioned to run a similar survey in 2023, 2024, and most recently in 2025.

As with previous years, the following project objectives were set:



## 3.2 Methodology

Impact conducted a two-stage approach to this research, laid out below, to meet the research objectives:



### Quantitative engagement

- Online survey with 351 stakeholders of SSEN Transmission in February 2025
- All respondents received the online survey through an invitation distributed by SSEN Transmission



### Qualitative engagement

- 49 x 15-minute online interviews were conducted in March 2025
- Invitation to stakeholders who took part in the online surveys were sent, after suggesting they would be happy to take part

#### 3.2.1 Quantitative engagement

The first stage of the project was an online survey. The questionnaire took an average of 15-20 minutes to complete. A total of 351 stakeholders, who had previously engaged with SSEN Transmission, participated.

Stakeholders participating in the online survey came from a range of locations across Scotland, focussed on six postcode regions, AB, DD, IV, KW, ZE, and PH, associated with major infrastructure projects. On average, stakeholders were affected by, or involved with, two infrastructure projects. The projects most stakeholders were most often impacted by were:

- 54% - Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection
- 26% - Beaully to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project
- 24% - Hurlie Substation

The remaining projects stakeholders were affected by, or involved with, included the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400kV Connection and the New Deer 2 Substation (Greens). Note: Only 1% of stakeholders did not know the name of the project or which project they had been impacted by.

More than three-quarters (79%) of stakeholders who completed the online survey described themselves as Community members / residents, and 11% as Land assembly.

The interview length and content were carefully designed to keep respondents fully engaged throughout, to maximise the response rate and to ensure no stakeholders dropped out mid-survey. The survey contained predominantly closed questions (including scale and yes/no type questions) with a few open questions, designed to elicit detailed feedback on the objectives. The questionnaire was similar to that asked in previous years, with some content altered and additional content added. The following topics were covered:

- Awareness of SSEN Transmission
- Contact with SSEN Transmission
- Satisfaction with current levels of service
- Engagement with SSEN Transmission
- Impact of recent and ongoing projects
- SSEN Transmission sponsorship activities

A full copy of the questionnaire can be found in [Appendix 1](#).



### 3.2.2 Qualitative engagement

At the end of the online survey, the 351 stakeholders who took part were asked if they'd be willing, in principle, to participate in a 15-minute follow-up interview. Almost half (161) agreed and were sent invitation emails in batches, allowing them to choose a time slot in March. Of these, just under a third (49) went on to take part

Of the stakeholders who were interviewed in the qualitative stage, the majority were also community members or landowners living near infrastructure routes. Some were attending the interviews in a personal capacity, with others representing local groups, such as a community councils, environmental charities, and advocacy groups.

#### Breakdown of the 49 stakeholders who participated in the qualitative research

Stakeholder role	Project(s) impacted by	Distance to project	#
Community member	Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project	11-19 miles	1
Landowner	Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project	Less than 1 mile	3
Landowner	Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project, Blackhillock 2 Substation (Coachford)	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project, New Deer 2 Substation (Greens)	Less than 1 mile	2
Landowner	Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project, New Deer 2 Substation (Greens)	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Beauly to Denny Upgrade, Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Beauly to Denny Upgrade, Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400kV Connection, Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project, Spittal Substation (Banniskirk Hub)	11-19 miles	1
Community member	Blackhillock 2 Substation (Coachford)	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Emmock Substation, Hurlie Substation	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection	20 miles +	1
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection	4-5 miles	1
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection	Less than 1 mile	7
Landowner	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection	1-3 miles	1
Landowner	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection, Emmock Substation	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection, Emmock Substation, Hurlie Substation	Less than 1 mile	2
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection, Emmock Substation, Hurlie Substation	1-3 miles	1
Statutory consultee	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection, Hurlie Substation	1-3 miles	1
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection, Hurlie Substation	Less than 1 mile	3
Community member	Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection, Hurlie Substation	11-19 miles	1
Community member	Loch Buidhe Substation (Carnaig)	1-3 miles	1
Community member	New Beauly Area Substation (Fanellan), Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project	1-3 miles	1
Community member	New Deer 2 Substation (Greens)	Less than 1 mile	2
Community councillor	Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400kV Connection	Less than 1 mile	1
Community member	Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400kV Connection	Less than 1 mile	7

Community heritage group coordinator	Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400kV Connection	1-3 miles	1
Community member	Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400kV Connection, Loch Buidhe Substation (Carnaig)	Less than 1 mile	2
			<i>Total: 49</i>

Whilst the follow-up interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes on average, some interviews ran over the allocated time, to allow stakeholders to fully express their opinions on the topics discussed. The discussion guide was designed to explore the results from the online surveys in more detail, to understand how SSEN Transmission can improve the service it offers to its stakeholders. The discussion guide covered the following content:

- Satisfaction with SSEN Transmission
- Transparency from SSEN Transmission
- Engagement from SSEN Transmission
- Communication of decisions
- Optional topics if time allowed: Sponsorship activities, SSEN Transmission website, impact of projects and expectations for the construction and delivery stage.
- A full copy of the discussion guide can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Awareness and contact with SSEN Transmission

During the online surveys, stakeholders were first asked if they had heard of SSEN Transmission, and the majority (89%) claimed they had at least some knowledge of them.

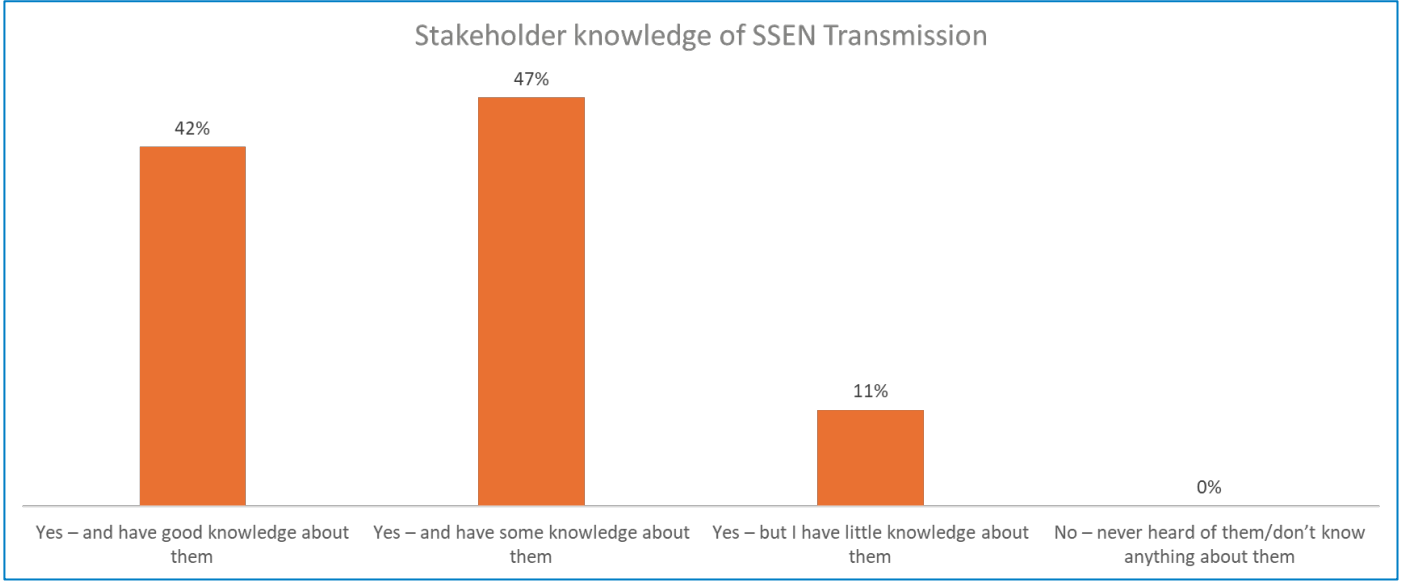


Figure 1- Q3. Before today, had you previously heard of SSEN Transmission and the strategic role they play in maintaining and operating the high voltage electricity network in the North of Scotland, as well as supporting the delivery of the UK and Scotland’s Net Zero? (Base size: 351)

The majority of stakeholders (94%) have had contact with SSEN Transmission within the last year, and 49% within the last month.

Just over two thirds (66%) of stakeholders have had contact with SSEN Transmission at least three or more times within the last 12 months. Nearly one-in-five (18%) have had contact with SSEN Transmission twice in the last 12 months, and 8% only once. The remaining 8% of stakeholders were unsure.

Both the proportion of stakeholders interviewed who have engaged with SSEN Transmission and the frequency of engagement has increased since the 2024 survey, with more stakeholders having had contact with SSEN Transmission three or more times in a month, and fewer stakeholders having contact once or twice in the year.

The full breakdown of the last contact with SSEN Transmission is given below, along with responses to the survey from last year:

Last contact with SSEN Transmission	Percentage of respondents 2025	Percentage of respondents 2024
Within the last week	20%	14%
Within the last month	28%	16%
Within the last 3 months	24%	31%
Within the last 6 months	15%	15%
Within the last year	7%	11%
More than a year ago	1%	2%
I have not had contact with SSEN Transmission	3%	7%
Don't know	1%	3%

Table 1- Q5. When did you last have contact with SSEN Transmission? (Base size: 351)



When asked **what SSEN Transmission could do to promote a better understanding of their role**, the stakeholders, on average, selected four of the fourteen prompted suggestions. The most common suggestions were:

- 71% - being more open and transparent about contracts, procedures, and policy
- 64% - prioritising environmental impact
- 52% - being available for meetings and more one-on-one
- 46% - providing a list of future projects and updates
- 45% - providing more consultation, communication, contact, seminars, trade fairs, etc.

The full breakdown of suggestions is given below, along with responses to the survey from last year:

Communication type	Percentage of respondents 2025	Percentage of respondents 2024
Be more open/transparent relating to contracts, procedures, and policy	71%	72%
Prioritise environmental Impact	64%	67%
Be available for meetings, more one to ones	52%	55%
Provide a list of future projects and dates	46%	46%
More consultation/communication/contact/seminars/ Trade fairs etc.	45%	56%
Be upfront/proactive about informing stakeholders about connection delays and other project issues	41%	42%
Be more sustainable	25%	28%
Prioritise Health and Safety / safe working practise	21%	16%
Show more interest in non-SSEN companies	11%	6%
Stronger presence on television	8%	7%
Stronger presence online	7%	6%
Stronger presence on social media	6%	9%
Speed up delivery of projects/access to the network	5%	3%
Stronger presence in print media	5%	5%
Don't know/nothing	1%	2%
Other	23%	

Table 2- Q4. From your perspective, what do you think SSEN Transmission could do to promote a better understanding of its role? (Base size: 351)

## 4.2 Satisfaction and engagement

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction scores quoted in the text below are NET scores based on combining the percentages for 8, 9 and 10 when looking at satisfied overall ('Top 3 Box' or T3B) and 1, 2 and 3 for dissatisfied overall ('Bottom 3 Box' or B3B) on a 10-point scale. The full spread of responses is shown in the charts.

Stakeholder satisfaction in relation to their overall engagement with SSEN Transmission was low, with just 7% stating that they were satisfied (score of 8+) and 70% dissatisfied (score of 3 or less). The full breakdown is given below. These scores are largely similar to last year, although the proportion selecting *very dissatisfied* (1/10) has risen by 7% points, from 48% in 2024, to 55% in 2025:

## Stakeholder satisfaction with their overall engagement with SSEN Transmission

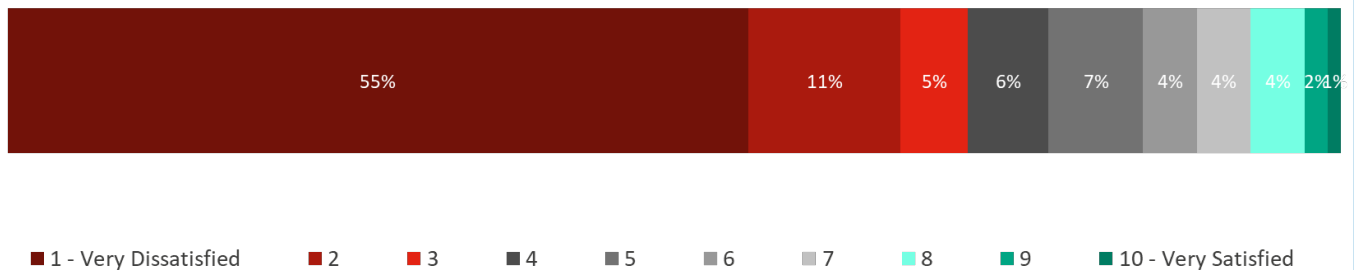


Figure 2- Q8. As a stakeholder of SSEN Transmission, how satisfied are you with your overall engagement with SSEN Transmission on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is very dissatisfied, and 10 is very satisfied? (Base size: 351)

Of the stakeholders who were dissatisfied, 73% were located less than a mile away from a SSEN Transmission project.

Stakeholders who did not give a score of 10 out of 10 for their level of engagement with SSEN Transmission were asked for suggestions on how SSEN Transmission could improve. The most popular responses were:

- Being more transparent
  - *“By being honest and open from the start of the planning. There appear to be arms and legs being added to the infrastructure as the planning procedure progresses.”* – Community member
  - *“Be fair, be transparent. Plan developments with people in mind, not profits. Help those effected by projects. Tick box exercises are transparent. Real meaningful discussions directly with individuals done in must be done privately. A noisy environment where not everyone has a chance to connect. Don't rush things. Clearly pushing things across the line is the priority at the moment.”* – Community member
  - *“To respond, truthfully and transparently. Have staff available who can answer all questions raised.”* – Community member
- Listening to the views of stakeholders
  - *“Being honest and having meetings round a table. Listening to concerns not writing them off straight away.”* – Land assembly
  - *“When we go to the meetings, the SSEN staff don't listen to our concerns. They have a dictate and don't listen as if it's all been decided regardless of our valid worries regarding the environmental impact of the Greens substation and pylons going near us. The reason they give for not going underground with cabling is cost but surely other means of transmission need to be explored but there does not seem any willingness to listen. We know many residents who ask the same thing. Also, when we asked about compensation for losing value of our home and quality of our life we were spoken to quite rudely -as if we were trying to capitalise on the situation. Again, I know our neighbours asked the same thing and were also given short shrift. There does not seem to be any sympathy for our situation and the adverse impact the development will have on us as well as the environment. There just isn't the infrastructure to cope with the establishment of the greens substation. However, on a positive note, the computer-generated models of what the pylons and substation will look like from our home, although disturbing, were informative and the staff helpful.”* - community member
- Being available for more contact with stakeholders either by email or face to face

- *“Need responses to questions and need community engagement people who keep in touch with those most affected. I had to go to a consultation for a nearby project (Netherton Hub) to get answers from staff regarding Greens, which is near my home.”* – Community member
- Acting on stakeholders’ concerns
  - *“Demonstrate more effective action in regard to community concerns”* – Community councillor

#### 4.2.1 Qualitative feedback: Satisfaction with engagement and avenues for improvement

Stakeholder satisfaction with SSEN Transmission’s engagement was generally low across the qualitative interviews, reflecting the findings from the quantitative survey. While most participants had experienced some level of contact with SSEN Transmission, this was often not perceived as meaningful or constructive engagement.

##### Lack of responsive engagement

A recurring frustration was that SSEN Transmission staff attending events were not equipped to answer stakeholder questions or lacked authority to commit to follow-up actions. Participants asking about technical details, route decisions, or compensation were often told to await a response which never came, or to contact someone else at a later date. This lack of responsiveness contributed to a broader perception that stakeholders were not being taken seriously, and that events were not structured to produce actionable dialogue.

- *“They continue to send out people who cannot answer questions, and that’s repeated every single time I’ve attended a public meeting.”* – Community council representative
- *“We were told to leave our details and they’d follow up, but no one ever did. It makes it feel like they just want to tick a box.”* – Community member

##### Perceived pre-determined outcomes

A widely held view was that SSEN Transmission had already made key decisions by the time engagement took place. Stakeholders commonly said they were being presented with plans, not consulted on them, and felt their involvement would have little or no bearing on the final outcome. This perception discouraged participation and eroded trust in SSEN Transmission’s stated commitment to listen and respond to community concerns.

- *“We’re holding these meetings, but the decision’s been made. You can argue as long as you like – this is going to go through.”* – Community council representative
- *“They’re not really consulting, they’re just informing. It’s more like a PR exercise.”* – Community member

##### Insufficient local knowledge and lack of continuity

Participants also criticised the apparent lack of local knowledge among SSEN Transmission representatives. Several commented that staff attending events were unfamiliar with the geography, local sensitivities, or even the full detail of the project itself. This was compounded by poor continuity: stakeholders reported meeting different people at each event, with no record of past conversations or commitments. The consequence was stakeholder frustration and, in some cases, disengagement.

- *“You’re explaining the same thing again and again because it’s always new people. It just feels disjointed.”* – Community member
- *“If there was a single point of contact who knew our area and the issues here, that would help a lot.”* – Community member

##### One-way communication

Many stakeholders distinguished between communication and engagement. While they acknowledged that SSEN Transmission sent emails, held exhibitions, and distributed leaflets, these were not seen as offering meaningful

opportunities for input. Several participants described the engagement as “one-way” or “broadcast-style” communication, rather than a reciprocal conversation.

- *“Emails aren’t engagement. I get emails from everyone – it doesn’t mean they’re listening.”* – Community member
- *“You could ask questions at the event, but it didn’t feel like they were actually taking anything on board.”* – Community council representative

**Examples of more effective engagement**

A minority of stakeholders reported more positive experiences, particularly where a local project manager or liaison officer was assigned. Having a named, accessible contact who understood the area and followed up on concerns was seen to make a significant difference.

- *“I met the Community Liaison Manager at the Spittal event – a local guy who knows the story up here – and that allayed my fears. I felt much better about the whole thing.”* – Community member
- *“The Community Liaison Manager was brilliant – sent maps, followed up, and actually answered our questions. It just felt a lot more respectful.”* – Landowner

Other features of better engagement included face-to-face conversations in smaller settings, and the use of tools like visual simulations that made the scale and impact of proposals easier to understand.

**Suggestions for improvement**

Stakeholders offered a range of specific suggestions for how SSEN Transmission could improve satisfaction with engagement:

- Ensure staff attending events are informed, empowered, and briefed on previous conversations
- Assign consistent local contacts who understand the area and can build trust
- Use engagement formats that allow for two-way discussion, not just presentation
- Make clear how input is being recorded, used, and feed back to stakeholders
- Improve the clarity and accessibility of communication, especially around complex or technical issues
- Offer regular updates, even when there is limited progress, to maintain transparency and dialogue
  - *“Even if they can’t change something, they should tell us why. That would go a long way.”* – Landowner
  - *“You’ve got to show how you’ve listened. Otherwise, people will just stop turning up.”* – Community member

**Satisfaction with engagement: key differences by proximity to project**

<p><i>Within 1 mile</i></p>	<p>Stakeholders living closest to projects were the most dissatisfied, often describing engagement as tokenistic or performative. Many felt their input had little effect and criticised SSEN Transmission for failing to follow up or provide meaningful dialogue.</p> <p>Several cited repeated staff turnover, vague answers, and a lack of responsiveness as sources of frustration. The tone was often emotional, reflecting how directly the projects affected their lives and property. There was a strong desire for local, knowledgeable, and consistent points of contact, as well as small-format, face-to-face engagement rather than large formal events.</p>
-----------------------------	--

Greater than 1 mile	Those living further from the infrastructure reported lower levels of dissatisfaction and were generally more accepting of SSEN's efforts. They still had concerns about clarity and influence, but these were framed in less personal terms.
---------------------	---

### 4.3 Qualitative feedback: Transparency

Stakeholder views on SSEN Transmission's transparency were mixed, but the majority expressed concerns about a lack of openness, clarity, and follow-through. While some acknowledged improvements in recent years, many felt that key decisions were made behind closed doors, with little visibility of the rationale or process behind them. Transparency was not only defined as the availability of information, but also as the ability to understand how and why decisions were made, and whether stakeholder input had any meaningful impact.

#### Lack of clarity about decisions

A central frustration for many stakeholders was the lack of clarity around how key decisions, such as route alignment, the rejection of underground or subsea transmission, technology choices, or construction timelines, were reached. In several cases, stakeholders said they were presented with an updated plan or project change without explanation of how or why that decision had been made. This lack of visibility over the reasoning behind decisions left some to assume that SSEN Transmission was deliberately withholding information or managing engagement in a way that minimised scrutiny and led to them feeling excluded from the decision-making process.

- *"They just say, 'Here's the scheme.' Then months later, 'Here's the scheme again, slightly different.' No one sees the decision-making process in between."* – Community member
- *"We've asked for information about why it can't go underground, or how they've chosen the route, and there's never a straight answer."* – Landowner
- *"It's not enough to say, 'We looked at alternatives.' We need to know what they were and why they weren't chosen."* – Community member

#### Calls for cost-benefit analyses of alternative options

Several stakeholders said that for engagement to feel transparent, SSEN Transmission must share cost-benefit data to justify decisions, particularly for contentious choices such as route alignment or the refusal to underground lines.

Calls for financial transparency included requests for proper comparisons, including environmental and social (e.g., impact on local communities and tourism) costs, not just capital outlay.

- *"I'd like to see a cost benefit analysis. I'd like to see a risk assessment. I'd like to see some numbers... to show that they've actually looked at alternatives rather than dogmatically saying, 'we're going to build pylons, live with it.'"* – Community member

#### Unclear or inconsistent messaging

Inconsistencies in what was communicated and by whom were also flagged as damaging to perceptions of transparency. Some participants noted that SSEN staff gave different answers to the same questions at different events or were unsure of what had previously been shared.

- *"One person said the route had moved based on feedback, then the next said it was because of technical issues. It's hard to know what's true."* – Community member
- *"They kept referring us to someone else who wasn't at the event. If you're going to say you're transparent, you need to be ready to explain things there and then."* – Community council representative

#### Desire for more honest and balanced messaging

Several interviewees called for more frank and transparent communication, even when the news was not what communities wanted to hear. They expressed a willingness to accept difficult decisions, such as the rejection of undergrounding or local route objections, if SSEN Transmission provided a clear and honest explanation. In this sense, effective communication of decisions was seen as a way to build trust, even in the face of disagreement.

- *“Even if they can’t do what we asked, just say why. People will respect that more than being ignored.”* – Community council representative
- *“You can’t please everyone but at least be upfront about the trade-offs.”* – Community member

### Technical language and lack of plain English

Several stakeholders noted that materials shared by SSEN Transmission, such as letters, consultation boards, and website content, were full of technical language that many found hard to follow. While some accepted that electricity transmission is complex, they felt more could be done to break down the information into accessible terms. This was seen as especially important when discussing issues such as safety, environmental impact, or the comparative costs of overhead versus underground and undersea lines.

- *“They use so many technical terms that most people just glaze over. It’s not transparent if you can’t understand it.”* – Landowner
- *“Transparency also means saying it in plain English. If you can’t explain it simply, it feels like you’re hiding something.”* – Community member

### Limited feedback on how input is used

A strong theme across interviews was that even when stakeholders contributed to engagement exercises, they rarely saw how their input was used. Many said they felt they were providing feedback into a “black box,” with no visibility of what happened next. This made it harder for stakeholders to trust that SSEN Transmission was listening and was a key contributor to the perception of tokenistic consultation.

- *“There’s no feedback loop. We don’t hear how it was received, or if anything changed.”* – Community member
- *“They should be saying, ‘We heard these concerns, here’s what we’re doing about them — or not doing — and why.’ That’s real transparency.”* – Community council representative

### Lack of transparency about the future

Some stakeholders expressed concern that SSEN Transmission’s engagement did not account for the likely long-term trajectory of major infrastructure developments. Based on previous experiences or wider research, they believed that current projects would lead to future phases, spurs, or expansions, which were not being acknowledged or explained during engagement. This raised concerns about the scope of consultation being artificially limited. Stakeholders called for greater transparency around long-term infrastructure planning, including the potential for follow-on works, and how current engagement might relate to future schemes. A failure to do so risks further eroding trust among those who already feel misled.

- *“They say it’s one project, but we all know there’ll be more after it. That’s what happened before — they just keep extending.”* – Community member
- *“They don’t talk about the bigger picture. It’s just this route, this year — nothing about what’s coming next.”* – Community council representative

### Variability across experiences

A small number of participants reported more positive experiences, particularly those who had developed a direct relationship with a liaison officer or project manager. Where there was regular communication, clear explanations, and staff who could answer questions in detail, stakeholders felt far more informed and involved. However, most



interviewees felt that SSEN Transmission needed to adopt a more open and proactive approach to communication if it wanted to build trust with affected communities.

- *“When we spoke to the Community Liaison Manager, he laid it out clearly. What stage they were at, what they’d taken on board — it made a big difference.”* – Landowner

**Suggestions for improving transparency**

Stakeholders offered several constructive suggestions for improving SSEN Transmission’s transparency, including:

- Providing a clear timeline of decision-making stages, with an explanation of when and how public input is used
- Sharing summaries of feedback received and how it was (or wasn’t) incorporated
- Offering clear explanations for key decisions, especially those that stakeholders may find contentious (e.g., route choices, visual impact)
- Avoiding jargon and presenting materials in more accessible, user-friendly formats, as well as clear instructions regarding where answers to queries can be found in any documents shared
- Ensuring staff give consistent messages and are empowered to explain the reasoning behind key decisions
  - *“They need to be upfront — not just about what they’ve decided, but how they got there and why. Even if people don’t agree, they’ll respect the honesty.”* – Community council representative
  - *“Just saying ‘we’re listening’ isn’t enough. You have to show it. You have to explain what you’ve done with what people told you.”* – Community member

**Transparency: key differences by proximity to project**

<i>Within 1 mile</i>	Stakeholders closest to the projects expressed significant frustration with transparency, often stating that decisions were communicated without explanation or justification. This group frequently questioned whether SSEN Transmission was intentionally withholding information, particularly around route choices and the rejection of alternatives like undergrounding. They were especially concerned by what they saw as inconsistent messaging and the lack of a clear link between feedback provided and final outcomes.
<i>Greater than 1 mile</i>	<p>Those living further from project infrastructure were less critical, but still wanted clearer, more consistent explanations of how decisions were made. They were more focused on the principles of good process, such as transparency of rationale and fairness, than on immediate personal implications.</p> <p>While not experiencing the same emotional frustration as those closer to projects, they still viewed opaque or inconsistent communication as damaging to SSEN Transmission’s credibility.</p>

**4.4 Methods of communication and engagement**

78% of stakeholders who took part in the online survey have been engaged with SSEN Transmission in the planning and development stage of a local project (13% points higher than in 2024). The remainder were engaged at the construction or delivery stage (7%), or at post-completion (2%), or were unable to say at which stage of the project they had been engaged with (6%).

Nearly one-in-seven stakeholders (15%) stated that SSEN Transmission had not engaged with them about a local project, which is a 9% points lower than captured in the 2024 survey.

Of those who had engaged with SSEN Transmission, 48% of stakeholders stated that SSEN Transmission engaged with them directly, and 85% at public events.

On average, stakeholders said they engaged with SSEN Transmission over 3 to 4 different channels, including:

- 66% - via a consultation event
- 60% - email
- 39% - town hall events
- 33% - leaflet
- 28% - letter

The full breakdown of communication methods used, including a comparison with the 2024 figures, is given below:

Communication method	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of respondents
	2025	2024
Consultation event	66%	18%
Email	60%	62%
Town Hall events	39%	35%
Leaflet	33%	22%
Letter	28%	34%
Website/Blogs	19%	7%
Community Liaison Groups	16%	7%
Conferences/Events	16%	1%
Face to face visit	14%	8%
Surveys	14%	11%
Webinars	12%	12%
Local Press	9%	4%
E-bulletin (e.g., electronic newsletter)	7%	7%
Telephone call	6%	7%
Social media message	6%	4%
Workshops	4%	2%
Insight Reports	1%	0%

Table 3- Q10. In what ways has SSEN Transmission engaged with you during any stages of a local project? Please select all that apply (Base size: 300)

#### 4.4.1 Qualitative feedback: What stakeholders classify as engagement

There was strong agreement among stakeholders that not all forms of communication from SSEN Transmission constitute “engagement.” For many, true engagement is defined by two-way interaction, the opportunity for discussion, and the sense that input will be taken seriously. Passive or one-directional communications, such as generic emails, newsletters, or leaflets, were consistently seen as insufficient.

##### Face-to-face contact seen as most legitimate

Consultation events, drop-ins, and one-to-one conversations with SSEN Transmission staff were most commonly classified as true engagement. Stakeholders valued these formats because they provided space to express their views, ask questions and, in some cases, challenge decisions.

Some participants also highlighted the value of having informal conversations at events, especially when staff were knowledgeable and willing to listen. Many said that smaller, more conversational formats — such as local drop-ins or one-to-one meetings — were significantly more meaningful than larger exhibition-style events.

- *"I don't think emails count as engagement. You can't ask anything. You don't know if anyone reads your reply."* – Community member
- *"I had a long conversation with the project manager and it was really good — that felt like actual engagement."* – Community member

### Format matters as much as frequency

Stakeholders were clear that the method of contact was critical. A personalised visit or one-to-one conversation could be much more meaningful than repeated generic communications.

By contrast, communications that were seen as "broadcast-only", such as social media posts, mass email updates or printed mailouts, were frequently dismissed as not participatory or in the spirit of consultation.

- *"A face-to-face chat, even for ten minutes, is worth more than five newsletters."* – Community member

### The importance of response and follow-up

Many stakeholders emphasised that engagement is not just about providing a platform for input, but also about receiving a response. This includes both answering questions on the spot and following up in a timely and meaningful way.

When no feedback or follow-up was received, participants often felt that the engagement had been superficial or performative.

- *"They hand out leaflets and take questions, but then nothing happens. That's not engagement — that's just a PR exercise."* – Community member
- *"Engagement means they get back to you. It means they take what you said and do something with it — or at least explain why they haven't."* – Community council representative

### Engagement through trusted intermediaries

Some participants mentioned the value of SSEN Transmission working through community councils or local groups, particularly when these groups were trusted by local residents. They felt this could make engagement more meaningful and less confrontational, particularly in areas with strong community identity.

However, there was also a clear expectation that SSEN should engage directly with those most affected, rather than outsourcing engagement entirely to third parties.

- *"If people can go to the community council, and the council has a link to SSEN, that works. It's less stressful than dealing with big events or outsiders."* – Landowner

### Reaching those excluded from formal or digital engagement

Some stakeholders stressed that SSEN Transmission's current engagement formats risk missing key groups, such as older residents or those without reliable internet access. Some explained that traditional consultation events or digital updates do not reach these individuals and recommended that SSEN instead make use of existing local social hubs, such as lunch clubs or community cafes. They emphasised that these were trusted, familiar spaces for many residents and represented an opportunity to share updates or answer questions in a way that was accessible and respectful.

- *"The only way they're going to be able to do that is through community hubs... the elderly, for example, here will go to a Monday lunchtime and not pay much money for that lunch. That's where they need to also go to just explain what they're doing and why they're doing it."* – Community member

- *“It’s these social hubs that SSEN have missed out on actually educating... That wouldn’t take as many staff — just two or three empathetic and understanding people.”* – Community member

### Suggestions for improving engagement perceptions

Stakeholders suggested that SSEN Transmission could improve perceptions of engagement by:

- Prioritising face-to-face formats such as drop-ins and one-to-one meetings
- Ensuring staff at events are well-briefed, consistent, and empowered to answer questions
- Offering ongoing communication with a consistent contact, not a rotating cast of representatives
- Avoiding over-reliance on mass emails, social media, and impersonal materials
- Working with trusted community groups and local venues to reach harder-to-reach residents
- Following up on concerns raised to demonstrate responsiveness

### What stakeholders classify as engagement: key differences by proximity to project

<i>Within 1 mile</i>	Stakeholders living closest to the infrastructure held a narrow and more demanding definition of engagement. For them, true engagement meant face-to-face interaction, meaningful conversation, and the ability to influence outcomes. Passive updates, such as emails, letters, or websites, were not seen as engagement.  This group expressed a strong preference for local drop-ins or one-to-one meetings, ideally with a consistent, knowledgeable representative who could speak to their specific concerns.
<i>Greater than 1 mile</i>	Stakeholders further away from projects had more flexible expectations and were more likely to consider written communications and online updates as legitimate forms of engagement, especially when they included the option to respond. While they still valued the ability to ask questions or attend events when relevant, they were less insistent on direct or in-person contact and were more open to digital and hybrid formats.

#### 4.4.2 Qualitative feedback: Preferred contact frequency

While preferences around the frequency of contact varied, most stakeholders expressed a desire for more regular and predictable updates from SSEN Transmission, particularly during key phases of project development and construction. A lack of ongoing communication between consultations or visible project milestones contributed to feelings of being “left in the dark” and undermined trust in the process.

#### Desire for more frequent updates during key stages

The strongest calls for regular contact related to the construction phase of projects. Several stakeholders said that once the initial engagement phase had ended, updates became infrequent or ceased altogether, just as the impact on communities began to increase.

Some stakeholders felt that monthly updates were a reasonable minimum, while others wanted fortnightly or even weekly contact during periods of high activity or disruption. Where stakeholders were less directly affected, expectations for frequency were generally lower, but the need for clarity and consistency remained.

- *“There’s a long silence after the first event. Then all of a sudden, pylons are going up. That gap’s too long.”* – Community council representative
- *“They should be checking in every couple of weeks during construction. That’s when people are worried about traffic, noise, disruption.”* – Community member

### Contact “as needed” is not sufficient

Several stakeholders pushed back against the idea of receiving updates “only when something changes,” noting that silence often led to uncertainty, anxiety, and speculation. For some, this created the perception that SSEN Transmission was avoiding difficult conversations.

This sentiment was especially strong in communities where trust in the engagement process was already low or where significant disruption was anticipated.

- *“Even if there’s no change, just say that. A quick message to say, ‘still on track’ would help people feel included.”* – Community member
- *“No news isn’t good news. It just feels like they’re hiding something.”* – Landowner

### Proactive communication is valued

Stakeholders expressed appreciation when SSEN Transmission reached out before concerns were raised, rather than reacting to complaints. Being proactive was seen as a sign of respect and professionalism, and an important part of building trust.

*“If they get in touch before people are angry, they’ll get a much better reception.”* – Community council representative

*“You shouldn’t have to chase them for answers. They should be updating us regularly so we’re not guessing.”* – Landowner

### Suggestions regarding communication frequency

To maintain trust and support, SSEN Transmission should:

- Provide regular updates, especially during active construction periods
- Establish a clear contact schedule, even when there are no major changes
- Tailor the frequency and content of updates based on the stakeholder’s proximity to the work
- Communicate proactively rather than waiting for concerns to escalate
- Use straightforward, localised information rather than generic summaries

### Preferred frequency of contact: key differences by proximity to project

<i>Within 1 mile</i>	Stakeholders closest to the infrastructure wanted frequent, proactive updates, especially during construction phases. For many, this meant fortnightly or even weekly communication, even if no major changes had occurred. A lack of regular contact was often seen as avoidance or disregard. They stressed that silence creates anxiety, and wanted practical, localised information, not just general project summaries.
<i>Greater than 1 mile</i>	Those further away were generally content with monthly or milestone-based updates and were more focused on having clear access to information when needed. While they appreciated

transparency, they did not expect or want high-frequency communication until the project came closer.

This group showed greater patience and trusted self-service channels like email or websites more readily, provided that the content was clear and up to date.

## 4.5 Materials stakeholders would benefit from

On average, stakeholders in the online survey stated they would benefit from a variety of materials, selecting four different types. The most commonly cited materials stakeholders would find beneficial to be available before SSEN Transmission's public events included maps and visuals (75%), technical information (59%), and project overview documents (50%).

When asked about the **most important things stakeholders would like SSEN Transmission to get right when engaging** with them, the most commonly mentioned responses were ensuring transparent communication (54%), followed by making information easy to understand (36%), and responding promptly to queries (30%).

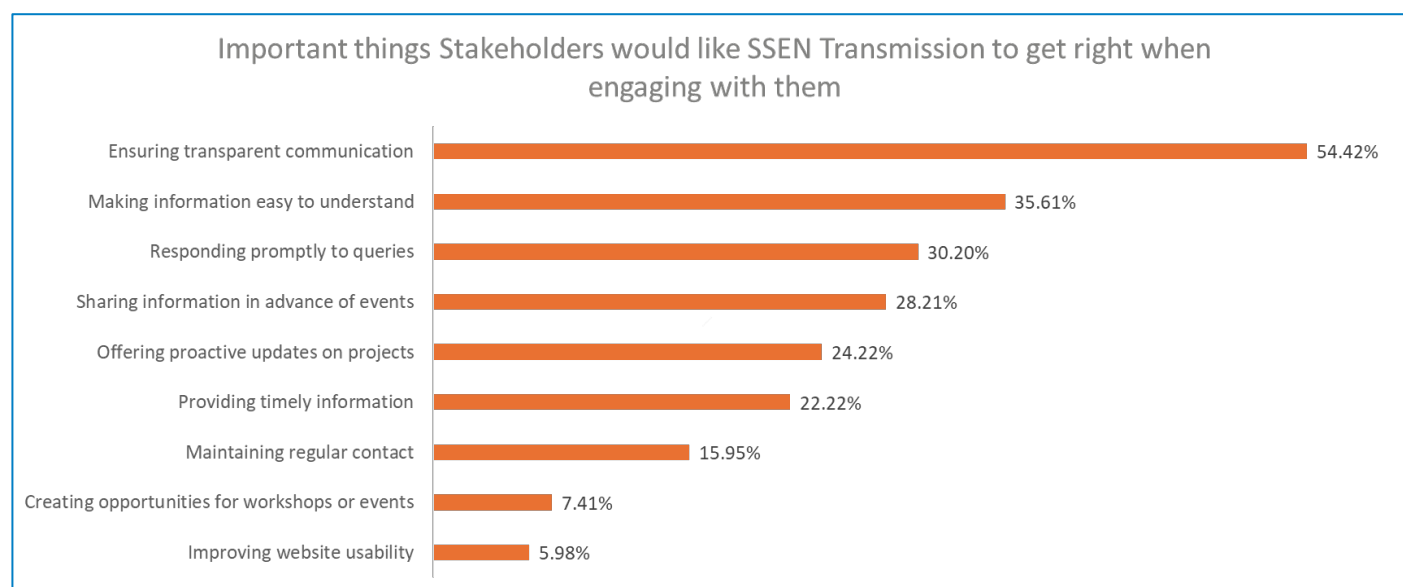


Figure 3- Q10b. What are the most important things you want SSEN Transmission to get right when engaging with you? Please select up to 3 responses from the list below (Base size:351)

When asked about **consultation events run by SSEN Transmission**, 90% of stakeholders said they have attended in person or virtually. This has increased from 72% from last year's survey. Among those who did not attend, the reasons cited included the consultation event timings, being unaware that the consultations were happening, and finding out about the event too late to be able to attend.

When asked about the **information available on SSEN Transmissions projects**, 48% of stakeholders found the information accessible, 32% found the information easy to find, and 25% found the information easy to understand.

**To improve accessibility**, stakeholders suggested: improving the website and making it easier to navigate, supplying clearer materials, and providing a comprehensive list of projects.

**To make information easier to find**, stakeholders suggested: making the website easier to navigate, issuing information directly to stakeholders, and developing accurate maps.



**To make information easier to understand**, stakeholders suggested: making information less technical, developing accurate maps, and producing shorter and clearer documents.

## 4.6 Qualitative feedback: SSENT website

Some stakeholders viewed SSEN Transmission's website as difficult to navigate, overly technical, and lacking in project-specific detail. While some acknowledged the value of having information available online, few relied on the website as their primary source of updates. Instead, it was often described as a back-up option, used only when other channels failed to provide answers.

### Website is not user-friendly

The most common criticism of the website was that it was not intuitive or easy to navigate. Stakeholders often struggled to find the information they needed, particularly if they were looking for updates on a specific project in their area. This issue was particularly challenging for less digitally confident users, or those unfamiliar with energy infrastructure terminology.

- *"I gave up after about five minutes. It wasn't obvious where anything was."* – Community member
- *"If you're not already familiar with how their site works, you'd never find what you're looking for."* – Community member

### Content is too technical and lacks plain English

Even when stakeholders managed to locate relevant pages, they often found the language difficult to interpret. Technical documents and planning jargon were frequently mentioned as barriers to understanding.

This was a concern especially for those wanting to understand the rationale behind decisions or the potential impact on their homes or communities.

- *"The documents are written for engineers, not residents. It's just not accessible."* – Landowner
- *"They need to explain things in plain English. Right now, you need a degree to make sense of it."* – Community member

### Lack of clear project summaries and visual tools

Several stakeholders said the website failed to provide the kind of clear, visual summaries that would help residents understand what was happening and why. Stakeholders wanted to see more maps, timelines, and visualisations — ideally interactive — rather than long PDF documents or generic updates. This indicates a desire for the website to support clarity and transparency, rather than acting as a document repository.

- *"It should have an overview of each project with a map, a timeline, and what's happening now. Not hidden in a 200-page report."* – Community council representative
- *"They had a great visual simulation at the event – why can't that be on the website too?"* – Community member

### Limited use as a communication tool

Although the website was sometimes used to verify information or look up contact details, very few stakeholders viewed it as a primary engagement tool. Instead, they suggested that the website could work better as a supporting channel rather than the main one. There was also interest in linking website content more closely with email communications, so that updates sent directly could point people to relevant pages or resources online.

- *"I'll check the website if I have to, but I'd rather get the information directly."* – Landowner

- *"It should be part of the mix, not the main thing. Most people I know never use it."* – Community member

## Suggestions for improvement

Stakeholders offered a range of ideas to improve the usefulness and usability of the website, including:

- Dedicated landing pages for each project with maps, summaries, FAQs, and updates
- Short, jargon-free explanations of project stages and decisions
- A live "what's happening now" section for construction updates
- Downloadable visuals, videos, and flyover simulations used at in-person events
  - Ability to search by postcode to find relevant affected areas
  - Higher resolution imaging to show impact in more detail
- Simple contact forms or direct links to named contacts for each project
  - *"It needs to be clean, visual, and simple. Like a dashboard where I can see what's going on near me."* – Community council representative

## Views on the website – key differences by proximity to project

Within 1 mile	<p>Stakeholders closest to the infrastructure were generally least satisfied with SSEN Transmission's website. Many said it was difficult to navigate, overly technical, and failed to provide the localised, practical information they needed. It was rarely used as a primary source of information and was often described as frustrating or inaccessible.</p> <p>This group strongly preferred direct communication and felt the website should support, not replace, more personal forms of engagement.</p>
Greater than 1 mile	<p>Stakeholders further away were more likely to use the website, particularly to check information or explore updates on their own terms. While they also noted that it could be improved, especially in terms of simplicity and project summaries, they were more tolerant of its limitations and more willing to engage digitally.</p> <p>This group offered constructive suggestions for improvement and were more likely to describe the site as useful in principle, despite requiring prior knowledge to navigate to relevant sections.</p>

- *"I've used the website a few times to check updates — it's helpful if you know what you're looking for."* – Community member living greater than one mile from nearest project
- *"I think it's actually not bad. The project pages are useful, and I liked the flyover animation they showed."* – Community member (greater than one mile from nearest project)

## 4.7 Preferred engagement

28% of stakeholders from the online survey said that **email** was their **preferred method of engagement**. The other most commonly mentioned methods of engagement for stakeholders included: face-to-face visits (19%) and town hall events (10%). Among those living less than 1 mile away, emails were the second most popular method of communication behind face to face visits.

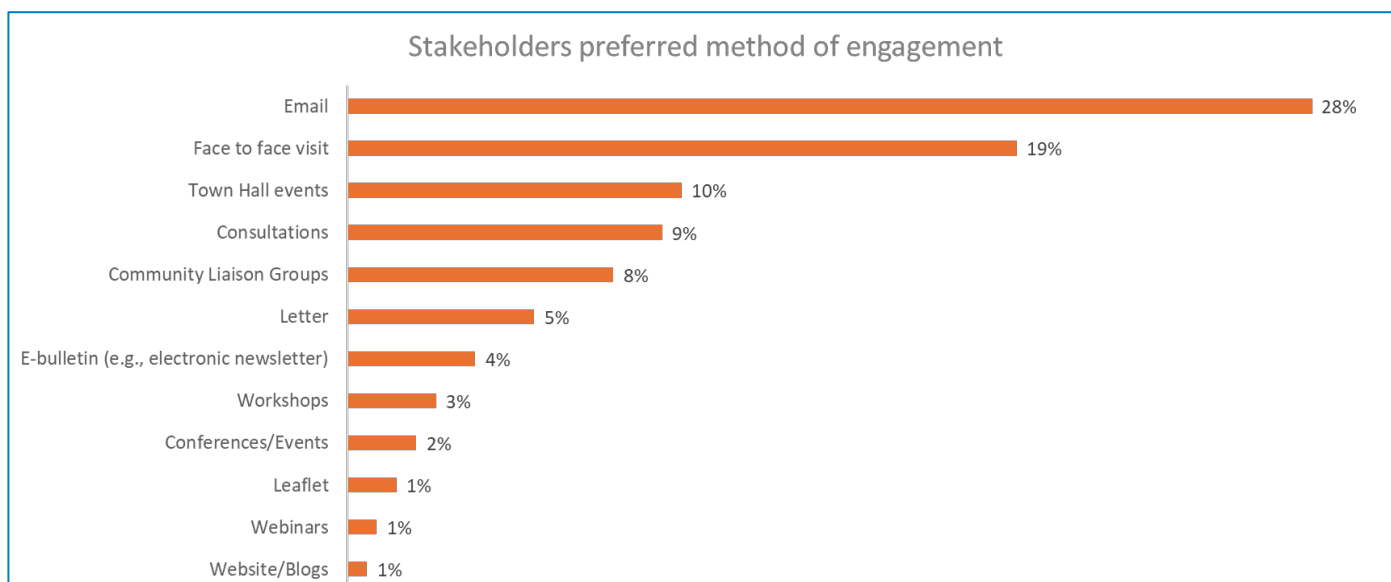


Figure 4- Q15. What is your preferred method for SSEN Transmission to engage with you? (Base size: 351)

When asked if they have any **comments on how SSEN Transmission currently informs stakeholders about its events and projects**, the most common answers included: emailing interested parties and advertising events on local radio stations, providing clearer communication as to why projects are happening, explaining how the projects impact people, and communicating to all households affected. Other stakeholders suggested listening to communities' concerns, and advertising in the local area via posters in shops, etc.

**Aspects of projects stakeholders would like to hear about from SSEN Transmissions regarding infrastructure projects** included: an explanation of the reasons for decisions and the community benefit, an explanation of the impact on the community and environment, provision of answers to questions raised at consultations, which weren't addressed at the moment, the planned route/reasons for taking this route, and providing a response to the community feelings.

- *"I would like them to respond to the community feelings and to consider alternative options which the local communities would support and prefer – e.g., underground cables - they refuse!"* – Community member
- *"The planned route and reasoning for taking this route (if it is contentious for stakeholders), including timescales for potential to move the route and what the constraining factors are."* – Land assembly
- *"Detail of their processes for choosing the technical solution they choose and the route over which that solution will run. Not just the high-level summary, we want to see how they have reached the decisions they have."* – Community councillor

When asked **how often stakeholders think SSEN Transmission should provide updates during the construction phase of projects**, 37% would require updates at least bi-weekly, followed by monthly updates at 28%.

## 4.8 Qualitative feedback: Expectations for the construction and delivery stage

Stakeholders expressed a strong desire for clear, ongoing, and locally relevant communication during the construction and delivery phase of SSEN Transmission's projects. Many described this stage as the most disruptive and sensitive yet felt that expectations for how SSEN would manage it were unclear or had not been addressed in prior engagements. There was concern that, once construction began, engagement would drop off just as the impact on communities increased.

### Anticipated disruption and concern about community impact

Stakeholders expected construction works to bring a range of disruptions, including noise, increased traffic, road closures, and visual and environmental impacts. Some also mentioned concerns about safety, access to land, or stress caused by works near their homes or businesses. This anticipation of disruption meant that communication during construction was seen as even more critical than during earlier planning phases.

- *“When the building starts, that’s when the real problems begin — dust, noise, roads being blocked. We need to know what’s coming.” – Landowner*
- *“We don’t want to be surprised. We want to know in advance if our fields are going to be dug up, or if heavy vehicles are coming through.” – Landowner*

### **Strong expectation for regular, practical updates**

Most stakeholders wanted frequent, predictable updates during construction. These updates should include what works were happening, where, when, and for how long, and cover operational information relevant to daily life, such as traffic management, timings of work, access issues, and contact points. Many said they would prefer direct updates, such as via email or letter, and not to rely on having to seek information out online.

There was also a desire for communication to feel accountable, with someone named and contactable to handle community concerns or issues during the delivery phase.

- *“There should be updates every fortnight once they start digging. It’s the only way people can plan their lives.” – Community member*
- *“Don’t dress it up. Just tell me when the road will close, and who I can call if there’s a problem.” – Landowner*
- *“If there’s a delay, say so. If something changes, tell us. Don’t sugarcoat it — just be honest.” – Community council representative*

### **Importance of visibility and responsiveness on the ground**

Some stakeholders said they wanted SSEN Transmission to maintain a physical presence in the area during construction, either through site visits, community liaison officers, or contact points that residents could access in person.

Where communities had experienced major infrastructure projects in the past, they stressed the importance of having visible, accessible personnel who could provide real-time updates and respond to issues quickly.

- *“There should be someone local to speak to if something goes wrong. Not just a number on a leaflet.” – Community member*

### **Need to maintain trust through this phase**

Several stakeholders expressed concern that engagement would drop off once planning was complete and construction began. They warned that this would damage trust and increase local frustration, especially if the works caused significant disruption.

- *“This is when you need to show up. If they disappear after planning, people will be furious.” – Community council representative*
- *“Engagement doesn’t end when the diggers arrive — that’s when it really starts.” – Community member*

### **Recommendations for managing disruption**

Some stakeholders also offered practical suggestions for managing disruption more effectively during construction. These included setting up a dedicated hotline for affected residents to report issues and introducing shuttle buses or minivans to reduce traffic from contractor vehicles on rural roads.

Other ideas included on-site traffic monitors, clear consequences for dangerous driving by contractors, and the use of local mapping support to help residents avoid damaging underground infrastructure in the future. These suggestions highlight a strong desire not just for information, but for active mitigation and responsiveness once construction begins.

- *“Have minibuses to get the workers up and down rather than dozens of vans tearing through single-track lanes.” – Community member*
- *“A hotline would help. People want to know who to call if something’s gone wrong.” – Community member*

#### Expectations for the construction and delivery stage – key differences by proximity to project

<i>Within 1 mile</i>	Stakeholders close to construction sites had clear and urgent expectations for how SSEN Transmission should communicate during the delivery phase. They wanted frequent, specific updates — at least fortnightly — covering things like road closures, noise, working hours, and land access. Many also expected a named, local contact to handle issues in real time.  This group saw construction as the most sensitive stage and feared SSEN would become less responsive once works were underway.
<i>Greater than 1 mile</i>	This group was generally less concerned about the delivery phase, though they still expected updates if works were happening nearby or affecting travel routes. Monthly or milestone-based contact was seen as sufficient. They focused more on transparency and consistency than frequency and were also more accepting of updates via email or the website, provided content was clear, localised, and timely.

## 4.9 Impact of recent projects

Stakeholders in the online survey were also asked questions about particular infrastructure projects that have affected them. 92% of stakeholders who took part in the survey said they have been impacted. Of these, 77% had been directly impacted, and 16% indirectly impacted<sup>1</sup>. Among those who had been impacted, the majority of stakeholders (98%) stated the impact upon them had been negative. The full breakdown of responses from those who have been affected by projects is given below.

<sup>1</sup> Definition of directly impacted and indirectly impacted:

- Directly impacted was defined in the online survey as: Someone directly impacted might be a community member, a landowner or a local business affected by our infrastructure works due to road closures, proximity to a substation or towers for overhead lines, access to private land, environmental concerns, noise, etc.
- Indirectly impacted was defined in the online survey as: The stakeholder might not be directly impacted but will likely be indirectly impacted in some way, even if this is a very low impact. Stakeholders that are indirectly impacted but could be an elected member who has seen an influx of constituent complaints being emailed, a land agent acting on behalf of an owner, a supplier, or a local business somewhere on the supply chain. These might also be secondary impacts from stakeholder who are directly impacted such as the supply chain, local charities and third sector organisations.

# Impact of new projects

The effect projects have had on stakeholders and/ or the organisation/ customers they represent among stakeholders who have been impacted by projects

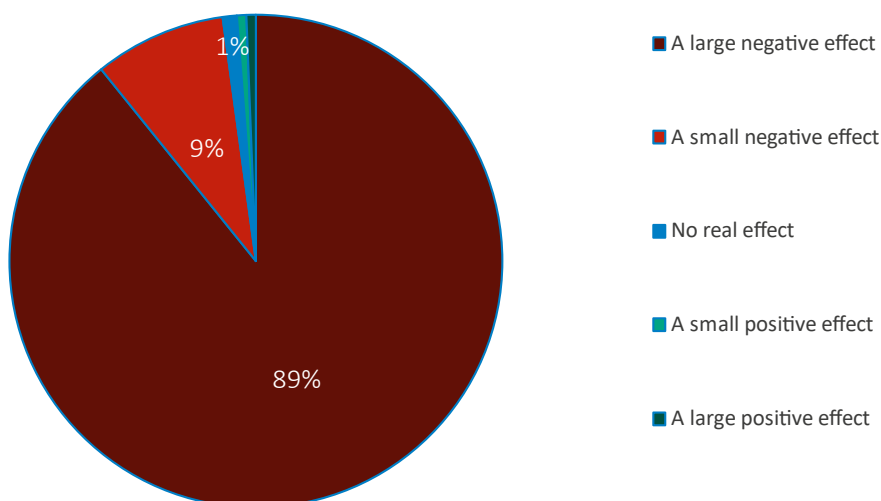


Figure 5- Q21. How much of an effect does the project have on you or your organisation/the customers that you represent? (Base size: 324)

When asked to describe how they had been impacted, stakeholders in the online survey gave a variety of reasons, but the most common reasons mentioned included: an expected reduction in the value of their home, the visual impact of the project, the impact on the local environment and/or wildlife, additional stresses/ mental health concerns, and extra traffic on the roads.

Stakeholders who were impacted by projects were also asked about the location of the projects being completed, in relation to where they lived. Most stakeholders (67%) live less than 1 mile from the project's location, with a further 20% living between 1 and 3 miles away. Additionally, a further 6% lived 4-5 miles away, 3% lived 6-10 miles away, 2% lived 11-19 miles away, and 1% lived 20+ miles away.

Only 13% of stakeholders felt that engagement with the SSEN Transmission project team has helped reduce the project's impact on the local community. Stakeholders' ideas for how this could be improved included more frequent consultations and progress reports, full transparency, listening to the community's views, consideration of environmentally friendly options, and providing accurate descriptions of the projects and their impacts.

## 4.9.1 Qualitative feedback: Impact of recent projects

Stakeholders reported a wide range of personal, community, environmental, and emotional impacts from SSEN Transmission projects. While a small number of participants acknowledged broader strategic benefits, the overwhelming tone was of concern, particularly among those living close to infrastructure or landowners directly affected by construction. For many, the impact of projects was deeply felt and personal, touching on quality of life, property, environment, and community cohesion. Note: Of the stakeholders who took part in the follow-up interviews, 78% lived less than one mile from a project.

### Emotional and quality-of-life impacts

Many stakeholders described a sense of ongoing stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion linked to the uncertainty and perceived scale of the projects. This was particularly true for those who expected pylons or substations to be



built close to their homes. Several participants described feeling ignored or dismissed, which compounded the emotional impact of the projects.

- *“It’s the not knowing — where the lines are going, how close, whether we’ll be able to sell our house. It’s incredibly stressful.”* – Community member
- *“People are losing sleep. It’s not just inconvenience — it’s the emotional toll of feeling powerless in your own home.”* – Community member

### Property and land value concerns

One of the most frequently cited concerns was the anticipated loss of property value, particularly for homes and farmland located near new infrastructure. Stakeholders believed this risk was not being adequately acknowledged or addressed by SSEN Transmission.

There was also frustration at the perceived lack of compensation or mitigation for these losses, especially when stakeholders felt they had no influence over the project. There were several reports of a perceived lack of empathy from SSEN Transmission employees in this regard, such as vocalised scepticism around the impact on house prices.

- *“We’ve been told the pylons will be within sight of our kitchen window. Who’s going to buy our house now?”* – Landowner
- *“Nobody wants to live next to a substation. It’s going to halve the value of our land and ruin our retirement plans.”* – Landowner

### Environmental and visual impact

Participants raised strong concerns about landscape change, visual intrusion, and damage to local biodiversity. Many expressed pride in their local environment and felt that the infrastructure threatened the character of their area.

Some also highlighted potential risks to wildlife, watercourses, and protected habitats, and questioned whether enough environmental assessments had been done or shared transparently.

- *“We live in a beautiful part of the country — this will change the view forever.”* – Community member
- *“It’s not just pylons, it’s access roads, compounds, fences. It scars the land.”* – Community member

### Community division and loss of cohesion

In some cases, the projects were seen to cause division and tension within communities, particularly between those directly affected and those who were more supportive or disengaged. A few stakeholders described local debates as becoming polarised and emotionally charged. The projects were often seen as a long-term impact that extended beyond construction and could affect social trust and cohesion, with suggestions this point was not appreciated in current SSEN Transmission engagement approaches.

- *“It’s split the village. Some people want to fight it, others think there’s no point. There’s a lot of resentment building.”* – Community council representative

### Practical disruption

Although many projects were still in planning or early construction stages, stakeholders anticipated and, in some cases, had already experienced practical disruptions such as road closures, restricted access to land, increased traffic, and noise. These impacts were particularly concerning for farmers and landowners.

Some called for clearer communication and stronger working relationships with contractors to minimise these types of impacts.

- *“They’ve already started surveying on our land. Fences down, gates left open — it’s not respectful.”* – Landowner
- *“When construction begins, it’ll mean rerouting cattle and losing access to parts of the farm for months.”* – Landowner

### Road safety and driver conduct

Several stakeholders expressed concern about unsafe and aggressive driving by contractors, particularly on rural and single-track roads. They reported experiences ranging from speeding and road intimidation to near-misses and collisions. In some cases, community members were forced off the road or into ditches.

Stakeholders called for stronger action from SSEN and its contractors, including visible vehicle numbers, a local reporting hotline, and clear disciplinary consequences for dangerous behaviour. Many noted that contractor conduct is a reflection of SSEN, and that failure to enforce safe standards damages trust.

- *“They would just sit in the middle of the road and come straight at you.”* – Community member
- *“They weren’t speeding, because legally it is a 60 mile an hour road, but it’s still a single track farm road... it was unsafe.”* – Community member

### Failure to notify and protect landowners

Farmers and landowners expressed frustration at contractors entering land without proper notice or permissions, obstructing access routes, and failing to observe biosecurity measures. These incidents included trackways being blocked, fields being crossed unannounced, not filling out and inadequate disinfection of boots, machinery, and tyres between sites, as well as engaging in heavy works during pivotal times such as lambing season.

Several called for clearer protocols and enforcement, and for early, direct consultation with farmers before project works begin. At minimum, farmers required at least 48 hours prior warning before their land was accessed.

- *“They need to adhere very tightly to biosecurity... boots, tyres, even overalls should be cleaned and disinfected before entering our land.”* – Landowner
- *“We were supposed to get these forms to fill in — basically to agree where they could go and when. But they never came. Then they just turned up one morning with diggers.”* – Landowner

### Impact of projects – key differences by proximity to project

<i>Within 1 mile</i>	<p>Stakeholders living nearest to the infrastructure reported the greatest personal, emotional, and financial impacts. They described stress, anxiety, and in some cases an inability to sell or enjoy their homes due to the proximity of pylons, substations, or construction access.</p> <p>Other common impacts included loss of land use, visual intrusion, and decreased property values. Several stakeholders in this group felt ignored or dismissed when raising these concerns with SSEN Transmission.</p>
<i>Greater than 1 mile</i>	<p>This group reported far fewer direct impacts, and where concerns were raised, they tended to relate to broader community or environmental effects, such as visual impact on the landscape, road congestion, or potential biodiversity loss.</p> <p>While some did express concerns, especially in scenic or tourism-driven areas, their feedback tended to be less emotionally charged and more focused on fairness, transparency, and long-term impacts.</p>

## 4.10 Sponsorship activities

29% of stakeholders were aware of SSEN Transmissions sponsorship activities. When asked for level of agreement with the statement 'SSEN Transmission's sponsorship activities positively affect communities', only 6% of stakeholders agreed, 58% disagreed and 36% stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

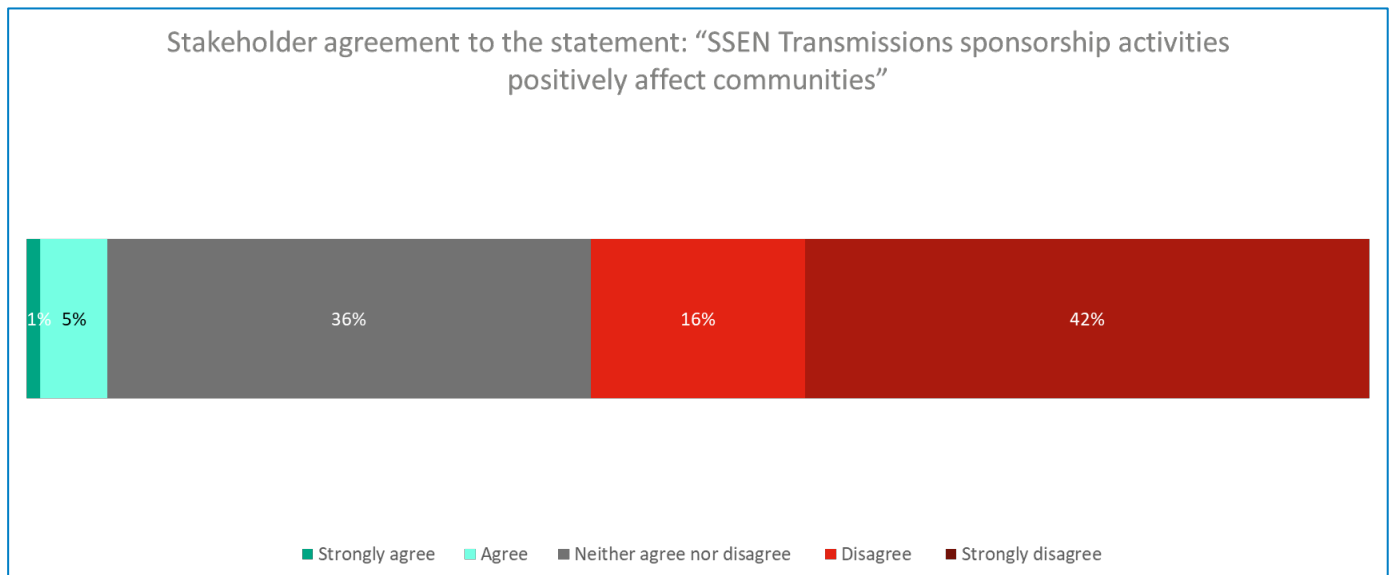


Figure 6- Q32. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "SSEN Transmission's sponsorship activities positively affect communities. (Base size: 351)

When asked **how SSEN Transmissions sponsorship activities could benefit local communities and raise awareness of their work in the North of Scotland**, suggestions from stakeholders included improving local infrastructure, and putting money back into the local community. There were, however, many negative opinions from stakeholders surrounding sponsorship due to it being portrayed as bribery to the local community.

- "I think sponsorship is fine but hides the real issue... you can't reduce the price if someone's house and hope to make it right by donating to charity."- Community member/ resident
- "It is nothing more than bribery. .if there was no project on going then SSEN wouldn't be interested in supporting local projects. The only reason they 'sponsor' things is to try and make their plans more palatable. It doesn't wash with me." – Community member/ resident

### 4.10.1 Qualitative feedback: Sponsorship activities

Stakeholder views on SSEN Transmission's sponsorship activities were largely negative or ambivalent. While a few acknowledged the potential for community benefit, most questioned the motives, timing, and perceived fairness of sponsorship efforts. There was a widespread belief that sponsorship was being used as a public relations tactic rather than a sincere gesture of community support, particularly in the context of wider dissatisfaction with the projects themselves.

#### Perception of sponsorship as a strategic tool, not genuine support

Many stakeholders interpreted sponsorship activities as an attempt to soften local opposition or buy community goodwill, especially when offered during periods of heightened tension about planned infrastructure.

For these stakeholders, the timing and framing of sponsorship undermined its perceived sincerity, particularly when engagement was poor or impact from projects was considered significant.

- *"It is nothing more than bribery... if there was no project going on, then SSEN wouldn't be interested in supporting local projects."* – Community council representative
- *"They try to make it more palatable by giving a grant to the local hall or something. It's insulting."* – Landowner

### **Lack of transparency in how sponsorship is allocated**

Several participants said they were unaware of any sponsorship activity in their area, or were unclear about how funds were allocated and who could apply. This led to perceptions that sponsorship was unevenly or opaquely distributed, benefitting some communities while others were overlooked.

There was a general feeling that, if sponsorship is to continue, it should be supported by clear criteria, fair access, and better promotion.

- *"We didn't hear about any money for our community. How do they decide who gets it?"* – Community member
- *"There's no transparency. Some places get funding and others don't. It doesn't seem fair."* – Community member

### **Sponsorship does not off-set negative project impacts**

Even where stakeholders recognised the potential for sponsorship to fund local amenities or support events, most were clear that it did not compensate for the disruption or perceived harm caused by major infrastructure projects.

In this sense, sponsorship was often seen as tokenistic, and did not address the core issues of fairness, compensation, or meaningful involvement in decision-making.

- *"You can't reduce the price of someone's house and make it right by donating to a charity."* – Community member
- *"A few thousand pounds to the community doesn't change the fact that people's land is being torn up."* – Landowner

### **Some cautious support for the principle of community benefit**

Despite widespread scepticism, a small number of stakeholders said they supported the idea of community investment in principle, if it was done well and independently of specific projects.

These participants emphasised that any future sponsorship efforts should be long-term, transparent, and, above all, decided by the community.

- *"If it's real funding for things that matter to the community — not tied to whether we accept a substation — then yes, it could help."* – Community council representative
- *"Don't use sponsorship as a sweetener. If you want to support the community, do it properly and do it for the long term."* – Community member

### **Suggestions for improvement**

Stakeholders proposed the following improvements if SSEN Transmission continues to deliver sponsorship or community benefit schemes:

- Decouple sponsorship from controversial planning decisions or specific consultations
- Publicise sponsorship opportunities more widely and transparently

- Use independent panels or local representatives to decide how funds are allocated
- Focus on long-term investment in infrastructure, environmental improvement, or skills
- Communicate clearly how sponsored activities fit into SSEN's wider responsibilities

#### **Sponsorship – key differences by proximity to project**

<i>Within 1 mile</i>	<p>Stakeholders living closest to infrastructure were highly critical of sponsorship activities, viewing them as a superficial attempt to pacify opposition. For many, the perceived harm caused by the project, including property value loss and disruption, made sponsorship feel disingenuous.</p> <p>These respondents felt that no amount of community funding could offset what they saw as permanent and uncompensated personal impact.</p>
<i>Greater than 1 mile</i>	<p>Stakeholders further away from infrastructure tended to express more balanced or open views toward sponsorship. While some questioned how sponsorship was distributed, they were less likely to see it as a cover-up or insult. Instead, they saw potential in community benefit if it was well-communicated, transparent, and long-term in focus.</p> <p>This group was also more receptive to campaigns or educational initiatives linked to sponsorship, although they stressed that it must be separate from planning consent and locally led.</p>

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1 Key conclusions

**Stakeholders closest to projects continue to report the lowest satisfaction.**

Those within 1 mile of infrastructure expressed strong dissatisfaction, frustration, and emotional fatigue. They described the engagement process as impersonal and inflexible, and reported feeling powerless in decisions that affect their daily lives. In contrast, those further away were more balanced in their views and generally more open to compromise.

**Engagement is still seen as a process of being informed, not involved.**

Many stakeholders said consultations were presentations rather than conversations. Several felt that their feedback made no difference and described engagement as a tick-box exercise. Where two-way dialogue and follow-up were provided, satisfaction was notably higher.

**Transparency and responsiveness are still lacking.**

Stakeholders frequently reported that they did not understand how decisions were made or how their feedback had been used. The absence of clear explanations, especially around route and design decisions, fed a wider perception of opacity.

**The way decisions are communicated matters as much as the decisions themselves.**

Participants felt that announcements lacked context or empathy. Simply stating a decision without explaining its rationale, trade-offs, or implications was seen as dismissive and alienating.

**The construction phase is seen as highly disruptive and inadequately supported.**

Stakeholders expressed concern that communication drops off once construction begins. They want regular updates, site-specific information, and access to someone who can help with issues as they arise.

**Road safety and property access are key concerns for nearby residents.**

Stakeholders living closest to infrastructure report that contractors drive aggressively on rural roads, damage verges, and fail to respect local access routes. They said this behaviour created both physical danger and a sense that their homes and communities were not being treated with respect.

**Some landowners and farmers are concerned about how their lands will be used during delivery.**

Several reported contractors accessing land without notice, failing to complete required paperwork, and breaching biosecurity standards. They felt overlooked despite being among the most directly affected.

**Digitally disengaged groups are often missed.**

Many stakeholders, particularly in rural or older communities, said they, or their neighbours, were not reached by online engagement. They suggested SSEN should go to where people already gather, like community halls and lunch clubs.

**Sponsorship is often misunderstood or mistrusted.**

Many stakeholders saw community funding as a PR gesture and an unwise allocation of funds, especially when more serious concerns were unresolved. Others were more receptive, but stressed that funding should be transparent, locally led, and independent of planning influence.



## 5.2 Recommendations

### **Make engagement a genuine two-way process**

- Involve communities early, before key decisions are made
- Show clearly how feedback has influenced outcomes
- Prioritise smaller, local, interactive formats where possible
- Engage in one-on-one consultative visits to the properties of residents strongly affected
- Provide consistent local contacts to build trust over time
- Consistently and reliably follow up with individuals who raise issues

### **Be transparent about decisions, costs, and long-term plans**

- Clearly explain how decisions were made and what alternatives were considered
- Share cost comparisons where relevant, including non-financial impacts
- Outline the expected future trajectory of infrastructure development
- Avoid contradictory messaging between staff, events, and documents

### **Improve communication and support during construction**

- Provide practical updates at least fortnightly for those within 1 mile
- Share clear information on disruptions, access issues, and timings
- Offer a hotline or dedicated contact for resolving urgent issues
- Explore practical mitigations such as shuttle buses, traffic stewards, or temporary screening

### **Engage directly and respectfully with landowners and farmers**

- Give adequate notice before entering land and complete all required documentation in advance
- Follow biosecurity protocols rigorously and consistently
- Respect operational access and seasonal agricultural/work patterns
- Involve landowners and agents early when planning routes and access logistics

### **Adapt methods to reach digitally disengaged communities**

- Attend trusted social spaces like lunch clubs, community halls, or village cafés
- Use printed materials and direct outreach where digital access is limited
- Simplify digital materials and promote them as support tools, not replacements for personal contact

### **Reposition sponsorship as independent community investment**

- Ensure sponsorship is transparent, community-led, and independent of planning engagement

- Improve visibility and fairness in how funds are allocated
- Let communities lead decisions on local priorities
- Avoid framing sponsorship as compensation for disruption or as a substitute for good engagement

## 6 Appendix

### 6.1 Appendix 1: Online survey questionnaire

1653 SSEN ISES 2025 questionnaire	ONLINE SCRIPT FINAL 07/02/2025	Chris Ralph Monika Swift Emma Gray
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--

[INFO](#) [SHOW ALL](#)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey.

We are conducting market research on behalf of **SSEN Transmission**.

SSEN Transmission is responsible for maintaining and investing in high-voltage electricity transmission networks in the North of Scotland. SSEN Transmission's network comprises over 4,800km of high-voltage overhead lines and underground cables. They serve around 70% of the landmass of Scotland, transporting high-voltage electricity from where it's generated to areas of demand. SSEN Transmission is part of the SSE Group, which includes their other network business, SSEN Distribution, who maintain the lower voltage network that supplies electricity directly to homes and businesses in the North of Scotland. You may have spoken to them if you have experienced a power outage or damage to the network during a storm. This survey will focus only on **your experience engaging with SSEN Transmission**.

In a rapidly changing industry, one challenge ~~they~~ SSEN Transmission face is meeting the industry's future needs and energy consumers. Effective decision-making relies on people's input from outside their business to ensure they meet expectations.

This research is **about your experience of how SSEN Transmission engaged with you when they were developing or constructing infrastructure projects** that affected you, your community, or your organisation. SSEN is a stakeholder-led business, and we always strive to maintain high-quality standards in our stakeholder engagement processes across the Transmission business. By completing this short anonymous survey, you will be helping SSEN continuously improve and offer the highest quality of service to our customers, communities, and wider society.

Depending on your answers, it should take no more than **to 20 minutes to complete this survey, depending on your answers**.

**The survey will close on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at midnight.**

This is a genuine market research study; no sales call will result from our contact with you. The interview will be carried out strictly per the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct and GDPR.

If you require any further information about how we store and use the data you provide, please see our privacy policy on our website: <https://www.impactmr.com/privacy-statement-research>

If you have any questions, you can contact Impact Research Ltd on 01932 226 793 and ask for a member of the Utilities team. You may also confirm our credentials by contacting the Market Research Society on 0800 975 9596.

Monika.swift@Impactmr.com

Impact Research Ltd, 3 The Quintet, Churchfield Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 2TZ

Office: +44 (0) 1932 226 793

## INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

### SHOW ALL

First, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

### O ASK ALL

#### VALIDATION: 3-4 CHARACTERS + SPACE + 1 LETTER

**Q1** This survey is anonymous. However, we would like to ask for your postcode sector so we can attach or associate your feedback with the project that directly affects you.

Please enter your postcode sector in the box below. Your postcode sector is the first half, plus the first letter of the second half. E.g., if your full postcode is AB12 3DE, the postcode sector would be AB12 3.

### M ASK ALL

#### RANDOMISE 1-10

**Q1b** And which SSEN projects have you been affected by or involved with?  
If you have been affected by multiple projects, please select all that apply.

1. New Beaulay Area Substation (Fanellan)
2. Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection
3. Beaulay to Denny Upgrade
4. Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaulay 400kV Connection
5. Beaulay to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project
6. Spittal Substation (Banniskirk Hub)
7. Loch Buidhe Substation (Carnaig)
8. Blackhillock 2 Substation (Coachford)
9. Netherton Hub (Longside)
10. New Deer 2 Substation (Greens)
11. Emmock Substation
12. Hurlie Substation
13. Cambushinnie Substation
14. Bingally Substation
15. Other (please specify)
16. Don't know

### S ASK ALL

**Q2** From the list below, which of the following best describes your role in terms of any contact you have with SSEN Transmission?

1. Academia/Innovation
2. Community member
3. Consumer Groups/ Special interest groups
4. Contractors /consultants
5. Developers
6. Environment
7. Government
8. Housing associations
9. Industry Partner or trade body
10. Land Assembly (e.g., landowner, land agent)
11. Local Authorities / councillors
12. NGO (non-government organisation)

13. Statutory Consultee
14. Supply Chain
15. Transmission Operator
16. Other (please specify)

**S** **ASK ALL**

**CLOSE IF CODE 4 SELECTED**

**Q3** Before today, had you previously heard of SSEN Transmission?

As a reminder, SSEN Transmission is responsible for transporting high-voltage electricity across the North of Scotland and remote islands. It moves power from generation sites, including renewable energy sources, along pylons to Grid Supply Points, where the voltage is reduced before being passed to SSEN Distribution. SSEN Distribution then delivers electricity to homes and businesses.

For this survey, we're only interested in your knowledge and opinions about SSEN Transmission—that's the high-voltage part of the network, not the distribution system or the electricity supplier you pay your bill to.

1. Yes – and have good knowledge about them
2. Yes – and have some knowledge about them
3. Yes – but I have little knowledge about them
4. No – never heard of them/don't know anything about them **CLOSE**

**M** **ASK ALL**

**ROTATE ORDER 1-14, 14-1**

**Q4** From your perspective, what do you think SSEN Transmission could do to promote a better understanding of its role? Please select all that apply from the list below.

1. Be available for meetings, more one to ones
2. Be more open/transparent relating to contracts, procedures, and policy
3. Be more sustainable
4. Be upfront/proactive about informing stakeholders about connection delays and other project issues
5. More consultation/communication/contact/seminars/Trade fairs etc.
6. Prioritise environmental Impact
7. Prioritise Health and Safety / safe working practise
8. Provide a list of future projects and dates
9. Show more interest in non-SSEN companies
10. Speed up delivery of projects/access to the network
11. Stronger presence online
12. Stronger presence on social media
13. Stronger presence in print media
14. Stronger presence on television
15. Don't know/nothing
16. Other (please specify)

**S** **ASK ALL**

**Q5** When did you last have contact with SSEN Transmission? This could be messages they have sent you about their work (not including about this research), consultations you've been involved with, or when you have contacted them about a project or query.

1. Within the last week
2. Within the last month
3. Within the last 3 months
4. Within the last 6 months
5. Within the last year
6. More than a year ago
7. I have not had contact with SSEN Transmission

8. Don't know

**S** ASK IF Q5=1-5

**Q6** In the last 12 months how many times have you had contact with SSEN Transmission or have they contacted or sent something to you?

1. Once
2. Twice
3. Three or more times
4. Don't know / can't remember

**S** ASK ALL

**Q8** As a stakeholder of SSEN Transmission, how satisfied are you with your overall engagement with SSEN Transmission on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is very dissatisfied, and 10 is very satisfied?

Very Dissatisfied									Very Satisfied	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	98

**O** ASK IF Q8=1-9

**Q17** How could this be improved? Please type in.

**IF Q18=1-6, SHOW:**

"That's a shame to hear you are not satisfied overall. You can contact SSEN to update your contact preferences and how they engage with you."

**IF Q18=7-10, SHOW:**

"That's great to hear you are satisfied overall. Don't forget, if you want to change the way you engage with SSEN you can contact them and update your preferences any time."

**INFRASTRUCTURE QUESTIONS – OVERALL**

An important part of SSEN Transmission's relationship with stakeholders is how SSEN Transmission engage with them when developing or constructing infrastructure projects. In practice, this includes phone calls, emails, community consultation events, newsletters, website updates, social media, and face-to-face visits.

**M** ASK ALL  
RANDOMISE 1-3

**Q9** At which, if any, of the following stages of a local project have you been engaged by SSEN Transmission?  
If SSEN Transmission engaged with you at more than one stage, please select all that apply.

1. Planning / Development
2. Construction / Delivery
3. Post-completion
4. They have engaged with me, but I don't know at which stage (EXCLUSIVE SINGLE CODE)
5. None of the above – they have not engaged with me about a local project (EXCLUSIVE SINGLE CODE)

**M** ASK IF Q9=1-4  
ROTATE 1-17, 17-1

**Q10** In what ways has SSEN Transmission engaged with you during any stages of a local project? Please select all that apply.

1. Letter



2. Leaflet
3. Email
4. E-bulletin (e.g., electronic newsletter)
5. Telephone call
6. Face to face visit
7. Social media message
8. Webinars
9. Insight Reports
10. Local Press
11. Consultation event
12. Town Hall events
13. Workshops
14. Community Liaison Groups
15. Surveys
16. Conferences/Events
17. Website/Blogs
18. Other (please specify)

**M**      **ASK IF Q9=1-4**

**Q10A**    **How did SSEN Transmission engage with you?**

1. Directly
2. At public events
3. Other (Please specify)

**M**      **ASK ALL**

**RANDOMISE 1-9**

**PLEASE SELECT UP TO 3**

**Q10B**    **What are the most important things you want SSEN Transmission to get right when engaging with you? Please select up to 3 responses from the list below.**

1. Providing timely information
2. Ensuring transparent communication
3. Making information easy to understand
4. Offering proactive updates on projects
5. Responding promptly to queries
6. Creating opportunities for workshops or events
7. Maintaining regular contact
8. Sharing information in advance of events
9. Improving website usability
10. Other (Please specify)      **FIXED**

**M**      **ASK ALL**

**RANDOMISE 1-12**

**Q10C**    **What materials would be beneficial to have available before SSEN Transmission's public events?**

1. Event Agenda – A detailed schedule outlining topics to be covered and key speakers.
2. Project Overview Documents – Summaries of ongoing or upcoming projects, objectives, and timelines.
3. Maps and Visuals – Detailed maps or diagrams showing project locations, affected areas, and infrastructure.
4. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Answers to common concerns or questions about the project or event.
5. Stakeholder Briefing Pack – A document with project updates, challenges, and opportunities.
6. Contact Information – Details on how to reach project teams for questions or follow-up discussions.
7. Feedback Forms – Pre-event surveys or forms to gather input before the event.
8. Case Studies or Success Stories – Examples of previous successful projects.

9. Technical Information – Data sheets, environmental impact assessments, or reports for those interested in technical details.
10. Videos or Interactive Content – Engaging tools or videos explaining complex aspects of projects.
11. Other (Please specify) **FIXED**

**S** **ASK ALL**

**Q11** SSEN Transmission often consults at different stages of its projects. Have you taken part in any of the consultation events, either in person or virtually?

1. Yes
2. No

**O** **ASK IF Q11=2**

**Q12** Is there a reason why not?

--

**G – SINGLE PER ROW** **ASK ALL**

**Q13** Do you think the information available on SSEN Transmission's projects is accessible and easy to find and understand? Please provide an answer for each measure.

	Yes	No
A. Accessible	1	2
B. Easy to find	1	2
C. Easy to understand	1	2

**O** **ASK IF Q13=2 'NO' FOR AT LEAST ONE ITEM A,B,C**

**Q14** What could SSEN Transmission do to improve this?

Accessibility suggestions for improvements:
Easy to find suggestions for improvements:
Easy to understand suggestions for improvements:

**S** **ASK ALL**

**ROTATE ORDER 1-17, 17-1**

**Q15** What is your preferred method for SSEN Transmission to engage with you?

1. Letter
2. Leaflet
3. Email
4. E-bulletin (e.g., electronic newsletter)
5. Telephone call
6. Face to face visit
7. Social media message
8. Webinars
9. Insight Reports
10. Local Press
11. Consultations
12. Town Hall events
13. Workshops
14. Community Liaison Groups
15. Surveys
16. Conferences/Events
17. Website/Blogs

18. Other (please specify)

O ASK ALL

Q15a Do you have any comments on how SSEN Transmission currently informs stakeholders about their events and projects?

They currently:

- Send postcard invitations to properties within 5-10km of projects
- Place adverts in local newspapers
- Engage with local community councils
- Use social media platforms

What additional methods or approaches could SSEN Transmission use to ensure more people know about their projects and events? Please type in.

O ASK ALL

Q15b What specific aspects of the project would you like to hear about from SSEN Transmission regarding infrastructure projects? Please type in.

S ASK ALL

Q15c How often do you think SSEN Transmission should provide updates during the construction phase of projects to ensure effective communication?

1. Weekly updates
2. Biweekly updates
3. Monthly updates
4. Quarterly updates
5. Updates only at key milestones
6. As needed, depending on the project's progress
7. Other (please specify)

## INFRASTRUCTURE QUESTIONS – PROJECT SPECIFIC

SSEN Transmission's work can be very complex and affect communities in various ways, depending on many contributing factors. This can lead to stakeholders and communities being impacted both positively and negatively throughout a project's lifetime. It is important for us to understand the positive and negative impacts of our infrastructure work upon our stakeholders and communities.

S ASK ALL

ROTATE ORDER 1-3, 3-1

Q19 Have you been impacted by an SSEN Transmission's infrastructure project?

Note: impact could be positive or negative, not just negative.

1. Yes, directly impacted - *Someone directly impacted might be a community member, a landowner or a local business affected by our infrastructure works due to road closures, proximity to a substation or towers for overhead lines, access to private land, environmental concerns, noise, etc.*
2. Yes, indirectly impacted - *The stakeholder might not be directly impacted but will likely be indirectly impacted in some way, even if this is a very low impact. Stakeholders that are indirectly impacted but could be an elected member who has seen an influx of constituent complaints being emailed, a land agent acting on behalf of an owner, a supplier, or a*

*local business somewhere on the supply chain. These might also be secondary impacts from stakeholder who are directly impacted such as the supply chain, local charities and third sector organisations.*

3. No

**S** ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

**Q20** How close are you located to the SSEN Transmission project?

1. Less than 1 mile
2. 1-3 miles
3. 4-5 miles
4. 6-10 miles
5. 11-19 miles
6. 20 miles +

**S** ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

**Q21** How much of an effect does the project have on you or your organisation/the customers that you represent?

1. A large negative effect
2. A small negative effect
3. No real effect
4. A small positive effect
5. A large positive effect

**O** ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

**Q22** Please describe how you have been impacted? Please explain both the positive and negative impacts, if applicable.

**S** ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

**Q24** Has the engagement with the SSEN Transmission Project Team helped reduce the impact the project has had on you/your community?

Please consider the following:

- How would the project have impacted you if there was no engagement?
- Additional support was provided, i.e., info on the project sent out, phone calls, questions answered, community liaison staff being easy to contact, ongoing support to handle issues when projects are in construction, etc.
- Even if the outcome of a project route or location wasn't the outcome you wanted, did the engagement from SSEN staff (either in development or construction) provide the context and understanding or support to reduce the direct impact on them/their community?

1. Yes
2. No

**O** ASK IF Q24=1

**Q25** Please describe how it could be improved. Please type in.

**O** ASK ALL

**Q28** Is there anything not covered during today's survey that you would have liked to have seen SSEN Transmission do differently while the project is ongoing? Please, in your own words, describe what this is.

**S** **ASK ALL**

**Q31** Are you aware of any SSEN Transmission's sponsorship activities? These include sponsoring the Stonehaven Highland Games, Aberdeen Science Centre, the Prosper Housing Challenge Conference, the Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce Awards, and the 2024 Green Energy Awards.

1. Yes
2. No

**S** **ASK ALL**

**Q32** To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "SSEN Transmission's sponsorship activities positively affect communities."

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

**O** **ASK ALL**

**Q33** In what ways do you think SSEN Transmission's sponsorship activities could benefit local communities and raise awareness of their work in the North of Scotland?

**S** **ASK ALL**

**Q29** Impact Research and SSEN Transmission want to invite stakeholders who have completed the survey to an in-depth interview with our moderator. The interview will be conducted through a Zoom video call, likely towards the end of February 2025 and will last up to 15 minutes.

The session will draw from people's experiences, identify key improvements to our stakeholder engagement, and allow for more detailed feedback and discussion around key findings from the telephone surveys.

Each participant will be incentivised £50 after completing their interview. If you cannot accept incentives, the amount will be donated to a charity.

Would you be interested in participating in the follow-up call?

1. Yes
2. No

**OE** **ASK IF Q29=1 'YES'**

Great! We appreciate your interest in the follow-up interview. A selection of participants will be chosen at random by Impact to take part in these interviews.

You will receive a call or email from Monika Swift or Emma Gray from Impact Research to schedule your interview. Please keep an eye on your inbox and look for the subject line 'SSEN Transmission survey'.

Please provide your contact details in the boxes below:

First name:
Telephone number:
Email address:

Here is a reminder of our privacy policy: <https://www.impactmr.com/privacy-statement-research>

## WRAP-UP QUESTIONS

**INFO** We are very interested in hearing your views on our survey design.

**G** **ASK ALL**

**D1** Using the rating please let us know how you would rate each of the following:

	1 Very Bad	2	3	4	5 Very Good
Length of survey					
Ease of completion					
Ability to express my true opinion					
Overall experience					

**S** **ASK ALL**

**D2** Have you experienced any technical difficulties while taking the survey?

1. No
2. Yes (Please specify)

### CLOSING MESSAGE INFO

Thank you so much for taking part in our survey. We appreciate your honest feedback, and I'll be sure to send it to SSEN, who will review the findings and continue to make improvements. The results will be published, and a copy of the report will be circulated to those who took part in the survey.

You can now close the browser.

### SCREENING MESSAGE INFO

Thank you so much for taking part in our survey. Unfortunately, you have indicated that you have never heard of SSEN Transmissions, which means that the rest of the questionnaire is not relevant to you.

Thanks again, you can now close the browser.



## 6.2 Appendix 2: Interview discussion guide

### INTERVIEW STRUCTURE (15 MINUTES):

AREA OF DISCUSSION	TIME ALLOCATION
1. Moderator introduction	1 minute
2. Warm up	1 minute
3. Satisfaction with SSEN Transmission	3 minutes
4. Transparency from SSEN Transmission	3 minutes
5. Engagement from SSEN Transmission	3 minutes
6. Communication of decisions	2 minutes
7. Final thoughts, Thank you, & Incentives	1 minute

### Moderator Introduction (1 minute):

- Introduce yourself
- Explain that the research is being conducted on behalf of SSEN Transmission
- Explain the purpose of the discussion. (This research is about your experience of how SSEN Transmission engaged with you when they were developing or constructing infrastructure projects that affected you, your community, or your organisation.)
- Today's aim is to develop tangible actions for SSEN Transmission to improve and enhance its engagement practices on infrastructure projects.
- Confidentiality is guaranteed, no right/wrong answers, interested in your opinions, in as much detail as possible. **All suggestions are welcome.**
- Explain audio and video recording. **Please ask the respondent to confirm that they are happy to be recorded.**
- A reminder that SSEN Transmission is part of the SSE Group, which includes their other network business, SSEN Distribution, who maintain the lower voltage network that supplies electricity directly to homes and businesses in the North of Scotland. You may have spoken to them if you have experienced a power outage or damage to the network during a storm. This interview will focus **only** on your experience engaging with SSEN Transmission.

### MODERATOR NOTE:

Additionally, the projects most likely to be discussed are in the development phase, due to be completed by 2030. Information on other projects has recently been released for projects beyond 2030, so if respondents have concerns, please let them raise them, but the discussion is most likely to be around projects in the development stage already.

## MODERATOR – REVIEW STAKEHOLDER QUANT DATA TO SEE KEY QUANT MEASURES

- About & projects impacted by
- Level of engagement & satisfaction
- Views towards transparency
- Views towards communication

- Any questions?

### Warm-up (1 minute):

Participants introduction

- Role & Engagement with SSENT
- Level of engagement
- Project they have been impacted by (**QUANT REMINDER**) & proximity to the project

### Satisfaction with SSEN Transmission (3 mins)

- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with SSENT Transmission's engagement with you?
- Why is that? Provide examples
- What could SSEN **Transmission** do to improve your satisfaction?

**OPTIONAL:** By the way, the results from the quantitative survey **show that 7% of stakeholders were satisfied and 70% were dissatisfied with SSEN Transmission's engagement with them**

- Do these figures surprise you?
  - Why?
  - Are they what you would have expected them to be?
  - Why do you think satisfaction levels are this low for stakeholders?

### Transparency from SSEN Transmission (3 mins)

**In the survey, when asked what SSEN Transmission could do to promote a better understanding of their role, most stakeholders selected being more open and transparent about contracts, procedures, and policy.**

- What is your view on SSENT Transmission transparency
  - Could you provide some examples? Positive or negative, if applicable
  - In what ways do you feel SSEN Transmission fails to be transparent with stakeholders?
- What would you like to see SSEN Transmission do to increase their transparency?
- In your opinion, what does transparent engagement look like? Provide examples.
  - Prompt on detail of information, ease of accessing information, responsiveness, etc.

### Engagement from SSEN Transmission (3 mins)

Now, we are moving on to talk about engagement from SSEN Transmission.

- What forms of communication or contact would you classify as engagement? [Prompt on email](#).
  - How frequently would you expect SSEN Transmission to engage with you?
  - Does it vary depending on the stage of the project?
- Thinking about <PROJECT>; how would you like SSEN Transmission to engage with you?
  - How frequently would you expect SSEN Transmission to engage with you?
  - Does it vary depending on the stage of the project?

### Communication of decisions (2 mins)

During the questionnaire, stakeholders expressed concerns that decisions are not well communicated.

- In what ways are you aware that SSEN Transmission communicate its decisions?
  - Do you think these current methods work/ or are effective?
- How would you like SSEN Transmission to communicate their decisions?

### OPTIONAL TOPIC TO DISCUSS:

#### 1) Sponsorship

**MODERATOR, YOU CAN REMIND THEM OF SOME SPONSORSHIP ACTIVITIES:** These include sponsoring the Stonehaven Highland Games, the Aberdeen Science Centre, the Prosper Housing Challenge Conference, the Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce Awards, and the 2024 Green Energy Awards.

- Were you aware of their sponsorship activities?
- **QUANT: About a third of stakeholders knew about SSEN Transmissions' sponsorship activities.** Why do you think awareness of sponsorship was low?
- What other activities could SSEN Transmission do to increase their awareness?
- **How do you think SSEN Transmissions' sponsorship activities affect communities?**
  - If not, how could SSEN Transmission improve this perception?

#### 2) Website

**MODERATOR NOTE: A common theme in the questionnaire was making the website easier to use/navigate (DO NOT PROMPT)**

- Do you ever go onto SSEN Transmission website?
  - If so, what is your user experience like?
- If so, what problems have you experienced?
- How could SSEN Transmission improve the usability of the website?

#### 3) Impact of projects

- How have projects by SSEN Transmission impacted you? Please provide some examples of the positive vs negative.
  - How close do you live to the project you have been impacted by?

- What could SSEN Transmission do to reduce the negative effects?

#### 4) [Expectations for the construction and delivery stage](#)

- When projects move from the planning to the construction and delivery stage, what would you like to see from SSEN transmission?

#### [Final thoughts \(1 minute\):](#)

- Finally, anything else to help us ensure the experience our stakeholders get whilst an ongoing infrastructure project is better?
  - What one thing would you change about your relationship with SSEN?
  - Thank you
  - As a thank you for your time, we would like to offer £50. You can choose a bank transfer, an Amazon e-voucher, or a donation. If you cannot accept incentives, the amount will be donated to a charity. Which would you prefer?
    1. Bank transfer. [Collect NAME, ACCOUNT NUMBER, SORT CODE](#)
    2. Amazon e-voucher. [Collect EMAIL](#)
    3. Charity donation – **Children's Hospices Across Scotland (CHAS)**: Provides hospice services for children and young people with life-shortening conditions.
    4. Charity donation – **Scottish Wildlife Trust**: Works to conserve Scotland's wildlife and natural habitats.
    5. Charity donation – **The King's Trust Scotland**: Helps young people aged 11 to 30 get into jobs, education, and training.
    6. None
    7. Other charity