

IMPACT

FROM INSIGHT TO INFLUENCE

SSEN ISES 2026

Report

Prepared for SSEN Transmission

Prepared by Impact

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Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

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1. Glossary of terms and definitions

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

2. Executive Summary

SSEN Transmission's engagement is too often experienced as late, one-way and insufficiently responsive, especially for communities directly affected by major infrastructure proposals. While there are some positive experiences, particularly linked to individual contacts or specific channels, these are outweighed by wider concerns that engagement often happens after plans are already well developed, limiting the extent to which people feel they can shape outcomes in a meaningful way.

A central learning is that stakeholders want engagement to begin earlier and to feel more genuine. They are looking for clearer explanations of what is proposed, why decisions were made, which alternatives were considered, and how local feedback influenced the final approach (the latter is especially important; stakeholders want to feel that the feedback loop has been closed through demonstrations of examples where their feedback has been taken on board). There is also a strong call for communication to be more transparent, consistent, and joined-up, particularly where multiple related projects affect the same communities.

The findings also highlight the need for more accessible and practical communication. Stakeholders want clearer maps, more localised and project-specific information, regular updates, and materials that can be understood easily by non-specialist audiences while still offering technical depth for those who want it. Events are expected to be better timed, better supported and staffed by knowledgeable people who can answer questions confidently, while digital channels such as the website need to be easier to navigate and more useful as a source of up-to-date local information.

3. Background & Objectives

In 2021, SSEN Transmission (SSENT) launched the first wave of its Infrastructure Stakeholder Assessment Survey (ISES). This followed Ofgem guidance for Transmission Operators (TOs) to continually improve stakeholder engagement, using a qualitative survey as an annual metric.

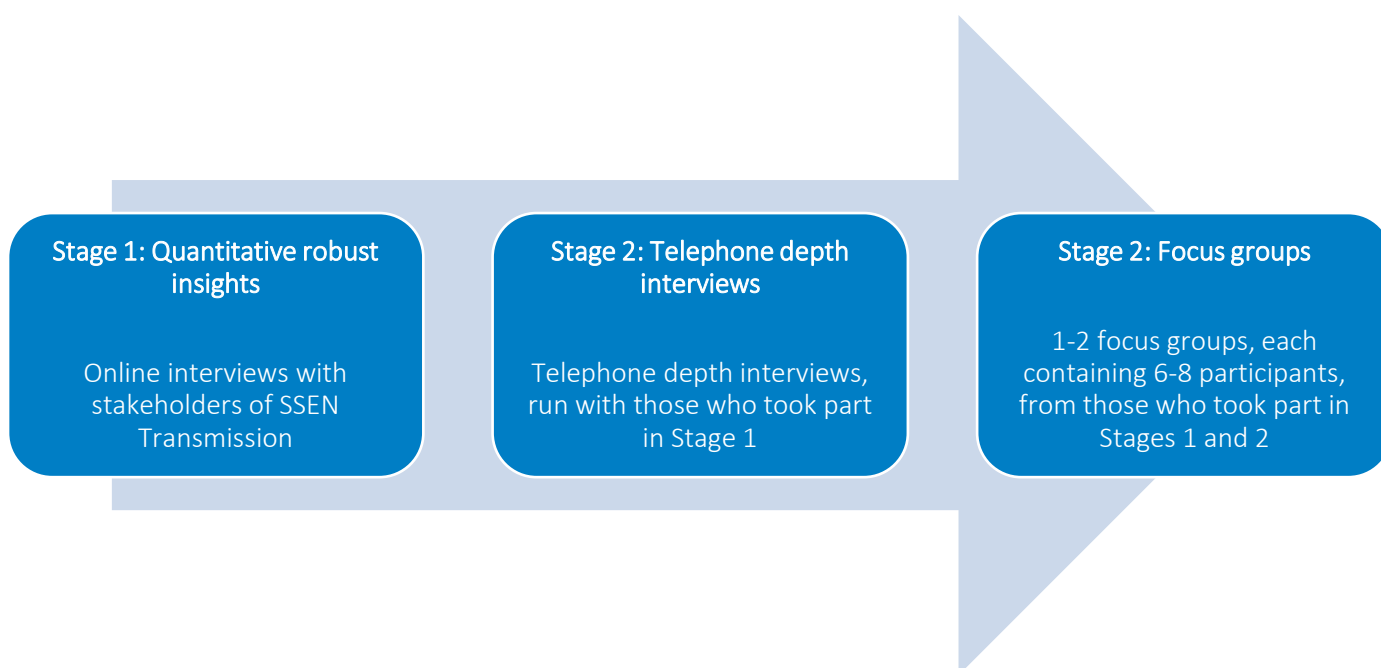
SSENT commissioned Impact to create and implement the survey to understand the experiences of stakeholders who could have been affected by recent infrastructure projects and has done so every year since.

The ISES aims to gather feedback to assess and improve SSEN Transmission’s engagement processes. The key objectives are:

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

4. Method & Sample

The methodology uses a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.



Stage 1: Online Survey

The interview length and content were carefully designed to keep respondents fully engaged throughout, to maximise the response rate and ensure no stakeholders dropped out mid-interview. The survey contained a mixture of closed (including scale and yes/no type questions) and open questions, designed to elicit detailed feedback on the objectives.

Survey Length: The survey took an average of 22 minutes to complete.

Survey content: The survey consisted of four broad categories:

- **Stakeholder Identification Questions:** Identify the type of stakeholder participating in the survey (e.g., community member, business stakeholder) and their location, ensuring proper segmentation of responses.

- **Aggregation Questions:** Aligned with Ofgem’s Transmission Owner (TO) requirements, addressing specific engagement metrics.
- **Survey-Specific Questions:** Explicitly tailored to the ISES, exploring stakeholders’ experiences of SSEN Transmission’s engagement and consultation across different stages of local infrastructure projects, including how, when, and how effectively engagement has taken place. These questions also assess the accessibility and usefulness of project information, preferences for communication and updates, and the extent to which SSEN Transmission’s engagement has mitigated or shaped the impacts of projects on individuals, organisations, and communities.
- **Closing Questions:** To share any additional feedback on how SSEN Transmission could improve ongoing project delivery and to indicate their willingness to participate in a paid follow-up depth interview and online focus group to discuss experiences and improvements in more depth.

A full copy of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

We spoke to a total of 363 stakeholders of SSEN Transmission. 77% of stakeholders who answered the survey described themselves as Community members/ residents, and 9% as Land assembly.

359 respondents completed the ISES survey, but for an additional 4 people, their data was moved from the SES survey to the ISES survey. For these 4 people, only the key and consistent KPIs covered across both projects can be reported.

93 respondents volunteered to take part in the follow-up interviews, with a further 92 unsure whether they would participate.

Stage 2: Telephone Depth Interviews

The second stage of the research involved a number of follow-up depth interviews designed to explore stakeholder views in greater detail. While the online survey provided a broad measure of perceptions and experiences, the interviews allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the reasons behind stakeholders’ views.

42 interviews were carried out with survey respondents who had agreed to be contacted again for further research. Invitations to take part were sent to all eligible respondents, and interviews were arranged on a first-come, first-served basis. Each interview lasted around 15 minutes and was conducted either by telephone or via Microsoft Teams. To acknowledge their time, participants were offered a £10 incentive. Where participants were unable or unwilling to accept payment directly, the payment could be donated to one of three charity options provided.

A semi-structured discussion guide was used to support the interviews. This drew on stakeholders’ earlier survey responses and included follow-up questions to probe their views in more detail.

Introductions and stakeholder context:

Interviewees were typically highly engaged stakeholders with a direct, local stake in SSEN Transmission projects. They included residents, community councillors, landowners, farmers, fishermen and others living or working close to proposed or active infrastructure, often in rural communities where project impacts felt immediate and personal.

Many described cumulative effects across multiple developments, including visual impact, traffic, access disruption, environmental concerns and uncertainty about future works.

A notable feature of the sample was that many participants were knowledgeable, long-standing community representatives who felt confident engaging with technical material and expected a more meaningful role in shaping decisions. However, engagement needs to work for both these technically minded, informed stakeholders and those less familiar with the technical details.

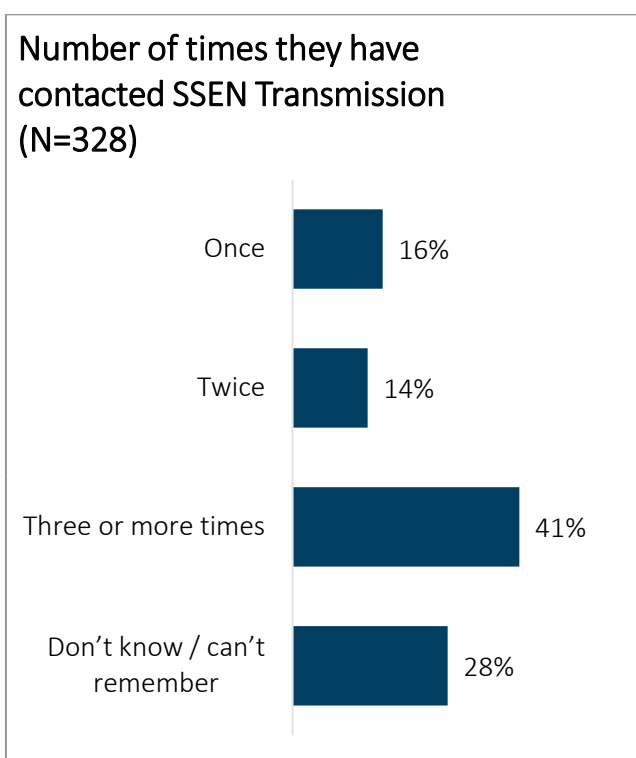
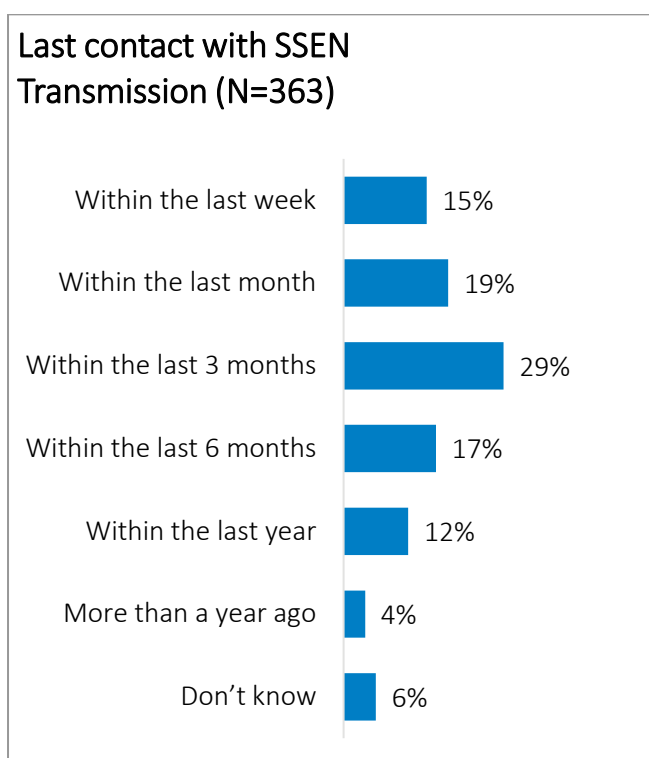
5. Results Summary

5.1 Awareness and Contact with SSEN

All stakeholders have heard of SSEN Transmission, with 89% having at least some knowledge of it (the same as in 2025).

Most stakeholders (90%) have had contact with SSEN Transmission within the last year, and 34% within the last month. (In 2025, 94% within the last year and 49% within the last month).

41% of stakeholders have had contact with SSEN Transmission three or more times within the last 12 months. 14% of stakeholders have had contact with SSEN Transmission twice in the last 12 months, while 16% have had contact only once. The remaining 28% were unsure.



Last contact with SSEN Transmission comparison results from 2025:

Last contact with SSEN Transmission	2025
Within the last week	20%
Within the last month	28%
Within the last 3 months	24%
Within the last 6 months	15%
Within the last year	7%
More than a year ago	1%
I have not had contact with SSEN Transmission	3%
Don't know	1%

There were a range of reasons why stakeholders had been in contact with SSEN Transmission, with the most commonly cited related to:

- **Objections and concerns about new transmission infrastructure, particularly pylons and substations.**
The vast majority of responses relate to opposition to proposed overhead lines, substations and cable routes. Many cite landscape impact, property devaluation, environmental damage, noise, health concerns, route selection, and perceived lack of consultation. Projects repeatedly referenced include Kintore to Tealing (TKUP), Spittal to Beaully, Fanellan, Bingally, Hurlie, Netherton Hub and others.

“They are planning to ruin a protected and idyllic Scottish glen - Glen Loth on the NC500, with 150ft pylons right next to my bothy (less than 600 feet away).” *Landowner*

“They want to put pylons across the Royal Deeside, including across our farmland and across the River Dee at a prime fishing beat.” *Land Assembly*

- **Dissatisfaction with consultation, communication and transparency.**
Many attended consultations, roadshows or public meetings, often describing them as information events rather than genuine two-way engagement. Common themes include lack of clarity, unanswered questions, poor follow-up, changing commitments, template responses, and feeling ignored or “run over”.

“Also attended two planning meetings where their representatives were woefully ill-prepared and very dismissive of community concerns.” *Statutory Consultee*

“Contact was at ‘consultation’ events, which were not really consultation events; they were information events. Consultation implies a 2-way process with listening on both sides.”
Community Member/ Resident

- **Impacts of construction and project delivery on local communities.**
Concerns include road closures, heavy construction traffic, speeding contractors, damage to roads and property, access issues, water supply contamination, noise pollution, light pollution, trespass, and cumulative disruption from multiple projects.

“Concern over large heavy vehicles going too fast on narrow roads that are designated walking/cycling/ wheeling routes.”
Community Member/ Resident

“Since SSEN have upgraded network to 400kv we have experienced constant noise issues from power lines.”
Community Member/ Resident

5.2 Satisfaction and Engagement with SSEN

The majority had engaged with SSENT via email in the last 12 months (60%). Consultation events (43%), town hall events (27%), letters (26%) and leaflets (25%) were the next most popular channels. Channels such as local press, websites/blogs, webinars, conferences/events, workshops and insight reports were used less frequently (5% or less).

Detailed results of engagement from SSEN 2026 vs 2025.

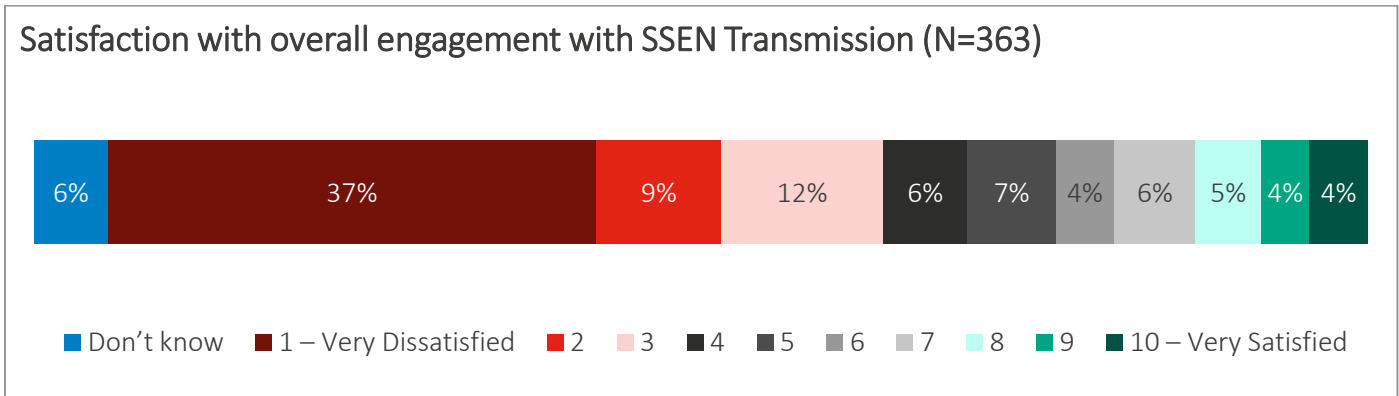
Communication method	2026	2025
Email	60%	60%
Consultation event	43%	66%
Town Hall events	27%	39%
Letter	26%	28%
Leaflet	25%	33%

Face to face visit	14%	14%
Surveys	13%	14%
E-bulletin (e.g., electronic newsletter)	12%	7%
Telephone call	11%	6%
Local Press	11%	9%
Community Liaison Groups	10%	16%
Social media message	9%	6%
Website/Blogs	4%	19%
Conferences/Events	4%	16%
Webinars	4%	12%
Workshops	2%	4%
Insight Reports	2%	1%

Customer satisfaction with the outcome of their contact with SSEN Transmission was low, 16% were satisfied and 55% were unsatisfied.

Again, a relatively low number (13%) of customers were satisfied with their overall engagement with SSEN Transmission, with 58% stating they were dissatisfied (see detailed breakdown in the chart below). Although the 2026 scores were higher in comparison to 2025, with just 7% stating that they were satisfied and 70% dissatisfied.

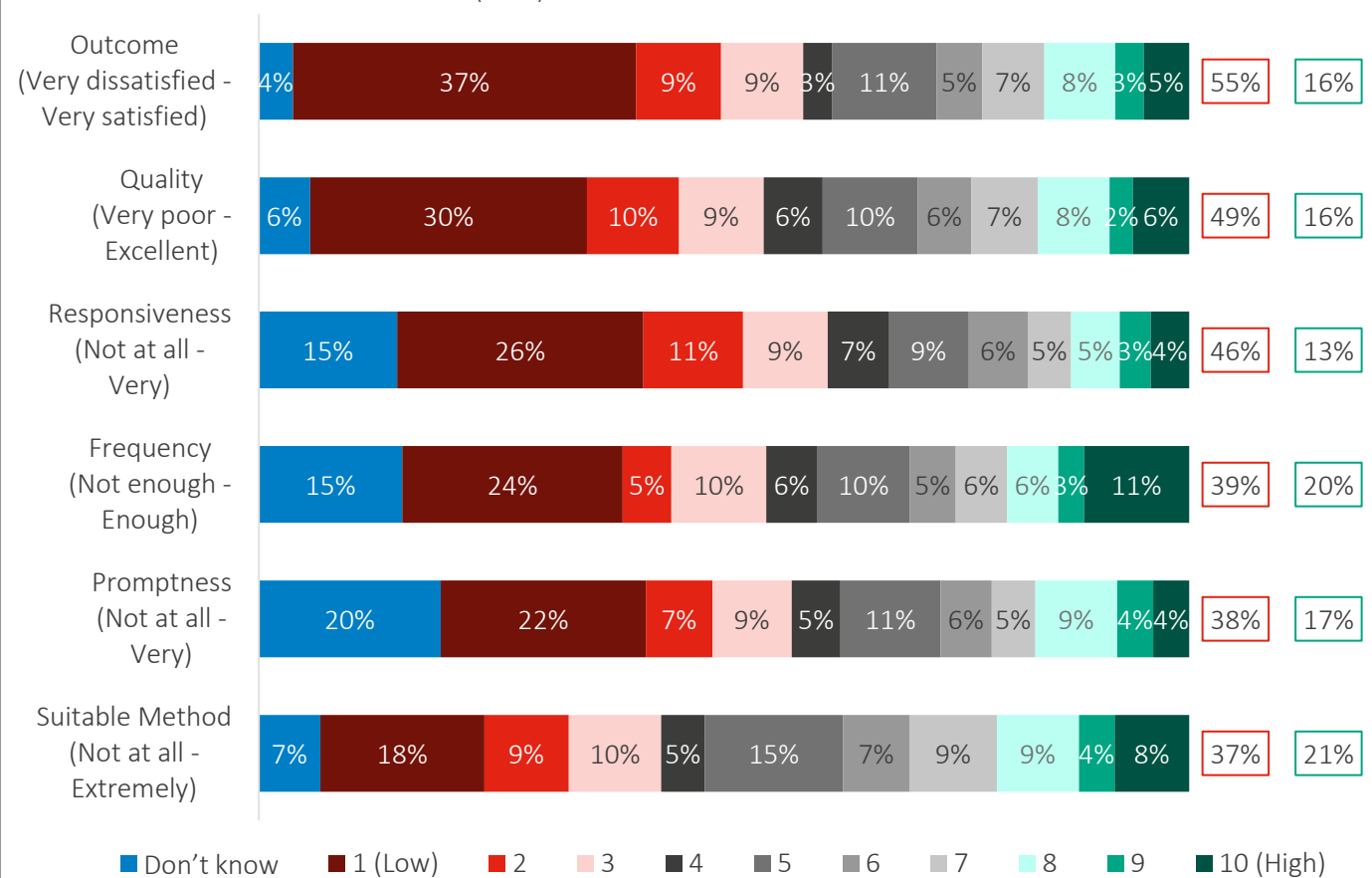
These scores were judged by combining the percentages for 8, 9, and 10 for high scores (T3B) and 1, 2, and 3 for low scores (B3B) on a 10-point scale.



Perceptions and satisfaction with engagement are low across all measures. This suggests that many customers leave interactions feeling that SSEN Transmission has not delivered the outcome they wanted or has not engaged in a way that feels responsive, timely, or fit for purpose.

Perceptions with different areas of engagement (N=328-363)

Red box at end of bar is Net Disatisfied (1-3)
Green box at end of bar is Net Satisfied (8-10)



Quality

16% rated the quality of engagement with SSEN Transmission positively, while 49% rated it negatively.

“The SSEN representatives at the public meetings have fully explained the works proposed and the reasons for them.” *Community Member/ Resident*

Quantitative survey:

Some respondents described SSEN Transmission’s engagement as strong, particularly when communication was clear, staff were visible and well briefed, and information was easy to follow. Others really criticised the quality of engagement, feeling it was inconsistent, one-way, and often lacked substance. A common view was that engagement was not genuine consultation, but a tick-box exercise designed to meet statutory requirements and secure planning permission. Several described poor follow-up and broken promises, including requests for updates or information that went unanswered, or material that was promised but not provided. Others felt communications were overly political, dismissive, or condescending, and that meetings and webinars were poorly organised, repetitive, or relied on “pretty pictures” that did not reflect reality. A frequent frustration was that staff at events were not sufficiently informed or locally aware, could not answer questions, relied on outdated or inaccurate maps and data, and appeared unable to discuss the wider plans beyond the immediate project being presented.

“SSEN's view of engagement is to tell, then go ahead and do, ignoring any feedback. What's the point in talking to them?”
Community Member/ Resident

“Maps are poor, with items missed off, and staff members generally can't answer questions.”
Community Member/ Resident

Qualitative Insights:

Perceptions of the quality of engagement were largely negative. While a minority of stakeholders described positive experiences in which staff were approachable, professional, and able to explain projects clearly, the dominant view was that engagement often lacked depth and substance. Many interviewees felt consultation events were too one-way and did not amount to genuine dialogue, with some describing them as “tick-box” exercises rather than opportunities to influence decisions.

A recurring criticism was that staff were not always sufficiently informed, locally aware or able to answer detailed questions, which reduced confidence in the overall quality of engagement. There was a strong feeling that more experienced members of SSENT and decision-makers should be attending the community consultations so they can hear local viewpoints directly, show they are familiar with the local area affected by the works, and be in a better position to answer questions on the spot than those who currently attend.

Responsiveness

Overall, 13% rated SSEN Transmission as responsive (T3B), while 46% rated them as not responsive (B3B).

Quantitative survey:

Responsiveness was viewed positively by some respondents, particularly when they could ask questions directly and receive timely replies. Some described their experience to date as good, noting that responses were prompt, polite, and quick, with emails answered in a reasonable time and queries generally answered when needed.

“Had a generally good relationship with the Project teams at SSENT, who have been prompt at responding to queries and helpful in solving any issues that arise.” *Developers*

However, those who felt SSEN Transmission was not responsive reported little or no follow-up, slow replies and poor-quality responses. Many said they had not received replies to emails or letters, had not been contacted as promised, or had to repeatedly chase for updates, with some reporting weeks-long waits for a response. Where replies were received, they often characterised them as bland or deflective, and felt that key questions were not answered. A common perception was that engagement was SSEN “going through the motions”, telling rather than asking, and showing limited interest in community concerns.

“Can wait weeks for reply to correspondence, actions agreed at meetings are often not carried out.”
Landowner

Qualitative Insights:

Responsiveness emerged as a major weakness. Stakeholders frequently said they had to chase for answers, experienced long delays, or received responses that felt generic. Some felt that questions raised in meetings or by email were not properly followed up on, and that promised information was not always provided. Where views were more positive, this was typically because stakeholders had access to a named contact who replied promptly and addressed issues directly.

Frequency

20% rated the frequency of engagement with SSEN Transmission as enough, while 39% felt it was not enough.

Quantitative survey:

Some described the volume of contact as “about right”, “just enough to keep me informed”, or “as needed and nothing more”, and a small number highlighted timely engagement, prompt and explanatory replies and frequent touchpoints such as fortnightly meetings.

However, many felt SSEN Transmission's engagement was insufficient, particularly given the scale and impact of the proposed projects. A number said they received little or no direct communication, were not kept informed about project progress, or only learned about developments through other sources. Others reported long gaps between updates, delayed responses to queries, or having to chase repeatedly for information. A common concern was that residents directly affected by proposals were not contacted proactively and were left unaware of key decisions, surveys, or works taking place nearby. Some also felt that engagement came too late in the process, once decisions had effectively been made.

“There are major projects being planned nearby and we get next to no direct information.”

Community Member/ Resident

“We have received very few updates on what is happening to reduce noise pollution from the upgraded lines - it is us that has to pursue information.”

Community Member/ Resident

Qualitative Insights:

Some stakeholders felt the level of contact was broadly appropriate and did not want communication for its own sake; instead, they wanted updates when there was something meaningful to report.

More commonly, however, stakeholders felt contact was too limited, with long periods of silence between updates and insufficient proactive communication given the scale and impact of the projects. Stakeholders expect regular engagement at an earlier stage so they can be involved and informed throughout the decision-making process, whilst being kept informed of any works or actions taking place. A key frustration was that directly affected residents often had to seek information out themselves rather than being kept informed as projects progressed.

Promptness

17% rated SSEN Transmission response as prompt (T3B), while 38% rated them as not very prompt (B3B).

Quantitative survey:

Those who felt promptness was good typically described communication as reasonably quick, acceptable, or as expected. Positive comments often referred to prompt replies by email or telephone, quick responses during power cuts or fault incidents and good engagement from specific named contacts or teams. In these cases, responsiveness was seen as helpful and efficient, particularly when stakeholders received updates within a few days or on the next working day.

By contrast, those who felt promptness was poor most often described long delays, unanswered emails and phone calls, and the need to repeatedly chase for a response. Many said they received only acknowledgements, with no meaningful follow-up, or that the promised updates never arrived. Others felt responses were generic, vague, inaccurate, or failed to address the actual issue raised, which reduced confidence even where a reply was technically received. Common concerns also included inconsistent response times depending on the team or project, poor notice of meetings or works, lack of follow-up after consultations, and a wider sense that communication happened only when it suited SSEN. For some, this contributed to a broader perception of poor accountability, weak coordination, and engagement that was reactive rather than genuinely responsive.

“Most communication needs follow up to get an answer. Questions are rarely answered directly and are highly political in response.” *Community Member/ Resident*

Qualitative Insights:

Promptness was closely linked to dissatisfaction with the timing of engagement. Many stakeholders felt SSENT was too slow both in replying to individual queries and in communicating important developments, such as surveys, decisions, road closures or construction activity.

Interviewees often felt communication came after key decisions had already been made, which contributed to a sense that engagement was reactive rather than timely. The qualitative findings suggest that promptness was judged not only by speed of response, but by whether stakeholders were informed early enough for the information to be useful and for their views to be taken into account.

“They had obviously already decided everything beforehand, and the consultation was not a consultation, it was a presentation of what they were going to do.” *Consumer groups/Special Interest Groups*

Suitability

Views on the suitability of engagement methods were mixed but leaned towards the negative. Overall, 21% found the engagement method suitable (T3B), while 37% found it unsuitable (B3B).

Quantitative survey:

Those who found the approach suitable typically described it as appropriate and fit for purpose. A mix of channels was seen as helpful, including email, online meetings, public events and direct contact. Email was frequently highlighted as effective because it is quick, clear and provides a written, time-stamped record.

By contrast, those who found engagement unsuitable often described events as tick-box or “done deal” exercises, where SSEN informs rather than listens, and community views feel ignored. Common concerns also included poor-quality information and lack of clarity, inconvenient timing and short notice, infrequent engagement, venues or formats that limit attendance, and issues with organisation and event logistics, including cancelled meetings that were not rescheduled.

“Consultation on the East May power line was not a consultation. You were simply telling us what you were going to do.” *Consumer groups/Special Interest Groups*

“The methods are fine. The content is poor.”
Community Member/ Resident

Qualitative Insights:

Respondents felt the mix of channels used, particularly email, public events and direct contact, could work well when delivered clearly and at the right time. However, many felt the methods used were not appropriate to their needs, either because they were too impersonal, too technical, too heavily reliant on digital channels or did not reflect how affected communities wanted to engage.

There was a strong preference for engagement that felt more direct, practical and tailored, with face-to-face contact remaining especially important for more complex or locally sensitive issues. As an example of this, people living or with businesses in direct proximity to a proposed pylon/battery storage unit etc. feel they should have a personal home visit to discuss the proposals and reasons for route selection, recognising the fact that they are likely to be most affected. Suitability was therefore judged less by the channel itself and more by whether the approach felt fit for purpose for the audience, stage and impact of the project.

“I struggle with some of the emails that come out in terms of the terminology that they use and some of the acronyms that they use are not fully explained.”
Community Member/ Resident

5.3 What SSEN Transmission Engagement Should Include:

- Ensuring transparent communication (46%)
- Offering proactive updates on projects (32%)
- Providing timely information (30%)
- Responding promptly to queries (30%)

There was a slight preference for engagement on projects to be communicated collectively as a group (45%), vs. individually on a project-by-project basis (34%). With 10% selecting 'don't know' and 11% selected 'other'.

Quantitative survey:

Those who preferred engagement to be communicated collectively, as a group of projects, typically said this would provide the bigger picture and make it easier to understand how schemes connect. A dominant theme was the need to assess cumulative impact, with many respondents saying that pylons, substations, battery storage, cables and associated roadworks cannot be understood properly in isolation. Presenting projects together was seen as more transparent and less confusing. Some also felt a grouped approach would reduce duplication, save time, help communities and businesses keep track of overlapping schemes, and make it easier to understand how works in one area relates to wider plans across the region.

By contrast, those who preferred project-by-project communication generally said this would make it easier to focus on what is directly relevant to them. These respondents often wanted more detailed, specific and localised information about the scheme affecting their property, land, business or community, without having to work through broader regional material. Some felt that individual engagement would allow deeper discussion of impacts, clearer accountability, and more meaningful responses to project-specific concerns. Others said that grouped information could become overwhelming, confusing, or too broad, especially when several different schemes are active at once.

Perceptions of how SSENT currently informs stakeholders about their projects and events (quantitative survey):

Those who were broadly satisfied with how SSEN Transmission informs stakeholders tended to say that a mix of channels works well, including postcards, email, social media, community councils, websites and local events. Some felt they were kept reasonably well informed and said these methods provided a good spread of information, particularly where postcards or direct emails reached them reliably. A few also suggested that websites, social media, radio, TV, WhatsApp or local noticeboards could complement existing approaches and make updates easier to access.

By contrast, many said current approaches do not reach people consistently or early enough. Common concerns included not receiving invitations despite living very close to proposed routes, over-reliance on local newspapers or social media that many people do not use, and information that was too vague, selective, late, or overly promotional rather than substantive.

"I have never received a postcard invite despite living within 1km of proposed route of pylons."

Community Member/ Resident

Additional methods or approaches that SSEN could use to ensure more people know about their projects and events (quantitative survey):

Those who suggested additional methods or approaches most often called for more direct, local and personal communication. This included door-to-door visits, direct letters, emails or texts to affected households and landowners, and one-to-one conversations or phone calls where people could ask questions and receive clear answers. Many also wanted wider use of traditional local channels, such as posters in shops, libraries, village halls, and supermarkets, alongside local radio, TV, noticeboards, and the local press. Some suggested opt-in email lists, WhatsApp updates, improved websites with live project maps, and more frequent social media updates to help people keep track of multiple overlapping developments.

A second strong theme was the need for earlier, more transparent and more joined-up communication. Respondents often said the issue was not simply a matter of awareness of events, but also the way projects are presented in isolation, too late in the process, or without the full picture of cumulative impact. They wanted SSEN to explain projects sooner, show how the different elements connect, and provide clearer, more honest information about local disruption, environmental impact and the wider strategic context. Some also called for more local meetings, more question-and-answer sessions, neutral chairs, better-trained staff and events scheduled at times that working people can attend.

A significant proportion of responses suggested that the problem lies not in the method but in the substance of engagement. These respondents said people already know about projects and events, but do not feel listened to. In these cases, the main request was less about adding new communication channels and more about genuine two-way dialogue, meaningful responses to concerns, and visible evidence that community feedback can influence decisions.

“Knock on every single door within 20 miles of projects and speak to everyone” *Land Assembly*

“Try a more personal approach to property owners who are directly impacted by these proposals.” *Community Member/ Resident*

5.4 Use of the SSEN Transmission Website

71% have used the SSEN Transmission website, with 20% finding it easy to find the information (T3B, rated 8-10) and 35% finding it difficult (B3B, rated 1-3).

Those visiting the website were most commonly looking for practical, project-specific information. This included route maps for pylons and transmission lines, details of local projects, project updates, timelines, consultation dates, planning documents, contact details, and information about how close infrastructure would be to homes or land.

18% feel it provides accurate and reliable information (T3B, rated 8-10), whereas 43% are not confident that it does (B3B, rated 1-3). Reasons why they are not confident in the accuracy and reliability of the website include:

- Lack of trust, transparency and perceived dishonesty
- Information seen as partial, biased or agenda-driven
- Poor accessibility, navigation and usability, or not updated regularly

Qualitative Insights:

The most common concerns were that it was difficult to navigate, too cluttered, too technical and not sufficiently focused on what local people want to know. Stakeholders often said the site worked better for users who already knew what they were looking for but was much less effective for people trying to understand local implications, track specific documents or locate clear maps and visual material.

Some also questioned the balance and credibility of the content, saying the website could feel polished and persuasive but not fully transparent about impacts, alternatives or uncertainty. Improvement suggestions centred on clearer structure, plain-English summaries, better signposting, more map-led navigation, timely updates, and direct email alerts when important new information is added.

“You need to understand how to read these things, and you need to understand how to look for archives that are relevant, and then you need to understand how to take the 300 documents, sift through.”
Community Member/Resident

6. Reactions to the Virtual Tool

Qualitative Insights:

The proposed virtual tool was generally seen as having potential, but only as an additional layer of engagement rather than a replacement for in-person contact. Many stakeholders said they would use a digital portal if it made

information easier to access, especially between meetings or during live project stages, but enthusiasm depended on it being genuinely useful and easy to navigate. It is important that this tool enables stakeholders to feel closer to the project and not further away. There was a fear amongst some that it could involve AI and remove the human aspect to the engagement, which would be counterproductive.

The most requested features were interactive maps, route-level detail, visualisations, 3D or fly-through views, project timelines, clear explanations of stage and status, local impact information, and simple ways to ask questions or submit feedback. Stakeholders also wanted a mix of plain-English content and deeper technical material so that both general residents and more expert users could engage at the right level.

“I would suggest it's an improvement because if you have a source of information and at some point in the year you need something, you know where you can go.” *Community Member/Resident*

7. Areas to Progress

There is broad support for improvements across all aspects of engagement, with the strongest emphasis on earlier and more meaningful community involvement in new infrastructure projects.

- The highest-rated priority is early engagement, with 79% rating this as appropriate, followed by greater support for communities to engage in the process at 72% and better staffing of events with sufficient subject matter experts at 69%.
- There is also clear support for increasing community touchpoints during the development phase and improving how decisions are communicated, both at 67%, suggesting stakeholders want more regular, transparent and informed dialogue.

Why people feel these actions were appropriate (quantitative survey):

Across the follow-up comments, the main reason respondents saw these actions as appropriate was the need for earlier, more transparent and more meaningful engagement. A consistent theme was that communities feel informed too late, often once decisions are already largely fixed, and want involvement much earlier so they have a genuine opportunity to understand proposals, raise concerns and influence outcomes.

Many also emphasised the need for clearer, more honest and more accessible communication, including plain English explanations, fuller technical information for those who want it, and clearer reasons for decisions, particularly where alternatives such as undergrounding have been discounted.

Another strong theme was the need for better support and more touchpoints for affected communities, especially rural or isolated areas, so that people have enough time, access and confidence to engage.

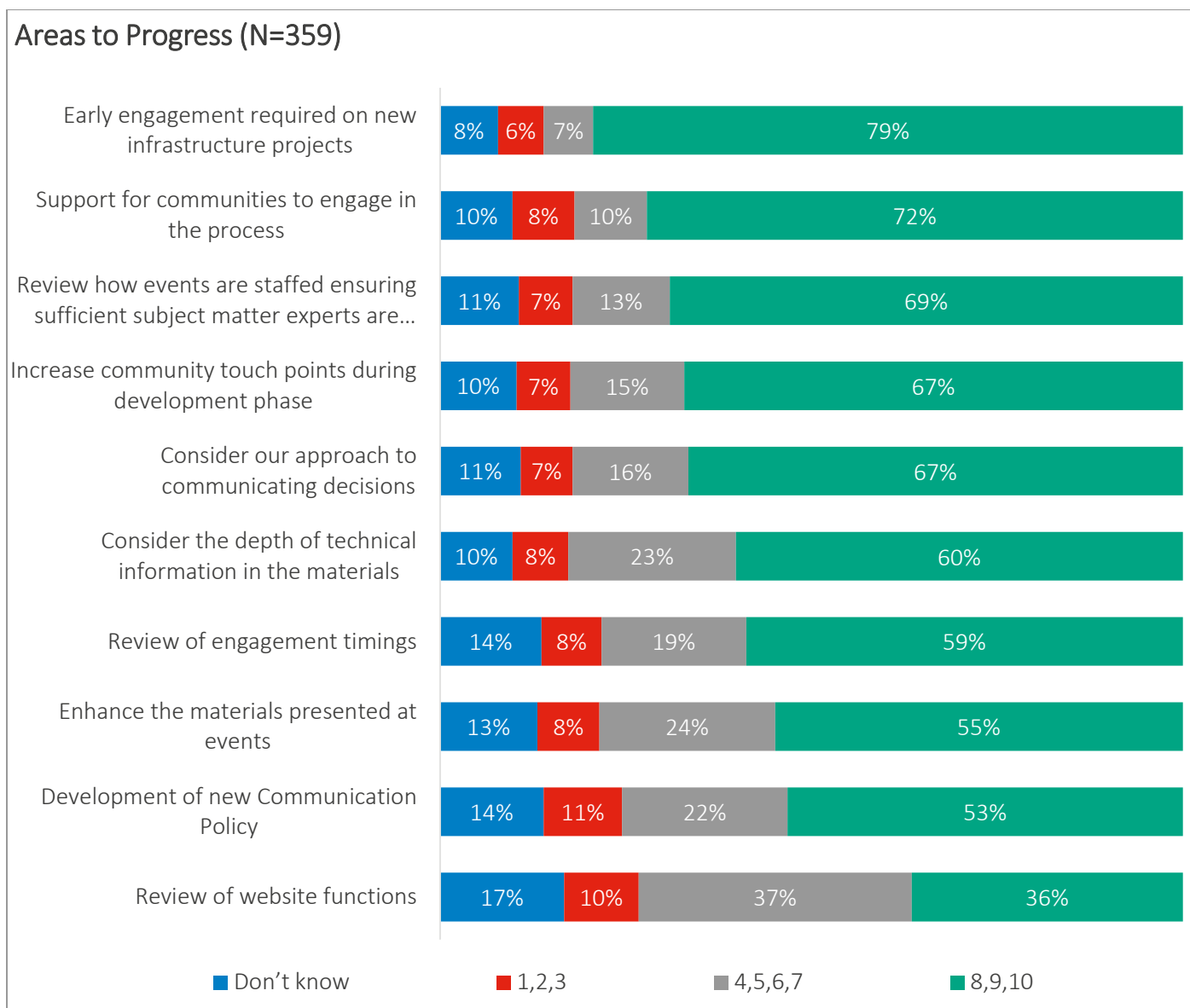
Respondents also frequently highlighted the importance of events being staffed by knowledgeable subject matter experts who can answer detailed questions credibly, rather than relying on staff seen as inexperienced, scripted or unable to respond.

Why people feel these actions were inappropriate (quantitative survey):

Where respondents said an action was not appropriate, this was often because they disagreed with the principle itself rather than because they lacked confidence that SSEN would act meaningfully on it. A strong theme running through the comments is scepticism that reviewing, enhancing or developing policies will make any real difference if SSEN is still seen as not listening, not responding to comments and proceeding with projects regardless of community views.

For some actions, especially around materials and technical information, respondents felt the current provision was already adequate, or that too much detail would overwhelm or disengage lay audiences. Others felt website changes

or communication policy reviews were of limited value compared with improving the quality, honesty and responsiveness of existing communication.



8. Conclusions & Recommendations

The findings indicate that while SSEN Transmission has established a range of engagement activities and channels, there is an opportunity to strengthen how stakeholders experience these, particularly those directly affected by infrastructure proposals. Engagement is not consistently perceived as early or two-way, and in some cases stakeholders feel involvement comes too late, when plans are already relatively well developed. This can limit the extent to which people feel able to shape outcomes.

A consistent conclusion is that trust is central. While some stakeholders describe positive experiences with individual contacts and certain channels, these are outweighed by broader concerns about transparency, responsiveness and credibility.

Recommendations:

1. SSEN Transmission should engage earlier in the project lifecycle, before options are seen as fixed. Early engagement should focus on helping communities understand the context for proposals, the choices being considered, and where feedback can still shape outcomes.
2. SSEN should place greater emphasis on demonstrating how engagement informs decision-making. This should include clear explanation of what stakeholders said, what changes were made as a result, and where suggestions could not be taken forward and why.
3. Communication should be more joined up where multiple related projects affect the same geography. Alongside project-specific detail, stakeholders should be given a clear overview of how projects connect together and what their combined effect means locally.
4. Project information should be made more accessible and practical. Priority should be given to clearer maps, simpler summaries, localised information on likely impacts, and regular progress updates. Materials should work for non-specialist audiences while still allowing interested stakeholders to access more technical detail where needed.
5. Engagement events should be reviewed to ensure they are properly timed, well publicised and staffed by knowledgeable personnel with sufficient subject matter expertise. Communities should be able to ask detailed questions and receive clear, confident answers at the point of engagement.
6. SEN should strengthen support for affected communities, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. This may include a broader mix of channels, more direct contact with those most affected, and more tailored support for people who are less likely to engage through digital or standard consultation methods.
7. The website should be improved as a practical engagement tool, with easier navigation, better searchability, up-to-date project pages, clearer contact routes, and more intuitive access to maps, timelines and key documents. Alongside launching the virtual tool, this also got the green light.

9. Appendix - Survey

INTRO TO THE RESEARCH AND ADHERENCE TO MRS CODE OF CONDUCT AND GDPR
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**.

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 always strives 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 their overall engagement.

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

The survey will close on Sunday 22nd February 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>

By clicking the start survey button, you confirm that you agree to participate in this survey. You can withdraw your consent at any time.

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'd like to ask a few questions about you.

OE 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.

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/Resident
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 and the strategic role they play in maintaining and operating the high-voltage electricity network in the North of Scotland?

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 have little knowledge about them

4. No – never heard of them/don't know anything about them **CLOSE**

M **ASK ALL**
RANDOMISE

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 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. Don't know

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

Q6 In the last 12 months, how many times have you contacted SSEN Transmission?

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

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

Q6B In the last 12 months, how many times have SSEN Transmission contacted or sent something to you?

1. Once
2. Twice
3. Three or more times

4. Don't know/can't remember

OE ASK IF Q5=1-5

Q7 What was the reason(s) for your contact with SSEN Transmission over the last year?

S ASK IF Q5=1-5

Q8 How satisfied were you with the outcome of your contact(s), 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	99

SECTION B: AGGREGATION QUESTIONS

SHOW ALL

We are now going to ask you some questions about your experiences of engaging with SSEN Transmission.

S ASK ALL

B1A On a scale of 1-10, please rate the **promptness** of SSEN Transmission's engagement.

Not at all prompt									Very prompt	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99

HOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS B1A

OE ASK IF B1A=1-10

B1B Please explain the reasons behind the score for promptness you provided.

S ASK ALL

B2A On a scale of 1-10, please rate the **frequency** of SSEN Transmission's engagement.

Not frequent enough									Frequent enough	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99

SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS B2A

OE ASK IF B2A=1-10

B2B Please explain the reasons behind the score for the frequency of engagement you provided.

99. I don't know

S ASK ALL
RANDOMISE

B3A In what ways has SSEN Transmission engaged with you during the last 12 months? 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) **FIXED**

SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS B3A

S ASK ALL

B3B Now, on a scale of 1-10, please rate the method(s) of SSEN Transmission’s engagement.

Not at all suitable										Extremely suitable	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99	

SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS B3A

OE ASK IF B3B=1-10

B3C Please explain the reasons behind the score for the method(s) of engagement you provided.

99. I don't know

S ASK ALL

B4A On a scale of 1-10, please rate the quality of SSEN Transmission’s engagement.

Very poor quality										Excellent quality	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99	

SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS B4A

OE ASK IF B4A=1-10

B4B Please explain the reasons behind the score for the quality of SSEN Transmission’s engagement you provided.

99. I don't know

S **ASK ALL**

B5A Please rate the responsiveness of SSEN Transmission's engagement.

Not at all responsive									Very responsive	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99

SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS B5A

OE **ASK IF B5A=1-10**

B5B Please explain the reasons behind the score for responsiveness you provided.

99. I don't know

S **ASK ALL**

B6a As a stakeholder of SSEN Transmission, how satisfied are you with your overall engagement with SSEN Transmission?

Please answer 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	99

OE **ASK IF B6a = 1 TO 9**

B6b Is there anything SSEN Transmission could do to improve their engagement with you? If so, please explain what they could do.

99. There is nothing SSEN Transmission could do to improve their stakeholder engagement.

SHOW IF B6a = 1-5:

That's a shame to hear you've scored low. You can contact SSEN to update your contact preferences and how they engage with you. If you would like to do this, please note down the following email: ISE.Survey@sse.com.

SHOW IF B6a = 6-10:

Thank you. Don't forget, if you want to change the way you engage with SSEN you can contact them and update your preferences any time. If you would like to do this, please note down the following email: ISE.Survey@sse.com.

SECTION C: SURVEY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

M ASK ALL
RANDOMISE 1-9
PLEASE SELECT UP TO 3

C1 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**

OE ASK ALL

C2A 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

OE ASK ALL

C2B What additional methods or approaches could SSEN Transmission use to ensure more people know about their projects and events?

S ASK ALL

C7A Have you ever used SSEN Transmission’s website?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don’t know

S ASK IF C7A=1

C7B On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is very difficult and 10 is very easy, please rate how easy it was to find the information you were looking for on SSEN Transmissions website.

Very difficult										Very easy	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99	

SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS C7B

OE ASK IF C7B= 1-7

C7C Please describe what you were looking for on the website.

S ASK IF C7A= 1

C7D One a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not at all confident, and 10 is very confident, please rate how confident you feel that the SSEN Transmission website provides accurate and reliable information.

Not at all confident									Very confident	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99

SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS C7D

OE ASK IF C7D= 1-7

C7E Please explain the reasons behind the score

S ASK ALL
RANDOMISE

C6A In some areas of the North of Scotland, SSEN Transmission are developing and delivering projects in close proximity to each other and often interact with the same communities and stakeholders.

Would you prefer SSEN Transmission’s engagement on projects in your area to be engaged on and communicated collectively as a group of projects, providing an overview of all works in the region, or individually on a project-by-project basis?

1. I would prefer to be engaged on and communicated collectively as a group of projects
2. I would prefer to be engaged on and communicated individually on a project-by-project basis
3. I don't know
4. Other (Please specify) **FIXED**

SHOW ON THE SAME PAGE AS B5A

OE ASK IF C6A= 1-2

C6B Please give the reason for your preference.

SHOW ALL PROGRAMMES: CANNOT MOVE TO THE NEXT SCREEN UNTIL 10 SECONDS HAS PASSED

Following the feedback from the engagement survey in 2025, SSEN Transmission have developed a set of engagement priorities that will form actions as part of the Stakeholder Engagement Annual Action Plan (SEAAP) from April 2026 – March 2027

These priorities are:

- **Early engagement required on new infrastructure projects.** Key focus on introducing the project at the earliest

opportunity, providing overview on what the potential impact is going to be, a robust explanation of the need for the project and an opportunity for communities to input at early development stage.

- **Support for communities to engage in the process.** Engaging local representatives to support wider community participation and making use of local expertise and existing networks and forums.
- **Consider the depth of technical information in the materials.** Explore ways of providing information in formats suitable for both people seeking highly technical information and those who prefer it in simplified, easy to digest formats.
- **Consider our approach to communicating decisions.** Reports need to be written in a way that is easy to digest and understand how and why decisions have been made. Consideration also required for how we better communicate this to all stakeholder groups.
- **Enhance the materials presented at events.** Materials presented at events can be insufficient, difficult to engage with, particularly at key stages of the project and can at times not present the overall impact of the project.
- **Increase community touch points during development phase** Additional engagement between events is required, including regular updates on progress.
- **Review how events are staffed ensuring sufficient subject matter experts are present.** Staff at events not being able to answer questions or provide further information to supplement materials.
- **Review of website functions.** Consider how information is presented on project web pages and how we can make this more accessible.
- **Development of new Communication Policy** - It was also highlighted that the timing of reports and comms relaying key updates that might affect people, should be carefully and sensitively communicated.
- **Review of engagement timings.** Careful consideration of locations, venues and timings of the engagement including consultation and information events.

CAROUSEL ASK ALL
RANDOMISE

C4 SSEN Transmission would like to know if you believe these are the most appropriate actions to progress.

Please rate the following actions on a scale of 1-10, in terms of how appropriate you find them to progress, where 1 is not at all appropriate, and 10 is very appropriate.

If you need to see the actions again, please click [here](#). LINK TO ACTIONS SCREEN

- Early engagement required on new infrastructure projects
- Support for communities to engage in the process
- Consider the depth of technical information in the materials
- Consider our approach to communicating decisions
- Enhance the materials presented at events
- Increase community touch points during development phase
- Review how events are staffed ensuring sufficient subject matter experts are present
- Review of website functions
- Development of new Communication Policy
- Review of engagement timings

Not at all appropriate									Very appropriate	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99

OE ASK IF C4 = CODES 1-3. PIPE IN ONE CODE FROM C4, WHERE C4 = CODE 1-3. USE LEAST COUNT ALLOCATION. IF C4 DOES NOT EQUAL 1-3 SKIP.

C5A You said that <PIPE IN CODE ALLOCATED FROM C4> is not an appropriate action for SSEN Transmission to progress. Can you explain why?

OE ASK IF C4 = CODES 7-10. PIPE IN ONE CODE FROM C4, WHERE C4 = CODE 7-10. USE LEAST COUNT ALLOCATION. IF C4 DOES NOT EQUAL 7-10 SKIP.

C5B You said that < PIPE IN CODE ALLOCATED FROM C4> is an appropriate action for SSEN Transmission to progress. Can you explain why?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

OE ASK ALL

Q9 Is there any other feedback you would like to give SSEN Transmission?

99. I have no further comments to add

OE ASK ALL

Q10 Impact Research and SSEN Transmission want to invite stakeholders who have completed this survey to an in-depth interview with our moderator. The interview will be conducted via Zoom video call and will last up to 15 minutes. The interviews will take place from 24th February to 16th March.

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 survey.

Each participant will be incentivised £10 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
3. Not sure – please send an invitation and I will decide then

OE ASK IF Q10=1 OR 3

Q11 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 infrastructure stakeholder engagement 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>

SHOW ALL

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

G ASK ALL

Z1 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

Z2 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 Transmission, 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 Transmission, which means that the rest of the questionnaire is not relevant to you.

Thanks again, you can now close the browser.