

# Our plans and commitments for connections customers



# Introduction

Providing excellent service to our customers is at the heart of what we do. This document details our commitments for all of our connections customers, some aimed at specific groups while others have wider benefits for all. It aims to tackle the issues you have identified in order to improve the overall experience for all our generation, demand and unmetered customers.

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It is essential that we don't stand still, but that we continue to learn and build upon our achievements from last year. We take into account the broad range of connections customers we serve, with your specific, individual needs. So whilst working to implement our commitments we have also been actively engaging with all our connections customers through a wide variety of routes to seek the feedback to help inform this work plan as well as our wider business improvement activities.

The coming year will see us focus on six key areas where you have told us you would like to see continuing improvements:

- Community Projects
- Customer Service
- Information Provision
- The Application Process
- Getting Connected
- Choice in Connections

We will follow this update up with our full work plan of activities by the end of May 2015. This will provide you with more specific information on each of our commitments, including:

- more detailed evidence of how the commitment was identified or requested by our connections customers
- a more detailed explanation around how we intend to deliver the commitment
- a targeted time of completion
- how we will measure what we implement, including clearly measurable key performance indicators

We hope you find this document both useful and interesting in showing how we are responding to your needs as a connections customer.

We appreciate your feedback on what we are doing. If you would like to share your thoughts, or if you would like to be kept up to date with our plans and progress through the year, please contact our connections engagement team at [connectionsfeedback@sse.com](mailto:connectionsfeedback@sse.com)

# Our work plan of commitments

	Commitment	Description
Community Projects	Dedicated account manager for community projects	We will provide a dedicated Account Manager for community projects, to allow all community projects to benefit from one point of contact for any queries they may have with their connection. They will be responsible for looking after all community connection projects and; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– attend industry meetings and liaise with community bodies to help develop relationships with all parties involved in a community connection</li> <li>– have regular catch up meetings to discuss current and potential projects making things easier for all parties</li> <li>– will take the opportunity to speak with you to fully understand the details of your request</li> <li>– ensure you know what to expect from start to finish through the connection process.</li> </ul>
	Run training workshops	We plan to host customer training workshops on our systems with a particular focus for community projects. Currently we provide access to much of the systems and information we use but we are aware that not everyone has the same level of experience to be able to make use of these. We understand that it is one thing to allow access to these systems but customers may need help with how to use them and interpret the information that they contain. To improve experience we will offer training courses and workshops to help their knowledge in the use of our materials such as GIS (maps), LTDS (long term development statement), online heatmaps and our Electricity Network Diagrams. We will consult with both our community connection customers and the appropriate community bodies to facilitate the best use of these sessions.
	Community connections guide	We recognise that people involved in community projects aren't always aware of how to go about applying for a community connection. Our community customers have told us that quite often they are new to working with this industry and they are often volunteers who have limited background in what connecting a community generator or community heat or power project involves. Building on our current suite of various connection guides and process maps we developed last year, we plan to work with the community groups and the relevant community bodies to develop a 'Community Connection Guide' to assist community groups with the various stages of connecting their project.
	Commercial and contractual innovation	Last year we were involved in a number of community projects where we explored novel connection agreements to allow these to progress early. We will continue this development so that in areas that are contractually, but not physically constrained, we will work with local communities and developers to explore options available to allow their connection to be brought forward ahead of the reinforcement they are dependent on.
Customer Service	Account Manager function extended	Last year we extended our account managers across all of our large generation customers. Feedback received has been very positive and supportive of this approach. We now plan to extend these to our large demand connection customers as we recognise having a single point of contact to liaise with you throughout your project is beneficial to you too. We will provide dedicated key account managers located locally at each of our regional offices to manage your connection from enquiry through to completion. These dedicated key account managers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– be responsible for looking after all works associated with your project</li> <li>– have regular catch up meetings to discuss current and potential future projects making things easier for you to connect</li> <li>– take the opportunity to speak with you to fully understand the details of your request</li> <li>– ensure you know what to expect from start to finish through the connection process.</li> </ul>

## Our work plan of commitments continued

	Commitment	Description
Customer Service	Improved selection of process maps and guidance booklets	<p>Over the last few years we have introduced a series of commitments to help improve our customers experience through tailored first contact. To help connection customers identify our processes for connection or other services, we will continue to develop our suites of easy to understand information booklets and process maps to guide customers through what to expect. Throughout the year we have asked customers for feedback on which of our processes they would like to see explained. The large generation connection process, clarity around our disconnections process and help with our wayleaves and legals process are the three areas which customers told us needed attention to help improve the service we offer. These guides will help explain what customers can expect when applying for a connection. Therefore this year we commit to providing improved literature around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Wayleaves / Legal process: A guide on the key features and considerations of the wayleaves and legal process involved when delivering a connection.</li> <li>– Large Generation Process: The processes followed by larger distributed generation projects can vary and this guide will explain the main differences that developers should be aware of.</li> <li>– Disconnection process: This guide will detail the various stages involved in arranging a disconnection.</li> </ul>
	Improved methods of engagement activities	<p>Last year we introduced a rolling programme of monthly connection surgeries. This provides a local regular opportunity for customers to engage with the key staff involved in their project. Feedback from our surgeries has been very positive. Building on this, we are reviewing how we engage with all our different customer types and propose to have a full program of different engagement methods including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Phase 2 of our events calendar thus providing an at a glance view of all upcoming events and activities with the ability to register timeslots at surgeries and other events where applicable</li> <li>– Independent connection provider (ICP) workshop including a section on policy with a view to clarifying any grey areas,</li> <li>– Introducing a connections steering panel to provide customers the opportunity to influence our high level connection strategy for major connection customers.</li> </ul>
	Extend support for application to evenings and weekends	<p>Currently our customer service centre staff who are the first point of contact for all connection applications are only available during normal office hours (8am to 5pm). We would like to consider extending those opening hours if it would be beneficial to you to include evenings and Saturday's. We have had a varied response to this from our stakeholders and so we plan to consult further on this with an intention to extend our working hours if supported by you later in the year.</p>
	Staff contact maps available on our website	<p>Customers have told us they would like to have contact information for our connection staff available so they can better understand our structure to know who is responsible for their project. We commit to providing a comprehensive list of key SSEPD staff for you to contact for any queries you may have regarding your connection. This will include the geographic area they cover and a brief description of their role and responsibilities. This will be made available on our website and regularly updated.</p>
	Implement a 'load calculator' on our website	<p>For our smaller projects, to help you identify what capacity you should be applying for we will provide a 'load calculator' on our website to assist our customers to calculate additional and total load. This will be available along side our online application forms.</p>
	Early feedback on the progress with your application	<p>For larger projects with longer timescales and where appropriate, we will provide updates on the progress of your application at an early stage. This will take the form, following initial assessment, of a call or email from your Contract Manager to update you on progress of the design and any high level findings.</p>

## Our work plan of commitments continued

	Commitment	Description
Information Provision	Access to network diagrams	We understand providing you with as much information in relation to visibility of our existing network can only help you in making decisions around your project. We will provide access to our systems starting with our extra high voltage and high voltage network diagrams (in PDF format) on our website. This would give you the ability to understand how our network is connected, and allow you to predict if you could easily connect your project to our existing infrastructure. This facility would help give you a better overview of our network in the area of your proposed connection.
	Extension to Heat Maps	We have recently produced online maps with information to show how much capacity is available for large generation connections. This has been well received by our customers. We will continue to improve this with the ability to download the information from the heat map tool into different formats. We now also want to extend this to customers who are looking to connect large loads, for example data centres, commercial units, retail parks or large housing estates. This information will show you where the headroom is available on our networks to give you better up-front information around likely reinforcement costs and timescales for your projects.
	Standards of Performance – included in our terms and conditions and explained in our quote letter	Our guaranteed standards of performance provide you with the parameters by which guarantee that we will cost, schedule and deliver your connections to our networks. These standards vary depending on the size of the connection you require and the works involved. To make sure you know what we always commit to, we will make these transparent in our Terms and Conditions and also include information on the standards relevant to your quotation in the offer letter. This simply means we will let you know what standards apply when we are dealing with your projects.
	Improved communal metering policy (building network operators)	Some of our stakeholders have asked us to review our policy in relation to communal metering in multi-occupancy buildings. We commit to work with our developers to update our approach with alternative solutions for communal metering policy. We will make transparent the facility for developers to become 'building network operators' which will allow them to install communal metering where they wish. We will provide information on this as part of our application process.
	Consolidated MPAN process	The MPAN is your unique connection point number and you need this to appoint your supplier and meter operator. We issue this number, usually close to your energisation date for you to provide to your supplier. We will review our MPAN process with a view to improving the clarity of information we provide. This will involve consolidating our Meter Point Administration Number (MPAN) process and supporting this with a customer friendly guide to help customers understand the process and what to expect from start to finish.
	Understanding wayleaves and legals process	We understand it can be frustrating to experience a delay in the progress of your connection due to wayleaves and legal process. We will review and improve our wayleaves and legals providing a clarity in the information we provide you. We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– look internally to consolidate our process and question our overall approach with the commitment to redesign areas where identified;</li> <li>– following this review we will tell you about the process and what you need to do at any particular time (including warning you of how long certain items can take and advise up front at what stage you need to be completing certain aspects of your job).</li> </ul>
	Unmetered supplies	Where a connection could be provided as unmetered we will facilitate the process, explaining the opportunities of an unmetered supply and the limitations where applicable.
	Register for information updates	We will provide a service to enable you to register on our website for updates and then keep you informed of our progress throughout the year, upcoming events and changes, even issuing as "draft for consultation" when we plan to change something to give you the chance to help inform our plans and make sure they are fit for purpose for the future.

## Our work plan of commitments continued

	Commitment	Description
<p>The Application Process</p>	Online statement of works tracker	We will add a Statement of Works (SoW) tracker to our website. SoW is the process with National Grid, where a larger generation or demand customer is required to go through the process to see whether their connection has an impact on the transmission network. Feedback from our customers is that it would be useful to be able to track the process and see what the current status is. We propose to have this function available via our website.
	A connection optioneering process for load	We will offer an improved estimating service to developers with long lead projects, for example 5-15 year build outs of new housing. Currently, long lead projects are not suitable for formal quotations, and budget estimates don't provide enough detail. We will consult with the relevant stakeholders to agree the level of detail required and what information is key to their project.
	Breakdown of costs	Our customers have told us they want to see more information and further detail provided in our breakdown of costs. We will provide more transparency in how these costs break down. We will produce a revised quote letter with the aim of making the information that is important to you even more visible. This cost breakdown will be consistent across the different types of quotes we provide.
	Extending our online application facility	Currently you can apply for the majority of our connections projects online, pay for and track them through to completion. We will extend our online application facility to unmetered customers to provide a greater choice in how you apply for your connection. This will include acceptance, payment and project tracking.
	Consortia register	In certain circumstances, it may be beneficial for two (or more) developers to come together as a consortia – as sharing a connection and/or reinforcement cost may be in both parties' interest. This is currently difficult for developers to do, but we will assist by helping facilitate this and propose to add a 'consortia register' on our website for developers to register their interest in being made aware of consortia opportunities in a given area. Once active it will then be publicised via the appropriate community bodies to ensure potential parties are aware of the facility.
	Review of generation connection offer	We will review our existing DOCO (generation connection offer letter) for simplicity and accessibility. Our plan is to revamp this contract in a similar way to that carried out for our 'demand' quote letter. This should bring improvements by promoting the key information to the front and improving it by using plain English, in comparison to the existing offer.
	Improved quote pack	We know that we currently have a range of different standard quotation packs containing different levels of information and breakdown. We will review what we currently provide with our stakeholders, and improve the information we provide in our connection quotation. For example we would like to deliver a standardised geographic plan illustrating proposed works with every quotation making it easier for you to see what we have quoted for.
	Standard design approval letter	Upon approval of a design submission from an Alternative Provider we will issue a standard letter to confirm approval, also detailing on what the next steps and timescales will be. This will enable you as a customer to have a clear picture of what will happen next and give you an indication on what to expect moving forward
	Streamlined design approval	We aim to speed up the approval of Alternative Provider designs through the use of standard approved designs and staged solutions. Where these agreed standard designs for simple and standard connection arrangements are used project specific design approval will not be required.
	Customer focused acceptance process for interactivity	When a quote becomes interactive, we commit to changing the acceptance process to allow the customer to accept the quote by providing just the signed acceptance within the moratorium period. Those successful in the interactivity process will be required to forward payment within 10 workings days of being advised that their acceptance has been processed. Our smaller connection customers have said that this could avoid the possible negative cash flow effect that upfront payment can have on an acceptance that may need to be cancelled if they have been unsuccessful.

## Our work plan of commitments continued

	Commitment	Description
The Application Process	Independent Connection Provider (ICP) staff to become an approved designer	We will put in place a designer validation process to enable Alternative Providers to control designs via a self-certification process, recognising the competencies and capacities of the organisations making the design submission.
	Getting Connected	
	Review the restrictions on capacity of an unmetered connection	We will review the current restriction on the capacity that an unmetered connection may be (currently 25A.) with the intention of increasing this to 100A.
	Alternative Provider to identify own POC	We will put in place a process to allow Alternative Providers to access the necessary information required to enable the identification of their points of connection to our network for the majority or straightforward new connections and diversions. This will give all access to information to the same level of detail and in the same manner as we have ourselves.
	Construction, adoption and connection agreements	We will ensure we have in place a fair and equitable framework and model agreements available to our Alternative Providers, to help reduce administration and touch points throughout the process.
	Online project tracking facility	We intend to make it easier for our customers to track the progress of their project online on our website. This will provide you with an overview of the following: What stage your project is at, the next milestone, important dates; and, the contact details for the member of staff responsible at each stage of your connection.
	Visit and inspect retro charges	Our current practice is to include costs for any likely planned commissioning and witness tasks we may have to carry out in our initial quotation. Going forward, where requested by the Alternative Provider, rather than up-front we will reserve asking for this until just prior to energisation.
	Alternative Provider visibility to inspection and monitoring	We will provide full access to all inspection and monitoring results carried out at an Alternative Providers site. We will demonstrate that Alternative Providers are not subject to any increased level of quality assurance audits that we carry out on our own staff sites.
	Commissioning assistance	The final step for all networks to be energised is the final commissioning. We recognise that this is often when particular issues emerge. To mitigate this we commit to provide, at the stage when a network design has been approved, an explanation of our requirements clearly and unambiguously presented to ensure wherever possible a successful first commissioning of a site.
	The adoption process	It can be confusing to know exactly what documentation requires to be in place and completed as we work with your Alternative provider through the adoption process. We will review this process to provide a list, timeline and flowchart to track the process through the adoption process for Alternative Providers
	Increased witness testing resource	We recognise that during particularly busy periods for renewable generation connections there may be occasions when we struggle to have enough engineers ready to witness the commissioning of your renewable generation project. We commit to increase the number of our trained Witness Testing resource to help facilitate connections during these peak connection points.
	Link box requirement	At the interface of an IDNO and DNO network there has historically been the need to have an interface point of isolation which separates the two networks. This has been required on both safety and customer service grounds and where DNOs have required it to be a part of the connections design the cost of its installation has been met by the ICP/IDNOs customer. There has been much debate about the efficiency of the link box and the fact that it adds an unnecessary cost to the IDNO which is construed as a barrier to entry in the competitive market. To resolve this issue we will no longer insist on these as standard and where deemed necessary by ourselves, we will fund these.

## Our work plan of commitments continued

	Commitment	Description
Getting Connected	Staged payments	We understand that for some, the prospect of paying upfront in full can sometimes be challenging. Customers have told us they would like us to offer the ability to pay in stages in more instances. We currently offer staged payments, if requested, for quotations greater than £100k. We will expand this offering by reducing the threshold, and/or offering staged payments as standard.
	Improve methods of payment online	We recognise that it is important for our customers to have a range of methods of payment to enable choice. Further to customer request, we will include Swift code and IBAN details on our payment details page of the SSEPD website and all other appropriate literature making it easier for customers to make payment to us.
Choice in Connections	Assistance with alternative options	We plan to continue to make all our customers aware that they have a choice when applying for a connection and assist with alternative options. If you want to investigate using an alternative provider to deliver your connection, on acceptance of your quotation we will contact you to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– explain what happens next; and,</li> <li>– provide you with guidance to ensure that you are clear on who does what and anything you have to do to progress your project.</li> </ul>
	Enhancing the Alternative providers register	We propose to improve the database on our website where alternative providers, and others who can help you with this process such as consultants, can register as 'active in our area'. This will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– be broken down into the geographical areas and electrical works that they are active in;</li> <li>– provide you with the facility to search for an alternative provider by what area they work in and what services they offer; and,</li> <li>– make it much easier for you to choose and contact an alternative provider.</li> <li>– include contact details to enable you to contact them directly.</li> <li>– allow for alternative providers to register for updates.</li> </ul>
	Quote with choice for all	We currently provide a quotation with a choice of acceptance options for the majority of our customers. We commit to improve this option by extending to all quotations automatically and simplifying the process. Going forward this will remain a single project from application to delivery, with no requirement for your alternative provider to make any additional application. This will ensure a single project number, single contract and single point of contact whether we or an alternative provider delivers your project.
	Quote to include alternative provider costs	Currently our quotations give you the option for us to do all works involved in your connection, or only those tasks that we require to do giving you the option to appoint an Alternative Provider. However additionally, should you appoint an Alternative Provider there may be additional design and assessment fees for your Alternative Provider should they carry out the project. Feedback from some of our customers is that they would like to see all costs in our quotations, so that they can understand the additional costs for their Alternative Provider. Going forward we propose to include these costs in our quotations so that you can make a more informed decision.
	Alternative provider delivering reinforcement	Where a customer wishes their Alternative Provider to carry our works required to reinforce our existing network associated with their project (and this is electrically and physically separate from our network so that their Alternative Provider can complete them), we will ensure their Alternative Provider has the opportunity to complete this reinforcement works.
	Extension of contestable works	We will extend the range of tasks that Alternative Providers can carry out. During this year we commit to reviewing our processes to allow competitors to undertake disconnections, service alterations and diversions for all voltage levels where they wish to.