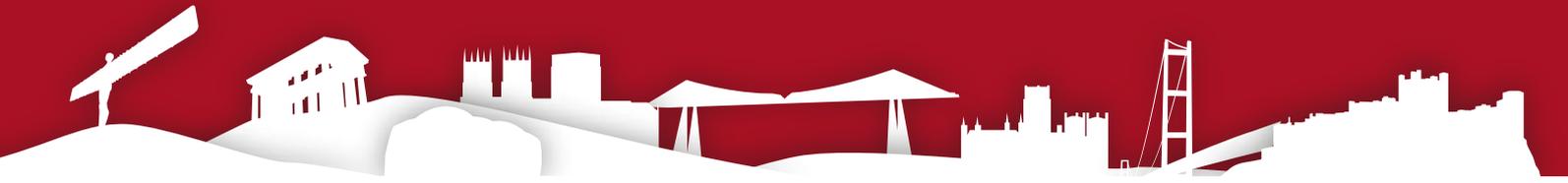


Ofgem Incentive on Connections Engagement

Northern Powergrid “Looking Back” Report
Distributed Generation 2014-15



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Who we are and what we do

Who we are and what we do

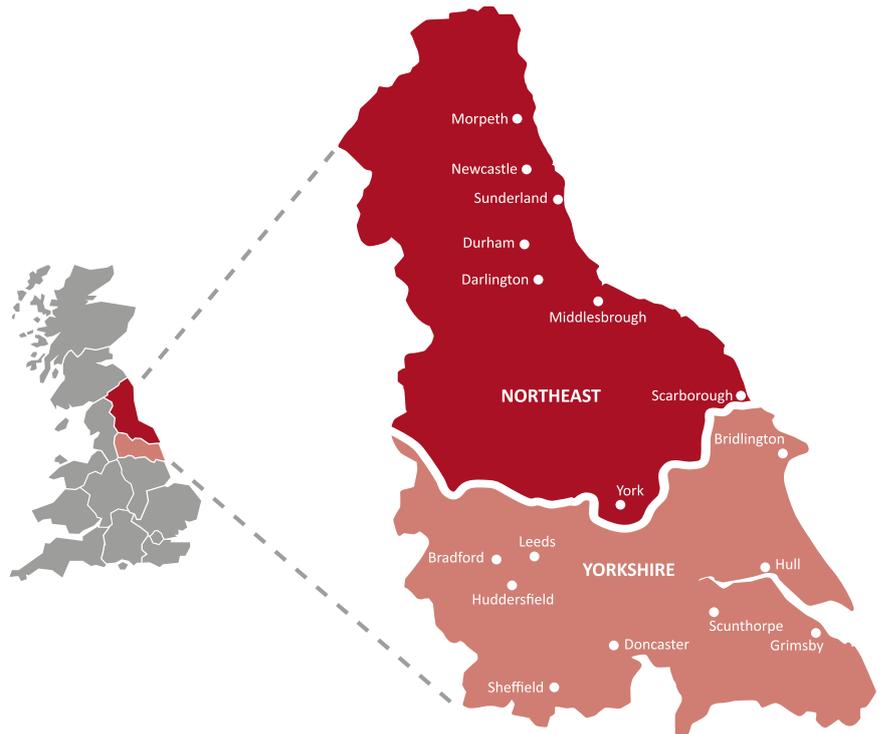
Northern Powergrid runs the only major electricity distribution network that provides power to customers in the Northeast, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire. We move electricity to and from homes and businesses over our network. We don't sell electricity, nor do we operate power stations.

We operate a network of more than 61,000 substations and around 91,000km of overhead power lines and underground cables that takes electricity from National Grid's transmission network and from smaller generators and delivers it to homes and businesses throughout the region.

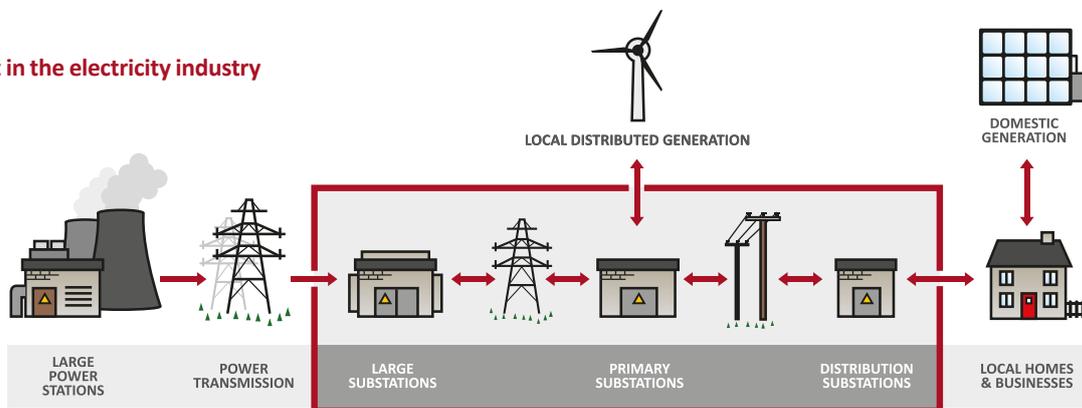
Keeping that network running safely, reliably and efficiently is our business. We are open for business every hour of every day of the year – no matter what the circumstances.

Demand customers, electricity generators and other distributors all require connections to our network. This report looks back on the year 2014-15 and focuses on what we have done to improve the connections service provided to the distributed generation (DG) sector. We operate as one company but we are regulated by the energy regulator, Ofgem, as two licensed businesses: Northern Powergrid (Northeast) Ltd and Northern Powergrid (Yorkshire) plc.

Note this map is a geographical representation of our licence areas.



Where we fit in the electricity industry



Executive Summary



"It is important that we are accountable for the promises we have made and this report identifies the positive steps that we have accomplished in improving service to generation customers against the plan we agreed."

Mike Hammond, Head of Connections Services



The distributed generation (DG) sector has continued to grow in importance over the last year with nearly 4200 enquiries leading to over 626 accepted quotations. Through our continued engagement with our DG stakeholders we have gained a much better understanding of the scope and range of the requirements of the DG sector. With stakeholders ranging from house builders and independent connections providers (ICPs) who wish to engage with us at a detailed technical level, to community energy groups for whom connecting their project to the electricity grid is a unique and demanding experience, we do our best to make sure that we provide the information and service that meets their needs.

Although we continue to engage regularly with customers to understand which areas of our connections process we should change and improve, if you are new to the sector or have not felt it necessary to engage with us so far we are keen to receive your views on the plan we have set.

Last year, as a pilot project we provided two reports for DG stakeholders setting out our achievements in the previous year 2013/14 and our action plan for continued improvement to our DG connections service for 2014/15.

This document reports on our progress in 2014/15 against the year's work plan. We have not achieved everything we set out to achieve in that plan. Some actions turned out to be harder to achieve than expected, either because of external events or other issues. In some cases we managed to achieve the desired outcome in a different way than we first proposed and we also managed to complete some of the actions early.

Of the 52 actions within the workplan, we completed 33 during the year. The remaining 19 have been included within our first Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) workplan for 2015/16 to ensure that they will be achieved. These actions include; a feasibility service, further improvements to our heatmaps, and continuing to work on active network management (ANM).

In this report, we describe how we have engaged with our DG stakeholders, and how well we have undertaken our work plan of activities and delivered against the planned outputs. Where we have failed or experienced problems or delays, we have explained why and what we are doing about it.

We have worked hard in 2014/15 to continue to improve the level of customer service given to our DG customers and to better understand the issues our customers face in getting a connection. This report seeks to demonstrate how our strategy, activities and outputs have been improved as a direct result of feedback from a broad range of DG stakeholders.

Overall we are pleased with the progress we have made but we are never satisfied. I would welcome your feedback, either directly or through one of our stakeholder events, about where you think we can improve our service.

I hope you find this report useful.

Mike Hammond
Head of Connections Services
Northern Powergrid

Introduction

Connecting customers’ premises to the electricity distribution network and making modifications to those connections is an important part of the work of a distribution network operator (DNO). Increasing amounts of distributed generation of varying output need to be connected to the distribution network and there are more accredited third parties are wishing to design and build their own networks to run for their customers or for adoption by the DNO. Connections is an area of growing complexity and one where an increasing number of stakeholders, not all of whom have previous experience of dealing within this sector, are involved. Northern Powergrid is keen to ensure that the needs and expectations of these customers are fully met.

Introducing competition where possible into the provision of new connections is the best way to ensure customers receive an efficient, cost-effective service. Northern Powergrid has been working hard to ensure that customers are aware of the choices open to them and to facilitate the provision of competitive services. To date, Northern Powergrid has been able to demonstrate to Ofgem that effective competition has developed in the largest (by value) of the designated connections market segments in the company’s distribution services areas (connections involving work at low voltage, but not above, high voltage). However, in the remaining market segments effective competition has yet to develop. In the absence of effective competition and in order to continue to encourage DNOs to provide the best possible connections service that meets the needs of all relevant

stakeholders in these market segments (detailed in Table 1), Ofgem has introduced the Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE) to operate from 1 April 2015.

ICE applies to all the relevant market segments where a DNO has not yet passed the competition test. For each licensee, the incentive carries a maximum penalty of up to 0.9% of base revenues to be shared evenly across the nine relevant market segments should we fail to perform to an acceptable standard. ICE is designed to ensure that we maintain our focus on the needs of our connections stakeholders by engaging and delivering the service that they request. For all market segments regardless of whether the competition test has been passed or not, DNOs must also comment on how they continue to promote the development of competition in connections.

Table 1: Summary of Relevant Market Segments

Metered Demand Connections	Low Voltage (LV) work: LV connection activities involving only LV work, other than in respect of the Excluded Market Segment.
	High Voltage (HV) work: LV or HV connection activities involving HV work (including where that work is required in respect of connection activities within an Excluded Market Segment).
	HV and Extra High Voltage (EHV) work: LV or HV connection activities involving EHV work.
	EHV work and above: extra high voltage and 132kV connection activities.
Metered Distributed Generation (DG)	LV work: low voltage connection activities involving only low voltage work.
	HV and EHV work: any connection activities involving work at HV or above.
Unmetered Connections	Local Authority (LA) work: new connection activities in respect of LA premises.
	Private finance initiatives (PFI) work: new connection activities under PFIs.
	Other work: all other non-LA and non-PFI unmetered connections work.

We carried out a pilot ICE exercise for distributed generation connections for 2014-15, in which we published a ‘Looking Forward’ report outlining our proposed improvement plan for the DG sector for 2014/15. This document is Northern Powergrid’s ‘Looking Back’ report on progress achieved against our plan actions proposed in our 2014/15 Looking Forward report.

Stakeholder Engagement



Northern Powergrid Stakeholder Strategy

Northern Powergrid’s approach to stakeholder engagement is to:

- ▶ Align stakeholder engagement to business priorities to ensure it is meaningful and makes a difference
- ▶ Translate feedback from stakeholders into improved services and business performance
- ▶ Research, benchmark, and adopt best practice from other organisations
- ▶ Embed stakeholders in every aspect of the Northern Powergrid culture; aligning our employees and service providers to stakeholder experience and needs
- ▶ Take a holistic approach to stakeholder engagement that is tailored, multi-layered and multi-channelled to meet the needs of our large and diverse range of stakeholders
- ▶ Keep pace with new and emerging markets and developments to ensure that our stakeholder mapping reflects current and potential future stakeholders
- ▶ Listen to, communicate our response to and, most importantly, act on the feedback we collect.

As an electricity network operator, we have a customer base of 3.9 million and serve a diverse population of some 8.3 million people. Many of our customers don’t know who we are until their lights go out. We’ve made it our business to increase our profile and talk to our customers, our communities and wider stakeholders, about what they require from our connections business. As we have such a large number of potential and existing stakeholders, it’s important not only to know who they are, but to feel confident that we can categorise and prioritise them. This principle is integral to effective delivery; it’s not always desirable or often necessary, to reach stakeholders with the same level of intensity but it allows us to target our stakeholders accurately and with purpose. Stakeholders are categorised according to the level of impact our plans and decisions may have on them, directly or indirectly, and the influence that they have in helping us to achieve successful outcomes. Our published stakeholder strategy places repeat connections customers in our top priority stakeholder group. This means that we use face to face meetings, a named Northern Powergrid contact and have a direct one-to-one relationship with them.

We run our overall stakeholder strategy through the following groups:

Stakeholder Engagement Management Group (SEMG)

The SEMG is a monthly meeting of the senior managers from across the business who are responsible for stakeholder issues, important stakeholder groups or for stakeholder feedback on which action is needed. The group is supported by individuals with responsibility to report on aspects of stakeholder engagement. The group’s main function is to plan and carry out the delivery of the stakeholder strategy, as well as responding to and acting on the resulting feedback. Each priority area, including connections, has a stakeholder plan in place and a lead within the business. These plans track activity, feedback and actions/outcomes.

Stakeholder Panel

Our Stakeholder Panel meets on a quarterly basis and comprises a cross section of senior stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors, including representatives of organisations such as Redrow Homes, Sainsbury’s supermarkets, Northumberland National Park and Leeds City Council street-lighting. The panel hears presentations from across our business, including from Network Connections, on our latest work and projects, and provides valuable feedback for directors and managers to act upon.



Who our ICE stakeholders are

The stakeholders who have an interest in our DG connections activities are diverse. They range from large organisations such as local authorities and major house builders down to community groups and individuals. As well as customers for new connections, they include representative groups and trade bodies, engineering consultants and service providers such as independent connections providers and independent distribution network operators. Many have detailed experience and knowledge of the connections process and the options available, but there are increasing numbers of stakeholders, such as those involved in community energy projects, who may have complex needs but have little experience or detailed technical knowledge, we have taken on board previous feedback from our engagement in 2013 to ensure community energy requirements are met in our ICE submission for 2015/16. Our aim is to provide a service which specifically meets the needs of each one of these stakeholders.

ICE stakeholder engagement governance

Connections customers comprise one of our top priority stakeholder groups, and so we apply a rigorous and intensive management regime to our stakeholder engagement and follow-up. The stakeholder engagement project team for this part of our business (now the ICE project team) is made up of senior managers representing the different aspects of the connections process. Members of the team update progress in their areas against the ICE work plan at the beginning of each month. The project team itself meets on a monthly basis to discuss overall progress, cross-departmental actions, new additions to the plan and proposed responses to stakeholder engagement during the previous month. Every quarter, the updated work plan is released on our

website alongside a summary letter that summarises the progress made, any complete actions and any additional actions.

To ensure full alignment between the connections stakeholder engagement strategy and Northern Powergrid’s wider stakeholder engagement strategy and to strive for continuous improvement, in March 2015 we reviewed our governance and reporting processes and agreed several actions. In particular, the 2015 external audit to maintain external accreditation under the Stakeholder Engagement Standard AA1000 will review specifically the strategy for connections stakeholder engagement.

Connections stakeholder engagement activity

We actively engage with our connections customers through multiple channels to seek their views. In 2014-15 we held three customer forums, for our connections stakeholders. The third was as a result of increased interest in the availability of DG connections on our network. The key purpose of our connections customer stakeholder sessions is to discuss progress we are making against our service improvement initiatives, discuss issues that together we face as an industry and importantly to give customers the ability to tell us how we are performing and how they would like us to improve.

We have used the output from these engagements and the requests from our customers to inform our ICE work plan. We maintain a close working relationship with our stakeholders and a continual dialogue with them. In this way we can properly understand their requirements, test our proposed responses against these requirements and ensure that the ensuing action will achieve their desired outcomes. We maintain dialogue after the action has been completed to ensure that the stakeholder’s need has been fully met.

Through this our customers can gauge whether or not what we are intending to do aligns with their requirements and can measure our performance.

Giving access to technical specialists

As well as the forum events in 2014-15 we have continued to operate monthly design surgeries where customers can discuss the details of their project with one of our design or commercial engineers and explore any technical or commercial issues. Northern Powergrid was the first DNO to launch this service (in 2011). These sessions are popular with connections customers, who continue to make good use of the availability of key experts to resolve issues well before they can materialise on the critical path of the delivery of their project. Our ICP connections surgeries were attended by 15 companies from September 2014 to May 2015, and in 2014 our connections customer surgeries have been attended by 61 customers from 32 companies.

Making our experts accessible

Part of continuous improvement of customer service is to maximise the use of web technology. In cases where customers are unable to attend a surgery or prefer anyway, they can receive the same level of engagement via our online [“Ask the Expert”](#) request process, where the customer interacts with our technical or commercial experts electronically. In 2014 we received and responded to 201 enquiries via this method. This method of communication is not only used to resolve customer’s problems and to give advice, but it is a useful method by which customers feedback their requirements and views about the service we provide.

Stakeholder Engagement

Using market research to good effect

In January 2014, we utilised Explain, a market research company, to run a customer satisfaction survey with our DG customers in order to gain additional verbatim and drive the workplan. Overall, satisfaction scores were good across most areas of the connections process, particularly the process of designing and quoting the project and then carrying out on-site work. Customers gave an 86% satisfaction score for the dealings they had with a design engineer, where 51% of respondents had contact with a Northern Powergrid designer before receiving their quotation and 53% after. Mean scores of 81% and 79% respectively were achieved for the time it took to complete works and the professionalism of Northern Powergrid’s on-site workforce. As a result of this satisfaction survey we were able to use the feedback received to identify a further 15 actions for our workplan in order to meet our customers’ requirements.



Keeping customers informed

Customer connections events are held every six months. In 2014/15, these events were in June 2014 and November 2014 with a dedicated DG event held in May 2014. Our most recent customer connections event took place on 14 May 2015. The briefings provide a forum for us to share our improvements and ideas with customers and gather their feedback and suggestions on further improvements going forward. We find these events are invaluable in helping us to understand the issues being faced by our customers and to help us to learn how we can provide a better service to suit their needs. We aim to use these events to keep customers informed of developments happening within the electricity connections industry that might be important to customers; to keep customers abreast of the improvement plans we have in place and to allow us to share and learn from customers’ experiences. These events provide opportunities throughout the day for customers to speak to our team, who are always delighted to discuss any of the topics covered in the presentations and any other issues that are of interest.

Overarching themes from our stakeholder engagement

Each activity in our work plans derives either from a specific request from a stakeholder or from ideas generated within Northern Powergrid to help address more general concerns and wishes expressed to us by stakeholders. In each case, we have gone back to the stakeholder making the specific request or stakeholders more generally to ensure that the action proposed meets their need and, once the action is complete, we shall be consulting stakeholders again on whether in practice we met the need expressed.

Our extensive stakeholder engagement programme has been taking place since the beginning of 2013, initially as part of the preparation of our well justified business plan submission and then more recently as part of ICE.

As a result, we have been made aware of the key issues that stakeholders believe contribute to good customer service:

- ▶ Simpler and faster application process
- ▶ Access to specialists to discuss project solutions
- ▶ A more personal tailored approach to relationship management
- ▶ Flexible quotation offers and acceptance terms
- ▶ Project delivery in line with customer’s project timescales
- ▶ Ease of access to generation specific industry information
- ▶ Improved means of digital communication
- ▶ Information that explains the connections process and the availability of competition.

Within our 2014/15 service improvement plan we categorised customers’ wishes into seven different areas, against which we have pursued a number of actions:

1. Customer Service
2. Application Process
3. Information Provision
4. Technical Developments
5. Charging
6. Choice and Competition
7. Stakeholder Engagement

We have set out to describe the actions we have undertaken and the outcomes we have achieved in these areas throughout the following sections of this report.

Workplan Progress



1 Customer Service

1.1 Monitor Customer Satisfaction

1.1.1 Action – Ensure customer feedback is appropriately captured and that tangible improvement opportunities are recorded, realised and communicated (throughout 2014-15)

Outcome - Achieved

We continually review feedback from our customers and monitor both the outputs and benefits. One of the ways in which we receive feedback is via our ‘online community’ at <https://northern-powergrid.explainonline.co.uk>, where we now have a dedicated page for DG customers, which allows us to collect opinions and perceptions from the DG community using online surveys and polls.

Throughout 2014 we have sought the views of an extensive range of DG customers:

- ▶ In January 2014, we contacted around 500 DG customers who had received a quotation within the last 12 months, and 150 of them participated in our customer satisfaction survey. We are using the feedback to enhance our DG plan for 2015/16. The report is available at <https://northern-powergrid.explainonline.co.uk>.
- ▶ During April 2014, we also sent 270 DG customers a copy of our improvement plan for comment and feedback.
- ▶ In July 2014, we notified over 4,000 DG customers of Ofgem’s open letter to the next steps in the Competition test, and sent our ICE part 2 Looking Back Plan 2013/14 to 500 DG customers.
- ▶ In August 2014, we notified over 500 DG customers and stakeholders of the launch of our availability maps. On the first day of the launch, 280 customers viewed our website and to date we have had over 2000 visits to this site.

▶ In quarter 3, 2014, alone we added 15 more actions to our DG plan as a result of stakeholder engagement. The feedback has been extremely useful.

▶ At our Connections stakeholder event on 13 November 2014 we demonstrated our online quotation system and network availability maps to 63 customers (including DG customers) representing 33 major companies. The reaction and feedback from our customers was positive with customers liking the fact that they can quickly get a quotation and view hot spots on our network. Our customers have given us some feedback that we have reviewed and incorporated into our forthcoming ICE plans, with improvements to take place on the information held about each primary substation and also publishing location data.

1.2 Helping Customers get Connected

1.2.2 Action – Establish key account management for regular DG customers and implement in RIIO ED1 (by March 2015)

Outcome – Deferred to December 2016

In May 2013, we established a proof of concept for our key account management approach as part of our preparation for our RIIO ED1 business plan submission. The full implementation of this approach will not be completed until the end of 2016, because of resource constraints and the need to prioritise other actions. In the interim we continue to adopt this approach where ever possible using our senior commercial engineers and managers.

1.2.4 Action – Five day communication standard on receipt of a customer’s application (by March 2015)

Outcome – Deferred for implementation in 2015/16 ICE plan

We are imposing a new internal standard to contact customers within 5 days of their acceptance of a quotation. This has proved more complex to introduce than originally envisaged, so this improvement will now be implemented in our 2015/16 ICE workplan

1.2.5 Action – Five days communication standard upon receipt of a complete job pack to discuss work dates (by March 2015)

Outcome – Deferred for implementation in our 2015/16 ICE plan

We are going to implement a new five day internal standard and process; upon receipt of customers completed job pack a designer will be in touch within five days to discuss the job and associated delivery dates. This has also proved more complex to introduce than originally envisaged so this improvement will now be included in our 2015/16 ICE plan

1.3 Resourcing

1.3.3 Action – Continue to develop a DG engagement model in line with RIIO ED1 Incentive on Customer Engagement (ICE)

Outcome – Achieved

Our Pilot DG ICE plan was submitted to Ofgem on time in April 2014. The “Looking Back” DG report for 2013/14 was submitted on time in June 2014. We received several responses to our ICE plan consultation which we used to develop our plan for 2015-16 for DG and other market segments. In order to gain a more in depth view of customer requirements, we carried out more detailed questioning of those customers who responded to our earlier consultation or had contacted us by other means. Their comments have been taken into account in developing our 2015/16 ICE plans.

Workplan Progress

2 Application Process

2.1 Feasibility Studies

2.1.1 Action – Working collaboratively with other DNOs, review existing feasibility study service and consider how it might be enhanced to better meet customer requirements. Consult with customers and stakeholders (by June 20 14)

Outcome – Deferred for implementation in our 2015/16 ICE plan

We continue to monitor the uptake of this service already introduced in Scottish Power (SPEN) who have had a wide range of responses from customers, varying from a lack of interest in the service to some minor changes to the model. Should SPEN confirm that customers are actively using this option and the connections offers are being converted into accepted projects, we will look to introduce as soon as practicable and as such have included this action in our 2015/16 ICE plan.

2.1.2 Action – Communicate the outcome of changes in our feasibility study process (by August 2014)

Outcome – Deferred for implementation in our 2015/16 ICE plan

As this action is dependent upon the outcome of action 2.1.1, the milestone was deferred. Once we have introduced our “quote plus” service, we shall communicate the fact on our website and via a customer brief.

2.3 Quotation Validity Period

2.3.4 Action – Extend quotation validity period from 90 days to 180 days (by March 2015)

Outcome – Action no longer required

This action was our ‘minded to’ position in our RIIO ED1 business plan. However, on further consideration, and taking account of likely increasing levels of DG activity on constrained parts of the network,

we have concluded that extending the quotation validity period further does not benefit customers as it would contribute to network capacity being ‘locked’ for extended periods and would affect the make-up of offers as prices are difficult to hold for such extended periods of time.

2.5 Online Application Process

2.5.3 Action – Develop a suite of electronic G59 application forms (by June 2014)

Outcome – Deferred for implementation in our 2015/16 ICE plan

In April 2013, we introduced an online G59 application available at:

<http://www.northernpowergrid.com/generation-connection-guide>

To further, assist our customers with generation applications, we are extending this action and developing multiple online application processes which will split the electronic application forms into below 50kW, up to 200kW and above 200kW. The delivery date for these online services has moved to the end of 2015 to enable additional self-serve offerings to be developed online in the meantime.

2.5.4 Action – Make available web communication channels to improve the ease of access and the submission of G83 stage one notifications (by June 2014)

Outcome – Achieved early

The online notification process for G83/2 Single Premises Procedure was launched on 18 April 2014. The new process enables all G83 installers to notify us of their installations within the required 30-day period via the Northern Powergrid website.

2.6 Reducing Timescales

2.6.1 Action – Reduce quotation timescales by 30% between April 2014 and March 2015

Outcome – Not achieved

The table below indicates our April 2015 position compared with our April 2014 figures.

2.6.2 Action – Reduce connection timescales by 30% between April 2014 and March 2015

Outcome – Not achieved

This target will be enabled by changes in our application processes, more information provided on our website and a review of our resource requirements.

2.6.1 Reduce Quotation Timescales by 30% between April 2014 and March 2015				
Average Time to Quote	April 2014	April 2015	Change (Day)	Change (Percentage)
LV	35.85	34.98	-0.87	-2.4%
HV	57.70	52.54	-5.16	-8.94%
EHV	84.74	67.62	-17.12	-20.20%

2.6.2 Reduce Connection Timescales by 30% between April 2014 and March 2015				
Average Time to Quote	April 2014	April 2015	Change (Day)	Change (Percentage)
LV	33.35	32.73	-0.62	-1.85%
HV	46.25	45.42	-0.83	-1.79%
EHV	62.05	59.46	-2.59	-4.17%



3 Information Provision

3.1 Information on LV(HV) Network, Voltage Issues and Plans

3.1.1 Action – Develop an area of our website which will provide specific information about our generation connection process and connection to our network (by September 2014)

Outcome – Achieved

In 2013 we made some initial improvements to our website to include more information about small scale embedded generation and large generation projects. We provided help information on the different DG application processes through a generation connection guide, alongside having separate information areas specific to size of connection. This information can be viewed on our website at:

<http://www.northernpowergrid.com/generation-connection-guide>

In doing this, we identified a number of other areas for DG web enhancements. These are now complete, including a refresh of the DG part of the website, an online indicative pricing tool and publication within our document library of DG specific code of practices and functional specifications for EHV customers, which will be updated at least annually.

3.1.3 Action – Continue to develop an online DG knowledge base, including a help and advice facility and a DG specific frequently asked questions web page (by December 2014)

Outcome – Achieved

The help and information section of our website has now been enhanced to include DG specific frequently asked questions. Throughout 2015-16, we will continue to enhance this using feedback from our DG stakeholders, and extend it to include more accurate specifications and case studies, with indicative costs and timescales.

3.1.4 Action – Production and publication of heat maps for demand and generation at HV and EHV substations (by December 2014)

Outcome – Achieved early

The demand and generation availability maps were launched in August 2014. The heat maps will save customers from making an application in an area where our network is constrained, and areas which will struggle to support any more generation connections.

The introduction of our new mains record system during quarter three 2015 will enable the development of interactive heat maps. We expect that these can be utilised by the end of quarter four 2015.

3.2 Information on our website

3.2.1 Action – Improve visibility of contact details on our website (by September 2014)

Outcome – Achieved

Our customers informed us that our contact details for the DG sector on the website are not as easy to locate as they should be so we redesigned the “My Account” section of our customer’s online applications to include the assigned engineers name and contact details. Completed by September 2014.

3.2.2 Action – Improve the visibility and content of our process flow charts (by September 2014)

Outcome – Deferred for implementation in our 2015/16 ICE plan

We already offer a process flow chart on our website for customers but recognise that applications vary based on size. As such, we are developing an application guide which will include the information required, how a customer can find it and how this information will be used in our process. Because of work on redesigning the website and developing the self-serve online quotation tool taking higher priority, work on this action will now take place in our 2015/16 ICE plan.



Workplan Progress

4 Technical Development

4.1 Innovation Collation and Rollout of Learning from the Customer-Led Network Revolution Project

4.1.1 Action – Assess alternative connection options offering the potential to reduce connection costs and timescales with a sample of DG developers (throughout 2014-15)

Outcome – Achieved

As part of our business as usual activities we continue to discuss and offer various connections solutions both inside and outside of the monthly surgeries, details of which can be located at <https://www.northernpowergrid.com/customer-events-and-surgeries>.

We are told by our customers that the surgeries offer a good opportunity for discussing jobs that are either at an early stage in the planning process or ongoing. We average 3 people/ companies per surgery.

4.1.2 Action – Publish analysis of available headroom on a selected sample of distribution networks, from trials of the LCN technologies (field trials to be complete by June 2014 and headroom assessment to be published in December 2014)

Outcome – Achieved

All smart grid equipment for real time thermal rating, demand side response, energy storage and automatic voltage control was installed and commissioned in 2013. The network trials commenced in October 2013 and were completed by September 2014. We published our findings on headroom assessments at the end of December 2014 in the report “[Optimal Solutions for Smarter Network Businesses](#)”. Our ICE plan incorporates an action that will see Active Network Management (ANM) trials further explored with a view to implementing it as a commercial offering in 2016.

4.1.3 Action – Publish analysis of generation profile data (including PV and Micro-CHP installations) which may influence GB distribution policy for the benefit of customers (by August 2014)

Outcome – Achieved

We published analysis of generation profiles at the end of 2012 for 160 larger DG customers, gathered over a 2 year period from 2009 to 2011 and in August 2014 for small scale PV and for Micro-CHP installations.



4.1.4 Action – Develop a prototype design tool that will allow designers to run connections network assessments. This will enable studies into whether new smart grid technologies could be used in new connections instead of more expensive traditional reinforcement (by December 2014)

Outcome – Achieved

Our prototype Network Planning and Design Decision Support (NPADDs) tool, specified and developed in collaboration with EA Technology Ltd, provides decision support to assess new and old design solutions, performs cost benefit analysis and offers the designer the most cost-effective solution. The prototype went through final acceptance testing on 17 December 2014. An enduring specification that could take the NPADDs tool through to full production was completed at the end of December 2014. This learning experience will influence the specification for the new design tool, to be utilised within Northern Powergrid.

4.2 Capacity

4.2.3 Action – Adapt our business in offering Active Network Management (ANM) for generation connections in future (throughout)

Outcome – Ongoing

We continue to develop Active Network Management (ANM) solutions and are looking to start offering connections with ANM as part of our business as usual practices in 2016.

We attended a knowledge sharing seminar with the other DNOs on 16 September 2014 in London to look at what we were all doing in terms of facilitating quicker, cheaper and suitable offers. However, there is not as yet, a suitable commercial offering that is generally applicable. All DNOs will, however, continue to run trials. We intend to continue monitoring our test network in the Driffield area in order to create a commercial offering that can be used throughout the business.





4.3 Consistency in Standards Interpretation

4.3.1 Action – Make recommendations to update the ENA engineering technical report ‘ETR 130 (July 2016) Application Guide for Assessing the Capacity of Networks Containing Distributed Generation’ based on the outputs from item 4.1.3 (by December 2014)

Outcome – Achieved early

The ETR 130 standards review and recommendations paper was completed in partnership with EA Technology Ltd ahead of schedule and this work is included in the report [‘Review of the Distribution Network Planning & Design Standards for the Future Low Carbon Electricity System’](#) which was published in October 2014

4.3.2 Action – Work collaboratively with other DNOs to actively participate in any new opportunities or trials to improve technology within the LCN Funded arena and develop further links with other DNOs and stakeholders (by December 2014)

Outcome – Achieved

We have participated in workshops and knowledge dissemination events / webinars with:

SSE – Orkney Active Network Management

SSE – Shetland NINES Energy storage trials

SP – North Wales Real-time thermal rating outputs

SP – Cumbernauld Flexible Networks demonstration

WPD – Lincolnshire Low Carbon Hub

WPD – Project Falcon demand-side response trials

WPD – Distribution Networks: A Balancing Act

ENW – CLASS (Customer Load Active System Services)

In October 2014, we presented findings from the CLNR project at the Low Carbon Networks & Innovation conference in Aberdeen.

Use of Legacy Projects and Strategic Development

4.3.3 Action – Publish details of significant generation projects to share best practice (by December 2014)

Outcome – For implementation in our 2015/16 ICE plan

Feedback from customers and others suggests that, rather than publish case studies, it would be preferable to publish improved guidance on what should be included in our application forms. We have included this action in our 2015/16 ICE plan to publish guidance and hold a webinar for our customers.

5 Charging

5.3 Pricing Reviews

5.3.1 Action – Carry out quarterly reviews of pricing (throughout 2014-15)

Outcome – Achieved

Our prices are reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure we are cost reflective. We review all elements of contract, labour and materials. We carry out extensive analysis which then gets approved as prices are net neutral or as an increase/decrease.

6 Choice and Competition

6.1 Address Barriers of Competition

6.1.5 Action – Provide access for ICP customers to a ‘technical helpline’ to answer technical, policy and standards questions (by March 2015)

Outcome – Superseded by work on the proposed Code of Practice on Competition in Connections (for completion in September 2015).

6.1.6 Action – Introduce technical workshops and hot desk facilities for ICPs to improve access to our systems and information (by March 2015)

Outcome – Achieved

We expanded our monthly ICP surgeries in quarter 2 of 2014, to allow ICPs to come and discuss any technical issues they may have. We have also made hot desk facilities available at our Dewsbury depot with access to the required technical information and specialist advice from our ICP team.

6.1.8 Action – Provide a web based environment for ICPs (by November 2014)

Outcome – Achieved

Following comments made by our customers, we completed a review of our website and as a result launched a new Competition in Connection specific web page dedicated to providing information within this area in November 2014. You can access it at the following hyperlink; <http://www.northernpowergrid.com/competition-in-connections>



Workplan Progress



6.1.9 Action – Introduce a self-determination point of connection process for HV (by December 2014)

Outcome – For implementation in our 2015/16 ICE plan

We continue to work on self-determination point of connection for HV. As a result of the Code of Practice on Competition in Connections we have included this action within our ICE workplan for delivery by September. This action will be delivered late due to the quick design rules taking longer to draft than initially visualised.

6.1.10 Action – Remove the two stage design approval process (by July 2014)

Outcome – Complete

Following comments from ICPs who stated our two stage design approval process was unnecessarily cumbersome and complex, we removed this in July 2014, and are now in line with other DNOs by offering a single stage design approval process.

7 Stakeholder Engagement

7.2 Customer Feedback Seminars

7.2.2 Action – Continue to organise twice yearly customer engagement events (throughout 2014-15)

Outcome – Achieved

We hold twice yearly customer engagement events which are attended by a wide range of customers, whether they have projects in our licence area or not. The 2014 events took place at the National Railway Museum in York on 18 June, where 24 customers attended, and 13 November, when 63 customers representing 33 companies attended. At the latter event, 10 customers provided us with feedback direct to camera and all of the customers were asked to complete a feedback card and list the 3 main areas where they would like to see us improve.



7.4 Support the DG Fora

7.4.2 Action – Work collaboratively with other DNOs to support and participate in the 2014 DG Fora (throughout 2014-15)

Outcome – Achieved

We successfully supported the DG Fora during September 2014, with Northern Powergrid representatives attending all three events, in London, Cardiff and Glasgow. The outputs will be reviewed and appropriately actioned within the DG-DNO Steering Group.

7.5 Customer Updates

7.5.1 Action – Provide quarterly E-bulletins surrounding DG news (throughout 2014-15)

Outcome – Achieved

In July we sent an E-bulletin to 500 DG customers with access to our DG part 2 Looking Back plan. We also made this available to our customers via our dedicated DG online community page.

In August we sent an E-bulletin to 500 DG customers to notify them of our availability maps.

In October we notified over 1000 customers of a change in our procedures for firm quotations, whereby we now require confirmation that the enquirer is landowner/occupiers or their nominated agents. We continue to issue a company-wide E-bulletin on a monthly basis to our stakeholders, which includes connections as one of its key topics.

Outputs for year ending 31 March 2015



Table 1 - Section 16			
Time to Quote (Including days paused) ¹			
Market Segment	Min	Max	Average
LV Generation	0	266	41
HV and EHV Generation	0	392	69
Time to Connect (Acceptance to connection) ²			
Market Segment	Min	Max	Average
LV Generation	24	343	96
HV and EHV Generation	39	556	165
Volumes Of Quotations 2014/15			
Market Segment	Volumes Of Enquiries	Volumes Of Quotes	Volumes of Acceptances
LV Generation	1793	1254	335
HV and EHV Generation	1681	732	242

Table 2 – SLC 15 Performance			
Time to Quote (Including days paused) ¹			
Market Segment	Min	Max	Average
LV Generation	3	266	41
HV and EHV Generation	0	392	69
Time to Connect (Acceptance to connection) ²			
Market Segment	Min	Max	Average
LV Generation	24	343	96
HV and EHV Generation	39	556	154
Volumes Of Quotations 2014/15			
Market Segment	Volumes Of Enquiries	Volumes Of Quotes	Volumes of Acceptances
LV Generation	63	29	13
HV and EHV Generation	603	325	36

¹From receipt of an acceptable application to the date of the quotation including days on pause whilst we await further information.

²From receipt of a customer acceptance to the date the connection is joined onto our network (though perhaps not energised)



Contact us regarding our plan

As an essential service at Northern Powergrid we believe that our customers and other stakeholders are the best judges of our performance and we always want to hear your views and opinions on the services we provide and your ideas for what we could be doing. If you would like to comment, you can contact us in a number of ways:

By email

yourpowergrid@northernpowergrid.com

On twitter

[@northpowergrid](https://twitter.com/northpowergrid)

Via our online community

northern-powergrid.explainonline.co.uk

And online at:

www.northernpowergrid.com

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