Stakeholder Engagement 2014

Engaging effectively and efficiently

Placing stakeholders at the centre of our business
ABOUT US

Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution own the local electricity networks that serve around 2.8 million customers in central southern England and 740,000 customers in the north of Scotland. Local networks distribute electricity from the national transmission system to homes and businesses, and our two networks are comprised of 106,000 substations and 130,000 km of overhead lines and underground cables across one third of the UK.

Our first priority is to provide a safe and reliable supply of electricity to the communities we serve in Scotland and England. We achieve this by:

- Operating our network assets effectively to ‘keep the lights on’
- Maintaining our assets so they remain reliable
- Repairing our assets in the event of a fault
- Improving and upgrading the existing networks or building new ones allowing additional electricity connections

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I am pleased to present the Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution 2013/14 Stakeholder Engagement report.

It is now in our culture to engage. Each business unit across our company has work plans at unit, team and individual level which show the role they have in delivering these engagement activities.

Stakeholder Engagement for us this year has never been more important, happening as it has against the backdrop of some of the most extreme weather in living memory. Our stakeholders in central southern England have experienced five major storms and 31 significant weather events.

During 2013/14, as well as using traditional methods of engagement, we sought new and exciting ways to communicate with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible – including those whom we historically have had limited contact. As a result we have identified five key areas of mutual interest, giving our stakeholders the opportunity to genuinely influence our actions and directly inform our initiatives.

I believe our activities in 2013/14 firmly demonstrate our open and committed approach to implementing change in direct response to stakeholder feedback. At the end of the year we checked back with stakeholders to make sure that our engagement had delivered beneficial outcomes for them. I was delighted to find that in all the areas we focussed on, stakeholders said that we had delivered positive change for them.

Stuart Hogarth
Director of Distribution
Our stakeholder engagement approach

We introduced our current approach in 2012/13 and set out our Engagement Values which are listed below. We established a robust framework to house specific activities and initiatives that we constantly review, refine and improve. We have an engagement process that has clear values, reliable data and is operated in accordance with audited and accredited processes and standards.

It is intentionally designed to be ‘two-way’, enabling us to both inform and obtain feedback from you, our stakeholders. The process is delivered by highly experienced and committed personnel, has robust governance procedures, appropriate monitoring, audit and evaluation processes built in and enjoys full Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution (SSEPD) board backing.

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

We are committed to placing you at the centre of our business planning and improvement processes. We can’t do this without knowing what you want and need.

1. Identifying of our stakeholders

We have developed a list of stakeholders who we felt could add particular insight into our day-to-day business and RIIO-ED1 business planning process. We have created a centralised stakeholder contact and record management system to enable us to actively manage engagement across the business. This is managed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and ISO 9001:2008.

2. Understanding our relationship with our stakeholders

We have categorised our stakeholders based upon our existing relationships with them; the level of influence they have over our business plan and processes; and their interest in helping us shape it.

3. Actively engaging our stakeholders

We offer a range of ways to engage with us: interviewer administered surveys; written consultation documents; audio recorded focus groups with electronic audience response system; on-line surveys; structured interviews with stakeholders; stakeholder meetings, events, forums and workshops; and customer voice groups. With our stakeholders in mind, we will continually monitor and evaluate our mechanisms of engagement to ensure they sustain constructive engagement.

4. Informing our stakeholders

We will produce and regularly update our stakeholder engagement and communication plan which will provide stakeholders with enough information, and in a format they want, to enable them to participate in key debates.

5. Listening and responding to stakeholders

We will publish key themes arising from our stakeholder consultation processes and our response to them so that our stakeholders know what action we will be taking both to improve our internal processes and how it has informed our business plan.

6. Being accessible to our stakeholders

We are committed to being open and easy to talk to.

We were delighted with the positive outcomes that we were able to report on last year and in 2013/14 our stakeholder engagement activities – and the benefits that have resulted – demonstrate our ongoing commitment and also reflect the growing maturity of our approach as we act upon feedback and introduce new and innovative ways to engage with those we serve.
We have a long history of working with you to improve our business. We are confident that we have the correct foundation and rigour around these processes, and that they complement the way we run our business, thereby enabling us to continue serving your best interests, supporting growth in our communities and most importantly, keeping the lights on.

### Planning our engagement this year

During our RIIO-ED1 Business plan consultation we gained an understanding of what you expect from us in terms of safety, customer service, supply reliability, environment, connections and social obligations.

From this, we planned and delivered a programme that focussed on these priorities across five areas of mutual interest:

- Preparing for emergencies
- Targeting our communications
- Priority Services Register
- Innovating to keep customer bills low
- Making it easier to connect

At the end of the year, we checked to make sure that our engagement activities had delivered beneficial outcomes. We commissioned focus groups and in-depth interviews so that we could better understand those benefits and how our stakeholders perceived our programme of engagement. The overriding feedback is that our proactive approach makes you feel listened and responded to, which instils trust in our business.

### Summary of 2013/14 engagement activities

We’ve held, presented at or engaged with you across 158 events this year, some examples of these are:

- Connections and DG events, surgeries and workshops
- Open Days/Behind the scenes and Fun Days with Resilience Partners, Councils, Community and Parish Councils and the General Public/Young Stakeholders
- Storm Response Sessions
- Industry events
- Innovation conferences
- Vulnerable Customer Awareness workshops and events

In total 4,671 stakeholders have attended these events giving us a wealth of feedback on every aspect of our business.

A total of 3,836 responses have been received via surveys and interviews offering more specific comments, ideas and support to our initiatives.

One of the ways we ensure our engagement strategy is embedded within our business is to insist on SSEPD board approval on any key changes we make through stakeholder engagement. This ensures that every part of our business is involved with our day-to-day engagement activities.
Preparing for Emergencies

When there is a power cut, our core task is to restore power to our customers as quickly as possible. However, we know the impact power cuts have on people. That’s why we implement practical, on the ground support for customers who are without power for a prolonged period.

This practical help ranges from welfare units which carry charging points for phones and laptops, offer hot food and drinks in addition to up-to-date information of estimated restoration times to small generators for customers who are dependent on medical equipment.

We accelerated our programme of engagement around resilience planning and the support we offer to customers accordingly in 2013/14. This proved timely as both our networks have been hit with unprecedented severe weather this year, causing multiple faults. These periods have provided us with many opportunities to improve the services we offer, with feedback from our resilience partners and customers supporting those changes.

Active Partners in Resilience Planning

Resilience Planning Partnerships (RPPs) and Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) coordinate multi-agency arrangements to deal with emergencies such as long power cuts. We engage with a number of key partners, including Police, Fire & Rescue, Ambulance Service, Coastguard, 4x4 Rescue, Local and National Government, NHS, Environment agencies and voluntary agencies such as the British Red Cross. Following emergencies we debrief them to identify what went well and where we can improve our response.

Engagement reveals the importance of understanding each partner’s duties and processes, and respecting our individual styles of working and communicating, as this will help us to improve our collective response in an emergency.

Throughout the winter season and the extreme weather which resulted, we assisted, and in turn were assisted by, these partners, coordinated response to customers affected by storm damage, flood water and power loss. Our partners helped to provide welfare options for vulnerable stakeholders, communications, equipment, support staff and asset monitoring during what was an exceptionally busy period. We in turn were able to quickly provide our partners with essential information efficiently on operational infrastructure within certain areas, allowing partners to respond to non-electrical emergencies with more confidence.

“They have brought together the strategic planning partnerships and local people to ensure that communities in their network area are prepared and ready for the unexpected. In our view SSEPD demonstrated a commitment to going the extra mile for their customers, particularly in times of most need.”

John Harkin and Colin McGowen, Forsee Associates (resilience planning specialists)
Preparing for emergencies

Encouraging resilient communities

Local Community Resilience Plans are developed by groups of stakeholders and businesses to help them cope with unexpected and prolonged power cuts while we fix the problem and restore power. Communities tell us that knowing there is a back-up plan in place reduces anxiety when the lights go out.

Plans also help us identify the most appropriate place to set up our welfare facilities and, in areas where plans have been established, we have noticed significant improvements in customer satisfaction around our communication.

We have worked with 36 Community and Parish Councils this year to help them develop their local Community Emergency Resilience Plans which help us to establish a communication protocol for use during a power cut to ensure accurate updates are given to the community.

These works have extended from providing key local contacts in times of emergency, to offering inspection to local halls and respite centres identifying their suitability for generator connection should there be an extended power cut.

Communications during power loss can be difficult, mobile phones can lose battery power or signal, modern landline phones rely on mains electricity, there’s no internet, no television and unless you have a wind up or battery powered radio you could feel extremely isolated.

In direct response to feedback we have formed the Customer and Community Advisor (CCA) team. Based across our network area and assisted by support staff, they pro-actively call at the homes of customers without supply during emergencies to check they are coping and offering advice, equipment and updates. The teams are furnished with:

- regular updates from the emergency service centre and local staff;
- vulnerability training; and
- storm packs including torches, plug-in telephones, hand warmers and glowsticks.

“If we had a power cut for three or four days, then we all get together at a certain particular point. Absolutely brilliant. It’s a good idea.”
Focus group participant

“… we might need this ourselves and it’s good to think that if you were on your own and vulnerable that there is something like this as a back-up plan, because not everybody’s got families or people to rely on.”
Focus group participant

Exceeding expectation in communications

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“When you have a special learning difficulty, you’re panicking. You just need the person to be able to come to your door, or pick up the phone. [You need] someone to say it’s OK, everything is going to be alright.”
Focus group participant
Targeting our communications

Prior to Services Register

As a responsible, supportive and caring organisation, we want to understand why customers are vulnerable, or may become vulnerable, during an interruption to their electricity supply, so we are honing our strategy which puts measures in place to reassure, protect and serve those people.

Raising awareness of the PSR

Our Priority Services Register (PRS) is the tool in which we record vulnerable customers’ data, allowing us to immediately see if a power cut is affecting customers who are vulnerable, such as those who may be reliant on electricity for medical equipment, or those who may suffer a higher level of distress during the power cut. In addition to our regular promotion of this vital service through phone calls, public meetings, press releases, on-line and social media, this year we also released a leaflet campaign. The leaflet explains who can join the PSR, how to join and the benefits of being on the register.

The leaflet has been distributed through existing networks including GP surgeries and hospitals (in particular renal, pulmonary, remote monitoring and midwifery units) to reach those customers who may benefit from this service. We have utilised our emergency partners’ networks to reach vulnerable groups, and have worked with organisations such as Portsmouth Association for the Blind and Berkshire County Blind Society, housing associations and local council offices. We also acknowledged and added ‘young babies’ to our PSR register, encouraging families with children under 12 months to register.

“During the December 2013 extreme weather, Highlands and Islands Division Police Scotland found the SSEPD Priority Services Register a fundamental component for assisting in the early notification of vulnerable people. The work of SSEPD in compiling the register is commendable as we, the local resilience partners work together to keep people safe.”

Sergeant Steve Raeburn, Emergency Planning Operational Support for the North Division of Police Scotland

Over 21,066 new registrations were made during the first three months of the leaflet campaign. In total we now have 457,944 customers on the list, up 40% from last year.

Committing to continuous improvement

Working in partnership with the University of Dundee, we are carrying out research into the past experiences of communities during prolonged power outages. We are particularly interested in how vulnerable groups felt about the power cut and our response, and also health and social care during these times. Socio-demographic models and study data from both our distribution areas will then be used to form the basis and framework necessary to develop and test the most effective solutions.

This will include ensuring that we give specialist advice to individuals on how to cope in a power cut. It’s expected that the learning will benefit the wider population too as this will also inform the advice we offer Resilience Planning Partnerships and Local Resilience Forums.

Sharing best practice

Recently we’ve been working with Ofgem, the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), the Energy Network Association and other Distribution Network Operators to ensure that lessons learned from recent storm events are shared across all parties. We’ve highlighted the importance of local community emergency resilience planning and the benefits of eligible customers joining the PSR.
Targeting our communications

We want our communications to be accessible and understandable to all our customers.

You told us that we needed to make it easier for those who:

• don’t speak English as a first language;
• can’t read or hear our communications;
• find it difficult to access quotes and compare the services of different connection providers;
• find it difficult to make a complaint about service they have received.

We have a large customer base who expressed lots of different preferences around the medium and type of publication we should use to keep them informed. We already accommodate any special communication needs, such as making publications available in different languages or formats including large print, Braille and audio CD. However we have gone further this year by:

• redesigning our website so that our information is in an easy read format which is suitable for those accessing it with screen readers;
• making our communications easier to understand and act upon; and
• improving the way that we reach out to communities to share important information around the services we provide.

This section gives a taster of how we have been doing this in practice.

Our maintenance information

Many communities approach their parish or community council for information on electricity matters. This line of communication is utilised far more during and after power outages or when we are working in an area to upgrade our equipment, often making parish and community council members a ‘hub’ for information.

In recognition of that important role, we now write to the parish and community councils, as well as to individual customers, when we are planning work that will cause scheduled interruptions to electricity supplies. We explain:

• when we will be working in their area, what areas will be affected by the supply interruption, and for how long;
• what we are spending on the work to improve the service we provide;
• who to contact locally if things go wrong.

This approach was prompted by a suggestion received from Appleton and Eaton Parish Council and has been welcomed by the communities we serve.

The enhanced relationships we now have with community and parish councils has led to additional benefits, including a reduction in complaints about road or walkway closures as we’ve worked with parish and community councils at an early stage to agree solutions prior to work commencing. We have also seen improvements in community response to tree cutting plans thanks to a similar approach.

In 2013/14 we engaged with 37 community and parish councils around planned interruptions and attended 31 parish and community council meetings to discuss power outages. In addition we held six meetings to notify local councils of work we would be carrying out in their area.

“‘It was encouraging to hear of the upgrades being made to the network itself and also the improvements being focussed on the communications with customers.’
Parish Council Chair

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“I was encouraged by the response we received from our customers, who appreciated the clear and straightforward information we provided.”
Parish Council Chair

“‘The customer service principles shown in the SSEPD response [to the February 2014 storm] were excellent. 96% of tweets were specific responses to customer queries and the majority of responses were tailored to the customers’ specific query. In the face of over 2,000 tweets, this is a Herculean effort.’
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Evolving our social media strategy

Our surveys have shown that customers value being able to contact us to receive instant accurate updates through our social media channels, especially during a power cut. These updates are also valued by our resilience planning partners who share them on their own social media channels, increasing the number of people who receive updates. Increasingly our channels are being accessed for information around how we are maintaining and repairing the network in local areas, and we proactively search for customers without power across our regions to offer assistance.

We have been evolving our strategy to shift the focus from customer driven, responsive enquiries to content focused, targeted conversations supported by videos, photos and information about our work.

We are currently identifying key influencers to allow us to build a community of engaged stakeholders to help us reach wider audiences during crises as our social media audience continues to grow.

### Strategy timeline

- **June 2009**
  - First network operator in the UK to offer a service to our customers through Twitter.

- **July 2012**
  - First network operator to use Facebook to issue fault messages.

- **September 2012**
  - First network operator to make this service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- **December 2012**
  - New Smart phone app ‘Power Track’ maps our network areas and gives an overview of any power cuts, pinpointing the area affected, how long it will take for an engineer to arrive and some advice for customers.

- **January 2014**
  - Launched an additional Twitter channel, @ssepd – a news channel that sits alongside our Customer Service profiles.

- **September 2013**
  - Launch of the new social media app ‘Power Map’ which allows customers to see which areas are affected by power cuts, including the number of customers affected.

### Reaching out to landowners and farmers

We work with the agricultural community to raise awareness of electrical safety issues – for example, how to avoid contact between machinery and power lines, and what to do if this happens.

Our engagement in 2013/14 included:

- presentations at Scottish and English agricultural colleges;
- a programme of attendance at regional agricultural shows;
- meetings with the National Farmers’ Union (NFU) and NFU Scotland on safety and other issues including new technologies, connections for new developments and wayleaves (contracts for access to land);
- attendance at farming forums and key industry events including those run by the Health and Safety Executive.

### Working in the community to combat metal theft

In the past three years we have had to spend £3.42m to prevent and repair damage caused by thieves stealing metal from our network. Metal theft poses severe danger not only to the thieves but also to communities and employees.

Working with the Metal Theft sub group of the Scottish Business Resilience Centre (SBRC), we identified the need to do more to help police officers recognise suspected stolen metal as belonging to us.

We have engaged police forces through:

- visits to our sites to help officers recognise our vehicles, equipment, cables and drums;
- issued all police officers a reference leaflet showing examples of our equipment;
- presented at the SBRC summit attended by fire and police services, Scottish Government and other network operators.

### Customer Voice Groups

Customer Voice Groups are widely recognised as effective in allowing customers to get their views across to an organisation by providing direct contact between senior managers and the people they serve. Having found that 80% of our domestic customers were supportive of us forming a Customer Voice Group, we introduced two groups, one for Southern Electric Power Distribution, the other for Scottish Hydro Distribution, both chaired by Stuart Hogarth.

Group members bring a wide range of practical and academic experience and represent the people who use our networks. Meeting quarterly, each group forms an independent scrutiny panel which evaluates our approach to, and performance in Stakeholder Engagement.
MAKING IT EASIER TO CONNECT

In 2013/14 we issued just under 23,000 quotes, each one providing the customer with a named member of staff to help through the connections process, answer their questions and feed back their suggestions for improvement.

This business as usual activity has been supported by a rigorous engagement strategy including events, workshops, meetings and surgeries. The feedback we’ve received has changed policy, improved communication and highlighted the need for greater interaction in this area. For example, we have changed our policy on how all connections customers receive communications from us, including significantly increasing the amount of staff in our Customer Account Management Team and tailoring our engagement style to suit individual customers’ preferences by holding job surgeries.

Our Distributed Generation (DG) Workplan

In 2013/14 our generation connections customers told us that they would like to see further improvements within the areas of:

- Customer service
- Information provision
- The applications and connections process
- Ease of choice in connection provider

We’ve responded by creating a workplan for 2014/15 which directly addresses the issues that were raised and then tested that we were focussing on the correct initiatives through a bespoke survey involving a further 125 customers.

Supporting competition

Continuing to develop and support competition is extremely important to us. We want to strengthen relationships with Independent Connections Providers (ICPs). We are encouraging this group to become accredited to carry out connections on our network so that when we adopt their installations we are confident that their work meets the same quality and safety standards as our own.

We invited interested companies to a workshop in Newbury showcasing training and assessment materials and walked them through the processes, from accreditation to final connection to our network.

“This SSEPD is showcasing best practice amongst the IDNOs in terms of enabling access to competitive quotes by issuing two offers in every case.”

Competition Notice Testimonial

“We can see you have listened to many of our concerns raised individually and in meetings.”

National Renewables trade body

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National Renewables trade body
INNOVATING TO KEEP CUSTOMER BILLS LOW

The projects below are long-term initiatives which we are trialling to ensure that they deliver the expected outcomes in terms of financial savings arising from not having to carry out engineering works. In the short term we deliver financial savings for the customers directly involved with the projects.

Because the current economic climate means that some customers find it hard to pay their bills, we offer advice around energy efficiency (behaviour change, efficiency of appliances, thermal efficiency of property) and also the use of low carbon technology (smart electric vehicle charging, micro distributed generation) to communities, individual households and businesses.

The benefits are twofold. Firstly customers now have the tools and support to change their behaviour, reducing the amount of electricity they use and pay for. Secondly, more residential, commercial and industrial developments can, through distributed generation, connect to the existing network thereby offsetting the need for an engineering reinforcement solution and reducing the costs we pass on to customers.

Working with communities to save energy and money

As part of the Solent Achieving Value Through Efficiency (SAVE) project we are working with partners to offer local domestic customers new energy efficiency technology to trial in their homes and incentives to change their energy usage. We are also delivering a community focussed campaign to evaluate the impact that coaching may have on household energy usage.

Our aim is to see whether we can create a culture of lower consumption (and therefore energy bills) through education thereby reducing the need to spend money on expensive network upgrades. From a networks perspective, we will measure how reduced energy usage in the home can reduce the amount of money that is required for electric network upgrades and balance this with the cost of the intervention campaign.

Managing the impact of electric vehicles

It’s estimated that there will be between one to three million electric vehicles in the UK by 2023, and up to 23 million by 2050. Our forward looking project, My Electric Avenue, acknowledges that while there is sufficient capacity overall across the UK to meet these demands, if the charging requirements are concentrated in small areas during peak times the local network may become overloaded which could lead to outages.

Our project creates a simulation of the 2030 electricity network so that we can assess the impact of clusters of electric vehicles on our network.

We have demonstrated our leadership and vision with innovation at various events where we shared learning with stakeholders including Ofgem, DECC, DNOs and a range of consultancies, developers, academic institutions, and community and industry bodies. We participate in a range of industry forums to promote knowledge exchange around smart grid technologies and we were one of the founding members of the Energy Storage Operators Forum (ESOF).

We have an excellent track record of participating in relevant industry conferences and in 2013/14 we exhibited at the Energy Event at the Birmingham NEC, the EcoTechnology Show in Brighton, the RegenSW conference and the Low Carbon Networks Fund Annual Conference.
Contact Us

The details we have included in this report are only a small percentage of the feedback you have provided, the work we have completed and comments you’ve been kind enough to give in response. If you have any queries or would like to know more, please contact us.

Stakeholder engagement

If you have any questions, or you would like to take part in future stakeholder consultations:
Call us: +44 (0)345 0760 515
Email: stakeholder.engagement@sse.com

Write to: Lisa Banks, Stakeholder Engagement Team, Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution, New Forest Depot, Castle Malwood, A31, Minstead, Lyndhurst SO43 7PE

You will also find more information on our website at www.ssepd.co.uk under ‘About us’

To report a power cut

If you experience a power cut, please call our Emergency Service Centre:

Central southern England: 0800 072 7282
England mobile: 0345 072 1905

North of Scotland: 0800 300 999
Scotland mobile: 0345 072 1901

For general enquiries

Central southern England: 0800 048 3516
North of Scotland: 0800 0483515

If things go wrong

Central southern England
Call: 0800 980 1395
Email: customer.relations.england@sse.com

Write: Comments, complaints and enquiries Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution, 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8BU

North of Scotland
Call: 0800 980 1394
Email: customer.relations.scotland@sse.com

Write: Comments, complaints and enquiries, Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution, Inveralmond House, 200 Dunkeld Road, Perth, PH1 3AQ

Priority services

We can offer extra help to customers who register for our priority services.

Free from a landline: 0800 294 3259
Local rate – included in mobile minutes: 0345 072 1900
From a textphone: 0800 316 5457

Follow us on social media

@southernelec
@hydropd

Southern Electric Power Distribution
Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution
SSEPD stakeholder Engagement