
Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks

Cross-sector infrastructure interactions Annual Report 2016



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

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Context

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) owns the transmission network (Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc) and distribution network north of the central belt in Scotland (Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution plc) and in central southern England (Southern Electric Power Distribution plc). Together, these networks carry electricity to over 3.7 million homes and businesses. SSEN's first priority is to provide a safe and reliable supply of electricity to the communities it serves.

In discharging our network role we are contacted for many reasons including supply interruptions, parties looking to connect to our network, enquiries about our equipment, where it is located and safe working practices.

Over the course of the year¹, we have:

Handled over 550,000 calls from our customers, over 1,500 a day

Received circa 17,000 requests from customers for 'safe dig' network information through our asset data team

Handled over 23,500 quotes for connection to our distribution networks and delivered circa 7,600 connection jobs

Issued almost 90 connection offers to our transmission network

Handled in excess of 26,500 timed customer appointments

Engaged with close to 500 stakeholders through our distribution connections engagement programme

Handled over 3,000 enquiries from customers interested in diverting our infrastructure

Received almost 1,500 requests to shroud our network in order to facilitate customers' scaffolding needs

We are a regulated networks business and therefore what we do is informed by legislation, our licences and the regulatory framework. This framework is designed to drive certain behaviours in order to protect and best serve customers' interests; we are committed to giving excellent customer service. Whatever the reason for contacting us, we endeavour to do everything we can to help.

To ensure calls / queries are directed to the right team, all of our telephone numbers can be found through the following web page:



<https://www.ssen.co.uk/contactus/>

This report, SSEN's first cross sector infrastructure interactions annual report, covers both our Transmission and Distribution businesses. It is designed to highlight the diversity of the interactions our networks businesses are engaged in and the service levels customers have experienced over the past year.

¹ Information reported to Ofgem relates to the Regulatory Year (1 April 2015 - 31 March 2016). All other information is provided on a calendar year basis.

Performance Metrics

SSEN is committed to providing excellent customer service.



[https://www.ssen.co.uk/
NetworkAccessStatement/](https://www.ssen.co.uk/NetworkAccessStatement/)

The focus of our first Access Statement has been to ensure that customers have the necessary information to access the appropriate records relating to our infrastructure and, perhaps more importantly, clear named regional contacts and direct contact details to ensure that customers can talk with high trained qualified personnel should they wish further advice about cable depths, service locations, etc.

As well as this direct point of contact, our web-based facility gives customers access to our network records. There are two key benefits of this facility. The first is ensuring customers have the necessary information to allow them to work safely in the vicinity of our infrastructure; the second is in giving customers that want to interact with or connect to our network the information they require. Included within the facility is a wealth of information relating to our high voltage and extra high voltage distribution networks. This includes the precise location of our network infrastructure, the associated assets, the number of customers attached to certain assets, load information and network diagrams, which allow customers to understand the configuration of our networks.

Our Access Statement does not currently include information for customers on what they can expect in terms of turnaround or delivery times. To date our focus has been on providing customers with named contacts who can help with whatever queries they have.

Our performance demonstrates:

Customers registering with SSEN's web-based system to gain access to network reports for 'safe dig' purposes are granted access within 3 working days

91% of all non-web-based customer requests for network records for 'safe dig' purposes are processed within 5 working days

Small-scale customers looking to connect to our network are, on average, provided with quotes for the work within 3 to 7 working days²

Small-scale customers looking to connect to our network are, on average, provided with a connection within 32 to 45 working days²

Once in receipt of a full application to connect to our transmission network, we issue 100% of offers within 60 days

Requests to divert our distribution infrastructure take, on average, 85 days from agreement with the customer to being delivered²

Requests to shroud sections of our network in order to make it safe for customers to erect scaffolding are delivered, on average, within 16 days²

² Note this is an average and some jobs will fall outside this band

The use of performance metrics in future years is addressed later in this report.

Clients' feedback

SSEN is committed to continually reviewing its processes and their effectiveness. We understand the importance of ensuring that our interactions and engagements are valued by those that request them and provided in timescales that are appropriate to our customers' projects / works.

Whilst we have not directly sought feedback on our Access Statement to date, we are constantly engaging with customers on this and have responded to their needs in relation to requests for information in a timely manner and endeavoured to improve our Network Report service provision in a number of ways.

These are outlined below:

Our Geographic Information System (GIS) web screens contain additional warnings where an extra high voltage cable is in the vicinity of any requested plan area. This is in the form of an additional warning note and seeks to reinforce the importance of knowing the dangers of working in and around electricity infrastructure. These warning notes reinforce the use of colour on our network records to distinguish between cable voltages.

In response to frequently asked questions, we have developed and now provide with all requests for network records a Guide to Interpreting our Network.

In direct response to a change in service standards, we have invested in IT works to improve the reliability of our GIS servers. This included server upgrades and splitting the traffic across separate servers.

A large proportion of our customer interactions are in relation to our connections work, i.e. customers enquiring and looking to connect to both our networks. In complying with our licence we meet certain timescales in relation to this work. In order to better meet the needs of larger customers the current distribution network regulatory framework includes an Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE).

In 2015/16, SSEN's distribution licensees held 11 engagement days and engaged with a further 152 individuals through their 22 connection surgeries.

94% of customers who were asked felt their appointment at the connections surgery was beneficial to them and their business.

We have established and reinforced links with a number of trade bodies including the National Farmers Union, the Federation of Small Businesses and the House Builders Federation by inviting them to our events, attending their meetings and holding regular calls.

In Scotland, our distribution network has actively consulted the National Farmers Union Scotland and Scottish Land Estates for their views on our Wayleaves Guide prior to publication. The National Farmers Union now displays this guide at all their events.

Our approach to engagement is constantly evolving to ensure we continuously improve and deliver tangible benefits for customers looking to connect to our network.

Meeting the good practice principles

SSEN concurs with the good practice principles set out by the UKRN. The following are examples of where we have put these principles into practice.

Principle 1: The role of infrastructure network operators

Infrastructure network operators recognise: the stewardship role they play in developing, owning and operating our national infrastructure; and that effective planning and delivery of new infrastructure, across all sectors, benefits everyone.

Our Southern Electric Power Distribution licensee is actively involved in major diversion works for both Network Rail's Great Western Rail Electrification project and the UK's new high speed rail network (HS2).

Close coordination with the Network Rail project is key to delivering efficient completion of the works whilst minimising disruption to users of the railway.

For HS2 we have entered into a bespoke contractual arrangement which is geared to maximising the efficient and effective delivery of this important project. This arrangement recognises that the required diversion works can be carried out by SSEN or a suitably accredited Independent Connection Provider. We continue to work constructively with the HS2 project team to explore and develop all options.

Principle 2: Efficiency, economy and safety

Without prejudicing the needs of customers or funders, or its statutory duties including safety, network operators of in situ assets should act with efficiency and economy when interacting with customers.

Our Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution licensee is assisting with major road construction works, including the dualling of the main route between Inverness and Perth and a new relief road being built around Aberdeen (the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route).

The latter requires 114 diversions of our existing infrastructure. We have worked closely with the Contracting Authority to continuously review and design the optimum solution for each. Maintaining the safety of all those working on this project around our live networks has been utmost.



Principle 3: Transparent processes and practice

Network operators should establish and follow a process to manage interactions that is transparent, easy to follow, appropriately resourced and commits to explicit service standards appropriate to the customers and projects concerned, supported by the provision of accurate information about the operators' network, safety or process as necessary.

SSEN operates a simple, transparent process for customers seeking to arrange to cross or work near its in-situ assets. Our network reports are updated daily and to aid with safe working practices, all customers requesting network records are provided with information on 'Safe Dig' working practices and our 'Watch It when working in the vicinity of Underground Cable & Overhead Line' leaflets.

Principle 4: Clear, transparent and appropriate pricing

Any fees or charges to customers should be clearly explained, reflect reasonable and appropriate cost and risk, without exploiting unfair commercial advantage, and where reasonable facilitate efficient planning and delivery of infrastructure projects.

Access to our electronic network records is generally provided free of charge. Where this is not the case, this is clearly explained. Where works are required, charges together with a breakdown of costs are clearly explained upfront in our quotation letters. Indicative costs for connections are provided free of charge on our website through our methodology statement. An online estimating tool is also available to provide likely costs for smaller (connection) projects.

Principle 5: Continuous learning and best practice

The lessons and experiences of best practice in managing interactions within the firm, based on measurable performance where possible, and outside are proactively gathered and applied, with a commitment to training and support of staff managing interactions.

SSEN is committed to continuous learning and putting that learning into practice. Lessons learned from our involvement in the Great Western Rail Electrification project are already being applied to our involvement in the HS2 project. This is evident through the establishment of a dedicated rail team within SSEN to manage this project and indeed any future rail electrification works.



Key Changes to Process

Our Access Statement has now been in place for a year and we are reviewing its content, looking at how we can build on this for the future.

We believe there is scope to expand our Access Statement to include information relating to the standard of service customers can expect when dealing with us. For example, the number of days customers should factor into their own project timelines to obtain network information and further information on what customers can expect from us in terms of standard requests.

We also believe we can readily incorporate a more active approach to customer feedback in terms of our Access Statement by offering this facility through our Statement's web page. We are mindful of the number of satisfaction surveys / questionnaires customers are encouraged to participate in through their daily lives and we are keen not to add to this burden. We will endeavour to invite comments on improvements in a way that is customer-driven.

We are continually looking for ways and opportunities to improve what we do and the services we provide. Our Access Statement and the effectiveness of our customer interactions are no exception. We look forward to building on this work and putting in place these further measures in 2017.

Contacting us

This report and associated documents
can be found at:



[https://www.ssen.co.uk/
NetworkAccessStatement/](https://www.ssen.co.uk/NetworkAccessStatement/)