



# Delivering the Electricity Future Now - Stakeholder Workshop

Feedback report

November 2024

**Electricity  
Distribution**

**nationalgrid** DSO

# Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
Methodology	7
Session 1: DSO Mid-Year Performance	8
Session 2: Planning and Network Development	13
Session 3: Governance	19
Expert Panel	22
Appendix 1: Attendees	25
Appendix 2: Workshop Feedback	26

Report produced by:



# Introduction

**On 24 October 2024, National Grid's Distribution System Operator (DSO) hosted a virtual stakeholder workshop for all DSO stakeholders including local authorities, academic institutions, renewables developers, charities, community energy groups and energy consultants.**

The purpose of this workshop was to provide a mid-year performance update on the company's strategic objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as the company evolves the role of Distribution System Operator and to demonstrate how the DSO has acted on stakeholder feedback over the past year.

The workshop also included a spotlight on flexibility markets and connections with opportunities for stakeholders to give their feedback on these topics. In addition, there was a presentation and feedback session on governance; specifically, how DSO interacts with National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED). The workshop concluded with a Q&A, where stakeholders could ask questions of a panel of industry experts.

**The workshop, titled: 'Delivering the Electricity Future Now', was aimed at achieving the following aims:**



**Demonstrating DSO's focus on delivery and how the organisation has acted on stakeholder feedback over the past year.**



**Sharing DSO's mid-year performance and progress on key deliverables.**



**Providing information and seeking feedback on flexibility markets and connections.**



**Updating stakeholders on how the DSO interacts with the DNO, ensuring that decision-making is transparent at all times.**

The workshop comprised a series of presentations, all of which were followed by discussions in breakout rooms. These discussion sessions were followed by electronic votes using the Slido platform.

**National Grid DSO instructed EQ Communications, a specialist stakeholder engagement consultancy, to independently facilitate the workshop and to take notes of the comments made by stakeholders. Every effort has been made to faithfully record the feedback given. To encourage candour and open debate, comments have not been ascribed to individuals. Instead, notes have been made of the organisation represented by each stakeholder.**

# Executive summary



**105** A total of **105 stakeholders** participated in the workshop, representing **73 organisations**.



**Energy consultants** were the most well-represented group (30%), followed by **local authorities** (16%) and **developers** (14%).

## Session 1: DSO Mid-Year Performance and Flexibility Market Development

The workshop was introduced by Cathy McClay, Managing Director of DSO, who outlined the agenda. She then gave a presentation beginning with a mid-year performance update, outlining the organisation's progress against its strategic objectives and KPIs.

Cathy then introduced Hayley Burden, Head of Strategy, Regulation & Governance to talk through the results of the first annual stakeholder survey and the Action Plan DSO has developed in response to stakeholder feedback.

Hayley then handed over to Matt Watson, head of Flexibility Markets, to provide an update on flexibility.

- Stakeholders expressed overall satisfaction with DSO's transparency, responsiveness and proactive support, with particular reference to support for local authorities relating to their Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs).
- While DSO's collaborative, data-driven approach was valued, some stakeholders recommended enhancing the consistency of shared data to increase its utility across platforms.
- The electronic voting data highlighted the importance of streamlining coordination between the DNO and DSO and clarifying how the two organisations worked together.
- Stakeholders highlighted the need for open access to localised, high-quality data.
- The electronic voting also emphasised that transparency of and communication around data were priorities for stakeholders.
- Stakeholders called for DSO to make flexibility markets more accessible and understandable, by simplifying explanations of flexibility's financial benefits and providing resources for users with varied expertise levels.
- Suggestions for improving engagement included standardised, easy-to-digest resources, targeted guidance, and increased outreach through webinars and collaborations, which would aim to broaden flexibility market adoption and strengthen grid resilience.

## Session 2: Planning and Network Development (Spotlight: Connections)

Matt Pope, Secondary System Planning Manager, and Dave Tuffery, Head of System Models & Data, gave the second presentation of the day, providing a spotlight on connections.

They explained that the aim of the DSO is to maximise capacity within the network and accelerate connections. Stakeholders were then asked to give their views on what more the DSO can do to facilitate the connection of Low Carbon Technologies (LCTs) to the network.

- There were calls for greater coordination between the DSO and DNO to ensure that infrastructure and investment was aligned.
- "Cost" was mentioned 12 times in the electronic voting, highlighting the financial barriers to adopting low carbon technologies.
- There was a suggestion that investment levels may not be sufficient given the rapid pace of technological change and complex demand situations.
- Data quality and transparency were seen as crucial by stakeholders to accelerating connections to the network.
- Suggestions for improving LCT connections included increasing public awareness on the benefits of LCTs.
- However, stakeholders felt there was a recurring issue with incomplete data, which caused delays to the process.
- There was a belief that a more structured collaboration between DSOs and DNOs to create a unified approach would go some way to addressing connection challenges.
- Stakeholders highlighted the importance of accessible, up-to-date datasets, which would significantly improve planning.
- The network capacity map was regarded as a valuable tool.

## Session 3: Governance

Steve Quinn, Senior DSO Policy Engineer presented the third session of the workshop, providing a governance update.

He highlighted the progress that had been made throughout the year, before talking stakeholders through two scenarios where there were potential conflicts of interest between the DSO and the DNO.

In the subsequent discussion, stakeholders were asked what their priorities are when it comes to DSO's governance process and what else they could be doing to ensure good governance and a resolution to conflicts of interest.

- Stakeholders called for greater transparency with regard to the interaction between the DSO and DNO.
- It was noted that there remains confusion with the current working arrangement between the two bodies and some people were of the view that the DNO was transitioning to DSO as opposed to the DSO being a separate entity.
- It was felt that confidence in the decision-making process could be improved by DSO sharing more consistent updates on progress and data sharing.
- Stakeholders asked for improved visibility of the decision-making process.

## Q&A and Expert Panel Discussion

The final panel session began with an expert panel discussion chaired by Cathy McClay, in which she started by asking Regina Finn, Chair of the DSO Panel, questions about the DSO performance and her experience working with the DSO this year. Cathy then took questions from the participants, opening the floor up to other members of the panel to respond.

- **Regina Finn** – Independent Chair of DSO Panel and Director at Lucerna Partners and Chair at Low Carbon Contracts Company
- **Hayley Burden** – Head of Strategy, Regulation & Governance at DSO
- **Fiona Campbell** – Deputy Director of Energy Systems Design and Development at Ofgem
- **Gary Swandells** – Director of Smart Grid Consultancy and member of Ofgem DSO Assessment Panel



# Methodology

**All DSO stakeholders were invited to attend the workshop. Details were also shared with local authority representatives who attended the dedicated local authority workshop which took place on 2 October.**

Stakeholders were sent several email invitations for the engagement event to ensure they were given the opportunity to participate. The first invitation was sent on 12 September 2024, which provided stakeholders with over eight weeks' notice. As is standard practice ahead of any workshops, all stakeholders who had registered were reminded about the event via both telephone and email in order to maximise participation.

## Providing Accessible Information

The workshop comprised three presentations, each followed by discussions in smaller groups, hosted in online breakout rooms, to enable stakeholders to provide verbal feedback. Discussions were followed by electronic voting using the Slido platform.

If stakeholders did not answer a question, facilitators asked them to confirm whether their silence indicated tacit approval or whether they felt unable to respond.



# Session 1: DSO Mid-Year Performance

**The workshop opened with an introductory talk by Cathy McClay, Managing Director at DSO. Cathy explained the aims of the workshop and set the scene for the day. She then gave stakeholders an update on the company's mid-year performance, an overview of the Strategic Action Plan and the progress that had been made against the company's stated commitments.**

Cathy then highlighted DSO's KPIs, which sit under the roles of: Planning and Network Development; Network Operation; and Flexibility Market Development. Cathy then introduced Hayley Burden, Head of Strategy, Regulation & Governance at DSO to provide an update to stakeholders on the outcomes of the first DSO annual survey and the activities DSO are currently working on in response to the feedback received.

Hayley then introduced Matt Watson, Head of Flexibility at DSO. Matt explained the work that DSO had done over the past year on flexibility market development, including three trial zones for demand turn up and generation turn down.

Matt also spoke about how the flexibility market is being developed through improving market access with the integration of Piclo Max with the option of long-term trades now available for customers.

Matt then introduced the discussion session, directing participants to their assigned breakout rooms.

## Views on DSO performance to date

Stakeholders generally expressed satisfaction with DSO's performance, citing transparency, responsiveness, and support for local energy planning as key strengths with one stakeholder saying...

### "We are happy with how transparent the DSO is."

Local authorities appreciated the assistance DSO provides, especially in helping them leverage data and resources for example when shaping Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs).

The shift towards a proactive, data-driven approach received plaudits from stakeholders, who observed that DSO's evolution has contributed to a more engaged, collaborative relationship with energy customers.

Furthermore, stakeholders noted that DSO's responsiveness to the push towards local decarbonisation ambitions has added value, as the organisation actively incorporates feedback into its strategy and operations.

Some stakeholders, however, suggested that DSO could further enhance its impact by ensuring that the data it shares is more current, comprehensive, and consistent across platforms.

Overall, the sentiment underscores that DSO's commitment to openness and active engagement has been well-received, laying a strong foundation for continued collaboration.

## Verbatim Quotes

- "In a recent survey regarding the website, we said we were happy with the engagement we had with DSO. We are happy with the help we get when it comes to supporting local energy plans." **Local Authority**
- "We are happy with how transparent DSO is. We do not know what more we would like, as we are satisfied." **Energy Consultant**
- "The feedback we have seen today really resonates with us. There has been more movement in recent times and the creation of the DSO has helped get this moving forward. We knew that going forward to Net Zero, energy customers had to be part of the equation, so I think Ofgem, and the industry have really taken that onboard. Data is key to engaging with consumers." **Academic Institution**

## Ideas to improve stakeholder satisfaction

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of open access to localised, high-quality data, which would allow them to integrate DSO resources into their strategic planning more effectively. Several stakeholders also suggested that the distinct roles of NGED and DSO should be clarified to reduce confusion and improve efficiency in interactions.

Stakeholders also expressed a need for DSO to become more involved in the earlier stages of reinforcement to accommodate new connections, stating "**We do not get loads of interaction when it comes to designing the reinforcement**". It was felt that hosting regular webinars or workshops that showcase data updates and best practices would be valued a means to inform and educate stakeholders on the types of data that are available and how to access datasets.

When asked as part of the electronic voting session what DSO could do to improve stakeholder satisfaction there was a large focus on data accessibility, transparency and communication. "**Data,**" with five mentions from stakeholders, along with calls for "**data accuracy,**" "**more real-time predictive data,**" and "**easy access to data,**" underscores stakeholders' desire for more robust, reliable, and accessible information. This is consistent with the discussion feedback highlighting the need for comprehensive, real-time data that stakeholders can easily interpret and apply to planning and decision-making.

## Verbatim Comments

- "Open access to data would be a good idea. I would like to see an improvement when it comes to ease of access and as well as openness of data. Reinforcing and hierarchy of data are vital for us to gain a better understanding." **Energy Consultant**
- "When getting a connection offer, we talk to our DNO contacts a lot. However, we do not get loads of interaction when it comes to designing the reinforcement. Bringing DSOs into these conversations would be great, as it would allow us to look at problems holistically. I know it might be hard to manage, but it would be helpful." **Energy Consultant**
- "Clarity on naming. National Grid covers three different things: National Grid [Electricity Transmission], the DNO and the DSO. People don't know which bit of National Grid does what. or which bit we are engaging with." **Distributed Generation Customer**
- "I appreciate the data is the main thing, but part of it is getting the relevant data locally. We liaise with different companies and different systems. Webinars where they go through their data portals and the updates and where you can find the information, making it easy to download in an accessible format so we can input it into a GIS and visually map it." **Local Authority**

# Session 1:

## DSO Mid-Year Performance Continued

Poll Question	Count
<b>What more should National Grid DSO do to improve stakeholder satisfaction?</b>	
Forefront the most vulnerable	1
Advance decarbonisation	1
Devolve	1
Work more with other DSOs	1
Simpler	1
More data	1
Smart Grid	1
Facilitate local market	1
Innovation	2
FSP journeys simplified	1
Respond	1
Website	1
Guidance	1
Single point of truth	1
Solutions	1
Improve data	1
Capacity	1
Understand stakeholder landscape	1
Collaborate	1
Visibility	1
Communication	1
Simplify	1
Operational Control	1
Innovation quicker	1
Deliver Net Zero sooner	1
Change communication for audience	1
More interactive platform	1
More real-time predictive data	1
Now your audience	1
Provide visibility on connections pipeline	1
Forecasts	1
Data accuracy	1

Poll Question	Count
<b>What more should National Grid DSO do to improve stakeholder satisfaction?</b>	
Simplify concepts, co-ordinate with other DNOs	1
Deliver infrastructure development without need for order	1
Evolution	1
Political direction	1
Easy access to data	1
Perhaps working on making the data more easily interpretable	1
Less systems which need to be integrated	1
Leadership	2
Incentives	1
Simplicity	1
QUICKER	1
Visible	1
Use simpler language	1
Clarity	1
Language/jargon	1
More proactive responses to connection queries	1
Surgeries	1
Information	1
Keep us updated on data	1
Naming confusion	1
Transparency	3
Less is more	1
Just continuing what you're doing	1
Make data accessible	3
Quality of data	2
Webinars	1
Be more specific in your survey to different stakeholder groups	1
Ask, don't tell	1
Keep us updated on projects	1
Breakdown acronyms	2
Work with DNO	1
Data	5

# Session 1:

## DSO Mid-Year Performance Continued

### Information on flexibility markets

Stakeholders highlighted that, while flexibility markets are increasingly relevant, more should be done to make these markets understandable and accessible to a broader audience. Some expressed that current resources do not adequately bridge the knowledge gap, especially for local authorities and communities engaging with flexibility for the first time.

Stakeholders emphasised the need for DSO to simplify the explanation of flexibility’s financial benefits with one stakeholder commenting **“Something I haven’t seen is NGED translate what flex means in a financial sense.”** This would allow both corporate and community stakeholders to grasp its potential impact better. Additionally, stakeholders stressed that accessibility to flexibility resources should be equitable, accommodating users with varying degrees of technical expertise and available time.

To address these needs, it was felt that DSO could consider measures to better promote flexibility services by providing clear, digestible summaries, and targeted guidance for diverse stakeholder groups. It was added that increasing visibility and awareness through webinars, outreach campaigns, and cross-sector collaboration may also enable broader adoption of flexibility markets.

### Verbatim Comments

- “Working in the area of flexibility, we live and breathe this subject every day, but passing information about it to clients is hard. There is not much information online, or it is not accessible. What we need is more advertising and talking to people about it again and again.” **Energy Consultant**
- “One of the challenges with accessibility is people having the time and understanding. Domestic companies are encouraging flexible tariffs, but one of the greater problems is about a just transition, with people from lower income backgrounds being able to access the same information, the same flexibility.” **Government**
- “How do you engage with stakeholders? Something I haven’t seen is DSO translate what flex means in a financial sense.” **Trade Association**
- “You’ve got people in local authorities and communities who will be encountering this for the first and potentially only time. This means you need to make it super simple and direct them to what their specific interests might be.” **Energy Consultant**

### Poll Question

How would you rate your understanding of the role of DSO in facilitating connections to the grid?	Count	%
No understanding at all	2	5%
Full understanding	4	10%
A little understanding	9	23%
A lot of understanding	10	26%
Some understanding	14	36%

# Session 2:

## Planning and Network Development

**The second session began with a talk on planning and network development by Matt Pope, Secondary System Planning Manager at DSO.**

Matt’s presentation provided a spotlight on connections, giving stakeholders an overview of DSO’s approach to connecting LCTs such as electric vehicles (EVs) and heat pumps to the network.

This was followed by an update on the increase in capacity at sites that were specifically targeted to accommodate LCTs and how this would help DSO support their customers with the journey to Net Zero.

Matt then introduced David Tuffery, Head of System Models & Data at DSO. Matt explained that a new capacity map would soon be introduced that would combine both primary and secondary networks into one map.

He then invited stakeholders to participate in testing the map and the data it provides. After David’s presentation, stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on how DSO can accelerate the connection of LCTs to the network.

### Views on our approach to investment

Stakeholders recognised the immense challenge in scaling infrastructure to connect more LCTs to the electricity network to meet decarbonisation targets by 2030, with one stakeholder highlighting **“The scale of the task is huge, especially when working towards 2030. I do not think that anybody is going to know if we are in fact investing enough until we actually get there”**. Whilst there was an appreciation of the efforts being made, some questioned whether investment levels are sufficient given the rapid pace of technological change and complex demand scenarios.

Concerns were raised about the quality and timeliness of data. For instance, stakeholders emphasised that real-time data could enable more informed, agile decisions on network capacity with one stakeholder pointing out **“The best way to enable more connections is more data. This will facilitate decisions and help make better decisions”**. Additionally, stakeholders highlighted the need for improved forecasting, particularly with capacity maps, which currently are not localised enough for effective planning.

There was also a call for greater coordination with other DSOs and DNOs to ensure that investment and infrastructure align seamlessly, in order to accelerate the integration of EVs and heat pumps. Overall, stakeholders felt that enhancing data accuracy and sharing forecasts could strengthen investment efforts to support LCT uptake effectively.

# Session 2: Planning and Network Development Continued

## Verbatim Quotes

- “The scale of the task is huge, especially when working towards 2030. I do not think that anybody is going to know if we are in fact investing enough until we actually get there. Technology is constantly changing and there are so many unknowns.” **Energy Consultant**
- “As far as I’m aware, everything seems to be okay, but this could be more of a thing for the grid guys. Technical limits interest us, and accelerating things in this area would be great, but that comes with the issue of curtailment.” **Developer**
- “The DSO role is to make real-time decisions based on digital data. The best way to enable more connections is more data. This will facilitate decisions and help make better decisions.” **Energy Consultant**
- “The capacity map that they showed is very useful. Understanding where capacity is currently and where it’s expected to be is important.” **Energy Consultant**
- “In terms of identifying likely scenarios, specifically in respect of extreme events and network planning, they might not be fit for purpose, especially on a localised level.” **Academic Institution**

## Support the connection of LCTs to our network

Stakeholders recommended several ways in which DSO could support LCT connections, including increasing public education on the benefits of LCTs including EVs, heat pumps and battery storage. One stakeholder commented **“Broader education for the general public, specifically in the domestic setting, is key”** highlighting that a lack of public awareness is currently a significant barrier to LCT adoption. The point was, however, made that battery storage is less well supported by some stakeholders with an interest in growth as it doesn’t create revenue streams in the same way that other LCTs do.

There was support for initiatives to accelerate connections such as the Technical Limit initiative which enables shovel ready customers, further down connections queues to connect more quickly, without having to wait for upgrades to the transmission network. Additionally, stakeholders suggested that DSOs could help customers by advising on sequencing to reduce network strain stating, **“There’s a whole question about the need for someone to help people to understand how they can sequence these new devices”**.

In the electronic polling, stakeholders overwhelmingly cited cost as the primary concern that would impact the likely take up of technologies such as EVs and heat pumps, as it was mentioned 12 times. There were also mentions for **“cost of installation,” “cost of energy” “tariffs,” “insurance,” and “policy costs on power.”** This aligns with feedback in the discussion session where stakeholders highlighted the financial barriers to adopting LCTs, including high upfront costs which posed a significant barrier for many, especially lower-income groups.

There was again call for more structured collaboration between DSOs and DNOs such as joint consultations, to create a unified approach in addressing connection challenges. It was noted that enhancing the economic viability of LCTs through targeted support and better coordination could drive a more widespread and resilient adoption.

Some stakeholders also noted the importance of subsidies, grants, and other financial support as essential incentives to help offset prohibitive costs and make EVs and heat pumps accessible to a broader demographic.

## Verbatim Quotes

- “Broader education for the general public, specifically in the domestic setting, is key... We need to show people the cost benefits of things like EVs and battery storage.” **Local Authority**
- “Fault levels are a massive problem for us. If you could do some studies on fault levels, it would be really useful for us to know.” **Storage and Renewables Provider**
- “There’s a whole question about the need for someone to help people to understand how they can sequence these new devices. That is where the DSOs could help the customers to help them.” **Energy Consultant**
- “We have a lot of enquiries for battery storage. Our problem is that this doesn’t create jobs or profit, so we don’t like to support battery storage. We need LCTs to be more economically viable for growth and jobs.” **Local Authority**
- “UKPN and NGED did a joint consultation on curtailment and that was really beneficial because both of them were listening to stakeholder feedback at the same time.” **Developer**

## Poll Question

### Which factors could potentially impact the likely take up of technologies such as electric vehicles and heat pumps?

Fossil fuel subsidies	1	Retrofit planning	1
EV second hand market	1	Building ownership	1
Connection viability	1	Mileage	1
Public transport	1	Public information campaigns	1
Fossil fuel	1	What to do with old car batteries	1
High proportions of landlords and renters	1	Available capacity	1
Greenness	1	Insurance	1
Reg of cost on public charging	1	Tariffs	1
Availability	1	More education	1
Bad PR	1	Ownership	1
Capacity availability	1	Convenience	1
Cost (item as well as connection)	1	Lack of capacity on the network	1
Education	1	Localised capacity pinch points	1
Public Opinion/Perception	1	Policy costs on power	1
Better support on building suitability	1	Cost of installation	1
Network performance	1	Infrastructure	2
Misinformation	1	Planning assumptions	1
Not having the network capacity	1	Grants and support for lower incomes	1
Policy, inaccurate media, cost	1	Network availability	1
Supply chain	1	Parking Availability	1
Trust	1	Cost of Energy	1
Capacity availability	1	Affordability	1
Building efficiency (HPs)	1	Location	1
Connection capacity	1	Subsidies	2
Dynamic tariffs	1	Inconvenience	1
Locational pricing	1	Gov funding	1
Capacity	2	Cost	12



# Session 2: Planning and Network Development Continued

## Ways DSO can help accelerate connections

Stakeholders identified data quality and transparency as critical factors in accelerating LCT connections to DSO's network. Inaccurate or incomplete data has been a recurring issue, leading to delays and added stress when technical limits or curtailment details require verification.

Some stakeholders proposed expanding resource allocations to improve mapping accuracy, allowing for more reliable planning and faster, more predictable connection timelines. Stakeholders also suggested that DSO clarify decision-making processes around which projects receive priority with one person commenting **“Clarity and transparency of why you make the decisions you make, and how you decide who gets the connections would help us all plan for the future.”**

Comparisons with international practices highlighted the benefits of pre-emptive investment in network capacity to support future growth with one stakeholder stating, **“In other countries, they invest in the network where it's not strictly necessary”** suggesting that the UK should adopt a more forward-looking investment approach. This is further underscored by the electronic poll responses which saw **“invest before need”** mentioned five times, with calls for **“massive forward investment”** and **“long-term thinking”** emphasising the desire for DSO to adopt a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to network expansion.

It was commented that this would enable smoother integration of new connections, particularly LCTs, and offer stakeholders the confidence they need to plan long term.

### Verbatim Quotes

- “Accelerating connections is a difficult task, as you could manage to unlock the capacity but there will still be other things to think about.” **Energy Consultant**
- “The issue is more around whether we have suitable data... When we've had incorrect data, we've had to liaise with the DSO and then things get hurried and stressful.” **Developer**
- “You need to leverage more resources and sources of information, so you can start to assess whether the current mapping is accurate.” **Academic Institution**
- “The system in the UK is broken. In other countries, they invest in the network where it's not strictly necessary... confident they will have the capacity they need.” **Local Authority**
- “How do you prioritise? Clarity and transparency of why you make the decisions you make, and how you decide who gets the connections would help us all plan for the future.” **Local Authority**

### Poll Question

#### What more could we as the DSO do to help accelerate connections (generation and demand) to our network?

Penalise spurious applications	1	Build it and they will come	1
More pre offer meetings	1	More information about the network up front	1
Support jobs	1	Process automation	1
Take or pay	1	Support planning applications	1
More connection surgeries on flexibility	1	Remove spurious projects	1
Enhanced network control	1	Time to connect	1
Work with supplier for smart meter roll out	1	Transparency on availability, offer more flexible connections,	1
Collaborate	1	Inform and educate	1
Encourage pairing	1	Invest before need	5
Holistic view	1	New connection products	1
Innovate	2	Prioritise community benefit	1
Long term thinking	1	Investment	1
Massive forward investment	1	Greater network visibility and control	1
Prioritise	1	Improved view of storage's role	1
Skill up	1	Specific meetings	1
Interactive enquiry portal	1	One stop shop?	1
More real-time predictive analytics	1	Cost benefit analysis	1
Streamline process	1	Enduring TANM	1
Data sharing and tech innovation	1	Flexible connections	1
Cost to connect	1	Provide clarity	1
Marry up resources for Gen connections as well as Load connections	1	Data management	1
Share live & dynamic LV loading	1	Forecast	2
Decarbonisation	1	Technology innovation	1
Transparency	1	LT capacity view	1
Better visibility of LV network	1		

## Session 2: Planning and Network Development Continued

### Datasets and other information that could be provided

The network capacity map was recognised as a valuable tool. Suggestions were made by stakeholders to enhance it by including predictive data on capacity changes over time, which would provide more forward-looking insights for planners and developers with one stakeholder asking, **“if there is a plan to show the targets, could it also show where capacity will be tomorrow.”**

Transparency around DSO’s internal datasets and how they are used to shape network decisions was another key point, with stakeholders proposing a more collaborative approach to data sharing between DSO, local councils, and community groups. Stakeholders recommended that real-time data input capabilities be explored to ensure the data remains current and relevant.

It was commented that providing clear, accessible data with predictive insights could significantly improve planning, with one stakeholder pointing out that **“The datasets themselves won’t enable better connections. It’s the datasets DSO are collecting internally that will enable better connections”** and ultimately support a smoother and more coordinated transition.

### Verbatim Comments

- “We have used the network capacity map... It is very useful. I wonder if there is scope to share details between local planners and councils.” **Local Authority**
- “You always need open and transparent information... if you let all people come in and enter data in real time.” **Academic Institution**
- “The datasets themselves won’t enable better connections. It’s the datasets NGED are collecting internally that will enable better connections.” **Energy Consultant**
- “We recently discussed the capacity maps to show current capacity. But if there is a plan to show the targets, could it also show where capacity will be tomorrow.” **Business Customer**
- “Capacity maps are the most important part of this transition. The more details about timelines of capacity, the better.” **Energy Consultant**

## Session 3: Governance

**Session three was introduced by Steve Quinn, Senior DSO Policy Engineer. He provided an update on DSO’s governance progress in years one and two of the ED2 price control period.**

This included feedback that stakeholders had provided to DSO on how governance could be improved, along with details on how they were continuing to implement functional separation between DSO and DNO. Steve then talked stakeholders through two scenarios where there was potential for conflicts of interest between the DSO and the DNO, explaining how these could be resolved.

In both cases, it was noted that the role of the DSO provides rigour and transparency to the decision-making process.

Following Steve’s presentation, stakeholders were asked for their views on what more DSO can do to ensure good governance and resolve conflicts of interest between the DNO and DSO.

### Priorities

In exploring stakeholder priorities, the workshop emphasised the need for transparency, improved governance and continued interaction between the DSO and DNO. A recurring theme among participants was the call for greater clarity in decision-making processes and enhanced visibility of all options considered before finalising any actions. One energy consultant commented that they wanted **“More detail and tell us more about the answer rather than just the fact you’ve had conversations”**. Stakeholders also felt that that trust and confidence in the DSO’s decision-making process would be improved by shared data and consistent updates.

It was suggested by an energy consultant that some governance challenges between the DSO and DNO echoed those previously experienced by NGED and National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET), commenting that **“It all feels a little déjà vu, looking at some of these priorities... Can we not apply some of these governance principles and learnings from that process to the current situation? It would be a shame to lose that corporate memory”**. This highlighted the potential to use existing frameworks and strategies to avoid repeating challenges encountered in previous regulatory transitions.

Additionally, the importance of accurate, multi-faceted forecasting was highlighted. One energy aggregator stressed the value of **“More permutations of forecasting”** to help stakeholders anticipate and respond to fluctuations in generation and consumption capacity. They explained that predictive insights are crucial in supporting both day-ahead market commitments and longer-term infrastructure investments, particularly if “real-time data” is integrated to allow for dynamic and informed responses.

In addition, there were calls for the DSO and DNO to still work together, with one business customer stating that they **“Think it is a key thing that the DSO and DNO interact, that is definitely a priority”**, suggesting that although separate entities, they should still collaborate. However, stakeholders also cited confusion with the current working arrangement, with concerns including the role of the DSO and the crossover between multiple authorities where different networks serve that area.

# Session 3: Governance Continued

## Verbatim Comments

- “It all feels a little déjà vu, looking at some of these priorities. I used to work at National Grid and these all sound like the governance conflicts of having distribution and transmission under the same umbrella, which was meant to have been solved by the Integrated Transmission Planning and Regulation introduced in 2009. Can we not apply some of these governance principles and learnings from that process to the current situation? It would be a shame to lose that corporate memory.” **Energy Consultant**
- “One of the areas that’s an issue for DNO’s and DSO’s is the crossover between multiple authorities when there are different networks that serve them.” **Energy Consultant**
- “I would like to see transparency and visibility. I think that the decision to create DSOs was rushed.” **Energy Consultant**
- “I do think it is a key thing that the DSO and DNO interact, that is definitely a priority.” **Business Customer**

## Ways to ensure DSO has good governance and resolves conflicts of interest between the DNO and DSO

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of establishing robust governance mechanisms to address potential conflicts of interest between the DSO and DNO. There was a recurring call for clarity on how priorities are set and transparency in decision-making processes. One energy consultant expressed a desire for **“Clarity when it comes to which way the priorities will go,”** underscoring a need for open, systematic communication regarding the choices made by both entities. There were also calls for regular updates via email, highlighting the value stakeholders placed in centralised, accessible updates.

Some stakeholders felt that transparency could be further improved by detailing the rationale behind project-related decisions, especially in cases where only costly reinforcement projects are presented. A representative from a trade association suggested that **“More scrutiny around the thought process may be needed... You could add an independent perspective that could also give oversight.”** This call for third-party oversight was echoed by other stakeholders, who noted that such a measure could offer a more impartial perspective on key DSO and DNO decisions, adding an essential layer of accountability.

The interaction between DNO and DSO roles again surfaced as a point of confusion. Several stakeholders remarked on the lack of clarity between the two entities, with one trade association representative noting that to external observers, **“You are NGED, not a DSO and a DNO as separate entities. There could be an impression that you are removing accountability by not showing how they interact. People want to understand more.”** Additionally, some stakeholders also recommended practical steps to demonstrate how conflicts of interest are managed.

This theme was also prominent in the electronic voting data as when participants were asked what additional activities should be undertaken to ensure we have good governance and resolve conflicts of interest between the DSO and DNO several responses, such as **“clearer regulation,” “clarify roles and responsibilities,”** and **“rigid adherence to the rules,”** reveal a need for more precise regulatory frameworks and definitions of the DSO and DNO’s roles. Suggestions like **“separate licence for DSO”** and even **“full separation”** indicate that some stakeholders believe a more distinct separation could help avoid conflicts, promoting more effective governance.

Further, it was noted that governance improvements should also involve regulatory bodies like Ofgem. One energy consultant called for **“An internal and external push for greater regulation across the whole industry”**, reflective of a desire for industry-wide standards that prioritise transparency and equitable outcomes for all stakeholders involved.

## Verbatim Comments

- “I would like to see clarity when it comes to which way the priorities will go.” **Energy Consultant**
- “To external people you are NGED, not a DSO and a DNO as separate entities. There could be an impression that you are removing accountability by not showing how they interact. People want to understand more.” **Trade Association**
- “We want DNOs and DSOs to be vocal about conflicts, but also not hold out from taking action.” **Aggregator**
- “More scrutiny around the thought process may be needed. If you have a preordained cultural disposition to a question, the answer will always be the same. You could add an independent perspective that could also give oversight. This would be transparent.” **Trade Association**
- “The DNO could do the work of the DSO. All their functionality could easily be incorporated into the normal DNO activities.” **Storage and Renewables Provider/Installer**
- “There needs to be an internal and external push for greater regulation across the whole industry” **Energy Consultant**

## Poll Question

### What additional activities should we undertake to ensure we have good governance and resolve conflicts of interest between the DSO and DNO?

Collaboration	1	Clearer regulation	1
Will DSO's become government owned?	1	Engagement with affected parties	1
Merge with NESO	1	Collaboration with other DSOs	1
Transparency and open discussions	1	Independent oversight	4
Independent review	1	Publish conflicts & outcomes	1
Scoring criteria	1	Info sharing	1
Independent oversight committee of range of stakeholders	1	Neutrality	1
Rigid adherence to the rules	1	Transparency	4
Transparency for decisions	2	Separate licence for DSO?	1
Interact with NESO?	1	Full separation	1
Clarify roles and responsibilities	1	Transparent reporting updates	2
Better education and clarity	1	Maybe for customer engagement you should	1
Comparable data year-on-year to show progress	1	Capacity	2
Risk appetite	1		

# Expert Panel

The workshop concluded with a Q&A session where stakeholders could ask questions of a panel comprising: **Cathy McClay, Managing Director (DSO); Hayley Burden, Head of Strategy, Regulation and Governance; Fiona Campbell, Deputy Director of Energy Systems Design and Development (Ofgem); Regina Finn, Independent Chair of our DSO Panel and Director at Lucerna Partners and Chair (Low Carbon Contracts Company); and Gary Swandells, Director of Smart Grid Consultancy and member of Ofgem DSO Assessment Panel (Ofgem).**

The questions asked, along with a summary of the answers, are shown below.

## Question:

What has been your impression of the DSO?  
What have we been doing well?  
What do we need to focus on for the rest of the year?

## Answer:

**It was explained that over the last eight months, the DSO team's openness and transparency have stood out, with in-depth insights into the DSO's progress proving particularly helpful.**

Stakeholders have found that there is a willingness to share information, even while still in development, which reflects the professionalism and commitment of the team. This approach has been both reassuring and appreciated by those involved.

## Question:

How do you think DSOs remain adaptable to the ever-changing landscape?

## Answer:

**It was acknowledged that this question is critical at this stage. For the DSO to remain adaptable, the transition must be seen not as an endpoint but as an evolving process.**

Stakeholders had recommended that the DSO focus on equipping itself with the tools and governance structures to adapt effectively, including addressing new operational challenges. Handling this evolution well will enable the DSO to remain responsive to changing needs.

## Question:

What would you like to see from us?

## Answer:

**It was noted that, although providing data is not currently mandated, there was a desire internally for the DSO to continue to advance data accessibility.**

Accelerating data initiatives, even ahead of regulatory requirements, would be of significant benefit to stakeholders. The DSO's progress to date on this front has already been well received.

## Question:

As a senior leader at National Grid, DSO, what is something you are most proud of?

## Answer:

**It was explained that the first year of RIO ED2 involved considerable effort to develop DSO capabilities.**

The team took time to listen to stakeholder priorities, particularly in reducing market entry barriers and enabling multiple access points. With rapid change across the energy sector and political landscape, the DSO's adaptability has been a point of pride and seen as essential for delivering ongoing value.

## Question:

Will DSO support community energy to deliver? Also how will DSO deal with current plans for 2030?

## Answer:

**It was highlighted that the DSO has a dedicated team working closely with community energy groups and local authorities.**

Insights from these collaborations are fed into the DSO's forecasting and investment planning. Recognising gaps in how local authorities engage with flexibility, the DSO has focused on building a stronger engagement foundation, ensuring that feedback and insights are shared widely across the teams.

## Expert Panel Continued

### Question:

I applied to the DNOR. They gave me a provisional date and we are in limbo until NGED deals with NESO to find out the actual date. That limbo period can be 6m to a year.

How can you guys accelerate connections when the connection date is usually decided by NESO?

### Answer:

**It was acknowledged that this challenge is being addressed through close coordination with NESO.**

The DSO has a connections action plan in place to monitor progress on queue reduction, though the high demand for transmission connections presents ongoing challenges. A new reform initiative, TMO4+, has been launched to help projects meet readiness criteria in the queue. Additionally, a comprehensive review of the connections process is underway, with an upcoming consultation aimed at improving service and fostering greater collaboration with NESO.

### Question:

Working with NESO, can you identify/set out datasets for more holistic connection analysis?

There are/could be more connection options available (that potential applicants) are not aware of which could speed up connections.

### Answer:

**It was recognised that while a large amount of data is already published, stakeholders need additional support to make use of it.**

This year, the DSO will offer webinars to guide stakeholders through the available data, addressing how it can be accessed and applied effectively. Collaboration with other DNOs and across geographical boundaries remains a priority, and the DSO is committed to developing a more user-friendly, coordinated approach to data sharing.

### Question:

There are always different ways of solving the same problem. Is there a way of improving transparency when sharing data, with each option being published with why the decision was made and a cost benefit analysis?

### Answer:

**It was explained that the team is developing process maps to make decision-making more transparent, including cost-benefit analysis as part of the process.**

This aligns with stakeholder interest in transparent governance. Currently, the DSO publishes a distribution options assessment to outline investment decisions, and documenting conflicts of interest is a specific goal for this year to further strengthen transparency.

## Appendix 1: Attendees

**A total of 105 stakeholders attended the workshops, representing 73 organisations. The organisations represented across the workshops are shown below:**

### A

Ampyr Solar Europe  
Aputura Energy  
Avalon Community Energy  
Axle Energy

### B

Balance Power Projects Limited  
Baringa Partners  
Basepower Ltd  
Bolsover District Council  
Boston Borough Council  
Bridgend County Borough Council

### C

Cardiff Capital Region  
Carmarthenshire County Council  
Centre for Sustainable Energy  
Ceredigion County Council  
Commonwealth Edison  
Conrad Energy

### D

Derbyshire County Council  
Dudley MBC

### E

Ecotricity Smart Grid  
Eelpower Limited  
ElectraLink  
Electric Miles Ltd  
Electron  
Elexon  
Enzen Group  
EPEX SPOT  
Ethical Power  
Evans Energy

### G

Gemserv/Talan UK  
Green Switch Capital  
Greentech  
Greenergy

### I

IBM

### J

Joint Radio Company Limited

### K

Kronos Solar

### L

LCP Delta  
Local Partnerships  
Low Carbon

### N

Neath Port Talbot Council  
New Flexibility Technologies  
North Somerset Council

### O

Oaktree Power  
Ofgem  
Ohme  
Orange Power

### P

Pod Point

### Q

Queequeg

### R

REA  
REG Power Management  
Regen  
Roadnight Taylor

### S

Schneider Electric  
SE2  
Smart Grid Consultancy  
Somerset Council  
South & East Lincolnshire Council's Partnership  
South West Net Zero Hub  
SP Energy Networks  
Starlight  
Stroud District Council

### T

The Association for Decentralised Energy  
The Wise Group

### U

UB Grid Consultancy Ltd  
University College London  
University of Bath  
University of Gloucestershire  
University of Warwick  
Urban Fox Network

### V

Volitalia uk  
Voltis Renewables

### W

Wales and West Utilities  
Warwickshire County Council  
Wiltshire Council

# Appendix 2: Workshop feedback

Poll Question	Answer choices	Responses	Count
<b>Overall, did you find this workshop to be:</b>	<b>Not interesting at all</b>	0%	0
	<b>Not that interesting</b>	6%	1
	<b>Neutral</b>	13%	2
	<b>Interesting</b>	63%	10
	<b>Very Interesting</b>	19%	3

- “There was a good coverage of topics with clear and confident presenters.”
- “Interesting points raised, good to hear from different stakeholders.”

Poll Question	Answer choices	Responses	Count
<b>Do you feel you had sufficient opportunity to contribute to the discussion and ask questions?</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	0%	0
	<b>Disagree</b>	0%	0
	<b>Neutral</b>	6%	1
	<b>Agree</b>	69%	11
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	25%	4

- “There was time allowed to contribute to the discussion and ask questions.”
- “It would be good to give people a bit of time to formulate ideas/questions during/immediately after presentations before jumping into the breakout sessions (e.g., raising discussion points ahead of breakouts).”

Poll Question	Answer choices	Responses	Count
<b>Did the range of topics discussed meet your expectations?</b>	<b>0%</b>	0	0
	<b>6%</b>	1	0
	<b>13%</b>	2	1
	<b>63%</b>	10	11
	<b>19%</b>	3	4

- “Yes, a lot was covered but this was interesting.”
- “Topics discussed was as expected”

Poll Question	Answer choices	Responses	Count
<b>What’s your assessment of how the workshop was chaired and facilitated?</b>	<b>Very poor</b>	0%	0
	<b>Poor</b>	0%	0
	<b>Neutral</b>	0%	0
	<b>Good</b>	75%	12
	<b>Very good</b>	25%	4

- “Excellent chaired. Ensured everyone had an opportunity to feed into the feedback.”
- “Efficient handover between all those leading the session, clear slides (if anything, a bit wordy).”

### How do you think external governance changes will impact NGED DSO’s current roles and responsibilities, including interactions with stakeholders, in future?

- “I suspect such changes will be impacted by regulation primarily rather than stakeholders.”
- “It will improve the DSO role and bring more transparency.”
- “Hopefully the DSO will be more transparent in how their decisions are taken”
- “It’s all a bit confusing, as though DNOs were becoming DSOs not adding in a DSO component. Perhaps will become clearer and how i’ll feed into the regional strategic planning delivery?”

### What was most useful to you today

- “All topics presented interesting and relevant.”
- “DSO confirming that they are effectively split into two parts (DNO & DSO).”
- “Really appreciated the examples showing conflict between DNO and DSO. This was really insightful regarding how decisions are made and made the difference between the two clearer.”
- “Interactive nature of the conference with smaller breakout rooms.”
- “Q&A session as, other than Cathy McClay session, most of the content for other sessions was on the slide. I found the openness about the trading platform delay refreshing and, equally, reassuring.”

### Finally, what could we do to improve future events like the one you have attended today?

- “Make one session a year in person with opportunity to meet and greet. Provide a score card of what we promised, what we did, how complete the action is.”
- “We need a bit more time in breakout sessions, referencing relevant information and sharing documents. Also, information on how this will feed into the SSEP process and regional strategic planning and how this will improve the rate to decarbonise our energy system.”
- “Have more specific sessions. DSO role is very broad, and meetings such as today’s should be specific to different aspects the DSO’s role (in our case, flex services)”
- “Less text on the slides, definitely fell into the trap of trying to read and listen at the same time.”

National Grid Electricity Distribution plc  
Avonbank, Feeder Road  
Bristol BS2 0TB  
United Kingdom

[nationalgrid.co.uk](https://www.nationalgrid.co.uk)