



Regen and ESN Working Group: Accessing the Grid

Thursday 21 October, 10:00 - 11:30

Meeting notes

The UK has set out clear ambitions for a net zero energy system by 2035. Critical to this challenge is ensuring that new renewable generation and low carbon technology can connect to the grid quickly and easily, and at the capacity and volume needed to meet net zero.

In response to this challenge, Regen ran a session for members to discuss issues impacting access to the electricity grid.

This meeting provided an opportunity to hear from the DNOs, followed by a members-only discussion on the key issues with connecting to the network with aim of agreeing whether there is value in an ongoing Regen members' working group to address these.

Chaired by: Merlin Hyman, chief executive, Regen

10:00 Introductions

Merlin Hyman, chief executive, Regen

10:10 Distribution Network Operators panel session

Randolph Brazier, director of innovation and electricity systems, Energy Networks Association

Paul Jewell, policy manager, Western Power Distribution

10:40 Member discussion

Led by:

Catherine Cleary, grid connections specialist, Roadnight Taylor

Nikki Pillinger, grid connections manager, GRIDSERVE

11:20 Wrap up and next steps

Merlin Hyman, chief executive, Regen

11:30 Close

Paul and Randolph provided an overview of the current situation, key issues and work planned to improve grid connections.

Connections are a key challenge and area of focus for the DNOs going forward. They don't currently have the tools to deal with the anticipated connection of low carbon and renewable technologies but are committed to improving the process in line with the pace of change required.

Strategic reinforcement

- For larger scale connections, the DNOs recognise they need to prepare for a greater volume of generation and storage connections.
- A key challenge is when connections arise in unpredicted places and reinforcement must play catch up. The DNOs recognise the importance of moving towards a more strategic, anticipatory approach to connections which involves building out in advance rather than waiting for reinforcements to be triggered.
- Ofgem plays a big role in allowing DNOs to invest in advance and they are increasingly allowing more of this speculative investment. The outcomes of Ofgem's Strategic Code Review will be significant as it proposes changes in who pays for reinforcement.
- Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES) are carried out by all DNOs and are helping to better prepare for new connections – DNOs would welcome feedback on DFES, particularly where high levels of curtailment aren't reflected.
- ENA's [Open Networks project](#) looks at rolling out the future electricity system. It is a broad project but focuses on some specific issues, such as interaction between transmission/distribution and how it can be made quicker, easier and smoother. The scope for this project is out for consultation and is an opportunity to shape ENA's workstream next year.

Domestic connections

- There is no mass market solution for connecting domestic and local EV chargers and heat pump at the scale and speed required, but it is an area of innovation. WPD has committed to giving domestic customers a connection agreement on the day or day after asking.
- A key issue is that the connections process is currently carried out manually and is not ready for scaling up. A key area of the ENA's work plan is the digitalisation of the connections process to make it quicker and easier to connect to the network. Examples of projects include SPEN's [iIdentify](#) app that uses image recognition technology to assess whether a home is EV ready and [ENA's National Energy System Map](#).

Communication

- Communication between developers and DNOs is important but developers don't always know who to raise their concerns with. Equally the DNOs are not always familiar with who to talk to in the industry. The DNOs welcome developers who'd like to get in touch, both about issues at specific sites, or to speak more generally about connections.
- There are a number of forums and groups for stakeholders to feed in their concerns including:
 - DER technical forum - ENA (Dcode)
 - Individual DNO forums (e.g. WPD's Customer Connection Steering Group)
 - New ENA forum on digitalisation

Members discussed the key issues for grid connections, guided by the following questions:

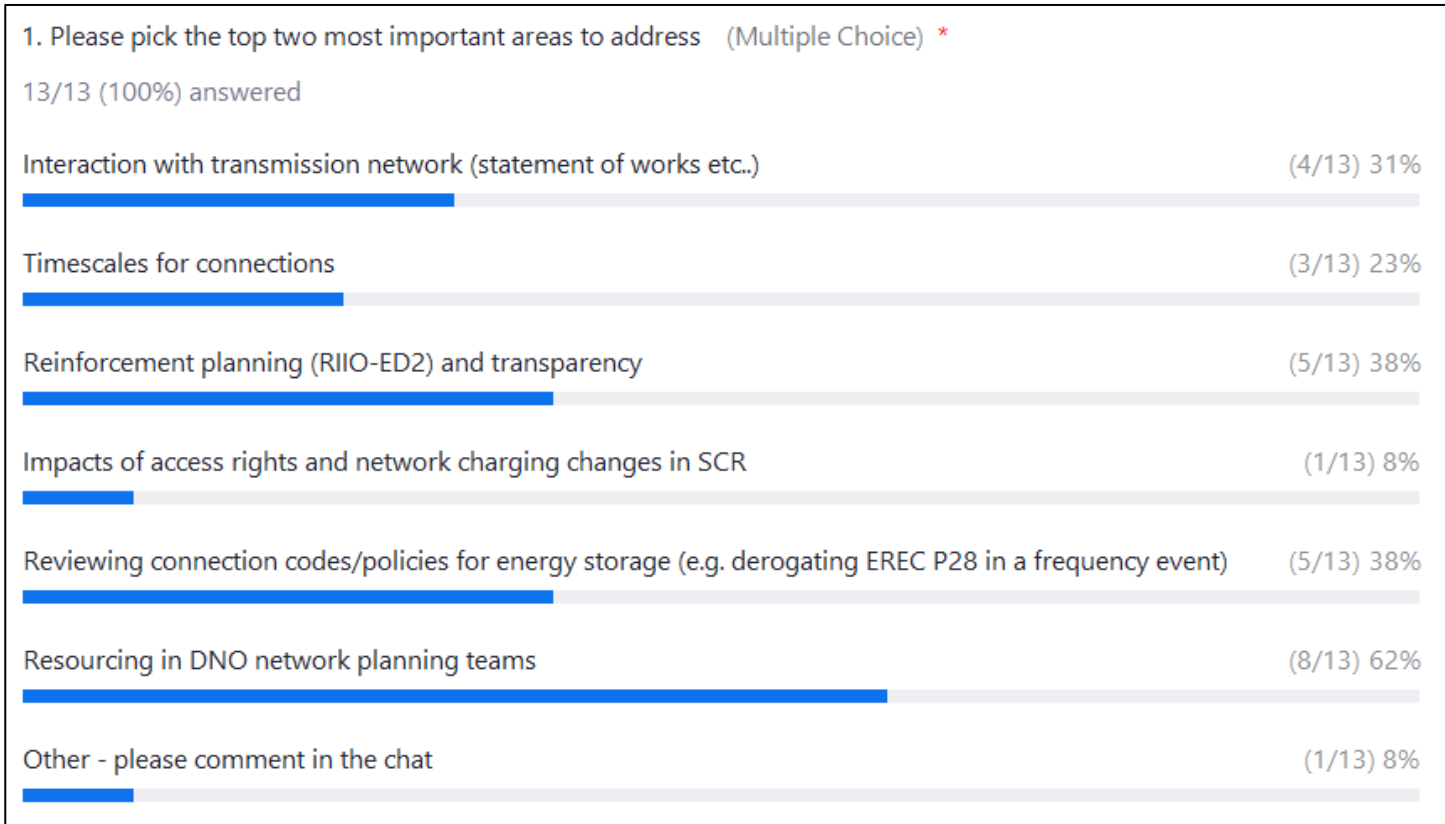
- *What are the key barriers to connecting the volume of renewable and low carbon technologies required?*
- *Are the processes and channels in place for market participants to address these issues with DNOs/ENA, or is there a role for Regen and its members to press for greater urgency?*

Key issues discussed were:

- **DNO resourcing/funding** – this does not match the pace of change needed for a net zero power system by 2035.
- **Timescales for connections** – developers are facing significant delays, particularly on details of any potential curtailment.
- **Interaction between DNOs and National Grid** – too slow and inefficient to provide solutions.
- **Interaction between transmission/distribution (statement of works)**
- **Impact of Ofgem's Significant Code Review** – this will change the dynamic between DNOs and customers.
- **Reviewing connection codes/policies for energy storage (e.g. derogating EREC P28 in a frequency event)**

Members agreed that it would be valuable to set up a 'task and finish' working group on this topic and to raise these issues in a coordinated way with Ofgem, BEIS and the DNOs.

Members participated in a poll at the end of the session to help prioritise the key connection issues:



“In reference to the poll an “other” could be some cultural change around the purpose of the DNOs. Paul has set out some encouraging shift in attitude to a more collaborative approach but more work to be done on the wider stakeholder engagement. In particular Local Area Energy Planning and future scenarios.”

Regen to set up a 'task & finish' working group on connecting low carbon technologies to the grid. **Please inform Estelle (elimon@regen.co.uk) if you would like to participate in this group.**

Members agreed three additional actions - **if you would like to contribute to these, please get in touch with Estelle (elimon@regen.co.uk)**

1. Regen to write to Ofgem as part of the RIIO ED2 price review process to express concern that investment required to connect low carbon technologies will not take place quickly and smoothly enough.
2. Regen to respond to ENA consultation on the Open Networks work plan for 2022 highlighting the importance of connections.
3. Regen follow up meeting with Paul Jewell on his proposal to organise a meet with Catherine Cleary and other interested Regen/ESN members to discuss the specific issues around connection codes/policies for energy storage (EREC P28).

- [ENA consultation on high-level scope for 2022](#)
- WPD's [Distribution Future Energy Scenarios](#)
- [Regional Development Programmes](#)
- [Green recovery scheme](#)

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