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Meeting Summary

Strategic Energy Planning Industry Working Group

Date:	16/09/2025	Location:	Microsoft Teams
Start:	14:30	End:	16:00

NESO	David Wilmott, Isla Martin-Abel, Rajdeep Bains, Posy MacRae, Eavan Dowse, Aradhna Tandon, Clare Matthews, Andrew Potter, Calum Mackenzie, Gavin Roe-Pearce
Organisations in attendance:	
Nuclear Industry Association	Energy UK
National Grid Electricity Transmission	SSEN Transmission
Strathclyde University	Wales and West Utilities
SGN	Carbon Capture and Storage Association
Future Energy Networks	Cadent Gas
Hydrogen UK	Solar Energy UK
British Hydro	Scottish Renewables
Renewable UK	REA
BEAMA	Royal Academy of Engineering
Regen	Association for Decentralised Energy
British Ports Association	
National Gas	

Agenda, discussion and details

Topics to be discussed

1. Introduction – David Wilmott

David provided a recap of what's happened since the last meeting in July and the special SSEP session in August. The transitional Regional Energy Strategic Plans (tRESP) consultation is about to launch, there's ongoing work on pathway themes for SSEP, gas and whole network development continues with more updates due in December, and the Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP) draft methodology is under consultation. The electricity transmission design

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principles consultation is now live. In offshore coordination, a public consultation on strategic environmental assessment is planned for November. Upcoming events include regional RESP forums from 13th to 23rd October and SSEP developer workshops in Scotland and Wales.

2. tRESP Consultation - Gavin Roe-Pearce

Gavin provided an update on the transitional RESP consultation, which launches on 23rd September and runs for six weeks, closing 3rd November. It's a collaborative effort that's been underway since March, aiming to bridge to a longer-term regional energy strategy. The final report will be published January 2026, feeding into the enduring plan for 2027.

There are public webinars on 23rd and 29th September, plus regional forums. The consultation covers national and regional context, short and long-term net zero pathways, planning assumptions for DNOs, and key investment needs for electricity distribution projects not yet in the connections process. Details on responding will be on the NESO website.

3. Electricity Transmission Design Principles consultation - Calum Mackenzie

Calum gave an overview of the electricity transmission design principles, explaining that these are part of the UK Government's efforts to speed up grid development. The idea is to give clear guidance to companies building transmission projects so there is more consistency and transparency about how and why decisions are made.

The draft principles are out for public consultation, which runs until 26th October, and NESO is keen to get feedback from anyone interested. The principles are grouped into three main types: strategic which set out the big picture and priorities, network planning for how the network is designed and planned, and project development covering technical and practical considerations for different types of assets. Examples include taking a default approach to overhead AC lines for new circuits, but there are also principles for things like underground cables and substations. All the details are in the slides and the consultation documents, and there are webinars later this month for anyone with questions. Calum encouraged everyone to have a look at the documents and share their views, as these principles will shape future projects and plans.

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4. CSNP Draft Methodology Consultation update – Clare Matthews and Andrew Potter

Clare gave an overview of where things stand with the CSNP draft methodology consultation. They explained the process so far: an initial consultation last winter, a second round from June to August, and now the team is digesting the feedback and preparing to submit the final methodology to Ofgem. Timelines for approval are still being discussed with Ofgem.

They highlighted that there was a good level of engagement, with 122 responses and plenty of interaction online and in webinars. The consultation covered electricity, gas and hydrogen, and brought in a broader mix of stakeholders this time, given its wider scope. Key feedback themes included calls for more clarity on data, policy links, and what whole system means in practice, especially as previous iterations focused mainly on electricity. There were also requests for more detail on stakeholder engagement plans, governance, incentives for third parties, and ways to make sure all energy vectors are included. Clare said they'll publish more detailed feedback and responses in due course and invited further questions from the group.

5. Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) Modelling and Pathways Discussion – Eavan Dowse

Eavan Dowse provided a brief update, noting that NESO is close to completing the SSEP economic modelling and narrowing pathway options to four to six for the Secretary of State's review. Next, the focus will be on assessing deliverability and detailed appraisal. Following the recent REMA decision, SSEP is now key to the new national pricing reforms and as such DESNZ has requested a four-week delay to review outputs. The pathway options report is now expected to be submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2026, with exact dates pending. This short delay does not affect the CSNP timeline.

Posy MacRae recapped SSEP's recent engagement on pathway development, including a round of forums and working groups that brought over 300 comments from 37 organisations, shaping the pathway themes. She also noted the developers workshop in Leamington, attended by over 70 people, with more sessions to come in Glasgow and Cardiff.

One of the main issues raised at the workshop was transparency around data inputs to the SSEP. NESO has confidentiality agreements with DESNZ which restricts the sharing of the data, they're working on a solution and will update everyone as soon as possible. There were also questions about how different

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technologies are treated, constraints in the modelling, and how SSEP links with wider policy changes like REMA.

Eavan acknowledged frustration from the industry about limited access to data, emphasising it's due to the data being provided by DESNZ and the confidentiality arrangements. NESO is committed to sharing as much as possible as soon as they're able.

Posy gave a quick roundup of the feedback from August's engagement and said people are asking for more clarity and openness, especially about how the four to six pathways are being put together. NESO wants to get as many stakeholders involved as possible before the options go to the Secretary of State in January. The pathways have been combined to pick up on the main themes and concerns, such as timelines for delivery, network build and energy independence. The idea of having a more varied energy mix got the most support and is being taken forward.

Adrian Palmer gave a brief update on the modelling, highlighting that NESO has developed hundreds of model runs since the last meeting and is now narrowing these down to four to six pathways for the Secretary of State. The team started with various 'what if?' scenarios, used feedback to blend and refine options, and are focused on finding the key trade offs between nuclear, offshore wind, solar, and storage. There's also ongoing work on how best to balance imports, domestic energy, green gases, hydrogen, and the role of a hydrogen backbone. All pathways are net zero compliant, and the final shortlist will reflect feedback and practical system needs.

Adrian Palmer explained that they're working closely with the geospatial team to understand what the capacity of the pathways mean in practice, especially in terms of land use and the appraisal process. They're narrowing down four to six key pathways, testing and refining options through economic and geospatial modelling to see how different technologies fit across the country and what trade offs might appear.

Richard England then described how NESO is using the spatial evaluation framework for geospatial modelling looking at both constraints and opportunities. The spatial findings are translated into megawatt potential for the economic model, testing how costs and deliverability change as criteria are tightened or relaxed.

Eavan added that, following down-selection of the pathways, the next phase will be about making sure the chosen pathways are deliverable, stress testing assumptions, build rates, and spatial feasibility, while gathering and clearly

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presenting risks and opportunities for the Secretary of State. The team is committed to openness, and further updates on the appraisal process will follow in future sessions.

6. Next Steps -David Wilmot.

David Willmot wrapped up the meeting by noting the strong interest in SSEP. The group will meet again in October.
