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Stakeholder feedback on draft early competition documents

Introduction

Early competition refers to the competitive tender process which seeks to select a Competitively Appointed Transmission Owner (CATO) to design, finance, build and operate a new electricity transmission asset.

NESO is inviting comments and feedback from stakeholders on the following draft early competition documents:

- Early Competition Project Appraisal Method
- Tendered Scope of Works
- Pre-qualification Questionnaire and Evaluation Criteria
- Invitation to Tender Questions and Evaluation Criteria

We would welcome general feedback from you on any or all of these draft documents. However, we have posed a number of questions below which we are particularly interested in receiving stakeholder responses to. You may choose to respond to some but not all of these questions.

Please submit your feedback to box.earlycompetition@neso.energy before 23:59 on 30th April 2026.

Early Competition Project Appraisal Method

This document sets out NESO’s proposed method for appraising projects recommended by the Transitional Centralised Strategic Network Plan 2 Refresh (tCSNP2 Refresh) for their suitability and favourability for early competition. It sets out the way in which we intend to identify projects which satisfy the legislative requirements of the Criteria Regulations¹, and which are attractive for early competition because they are considered to face the lowest risks to successful delivery by a CATO and/or would deliver the greatest benefits.

- Do you have any general comments or concerns about the proposed project appraisal methodology?

¹ The Electricity (Criteria for Relevant Electricity Projects) (Transmission) Regulations 2024. See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/168/made>.

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- Do you consider the proposed appraisal process to be transparent and comprehensive?
- Do you agree with the factors included in the longlist and shortlist appraisal stages? Do you consider that the method by which each factor will be assessed is appropriate?
- Are there any additional factors you believe should be included in the longlist or shortlist appraisal stage?
- What are your thoughts on the proposed method for estimating the likely delivery programme for a CATO?
- Do you agree with the factors for prioritising projects for early competition? Are there others that you think should be considered?

Tendered Scope of Works

This document is a draft of the template that will be populated by NESO on a project-by-project basis for early competition tender exercises. It sets out the requirements that a CATO's solution must meet to fulfil the identified transmission network need. It also provides a high-level overview of the environmental context of the area within which the project will lie.

- Is the document clear and understandable? Do you have any suggestions for improving the structure or content of the document?
- How well does the document explain the underlying reasons for the project need?
- Is the information that will be provided in the Tendered Scope of Works document sufficient for preparing a compliant bid? If not, what other information do you think needs to be provided?
- Is there any information in the draft Tendered Scope of Works document which you consider to be redundant? If yes, please let us know what information and why you think this is the case.

Pre-qualification Questionnaire and Evaluation Criteria

The draft Pre-qualification Questionnaire and Evaluation Criteria document contains the questions that NESO intends to ask Bidders at the Pre-qualification (PQ) stage of the tender process. Bidders must pass the PQ stage by successfully answering the PQ questions before they can become a Qualifying Bidder and move to the Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage. The draft document contains our proposed evaluation criteria, which is how we will assess Bidder's responses to each question and assign a 'Pass' or 'Fail' mark.

- Are there any questions that you think are unclear, or are you uncertain what is being asked for?
- Does the Pre-qualification Questionnaire ask for anything that you could not provide and/or that would prevent you from submitting a passing response?
- In your opinion, are the evaluation criteria clear any easy to understand?

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- Do the questions relating to Bidder’s experience and capability adequately allow for you to demonstrate your ability to deliver the Qualifying Project?
- Are there any other areas of expertise that you consider should be assessed at the PQ stage?

Invitation to Tender Questions and Evaluation Criteria

The draft Invitation to Tender Questions and Evaluation Criteria document contains the questions that NESO intends to ask Qualifying Bidders at the ITT stage of the tender process. The purpose of the ITT questions is to enable NESO to assess Qualifying Bidders approach to developing their proposed solution to the network need, the solution itself, and their ability to deliver that solution. The draft document contains our proposed evaluation criteria, which is how we will assess Qualifying Bidder’s response to each question and assign a score based on the quality of the response.

- Are there any questions that you think are unclear, or are you uncertain what is being asked for?
- Do any of the ITT questions ask for anything that you could not provide and/or that would prevent you from submitting a response?
- In your opinion, are the evaluation criteria clear any easy to understand? Do you believe that they will enable fair and transparent scoring of tender responses?
- Are the broad topic areas being assessed by the ITT questions correct? Do you think any important areas have been missed?
- Do you agree with NESO’s proposed weighting to be assigned to each of the ITT questions?
- Are the page limits set for the ITT questions realistic?
- Question 1 mandates that at least three corridor options are to be considered as part of the Qualifying Bidder’s option assessment – do you think this is appropriate?
- Question 2 and Question 11.3 are proposed to be marked on a ‘Pass/Fail’ basis, rather than being scored – do you think this is appropriate? Do you believe that additional value can be demonstrated by a Qualifying Bidder that would merit either of these questions being scored, rather than being simply Pass or Fail?
- Considering the stage at which the tender process will take place, do you agree with the level of detail being asked for by Question 9. Operation and maintenance? Would you be able to evidence your responses to the questions being asked?
- In your opinion, should Qualifying Bidders be expected to achieve a minimum score on each or any question, with failure to achieve that score meaning exclusion from the tender process? If so, please explain your reasoning.
- Do you foresee any difficulties or barriers to obtaining specialist support (where needed) to respond to any of the ITT questions? If so, do you believe that there is anything that NESO could do to facilitate Qualifying Bidders obtaining this support?