

## Public

Ref: FOI/25/329

National Energy System Operator  
Faraday House  
Gallows Hill  
Warwick  
CV34 6DA

[InformationRights@neso.energy](mailto:InformationRights@neso.energy)  
[www.neso.energy](http://www.neso.energy)

27 April 2026

Dear requester

## Request for Information

Thank you for your request for information which was received by NESO on 26 March 2026. Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

## Request

You asked us:

- 1. Please provide any information, in any format, regarding a future grid connection for the proposed 'Rufus' 540MW mega AI data centre near Kilmarnock in East Ayrshire, Scotland. (This project is being proposed and developed by ILLI Group)*
- 2. Please provide all communications between NESO and ILLI group staff in regard to the proposed 'Rufus' data centre in East Ayrshire.*
- 3. Please provide all communications between NESO and East Ayrshire Council staff in regard to AI growth zones and grid connections, and in regard to the Rufus data centre grid connection.*

## Our response

Public authorities subject to the FOIA and the EIR are required to:

- confirm whether they hold recorded information in scope of a request, and
- provide access to that information.

The right of access to information provided by both pieces of legislation is subject to certain exemptions. Where an exemption is engaged the public authority may withhold from disclosure the information to which the exemption applies.

We can confirm that NESO holds some information in scope of your request. NESO holds information relating to connection agreements because of our role leading and facilitating the process by which customers connect to and make use of the national electricity transmission system (NETS). We receive applications for connections and issue agreements with projects which will either generate and/or store electricity and connect to the transmission network or that are demand connections that will import electricity directly from the transmission system. More information about NESO's roles in Connections, and the role of other stakeholders, is available here: [NESO's role in Connections | National Energy System Operator](#).

We have responded to each of your questions below.

- 1. Please provide any information, in any format, regarding a future grid connection for the proposed 'Rufus' 540MW mega AI data centre near Kilmarnock in East Ayrshire, Scotland. (This project is being proposed and developed by ILLI Group)*
- 2. Please provide all communications between NESO and ILLI group staff in regard to the proposed 'Rufus' data centre in East Ayrshire.*

We can confirm that NESO holds recorded information relating to the Rufus data centre project. We have considered these two questions under the EIR.

We can advise that a very limited amount of information held by NESO and relating to the Rufus data centre project is publicly available:

- The Connection and Use of System Code (CUSC) is the contractual framework for connecting to and using the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS). NESO is the code administrator and publishes the CUSC Code documents, including the [Schedule 1 List of Users](#), which includes ILLI Rufus Limited.
- The [Existing Agreement \(EA\) Register](#) is publicly available and has been published in relation to the Connections Reform Gate 2 To Whole Queue Process (G2TWQ). We have provided further information about Connections Reform and the G2TWQ process at the end of this response. The Register details all projects that applied for 'Gate 2' in the Connections Reform process where consent was given for inclusion in the EA Register. If a project is not listed on the EA Register an application for Gate 2 may not have been

submitted or the developer may not have consented to information being made publicly available. There is a reference to a project 'RUFUS' on the EA Register which confirms that a Gate 2 application was made for this project, and confirms the existing '*associated installed capacity*', '*connection date*' and '*connection point*' as in the project's agreement at the time of the Gate 2 application. The EA Register does not outline any outcomes or results of applications.

Further to the above, we have undertaken a centralised search of our Microsoft tenancy and Customer CRM and have asked relevant teams in NESO's Engineering & Customer Solutions (Connections) directorate to search for recorded information in scope of your request.

We can confirm that we hold further recorded information in scope of your request in questions 1 and 2, including email communications with the developer Ili Energy. The information held relates to the connection agreement and includes contractual information for this project.

NESO cannot disclose information relating to specific developers or their projects, other than where that information is already publicly available. Regulation 12(5)(e) of the EIR states that a public authority may refuse to disclose information to the extent that its disclosure would adversely affect the confidentiality of commercial or industrial information where such confidentiality is provided by law to protect a legitimate economic interest.

Information is covered by Regulation 12(5)(e) if:

- The information is commercial or industrial in nature;
- Confidentiality is provided by law;
- The confidentiality is protecting a legitimate economic interest;
- The confidentiality would be adversely affected by disclosure.

Information relating to specific developers and their projects is commercial in nature and our use of this exception is primarily in respect of the potential consequence to the commercial interests of developers.

Whilst we review each request that we receive on a case-by-case basis, you will see from the responses published on our [Disclosure log | National Energy System Operator](#) that our decision to refuse your request is consistent with our decisions on similar requests for information relating to individual energy projects.

Commercial companies are independent of NESO and the respective transmission owners. Development projects are competitive processes, and a developer would not expect their

commercial information to be made publicly available. This would, in effect, make it available to other developers.

Where a connection agreement is between NESO and a developer, the connection offer is made substantially in the form and under the terms of the Connection and Use of System Code (CUSC). The CUSC has exhibits containing proformas of the documents which set out the main content of the connection agreements between NESO and a developer. You can find the CUSC and the proformas on our website: [Connection and Use of System Code \(CUSC\) | National Energy System Operator](#). NESO is bound by the confidentiality obligations under the CUSC and cannot share the specific terms put in place with a developer.

NESO also falls within the scope of the Utilities Act 2000 and Section 105 of that Act makes it a criminal offence to disclose information: a) obtained under the Utilities Act 2000 and any other key energy legislation such as the Gas Act 1986 and the Electricity Act 1989, subject to specific exceptions; and b) where the information relates to the affairs of any individual or any particular business during the lifetime of the individual or so long as the business continues to be carried on.

You may find it helpful to know that this kind of confidentiality obligation is not limited to the energy sector. There are equivalent provisions in legislation governing other sectors (e.g. the Water Act 1989, the Telecommunications Act 1984, the Airports Act 1986, and the Broadcasting Act 1990).

In our opinion, the information in question is subject to the restrictions at Section 105 of the Utilities Act and does not fall within any of the limited exceptions to that duty of confidentiality. Beyond this, there is also a common law duty of confidentiality based on the expectations of the developers.

All exceptions in the EIR are subject to a public interest test.

NESO acknowledges that there are a number of public interest arguments in favour of disclosing the requested information. There is a growing public interest in the development of data centres, particularly where the construction and development of such projects may have an impact on local areas. The general public may be interested in the dates and times of construction, the connection dates, and the timelines and scope of developments.

There is however a public interest in ensuring no specific developer is materially disadvantaged through disclosing confidential commercial information, which is not released in respect of other projects. This ensures that there is a level playing field across all projects.

NESO, as the designated independent system operator and planner under the Energy Act 2023, must remain independent, fair, and consumer focused. Disclosure of information provided to us by developers could erode trust within the sector, hampering NESO's role. An erosion of trust would impact our ability to drive forward reforms and initiatives that would bring benefits to consumers and to the environment.

Having weighed up these public interest arguments, our opinion is that the balance of the public interest lies in maintaining the exemption provided by Regulation 12(5)(e) of the EIR.

NESO is ensuring that it is being as transparent as possible through the Connections Reform process and where it is able to do publishes information related to connection agreements. Where a developer has consented to the information being made publicly available, the Existing Agreements register confirms whether a project applied for Gate 2 through the G2TWQ process.

The use of the EIR exception for similar information relating to the connection of windfarms was the subject of a Decision Notice (Reference IC-127537-Q8R6) from the Information Commissioner. Whilst we consider every request for information on a case-by-case basis, the Information Commissioner's analysis of the connections process and the application of this exemption is helpful context. This decision upheld the use of the exception by the National Grid Electricity System Operator prior to our transition to NESO. The full decision is available on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website.

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- 3. Please provide all communications between NESO and East Ayrshire Council staff in regard to AI growth zones and grid connections, and in regard to the Rufus data centre grid connection.*

We can confirm that we hold some limited information in scope of this question. We have considered this information under the FOIA, as it does not meet the definition of 'environmental information' provided at Regulation 2(1) of the EIR.

We attach two emails between NESO and East Ayrshire Council that contain reference to AI Growth Zones. The names of NESO employees have been redacted under Section 40(2) of the FOIA which provides an exemption for personal data. The employees in question are not members of NESO's Executive Leadership Team and did not have the expectation that their

names would be disclosed into the public domain. We do not, therefore, believe that we have a lawful basis for the disclosure of their personal data. We have consulted with East Ayrshire Council and have also redacted names of their employees.

No email correspondence between NESO and East Ayrshire Council referring to the Rufus data centre was identified.

This concludes our response to your request

### **Connections Reform**

NESO, in collaboration with the networks, industry, government and Ofgem has delivered a transformational change to the way that the grid connections process operates. Information on Connections Reform is available here: [Connections Reform | National Energy System Operator](#).

A key part of this reform is the introduction of the new Gate 2 to Whole Queue (G2TWQ) process, which ensures that only projects that are ready to go, and that are aligned to the [UK Government's Clean Power Action Plan](#) will progress through to the new connections delivery pipeline. The Gate 2 Criteria Methodology and Connections Network Design Methodology can be found here: [Connections Reform design documents and methodologies | National Energy System Operator](#).

On 8 December 2025 NESO began informing Customers of the outcome of their applications and published the results of the new connections delivery pipeline. Further detailed results data was published in January 2026. The published information provides a high-level view of the reformed pipeline:

- [Connections Reform Results | National Energy System Operator](#).
- [Connections Reform: Detailed Results Data](#)

On 13 February 2026 NESO, Transmission Owners (TOs), Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and wider delivery partners jointly confirmed updates to the delivery timeline for Connections Reform: [Connections reform timeline | National Energy System Operator](#).

### **Advice and assistance**

AI Growth Zones (AIGZs) are an initiative of the UK Government, and the application process is managed by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. Government departments are subject to the FOIA and EIR and you may wish to request further information on for AIGZs from DSIT: [Make a Freedom of Information \(FOI\) request to DSIT - GOV.UK](#).

Scottish councils are subject to the Scottish information rights legislation. You may wish to contact East Ayrshire Council to request recorded information they may hold in scope of your request: [How to make a freedom of information request · East Ayrshire Council](#).

The Transmission Owners own and operate the network infrastructure and are subject to the EIR (not the FOIA). The relevant transmission owner is Scottish Power Transmission.

### **Next steps**

If you are dissatisfied with our handling of your request, you can ask us to review our response. If you want us to carry out a review, please let us know within 40 working days and quote the reference number at the top of this letter. You can find our procedure here: [Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations | National Energy System Operator](#). The ICO's website also provides guidance on the internal review process: [What to do if you are dissatisfied with the response | ICO](#).

If you are still dissatisfied after our internal review, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). You should make complaints to the ICO within six weeks of receiving the outcome of an internal review. The easiest way to lodge a complaint is through their website: [www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints](http://www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints). Alternatively, they can be contacted at: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF.

Thank you for your interest in the work of the National Energy System Operator (NESO).

Regards,

The Information Rights Team, National Energy System Operator (NESO)

From: [REDACTED] [\[NESO\]](#)

To:

Subject: RE: [OFFICIAL]Link to onshore wind mapping in East Ayrshire [PUBLIC]

Date: 04 November 2025 16:59:00

From: NESO  
To: East Ayrshire  
Council

[REDACTED]

I realised my manager [REDACTED] is actually meeting some of your colleagues on Monday to talk about AI growth zones, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Strategic Lead – Scotland

Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP)

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] [NESO]  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED] [NESO]  
Subject: RE: [OFFICIAL]RE:East Ayrshire Electrical Infrastructure and AI Growth Zones. [OFFICIAL]  
Date: 21 October 2025 11:28:00  
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

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From: NESO  
To: East Ayrshire Council

Received and accepted

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From: [REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>  
Sent: 21 October 2025 11:25  
To: [REDACTED]@neso.energy>  
Cc: [REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@neso.energy>  
Subject: [OFFICIAL]RE:East Ayrshire Electrical Infrastructure and AI Growth Zones. [OFFICIAL]

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[REDACTED].  
I have issued an invitation for the 10<sup>th</sup> @ 2pm, hopefully that is suitable.

Have a lovely day.

Kind regards,

---

From: [REDACTED]@neso.energy>  
Sent: 21 October 2025 10:17  
To: [REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>  
Cc: [REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@neso.energy>  
Subject: RE: [OFFICIAL]East Ayrshire Electrical Infrastructure and AI Growth Zones. [OFFICIAL]

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[REDACTED]

Just to note the CoSLA conference is at the end of that week so Mon/Tues would be best

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**From:** [REDACTED] [NESO]  
**Sent:** 21 October 2025 10:06  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>;  
[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)> [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@neso.energy](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso.energy)>  
**Subject:** RE: [OFFICIAL]East Ayrshire Electrical Infrastructure and AI Growth Zones. [OFFICIAL]

[REDACTED]

All well thanks and hope you are too.

Diaries have become rather congested so could you suggest some dates w/c 10<sup>th</sup> Nov that would suit (other than Friday when my colleague [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@neso](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso)> is not working)

Regards

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 21 October 2025 09:58  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@neso.energy](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso.energy)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@neso.energy](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso.energy)> [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** [OFFICIAL]East Ayrshire Electrical Infrastructure and AI Growth Zones. [OFFICIAL]

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[REDACTED],

I hope all is well with you.

I am following up on the undernoted and apologise one of the times are no longer available.

Please let me know if any of the other dates/times suit or if you require further availability.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** [REDACTED] **From: East Ayrshire Council**  
**Sent:** 13 October 2025 11:37  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@neso.energy](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso.energy)>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>;  
[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@neso.energy](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso.energy)>  
**Subject:** RE:East Ayrshire Electrical Infrastructure and AI Growth Zones. [OFFICIAL]

**CLASSIFICATION:** OFFICIAL

[REDACTED]

I hope you had a lovely weekend.

With regard to the meeting request, I have listed some dates/times below, hopefully something will be suitable for a MS Teams call.

- 27<sup>th</sup> October 11-12 – apologies this is no longer available
- 30<sup>th</sup> October 9 – 10
- 3<sup>rd</sup> November 9 – 10 or 4-5pm

Can I please ask for an early response as I am sure you appreciate, diaries fill very quickly.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

*East Ayrshire Council  
Council Headquarters  
London Road,  
Kilmarnock*

*East Ayrshire*  
*KA3 7BU*

*Email:* [REDACTED] [@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

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**From:** [REDACTED] [@neso.energy](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso.energy)>  
**Sent:** 10 October 2025 16:32  
**To:** [REDACTED] [@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] [@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>;  
[REDACTED] [@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [@neso.energy](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso.energy)>  
**Subject:** RE: [OFFICIAL]East Ayrshire Electrical Infrastructure and AI Growth Zones.  
[OFFICIAL]

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[REDACTED]

Thanks for getting in touch. I would be delighted to have a call later in October – let me have some dates and we can get something in the diary

In the meantime you and your colleagues would be interested in this event which will give you an insight into our current work and plans <https://www.neso.energy/calendar/resp-forum-round-3autumn-2025-scotland>

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**From:** [REDACTED] [@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 10 October 2025 15:42  
**To:** [REDACTED] [@neso.energy](mailto:[REDACTED]@neso.energy)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] [@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** [OFFICIAL]East Ayrshire Electrical Infrastructure and AI Growth Zones. [OFFICIAL]

Official

**CLASSIFICATION:** OFFICIAL

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]. Recently, the Ayrshire Councils submitted a AI Growth Zones expression of Interest application to UK Government in relation to the Ayrshire Region. While we await the outcome it would be great for a catch up to discuss the future energy grid proposals for Ayrshire. We are presently supplying SPEN with data on projects within the region but are looking to understand where we can maximise economic benefit and opportunities through the maximisation of the grid linking back to our LHEES.

Let me know if you are available for a MS Teams call after the October school holidays and we can catch up.

Regards

**East Ayrshire Council**  
**Council Headquarters**  
**London Road,**  
**Kilmarnock**  
**East Ayrshire**  
**KA3 7BU**



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