

Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP)

FAQs

This document answers frequently asked questions about the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) including its modelling approach, transparency commitments, assumptions and outputs. It will be reviewed and updated as information becomes available.

Further information on the SSEP including the commission, methodology, webinars and our regular transparency updates can be found [on our website](#).

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1. Pathway Options Report (POR)

What is the relationship between the POR, Environmental POR and the final SSEP?

The Pathway Options Report (POR) is a confidential NESO deliverable for the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (the UK Energy Secretary) that sets out six SSEP pathways and their implications, to support an informed pathway selection. The report will be shared with DESNZ, Ofgem and devolved governments, with the selected pathway then taken forward to public consultation following the UK Energy Secretary's decision.

The purpose of the Environmental Pathway Options Report (EPOR) is to provide the same group of organisations, often referred to as the co-commissioners, with more in-depth but relevant environmental information on the six pathway options, to assist in the selection of the pathway for public consultation. It will utilise the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) assessment criteria although it is not a statutory obligation.

The POR will have a supporting Technical Annex which provides additional technical information, evidence and methodological detail that underpins the analysis presented in the POR.

The Stakeholder Report, which accompanies the POR and EPOR, provides a transparent account of stakeholder engagement undertaken during pathway development, the key themes raised by stakeholders and how those insights were considered in the development of the pathways.

Together, these reports inform the UK Energy Secretary's selection of a preferred pathway. The selected pathway is then developed into the draft SSEP, which will be subject to public and stakeholder consultation before the SSEP is finalised.



Will the full POR be published?

The Pathway Options Report (POR) is a confidential report submitted to the UK Energy Secretary to support pathway selection. The POR, Environmental POR (EPOR) and supporting Stakeholder Report will be provided to the UK government to inform the decision on which pathway should be taken forward as the draft SSEP and for public consultation. The draft SSEP consultation will include information on the selected pathway and the evidence supporting it.

When will the POR be submitted to the UK Energy Secretary?

The POR, EPOR and stakeholder report will be submitted to the UK Energy Secretary in summer 2026.

When will a preferred pathway be selected?

Following receipt of the POR and EPOR, the UK Energy Secretary will select a preferred pathway to be taken forward for consultation. More information on the SSEP timelines can be found [here](#)¹.

Will stakeholders be able to comment on the pathway options before the UK Energy Secretary makes a decision?

The SSEP is being delivered in line with the [formal commission](#)² from DESNZ, Scottish Government and Welsh Government, which sets the process for pathway development and decision-making.

As outlined in the commission, pathway options are submitted to the UK Energy Secretary to inform the choice of a preferred pathway ahead of public consultation on the draft SSEP.

¹ <https://www.neso.energy/news/neso-outlines-new-timelines-strategic-energy-plans>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-spatial-energy-plan-commission-to-neso>



Any change to that approach, including consulting on pathways at an earlier stage, would need to be directed by the three governments through a change to the commission.

2. How can stakeholders influence the SSEP?

How has stakeholder feedback informed the development of the SSEP?

Stakeholder feedback is essential to the development of the SSEP. Insights, inputs and recommendations from stakeholders are built into the development of the SSEP to strengthen the evidence base, identify risks and opportunities and test the deliverability of different approaches.

There has been a significant amount of stakeholder engagement taking place to provide input into the development of the draft SSEP, providing an opportunity to include the views of representative bodies of community organisations from England, Scotland and Wales alongside expert input from energy industry, environmental and societal organisations and other technical experts. This has helped inform pathway development, environmental assessment, deliverability considerations and the narrative presented in the Pathway Options Report (POR). *(You can find out more about the POR in Section 1 of this document.)*

Stakeholder insights have been considered alongside technical, economic, environmental and policy analysis of the pathways.

Further information on our engagement approach and structure can be found in the SSEP [methodology](#)³.

³ <https://www.neso.energy/document/360501/download>



Have some stakeholder groups had more influence than others?

Different stakeholder groups have influenced different parts of the development of the SSEP according to their expertise, but no single group has had more influence than others. Energy industry stakeholders have informed deliverability considerations, environmental stakeholders have informed environmental assessments and societal and community representatives have helped us understand wider social and economic impacts. We consider stakeholder feedback alongside technical, economic, environmental and policy analysis, with the weight given to feedback is determined by its relevance and supporting evidence rather than who provided it.

How is public acceptance considered in the SSEP?

To help ensure the robustness of the plan and take the views of society as a whole into account from the start of our processes, we have carried out two opinion surveys of more than 9,000 people across Great Britain. The survey results will contribute to the modelling at the heart of the SSEP, ensuring public perceptions are considered and informing the balances and trade-offs that need to be made as we move to a cleaner, secure and reliable energy system. Across the two surveys, 40 focus groups were undertaken to validate the data from the survey and to focus on specific areas of the SSEP. We are also coordinating 14 Societal Forums, each focused on a specific area of stakeholder interest and ensuring that a greater diversity of views is heard.

How can organisations get involved in future SSEP engagement activities?

As outlined in the SSEP commission⁴ we will seek feedback on the draft SSEP via public consultation in early 2027. Our activities will include visual representations

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-spatial-energy-plan-commission-to-neso>



of the plan, text descriptions and direct engagement such as webinars and stakeholder meetings. Our consultation process is designed to be flexible, open, inclusive, and responsive. Using structures and forums established during the SSEP's development, we will engage a broad range of political, societal, industry and community stakeholders. Our consultations will be wide-reaching and inclusive and guided by the Gunning Principles, ensuring everyone can have a say.

Ahead of public consultation you can find a library of information on SSEP and our technical webinar recordings on our [website](#)⁵ and you can get in touch via box.ssep@neso.energy.

3. How has the SSEP been developed?

Which technologies are in scope and why?

The SSEP is developing a holistic energy pathway, considering the breadth of anticipated technologies in our economic analysis. We are focusing in detail on a sub-set of those technologies, to spatially optimise them. They include:

- Solar
- Offshore wind (including floating)
- Nuclear (including small modular reactors (SMRs))
- Onshore wind
- Hydrogen
- Energy storage (electricity short- and long-term storage, hydrogen storage)
- Power and hydrogen production with carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS)
- Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS)
- Electricity interconnectors

⁵ <https://www.neso.energy/what-we-do/strategic-planning/strategic-spatial-energy-planning-ssep>



- Unabated gas
- Data centres.

More information can be found in the SSEP's [methodology](#)⁶.

In-scope technologies for the SSEP were agreed with DESNZ at the start of the programme. Inclusion was influenced by policy support, delivery mechanisms and strategic importance and technology maturity.

How are electricity networks represented within the modelling of the SSEP?

The SSEP is a strategic plan for the future energy system, identifying the quantity, type and zonal location of energy generation and storage needed across Great Britain. The Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP) then uses that information to determine the transmission network infrastructure required to connect and support that future energy system.

Network implications are considered throughout the SSEP methodology. The economic modelling represents energy flows and high-level electricity and hydrogen transfer requirements between zones, including the costs and constraints associated with locating generation and storage in different parts of Great Britain. We have compared the high-level network implications of reinforcements required for each pathway. The detailed design, routing and delivery of network infrastructure will then be determined through subsequent planning in the CSNP.

How are new and emerging technologies treated in the SSEP?

NESO is technology agnostic. We recognise that many new technologies will come along over the coming years as we transition to a resilient, low carbon and

⁶ <https://www.neso.energy/document/360501/download>



low cost system. Strategic energy plans apply a strict set of published criteria to consider how technologies are expected to evolve and contribute over time, while recognising uncertainty and the potential for innovation.

For new technologies, engagement with NESO through the Energy Insights, Innovation and Strategic Planning teams is critical to ensure that NESO fully understands the opportunities and risks associated with development of the technology. As the strategic plans are undertaken on a three yearly cycle, even if a technology is not included in the latest strategic energy plan, there is the opportunity to progress in future plans.

What does the SSEP class as a nascent technology and how did you determine what was included in the modelling?

The SSEP defines nascent technologies as those that are not yet proven at scale or commercially mature. Examples include Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS), hydrogen production with Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage, hydrogen-to-power technologies Compressed Air Energy Storage (CAES), Liquid Air Energy Storage (LAES) and gas generation with Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS). These technologies are included in the modelling, but the SSEP also tests alternative scenarios with lower reliance on nascent technologies to understand the implications of delivery, cost and scalability risks.

How is climate change considered in the development of the SSEP?

The SSEP is intended to support the transition to a decarbonised energy system, helping to meet net zero objectives while maintaining energy security. Climate-related environmental factors, such as flood risk, water availability and carbon-rich habitats, are considered through the spatial and environmental assessment processes. The SSEP is iterative, and climate resilience considerations can continue to evolve as new data and evidence become available.



The economic model focuses on identifying a least-cost energy system that meets demand, decarbonisation and security of supply requirements. The modelling uses historical weather datasets and tests different weather year cycles. We have also tested modelled weather cycles with higher frequency of extreme patterns as well as the potential impact of climate change on heating and cooling patterns in the sensitivities. Both have been developed in conjunction with the Met Office. We are considering how we can use climate change projections for future iterations as we recognise the importance of the changes in weather patterns that are already happening and the implications for future energy systems.

What cost assumptions have been used in the SSEP economic modelling?

We are using asset cost forecasts supplied by DESNZ, in most cases these include a range of forecasts and we conduct sensitivity testing to explore a range of cost assumptions.

Our data transparency [data list](#)⁷ provides an overview of the data used. Please note, certain costs may remain confidential due to commercially sensitive information, these are outlined within the spreadsheet.

How are risks and uncertainties considered in the SSEP modelling?

The SSEP commission specifically sets out that the SSEP must be flexible and adaptable to the complexities and uncertainties of the energy landscape.

The SSEP therefore must account for multiple sources of uncertainty, including demand, technology costs, energy policy changes and external factors such as weather patterns, given its 20-year planning horizon. Each step of the SSEP process is designed to address and manage these different forms of uncertainty.

⁷ <http://www.neso.energy/document/371386/download>



In developing the SSEP pathways, we are carrying out extensive sensitivity testing to assess how robust capacity needs are under a range of key parameters that could change over the period. This assessment will be communicated to the UK Energy Secretary to inform their decision on the preferred pathway.

In addition, the presentation of the SSEP will include indicative capacity ranges for each technology in each zone, capturing the underlying uncertainty. There will also be a single planning line for all technologies for all zones which will be used by CSNP and provides certainty for network planning. The capacity ranges provide clear direction for industry and planning authorities while allowing flexibility for future changes. More information can be found in the methodology changes section of the data transparency update⁸.

The SSEP will be updated on a three-yearly basis. The scope of future iterations of the SSEP will be developed in conversation with government. In doing that the balance between the need for continuity for investors and developers and the flexibility to ensure the process reacts to changes in the market and technological developments will need to be considered.

How are technology deployment rates determined in the SSEP?

The SSEP uses build-rate assumptions and other key inputs provided by DESNZ within its economic modelling. The model then determines the optimal capacity and timing of deployment for each technology required to meet future demand at lowest overall system cost, while maintaining security of supply and complying with environmental, spatial and technical constraints.

How are balancing costs and ancillary services considered?

These are not directly considered as part of the SSEP economic modelling. The SSEP looks at minimising system costs, with a large focus on building and siting of new assets, considering fuel costs and meeting security and emission

⁸ <https://www.neso.energy/document/385566/download>



constraints. Ancillary services and balancing costs are assessed through other downstream processes such as the Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP).

How does the SSEP modelling consider repowering and co-location?

Co-location is considered within the SSEP spatial evaluation process, which looks at identifying the most developable area in a zone. While co-location is often project specific, more developers are now exploring it in their designs. Because SSEP operates at a strategic level rather than a project specific one, we have developed a matrix to identify the most likely pairings for technologies that can co-locate in the same area. Using geospatial modelling, we assess suitable areas for each infrastructure type and highlight where these areas overlap, revealing strategic opportunities – such as potential co-location of battery energy storage systems (BESS) and onshore wind. You can find out more about our geospatial modelling on [our website](#).

Repowering, replacing assets coming to the end of their operational life, is recognised as important. In particular its relevance in Scotland, where a number of onshore wind farms are expected to reach the end of their operational life over the coming decade. Repowering is highly project specific and therefore not explicitly modelled in the SSEP as it is not something we can robustly assume at a strategic, GB-wide level.

From an SSEP perspective, it would not be appropriate to make firm assumptions on repowering at this stage, given the variability by site, developer decisions, planning context and connection arrangements. Instead, the SSEP focuses on identifying optimal capacities and locations at a system level. Some of that capacity could, in practice, be delivered through repowering existing assets.

Does the SSEP consider project attrition rates?

The SSEP will not assume a specific level of project attrition in its recommended capacities. Its role is to identify what infrastructure is needed to deliver the future energy system at a strategic level. Uncertainties around future delivery are reflected through the use of the planning line, ranges and sensitivity analysis and



subsequent market processes. *(You can find out more about the planning line and ranges in the above question “How are risks and uncertainties considered in the SSEP modelling?”).*

The SSEP has considered spatial overlap as part of the spatial assessment of pathways, but what is the potential impact of this overlap?

Through the Spatial Evaluation Framework (SEF), our spatial planning process has identified potential areas where particular technologies could be located, based on the need of that technology and features of the space. These do not necessarily represent the actual sites that will be used in reality, but rather are used to assess the volume of a technology that could be located in particular spatial zones.

The SSEP looks at broad areas where different types of energy infrastructure could be built. Some of these areas overlap with places that are important for people, nature, the environment or other uses of land and sea. This does not mean the full area would be developed. Strategic planning often uses the whole outline of a possible project, which can make the land-use impact look bigger than it would be in practice. For example, an onshore wind farm may cover a wide area on a map, but the turbines and permanent infrastructure usually take up only a small part of that area. Even so, overlaps with sensitive environmental areas can still create risks or impacts, so the first aim should be to avoid those areas where possible. Where impacts cannot be avoided, they would need to be carefully considered and reduced through mitigation.

Have NESO considered who owns the land as part of the SSEP development and spatial modelling?

As the SSEP is a strategic plan, land ownership is not in scope as this is a project specific consideration.



Does the economic model account for compensation?

The economic modelling does not account for environmental compensation and mitigation costs. The data to make assumptions at a strategic level across GB is not available. Where stakeholders have been able to provide guidance on strategic compensatory measures (for example replacement planting for ancient woodland) we have included this as a deliverability consideration in the POR narrative. *(You can find out more about the POR in Section 1 of this document.)* We welcome input on how these considerations might be integrated into future versions of the SSEP, should suitable data become available.

How will the SSEP be implemented?

Once the SSEP is endorsed, the implementation of the Plan sits across a range of levers, including status in planning, flow through to network planning, relationship to the connections regime and to other market signals. The owners of these levers sit across government, Ofgem and NESO and a co-ordinated approach is needed to ensure all these signals are aligned. This coordination is carried out by the UK Government in their Reformed National Pricing programme.

4. How does SSEP interact with other plans?

How does SSEP relate to CSNP?

The SSEP recommends an optimal energy mix for GB (what should get built and where) from 2030 to 2050. It also considers potential impacts on industry, communities and the environment.

The Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP) is a 25-year network blueprint for GB. The plan recommends what energy network infrastructure GB needs to reach net zero. The CSNP maps optimal locations for onshore and offshore transmission



infrastructure. It considers if options are economical, deliverable and will operate when needed.

The CSNP will use the single pathway planning line provided by the SSEP to prepare network options and drive investment decisions.

How does SSEP relate to RESP?

The SSEP will provide the capacity for generation, storage and hydrogen as inputs into the RESP process, to ensure that the pathways developed for each region are coherent with national ambitions. This will include ensuring coherence between regional ambitions, distributed demand growth, embedded generation and national ambitions.

Over time, insights from RESP are expected to inform future iterations of the SSEP, creating an iterative feedback loop between national and regional planning. RESPs will primarily drive investment in distribution networks. Where investments at distribution level are dependent on investments in transmission networks, we will need to ensure that the CSNP triggers sufficient transmission investments, considering the demands at the transmission/distribution interface.

How does SSEP relate to Beyond 2030?

Beyond 2030 and the SSEP are complementary parts of NESO's wider strategic planning framework. The Beyond 2030 Update⁹ published in June 2026 sets out the ongoing needs for electricity transmission infrastructure out to the mid-2030s and provides advice ahead of full strategic energy planning with the SSEP due in 2027 and CSNP in 2028. We will revalidate the outcomes of the Beyond 2030 Update against the electricity transmission network needs arising from the chosen SSEP pathway in a light touch assessment ahead of the CSNP. This check will help identify where the Beyond 2030 report recommendations remain

⁹ <https://www.neso.energy/publications/beyond-2030>

consistent with the SSEP pathway and confirm the system need for proposed options, supporting the timely development of network options.

How will SSEP interact with Connections Reform?

NESO has worked closely with industry, networks, UK Government, and Ofgem to deliver the most significant overhaul of the grid connection process in decades.

The new approach is:

- Prioritising projects that are ready to build and aligned with GB's future energy needs
- Removing non-progressing projects, clearing longstanding gridlock
- Ensuring investment goes where and when it is needed, enabling more efficient and coordinated growth of the electricity network.

These changes mean investors, developers and communities will see a clearer, more timely and more transparent system. The reforms are expected to unlock around £40 billion in annual investment, supporting jobs and emerging industries including new energy technologies, manufacturing, data centres and advanced digital infrastructure.

The connections process will be aligned with the first SSEP once it is published. Aligning the connections process to strategic planning will ensure that the right technologies are connecting in the right place, at the right time.



5. Data transparency and assumptions

Where can I find out more about the assumptions that underpin the SSEP modelling, policy inputs considered, assurance processes in place and data being used in the SSEP?

We publish regular SSEP transparency updates¹⁰. These updates include information on data sources, further detail on elements of the SSEP and further detail on technical and data assurance processes.

Why can't all the data used in the SSEP be published?

NESO is committed to being as transparent as possible, but not all data can be published. Some information is subject to commercial confidentiality, licensing restrictions, intellectual property rights, data protection requirements or critical infrastructure considerations. Where publication is possible, NESO aims to share methodologies, assumptions, analysis and supporting evidence so stakeholders can understand how the SSEP has been developed and how decisions have been informed.

Will additional datasets be released?

We will continue to review and update the publicly available SSEP data. We are committed to continuing to keep our stakeholders and customers updated throughout. We will continue to provide regular updates and intend to publish more data as part of the SSEP public consultation. You can review which data sets are due to be released by those marked as “to be published” in column F of the data list¹¹.

¹⁰ <https://www.neso.energy/document/371391/download>

¹¹ <http://www.neso.energy/document/371386/download>

6. Policy and Government

Why is the SSEP an iterative cycle of every 3 years?

The SSEP Commission specifically sets out that the SSEP must be flexible and adaptable to the complexities and uncertainties of the energy landscape.

The SSEP therefore must account for multiple sources of uncertainty, including demand, technology costs, energy policy changes and external factors such as weather patterns, given its 20-year planning horizon. Each step of the SSEP process is therefore designed to address and manage these different forms of uncertainty.

The SSEP will be updated on a three-yearly basis. The scope of future iterations of the SSEP will be developed in conversation with government bodies. In doing that the balance between the need for continuity for investors and developers and the flexibility to ensure the process reacts to changes in the market and technological developments will need to be considered.

The cycle also aligns with the wider Strategic Energy Planning framework, particularly the Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP). The SSEP establishes a long-term strategic view of where generation and storage infrastructure may be needed, while subsequent network planning uses those outputs to identify the network investments required to support them. Regular updates help ensure that both plans remain aligned as evidence, policy and system needs evolve.

How are policy commitments incorporated in the SSEP?

The SSEP is jointly commissioned by the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments. Devolved priorities are reflected through formal governance, policy assessment, direct engagement and specific assessment of how pathways align with Scottish and Welsh government ambitions and objectives.



We have been commissioned to give due consideration to UK, Scottish and Welsh governments' commitments, statutory duties and targets. We have taken the targets into consideration throughout the development of the SSEP.

We have explored and tested renewable energy ambitions, such as the inclusion of existing offshore leasing rounds, within pathway development to understand how they perform in our economic, environmental, societal, spatial and deliverability assessments.

We are working closely with relevant spatial planning stakeholders to work towards compatibility between the SSEP and existing and upcoming spatial plans, in particular those embedded in planning policy of the three GB nations. As planning is a devolved activity it is important for us to work collaboratively with the Scottish, Welsh and UK governments to allow us to work towards spatial plans that are consistent with each other and enable effective planning decision making.

These planning frameworks, government programmes and policy statements must be considered while developing and understanding the spatial constraints. Where possible, we will seek consistency and compatibility between existing spatial plans and policies.

You can find a list of our policy assumptions in our [data transparency update](#)¹².

7. Technology Specific

How are tidal technologies treated in the SSEP?

We recognise that tidal is an established technology. For the SSEP, we evaluated all technologies against a number of set principles to determine which ones we would spatially optimise. These included data availability, connection with

¹² <https://www.neso.energy/document/371391/download>

government ambition, requirement for decarbonisation targets and suitability for strategic spatial planning.

Based on these principles we have decided to not include tidal in the first SSEP for the following reasons:

- Small volumes forecast (both number and volume – we focus on technologies that impact the transmission system)
- Challenge in finding cost data which have historically been very high and are bespoke to different projects
- Challenges with spatial planning at a strategic level for projects at a small in scale

Tidal growth is reflected in the SSEP's broader modelling as generation background, using forecasts of expected growth and zonal location. However, tidal technologies are not spatially optimised in this cycle because they are highly site specific. This means tidal and other emerging technologies are still represented in the modelling, even where they are not actively spatially optimised.

We will continue to monitor tidal technologies and consider whether they should be included in future SSEP iterations or reflected through RESP where relevant.

How has NESO developed the range of theoretically possible build out rates for nuclear small modular reactors (SMRs)?

The SSEP uses build-rate assumptions provided by DESNZ, within its economic modelling, alongside cost and policy assumptions. The model identifies the optimal capacity and timing of SMR deployment needed to meet future demand while maintaining security of supply and minimising overall system costs. In the case of nuclear SMR, the assumptions include costs for first-of-a-kind and next-of-a-kind projects, along with learning rates for subsequent projects



Will the SSEP split out fixed and floating offshore wind generation capacities?

Fixed and floating offshore wind are modelled separately within the SSEP analysis. However, a decision has not yet been made on how these technologies will be presented in the final SSEP outputs and pathway materials.