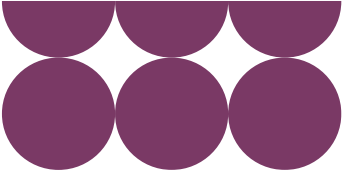


September 2026

Strategic Energy Planning Forums 2026 Report



Contents

Foreword 3

How to use this document..... 4

What is Strategic Energy Planning? 6

Attendance 11

What we heard 13

What you told us..... 14

Appendix 1 – North East and Yorkshire Forum 16

Appendix 2 – South East Forum 20

Appendix 3 – East Midlands Forum 24

Appendix 4 – West Midlands Forum 27

Appendix 5 – Greater London Forum 31

Appendix 6 – Glasgow Forum.....35

Appendix 7 – East Forum.....39

Appendix 8 – Central England Forum.....43

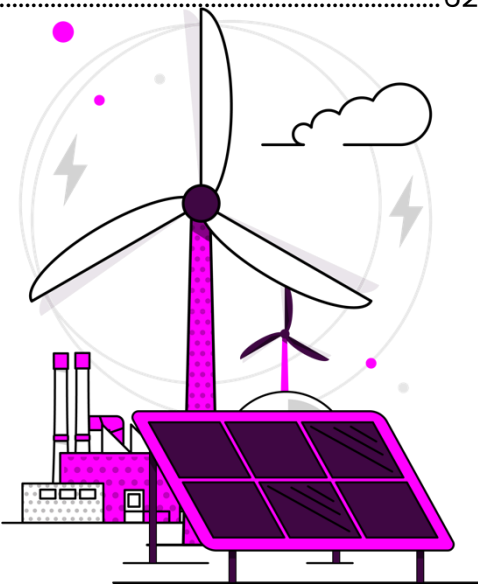
Appendix 9 – Inverness Forum 47

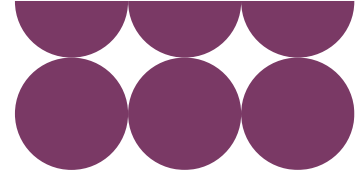
Appendix 10 – Swansea Forum 51

Appendix 11 – South West Forum.....55

Appendix 12 – North West Forum 58

Appendix 13 – Llandudno Forum 62





Foreword

A word from our CEO

Together we are taking up the challenge of building the energy system of the future for Great Britain. One that's reliable, clean and affordable.

Getting there requires us to do things differently.

At NESO, we operate today's electricity system and design tomorrow's energy system.

Strategic Energy Planning is a central part of our remit and it requires the help of many to get it right. Together, we are building a first-of-its-kind energy plan out to 2050. The plan will set out what we need Great Britain's energy system to look like, for the energy network companies and project developers to then deliver.

Engaging with you is a key part of building the energy plan. That's why we held forums across Great Britain in June 2026, inviting stakeholders from different organisations, each bringing their own unique perspectives. The forums created space for honest and open conversations on what is working and what needs to change.

Your input was invaluable. We heard that strategic energy planning is welcomed, that it's critical to get all voices in the room, and that it needs to be undertaken in a way that integrates with planning for housing, transport and economic growth. We understand that the energy landscape is extremely complex, and that we need to do better at communicating what's important.

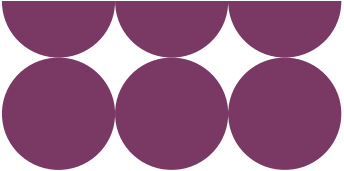
Thank you for bringing your experience, insight and expertise to the discussions. Your contribution is essential to developing practical and deliverable plans, all towards building an energy system that works for us all.

Whatever your interest or role in the energy system, we want to keep working with you over the long term. We want to be transparent and build trust in the way we work, share learning and make progress together.

I hope you found the forums useful, informative and collaborative – and another step towards building the energy future that communities and consumers across Great Britain need.

Fintan Slye

CEO, NESO



How to use this document

The purpose of this document is to provide a write-up of the Strategic Energy Planning forums held across Great Britain in June 2026.

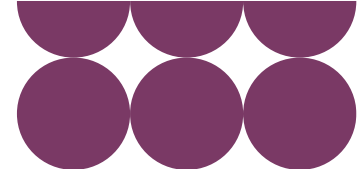
The body of this document summarises all 13 forums held across England, Scotland and Wales. It covers what strategic energy planning is, who attended the forums, what we heard and the feedback we received across the events.

The appendices that follow summarise what was discussed at each forum and how the insights will be taken forward.

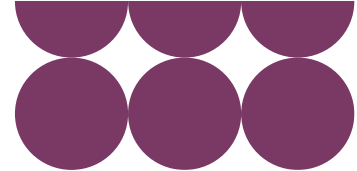
We suggest reading the body of this document first, followed by the appendices that interest you.

Glossary of key terms used

Term	Definition
Distribution network	The electricity and gas networks that transport energy from the transmission system, or other sources of supply, to homes, businesses and other consumers.
Flexibility	In an energy context, the ability to shift in time or location the demand or supply of electricity, over hours, days or seasons. It includes storing energy for times when demand outstrips supply, offering rewards to consumers who choose to shift demand away from peak times, importing and exporting electricity, and generating dispatchable power (meaning energy sources that can be controlled and adjusted to meet demand).
Heat network	Systems that provide heating, cooling and hot water to multiple properties in a building or to multiple buildings from a single source.
Local Actor Support	The support that NESO will provide to enable Local Actors who need it to engage effectively with RESP, particularly local government and local energy representatives.
Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs)	Place-based whole energy system plans for net zero, usually coordinated by local or combined authorities.



Nations and Regions Context	One of the five components that together form each of the RESPs. They will provide a view of local conditions ('where we are now') and priorities ('where we are trying to get to') and set a benchmark from which to measure progress. They will include energy and related topics such as economic and social factors like housing and transportation. They will be informed by engagement in the RESP nations and regions and datasets, and will reflect, rather than supersede, local priorities.
Strategic Investment Need	An area of strategically significant and complex energy need identified through RESP analysis, where a whole system approach may be required to support efficient, coordinated and timely energy system development. Strategic Investment Needs are specified through the Specification of Strategic Investment Need component.
Transmission networks	The high-pressure gas and high-voltage electricity networks that transport energy across Great Britain, together with future hydrogen transport infrastructure where relevant, connecting sources of supply with distribution networks and major users
Pathway Options Report	The report submitted to the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments, who are co-commissioners of the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP). The report covers the six possible pathway options for the SSEP. The pathways represent NESO's independent view of potential energy system futures, setting out what energy infrastructure Great Britain could need, where it could go and when it might be needed.



What is Strategic Energy Planning?

The UK, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem have asked us to develop a set of interconnected energy plans. Together, these plans will form one strategic plan to build a blueprint for the future energy system. The key components of the strategic plan are the:

- Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP)
- Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP)
- Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESP)

These plans are focused on different parts of the energy system: the SSEP looks at where generation and storage should be built, the CSNP sets out what energy networks are needed and where, and the RESPs take into account local, regional and national needs. Each of the plans are designed to align with each other, and together, create a more coordinated approach to energy planning.

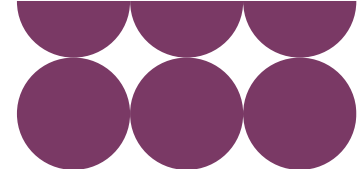
The Strategic Spatial Energy Plan

The SSEP will provide a pathway setting out broadly where different types of electricity and hydrogen generation and storage could be needed, how much may be needed, and when. It will look at the most cost-effective way to meet future demand, while also considering environmental impacts, communities, and how land and sea are used. By giving clearer long-term direction, this plan will help unlock investment, strengthen supply chains, support skills and jobs, and ensure communities across Britain are part of the conversation.

The Centralised Strategic Network Plan

The CSNP is a long-term plan for how GB's electricity and gas transmission networks, and the hydrogen system, may need to develop over the next 25 years.

As the energy system changes, electricity networks will need to expand, gas will continue to be used, and the hydrogen system will develop based on need. The CSNP will help ensure our GB-wide energy transmission networks are planned at the right scale to support the growth of renewable energy, increasing electrification and future use of hydrogen. Planning these elements together helps ensure that only the networks we need get built, which helps to keep costs lower for consumers.



Regional Energy Strategic Planning

We will produce 11 RESPs for Great Britain, covering Scotland, Wales and nine English regions. Each of the RESPs will set out long-term plans for local energy systems, covering electricity, gas, hydrogen, biomethane and heat.

RESPs are not detailed investment plans and will not identify specific projects. Instead, they will set the overall direction, which energy distribution networks will then use to develop their detailed investment plans.

Each RESP will be developed by local teams in the RESP nations and regions. We will work closely with governments, local authorities, energy distribution network operators and other stakeholders so that local priorities are reflected and supported by our plans.

How do the plans fit together

These plans will iterate over time and interact with one another through planning cycles. Figure 3 shows these interactions through successive planning cycles.

The CSNP uses information from the SSEP to understand what future transmission infrastructure may be needed and what investment could be required.

As RESP pathways are developed, we will compare national SSEP capacity ranges with the priorities identified by nations and regions. We expect RESP pathway assumptions for electricity and hydrogen generation and storage to stay within the approved SSEP ranges.

The RESP will also provide local evidence on demand and supply, which will help improve the next version of the SSEP by ensuring national modelling better reflects local needs.

We will keep working with stakeholders to understand and resolve any differences between plans, so strategic energy planning remains joined up and consistent.

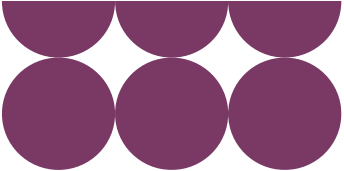
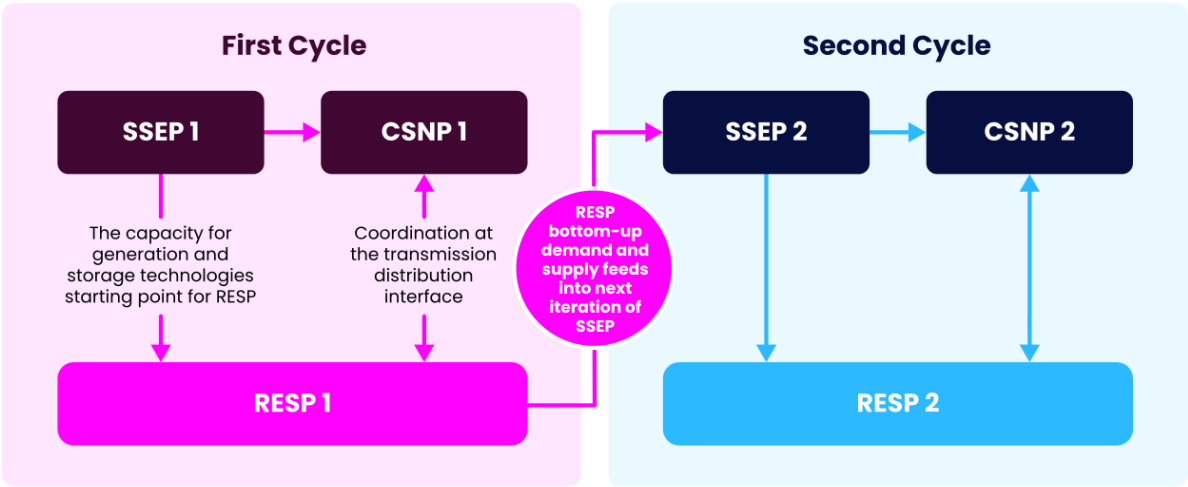
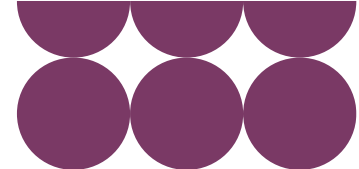


Figure 1: Strategic Energy Planning interactions over time



Over the long term, these plans give us a clearer, coordinated path forward. But they will only be robust, credible, practical and deliverable if they reflect real insight. That is why holding the forums and hearing your experience and expertise was so valuable, and why we will continue to work with you as these plans progress.



Why we held the forums

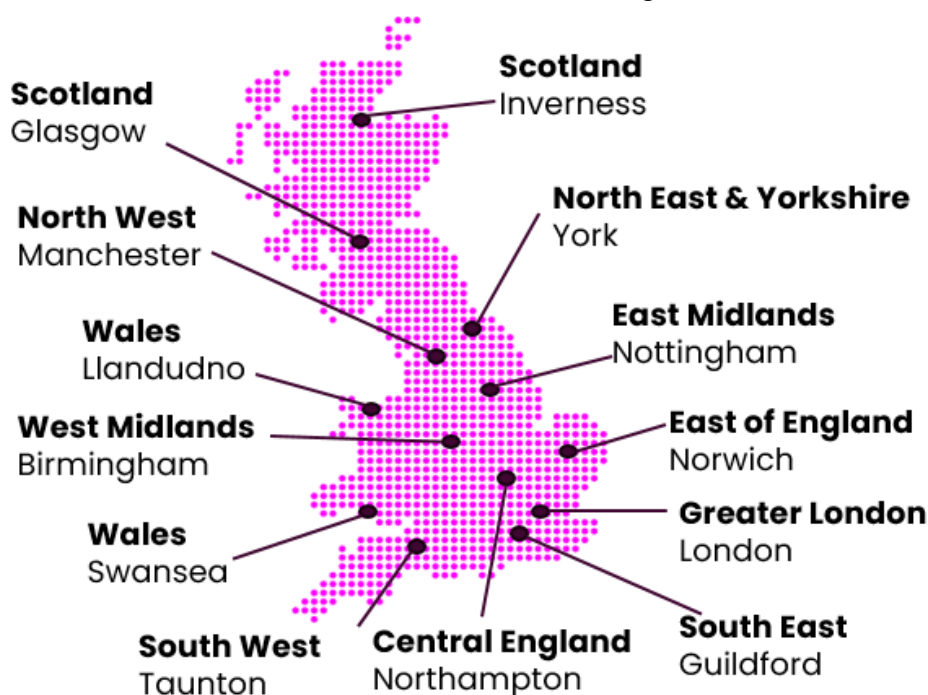
Since March 2025, we have held quarterly online forums for each RESP nation and region. This has helped us connect with a wide range of customers and stakeholders across Great Britain, as part of our commitment to transparent and accessible engagement.

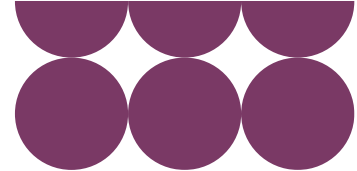
In response to stakeholder requests for more interactive forms of engagement, in June 2026, we held these forums in person for the first time. We also broadened their scope to cover our wider strategic energy planning role. The objectives of the in-person forums were to:

- Provide a clear understanding of our role and responsibilities as NESO, including our strategic energy planner role
- Gather stakeholder insights to help shape strategic energy planning in the nations and regions

We held 13 forums in total across Great Britain – two in Scotland, two in Wales and nine in England, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2: Forum locations in the RESP nations and regions



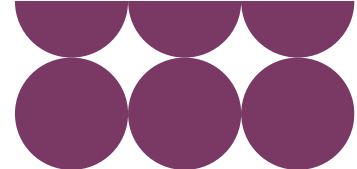


The forums consisted of panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders as well as table discussions for attendees to share their priorities, views and challenges.

Table discussions on RESP covered topics such as local planning, industrial, transport and heat decarbonisation, community energy, data, energy network infrastructure and barriers to engaging with RESP. These insights will feed into the development of the regional plans, ensuring they better reflect local priorities and needs.

We also held table discussions on the SSEP. These focussed on modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Stakeholders were asked what the insights might mean for their nation or region, including the challenges and opportunities the SSEP presents. The insights shared have fed into a dedicated stakeholder insights report, which sits alongside the Pathway Options Report submitted to the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem.

More information on what was discussed at each forum and the insights gathered are included in the appendices that follow this document.



Attendance

721 stakeholders attended across the 13 forums, highlighting the level of interest in strategic energy planning.

Nation or region	Date of forum	Number of attendees
North East and Yorkshire – York	2 June	71
East Midlands – Nottingham	3 June	42
South East – Guildford	3 June	55
West Midlands – Birmingham	4 June	34
Greater London – London	8 June	65
Scotland – Glasgow	9 June	71
East – Norwich	16 June	59
Central – Northampton	17 June	49
Scotland – Inverness	19 June	71
Wales – Swansea	22 June	53
South West – Taunton	23 June	73
North West – Salford	23 June	45
Wales – Llandudno	25 June	33
Total number of attendees across forums		721

The forums brought together customers and stakeholders from local authorities, businesses, energy networks and the wider energy industry. Attendance by stakeholder group is shown in Figure 3. The 'other' category included community groups, researchers and water companies.

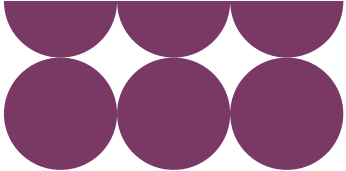
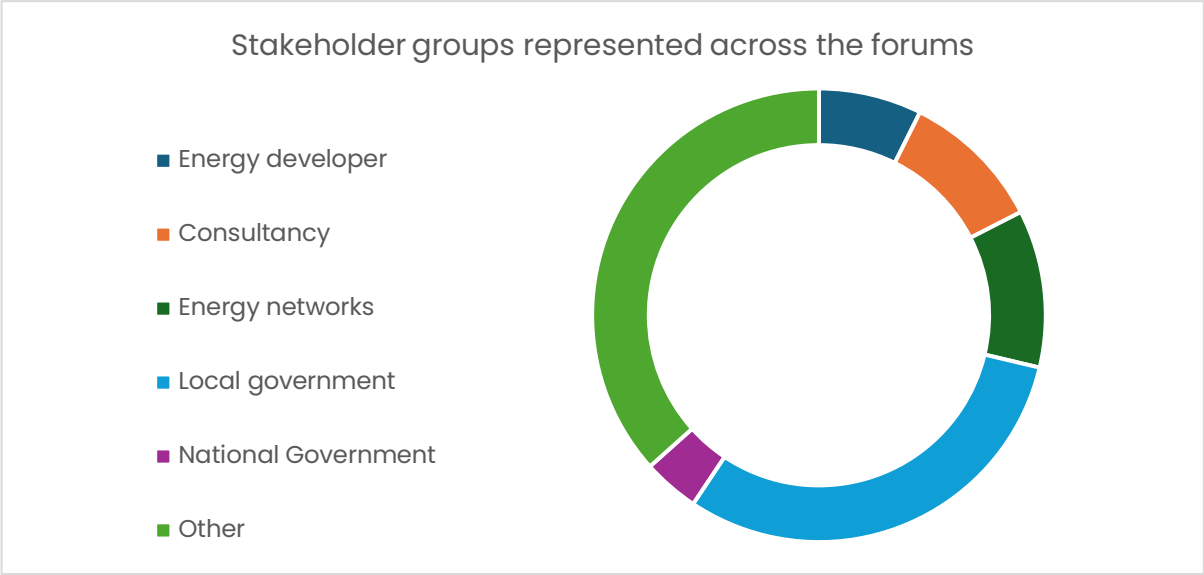
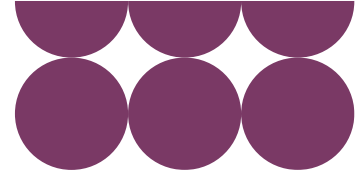


Figure 3: Stakeholder groups represented across the 13 forums

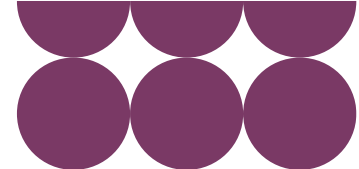




What we heard

Several consistent themes emerged across the 13 forums:

- **Strategic Energy Planning is much needed and welcomed.** Stakeholders recognised the value of a more joined-up, long-term approach to energy planning. There was broad support for strategic energy planning to give greater clarity on future needs, support investment decisions and help align local, regional, national and GB-wide priorities.
- **The energy landscape is extremely complex.** The forums reinforced the scale of complexity across the energy system, with multiple plans, organisations, geographies, technologies and policy processes needing to interact effectively. Stakeholders were clear that energy planning cannot be considered in isolation, as it is closely linked to housing, transport, industry, economic growth, land use and community priorities.
- **Collaboration and coordination will be essential.** Stakeholders emphasised that no single organisation can deliver the future energy system alone. Effective strategic energy planning will require organisations to work together, share information, align activity where possible and recognise that trade-offs will need to be managed transparently.
- **It is critical to get all voices in the room.** A key message across the forums was the importance of inclusive engagement, bringing together national and local government, energy networks, the energy industry, businesses, communities and other local actors. Stakeholders felt that plans will be stronger, more credible and more deliverable if they are shaped by a broad range of perspectives from the outset.
- **Tailored communications to build understanding:** Stakeholders highlighted that information and materials need to be clear, accessible and easy to use, so that organisations with different levels of technical knowledge can understand and engage with strategic energy planning. Across the forums, attendees asked for plain English explanations, clear signposting, simple visual materials and information tailored to different audiences and places.



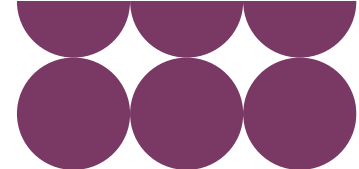
What you told us

Across the 13 forums, we had over 200 responses to the post-event feedback form.

Overall, attendee feedback was positive, with stakeholders valuing the networking opportunities, face-to-face engagement, the inclusive atmosphere and gaining an improved understanding of NESO and the strategic energy plan. The table below shows the questions we asked in the feedback form and the average score received across the 13 forums. The scale is: 1 = not at all, 10 = very.

Question asked	Averaged score
Overall, how useful did you find this event?	Average score of 7.9 out of 10
How confident are you in the accuracy and relevance of the content presented?	Average score of 8.2 out of 10
Did the event meet your expectations?	Average score of 8 out of 10
Did you feel the event was inclusive and represented a range of perspectives?	Average score of 8 out of 10
How easy was it to register, access, and participate in the event?	Average score of 9.1 out of 10
Average score across all questions	8 out of 10

There were also areas for improvement. Some of the key points raised were around simplifying and clarifying table discussion activities, strengthening the pre-event communications, broadening stakeholder representation and providing more region and nation-specific detail.



What we will do next

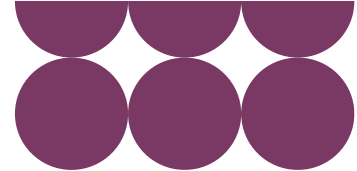
We will use the insights gathered through the forums to inform the development of the first cycle of strategic planning.

For RESP we will use the insights in the development of key RESP components and workstreams such as the Nations and Regions Contexts and Local Actor Support.

For SSEP, we have used the feedback shared to support the SSEP pathway options process through a dedicated stakeholder insight report. This report has been submitted to the UK Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments, and Ofgem to aid ministerial decision-making on the selected pathway.

Just as importantly, we will use what stakeholders told us about the events themselves to improve future engagement.

The appendices that follow provide more detailed summaries of what was discussed at each forum and how the insights will be taken forward. Together, they show the breadth of views shared across Great Britain and reinforce the need for ongoing collaboration as strategic energy planning develops over the coming years.



Appendix 1 – North East and Yorkshire Forum

Forum Overview

The North East and Yorkshire forum took place in York on 2 June, with 71 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Laura Lotinga, NESO Director of Corporate Affairs.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders: North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, Bradford Manufacturing Futures, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission, Northern Powergrid, North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub, National Wealth Fund.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

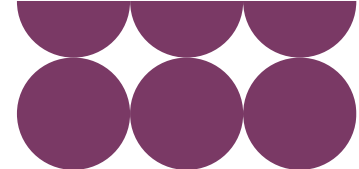
You said, we will – RESP table discussions

Attendees participated in facilitated table discussions across four topics relevant to RESP in the North East and Yorkshire. The topics were industrial decarbonisation, policies and plans, community and local energy and changes to energy demand. The discussions explored attendees' views of RESP and gathered early insights to test emerging processes and assumptions.

Uncertainty in Industrial Decarbonisation

You said: There's a wide range of challenges and barriers that people face when decarbonising industry in the North East and Yorkshire, including supply chain constraints, planning issues, market certainty, knowledge gaps and policy stability. When trying to overlay these challenge areas on the definition of complexity in our 'Strategic Investment Needs' component, it became clear that there was a misalignment between what attendees wanted RESP to deliver and what we propose in our methodology.

We will: Feed these insights into the next phase of development of the Strategic Investment Needs component to refine the way we introduce the topic of 'Complexity' in Strategic Investment Needs to stakeholders. We will also share



insights with each RESP nation and region as we begin preparation for the launch of thematic Working Groups.

Community and Local Energy

You said: Participants want to see a wide range of interventions to support community energy in the region, including education and advisory support, funding, opportunity identification, market reform and policy interventions. They want NESO to engage with the sector, with expectations that we could support them in smoothing the path for community energy projects in a complex and often competitive environment.

We will: Explore the suggested interventions, focusing on how we provide more clarity on which things are in NESO's remit, and who else should be responsible for delivering the remainder.

Policies and plans as puzzle pieces

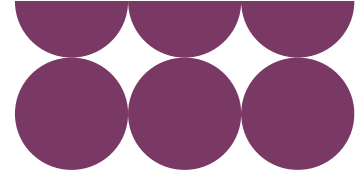
You said: Participants shared a wide range of plans, cutting across different levels of granularity, statutory duty, ownership and thematic focus, and covering all parts of the North East and Yorkshire. They felt that a large proportion of these plans were common either across Great Britain or across the North East and Yorkshire.

We will: Use the insights on commonality perceptions to inform the next phase of development of the Nations and Regions Context component of RESP. The Nations and Regions Contexts will form the starting point for the RESPs, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel in the nations and regions. We will take the identified policies and plans directly into the development of the Regional Context for the North East and Yorkshire.

Homes, high streets and hospitals

You said: Participants had a good understanding of the types of projects that may be reflected in the RESP under one or more of the components – but there was less confidence when they were trying to pick which component would be the best fit, with more than expected assigned to the Strategic Investment Need category.

We will: Note the individual projects in an early version of a project database for the region, ahead of finalisation of data gathering mechanisms. Work with the



Strategic Investment Needs component of RESP to create clarity for stakeholders about what types of project will be explored.

You said, we will – SSEP table discussions

This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for the North East and Yorkshire and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities might like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Stakeholders saw the SSEP as an opportunity to support economic growth in the North East and Yorkshire by creating jobs, attracting investment and building on regional strengths such as the Humber cluster, offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture and storage (CCS). They also highlighted its potential to provide clearer signals for investors and decision-makers, and deliver wider benefits such as lower costs, stronger system efficiency, improved energy security and more resilient infrastructure.

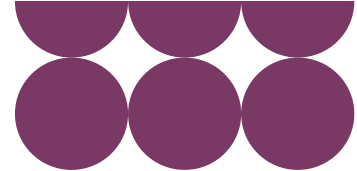
Stakeholders identified planning, governance, data uncertainty and delivery risk as key challenges for SSEP in the North East and Yorkshire. They highlighted the need for transparent governance, meaningful local input, better spatial data, clearer assumptions and stronger evidence on future demand, costs, technology pathways and infrastructure requirements. Participants were also concerned that electricity grid capacity, connection delays and transmission build-out may not keep pace with SSEP ambitions.

Information communities would like to know

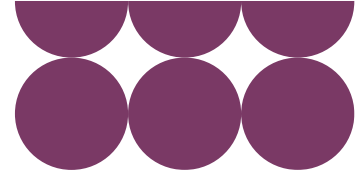
Stakeholders felt communities will want clear information on how proposals could affect land use, local environments, costs, affordability and quality of life, alongside the tangible benefits they may receive, such as jobs, skills, investment and community benefits. They will also want to understand how decisions will be made, who is responsible, when they can meaningfully engage and how impacts will be distributed fairly across different places.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and



Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 2 – South East Forum

Forum Overview

The South East forum took place in Guildford on 3 June, with 55 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Steve Wallace, NESO Director of Transformation and Major Projects.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders: Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, SGN, University of Southampton, Community Energy England, Greater South East Net Zero Hub.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

You said, we will – RESP table discussions

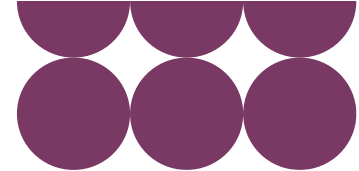
The RESP table discussions covered two topics: Local Actor Support (LAS) and the South East Regional Context.

LAS is intended to help all participants engage with RESP by providing additional support where it is needed. To help shape this support, attendees were asked what barriers could prevent them from engaging with RESP effectively, and what would help to remove those barriers.

The Regional Context will provide the starting point for the South East RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the region. Attendees were asked what targets, aspirations, ambitions and plans exist across the South East, and how these interact with each other.

You said: Local Actor Support – barriers to engaging with RESP and how to remove them

Clarity on approach, timelines and outputs: This particularly related to how RESP interacts with Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP), spatial plans, energy distribution network activities, local authority activities and other existing planning frameworks. To address these issues, stakeholders suggested providing straightforward explanations of how RESP integrates with existing processes.



Data quality, accessibility and usability: Stakeholders identified data as a critical enabler of strategic energy planning but raised concerns about the availability, accessibility, consistency and quality of the information needed to support decision-making. To address these issues, participants suggested common data standards, accessible data formats, improved data sharing, and user-friendly digital solutions that make information easier to understand and apply in practice.

Skills and capability: Stakeholders raised challenges around skills shortages, limited staff capacity, resource constraints and difficulties interpreting complex technical data and planning outputs. Participants suggested targeted training and capability building, practical guidance and orientation materials, and simplified tools and outputs.

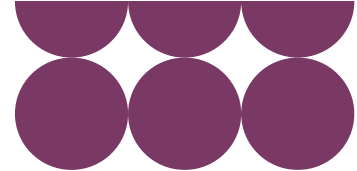
We will: Input into development of Local Actor Support

We recognise that some local actors face constraints. Where that is the case, and if the local actor is vital to the successful development and delivery of RESP or plays a key role in the energy planning landscape, they will receive targeted LAS.

While some support will be targeted, LAS will also include some self-service products that will be freely available for wider customers and stakeholders to access and use as needed. We have already used the forum insights to shape and inform the first wave of LAS and will continue to do so for future waves, as appropriate. The three aspects of the first wave of LAS are: energy planning literacy resources, signposting to external resources, and data guidance and best practice. The energy literacy resources will help build local capability by explaining NESO, strategic energy planning and energy-related policy in clear, accessible language. The signposting materials will act as a virtual library, helping stakeholders navigate the resources and support already publicly available on energy planning. The data guidance and best practice output will help address barriers around data quality and usability by clearly articulating clear expectations and processes for data submission and governance.

You said: South East Regional Context – targets, aspirations, ambitions and plans

Alignment of planning activities: Participants highlighted that energy planning should not be undertaken in isolation. Stakeholders want RESP to align with current and future planning activities, including Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs), Spatial Development Strategies, transport planning, water resource management, local plans, economic growth strategies and decarbonisation programmes.



Heat, buildings and energy efficiency: Participants highlighted heat networks, district heating schemes, heat network zoning, retrofit programmes and low-carbon heating technologies as essential to the transition to clean heat. Many viewed improving the efficiency of homes and buildings as both a significant challenge and opportunity, given the scale of investment and coordination required.

Transport electrification and energy infrastructure: Attendees referenced aspirations around electric vehicle charging infrastructure and local transport plans. Alongside this, participants highlighted the need for electricity grid reinforcement, network upgrades and strategic infrastructure investment to ensure the energy system can accommodate future demand.

We will: Input into the South East Regional Context

We will use these insights to inform and build the Regional Context for the South East. The Regional Context will form the starting point for the South East RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the region. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the South East Regional Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

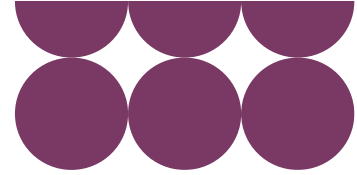
You said, we will – SSEP table discussions

This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for the South East and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities might like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Stakeholders saw the SSEP as an opportunity to support a more localised, community-led energy system in the South East, with greater potential for community ownership, local generation, storage and flexibility. The region's strong renewable potential across solar, offshore wind, tidal and marine energy was also seen as an opportunity. Furthermore, attendees saw value in better coordination across local, regional and national planning to support investment decisions, manage trade-offs and align energy with transport, water, digital infrastructure and land use.



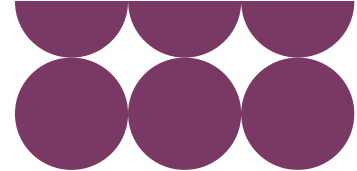
In terms of challenges, attendees identified land availability, public acceptance and delivery constraints as the most important. Competing demands from housing, agriculture, renewable energy infrastructure and environmental protection create difficult spatial trade-offs. At the same time, local opposition and political barriers underline the need for clear communication, early engagement and a stronger case for community benefits. Stakeholders also raised concerns about whether electricity grid capacity and connections can keep pace with future demand.

Information communities would like to know

Attendees felt communities would like clear, accessible information on what the SSEP means locally. This includes proposed energy infrastructure and the likely impacts on bills, land and the environment. They will also want to understand the potential benefits, such as community energy ownership and the potential for increased jobs, skills and economic growth in the region.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 3 – East Midlands Forum

Forum Overview

The East Midlands forum took place in Nottingham on 3 June, with 42 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Colm Murphy, NESO Director of Connections
- Panel session with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders: Midlands Net Zero Hub, National Grid Electricity Distribution.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

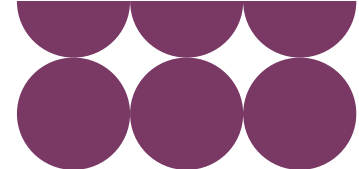
You said, we will – RESP table discussions

The RESP table discussions focused on understanding the energy needs and constraints in the East Midlands up to 2050. Energy needs were taken from existing projects, plans, strategies or ideas with an energy-related dimension. Constraints related to specific projects and more general energy system constraints. The key themes from the discussions are summarised below.

You said: Energy needs and constraints

Electricity grid capacity and network infrastructure: Attendees highlighted the need for significant investment in electricity network infrastructure, citing grid capacity limitations, connection constraints and concerns that existing infrastructure may not be sufficient to meet future demand. They emphasised the importance of planning for new housing development, transport electrification and new energy technologies but were concerned that slow energy network upgrades could become a barrier to decarbonisation.

Industrial growth and economic development: Attendees linked energy planning to economic growth ambitions across the East Midlands. Stakeholders emphasised that energy planning must support planned growth with several references to manufacturing, industrial clusters, commercial development, logistics, freeports and industrial decarbonisation. Strategic clusters such as the Trent Arc, Freeport, Ratcliffe, the Peak Cluster and links to the Humber are key areas of opportunity. Delivery will depend on key enablers, including funding, affordability, skills, policy certainty and public acceptance.



Need for a balanced energy mix: Attendees generally supported a diverse energy mix rather than reliance on any single technology. Attendees suggested that flexibility, storage and local generation would be important for managing future energy demands and supporting system resilience. Participants also highlighted uncertainty around the scale and timing of technologies such as hydrogen and therefore the need for adaptable planning approaches.

Planning and coordination: Attendees highlighted that clear coordination between NESO and RESP, Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) and energy distribution networks will be essential. This should be supported by defined roles for each organisation, shared mapping, accessible energy network data, stakeholder forums and aligned infrastructure sequencing.

We will: Forming the basis of the East Midlands RESP

These insights will be used by the East Midlands RESP team to help build their knowledge of energy needs and constraints in the region and used to inform the East Midlands RESP. The projects identified in the table discussions will be geospatially mapped and will also be used in the development of the East Midlands RESP.

You said, we will – SSEP table discussions

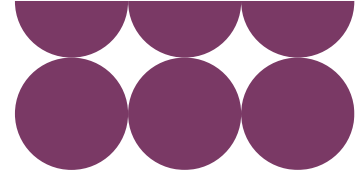
This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for the East Midlands and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities might like to know

Opportunities and challenges

The opportunities identified for the East Midlands centred on using the SSEP to unlock economic growth, attract investment and create skilled jobs across emerging energy sectors. Stakeholders highlighted the potential for the region to build on its central location, industrial heritage and available brownfield sites to become a strategic energy hub, supporting technologies such as hydrogen, nuclear, renewables, battery storage and regional supply chains. Alongside this, there is an opportunity to develop local skills and training pathways so that communities benefit directly from the transition.

Land use was a significant challenge for attendees in the East Midlands. Stakeholders raised concerns about the pressure that energy infrastructure could place on farmland, rural character, housing, biodiversity and local landscapes.



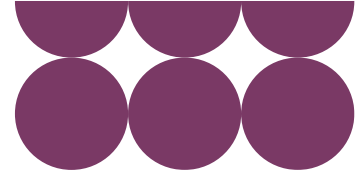
As highlighted in the RESP table discussions, infrastructure delivery and system coordination were also raised as challenges. Electricity grid capacity, connection delays, infrastructure siting and the pace of rollout were all highlighted as risks, alongside the need for more joined-up planning across regions and sectors. Without better coordination, stakeholders were concerned that delivery could become fragmented, slow and inefficient.

Information communities would like to know

Stakeholders felt communities will want clear, plain-language information on how the SSEP could affect them locally. This includes where new infrastructure may be located, why particular sites or technologies are being considered, potential impacts on land, farming, housing and biodiversity, and the trade-offs involved. They will also want to understand the benefits they may receive, such as lower bills, job opportunities and community benefits. Communities would also like reassurance that decisions will be fair, transparent and shaped by local voices.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 4 – West Midlands Forum

Forum Overview:

The West Midlands forum took place in Birmingham on 4 June, with 34 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Julian Leslie, NESO Director of Strategic Energy Planning.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders; Midlands Net Zero Hub, West Midlands Combined Authority, Cadent, Local Energy Partnerships.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions: You Said, We Will

The RESP table discussion focused on the Regional Context for the West Midlands. The Regional Context will provide the starting point for the West Midlands RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the region. Attendees were asked about their priorities and concerns relating to energy planning in the West Midlands.

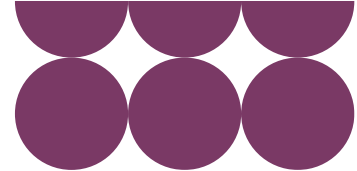
You said: Priorities relating to energy planning in the West Midlands

Economic growth and regional competitiveness: There was a strong focus on ensuring the region retains and strengthens its industrial base, particularly in manufacturing and energy-intensive sectors, while creating the conditions needed for investment, innovation and job creation.

Delivering an affordable and fair transition: Attendees emphasised that the transition to cleaner energy should limit bill impacts for households and businesses, support vulnerable communities and reduce inequalities in the region.

Investing in energy infrastructure: Attendees highlighted the need for investment in energy infrastructure to support future demand and economic growth. Stakeholders viewed proactive infrastructure investment as essential to avoid energy constraints becoming a barrier to regional development.

Accelerating the decarbonisation of heat and buildings: Stakeholders discussed the role of retrofit programmes, heat pumps, heat networks and hybrid heating



solutions, alongside the need for coordinated delivery approaches. There was recognition that transitioning heat systems will require long-term planning, investment and support for communities to adopt new technologies.

You said: Concerns relating to energy planning in the West Midlands

Two of the concerns raised – affordability of the energy transition and investment in energy network infrastructure – mirrored the priorities that stakeholders shared. Electricity grid capacity constraints were frequently highlighted as a potential barrier to housing, industrial development and investment in the region. Further concerns raised by attendees were:

Deliverability of the transition: Attendees questioned how quickly and effectively the scale of change required can be delivered. Concerns focussed on the pace of infrastructure deployment, the complexity of coordinating multiple stakeholders and the practical challenges associated with implementing ambitious decarbonisation plans.

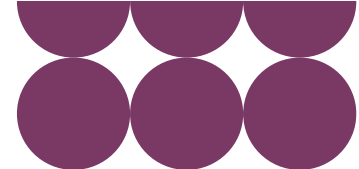
Skills shortages and workforce capacity: Attendees highlighted the growing demand for specialist skills across areas such as infrastructure delivery, retrofit, low-carbon heating and emerging energy technologies. They recognised that without sufficient training, workforce development and skills investment, labour shortages could become a significant barrier to delivery.

Coordination, governance and responsibilities: Attendees highlighted the risk of fragmented decision-making, competing priorities and a lack of alignment between local, regional and national plans. There was a strong view that clearer governance arrangements and stronger collaboration will be needed to ensure investment decisions, infrastructure delivery and policy development are coordinated effectively across the energy system.

We will: Input into West Midlands Regional Context

We will use these insights to inform and build the Regional Context for the West Midlands. The Regional Context will form the starting point for the West Midlands RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the region. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the West Midlands Regional Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will



This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for the West Midlands and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities would like to know

Opportunities and challenges

A significant opportunity identified for the West Midlands was for the SSEP to support a more localised, flexible and resilient energy system. Stakeholders saw clear potential in place-based solutions, including local generation, smart local energy systems and community-level approaches that better connect supply with demand. A diverse energy mix, spanning technologies such as biomethane, hydrogen, solar, small modular reactors and waste-to-energy, was viewed as important for improving resilience, maintaining optionality and making best use of existing assets. There was also a strong economic opportunity, with the potential for SSEP to support job creation, strengthen supply chains, attract investment and position the West Midlands as an energy hub.

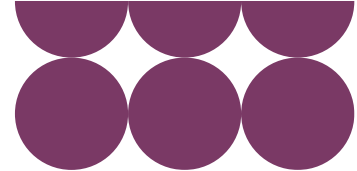
Similarly to the concerns raised in the RESP discussions, the main challenge identified was delivering a coordinated and fair transition in a region with significant spatial, economic and infrastructure constraints. Stakeholders highlighted the difficulty of aligning energy planning with local plans, spatial strategies and national frameworks, particularly where decision-making is slow or unclear. Technology uncertainty was also a recurring concern, including risks around immature technologies, optimistic delivery timelines and stranded assets. These challenges are compounded by limited land availability, urban density, varied housing types and more limited renewable resources than in other regions.

Information communities would like to know

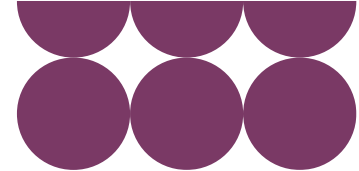
Consistent with other forums, stakeholders felt communities will want clear, accessible information on what the SSEP means locally, including how decisions will be made, what evidence will be used and where new infrastructure may be needed. They will also want to understand factors relating to affordability and fairness. This includes impacts on bills and the potential local benefits such as more jobs, skills, investment, health improvements and local energy solutions.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and



Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 5 – Greater London Forum

Forum Overview:

The Greater London forum took place in London on 8 June, with 65 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Rebecca Beresford, NESO Director of Markets.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders: DESNZ, Greater London Authority, UK Power Networks, SGN, West London Business, London Councils.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

Attendees were asked to consider the main barriers to unlocking Greater London's decarbonisation priorities, as well as how strategic energy planning can address these barriers. To frame the conversations, attendees focused on one of four topics: Local engagement, lessons from energy planning processes, local energy context and decarbonising large energy users. Attendees chose their topic in advance according to their preference.

You said: Barriers to unlocking decarbonisation priorities

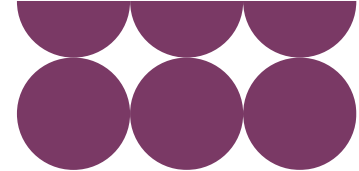
Local engagement

Local authorities were seen as under-resourced and in need of more consistent support, tools and one-to-one engagement from NESO to help them participate effectively in strategic energy planning, particularly where local priorities, Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) and levels of capability vary across London.

Wider public understanding of the energy transition was seen as limited, creating a need for clearer communication and educational materials.

Lessons from energy planning

Participants viewed local energy planning as a useful foundation for strategic energy planning, particularly where LAEPs have helped build collaboration and strengthen shared evidence bases between local authorities, energy network operators and other stakeholders.



Key areas for improvement included creating clearer links between strategic plans, delivery routes and investable business cases, as well as involving local actors more directly in the strategic energy planning process so they understand how to contribute.

We will: Input into development of Local Actor Support

We recognise that some local actors face constraints. Where that is the case, and if the local actor is vital to the successful development and delivery of RESP or plays a key role in the energy planning landscape, they will receive targeted LAS.

While some support will be targeted, LAS will also include some self-service products that will be freely available for wider customers and stakeholders to access and use as needed. We have already used the forum insights to shape and inform the first wave of LAS and will continue to do so for future waves, as appropriate. The three aspects of the first wave of LAS are: energy planning literacy resources, signposting to external resources, and data guidance and best practice. The energy literacy resources will help build local capability by explaining NESO, strategic energy planning and energy related policy in clear, accessible language. The signposting materials will act as a virtual library, helping stakeholders navigate the resources and support already publicly available for energy planning. These materials will help to address some of the barriers identified.

You said: Barriers to unlocking decarbonisation priorities

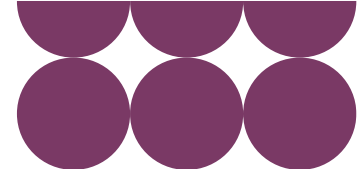
Local energy context

Participants highlighted that London's local energy context is shaped by rapidly increasing electricity demand from the electrification of transport, heating and industry, alongside major affordability pressures and varied local priorities and constraints across the city.

Attendees highlighted the need for stronger alignment between NESO, energy network operators, local authorities and developers, supported by borough-level relationships and bottom-up engagement to help turn local ambitions into deliverable plans.

Decarbonising large energy users

Participants highlighted that large energy users in London, including hospitals, industrial sites and data centres, face significant barriers from constrained electricity network capacity, high connection and infrastructure costs, energy affordability pressures and uncertainty around funding.



Suggested solutions focused on coordinated planning, clearer market signals, stronger local government capability, better regulatory alignment and closer collaboration between NESO, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), local authorities, energy network operators, the wider energy industry and related sectors such as water.

We will: Input into Greater London's Regional Context

We will use these insights to inform and build the Regional Context for Greater London. The Regional Context will form the starting point for the Greater London RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the region. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the Greater London Regional Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

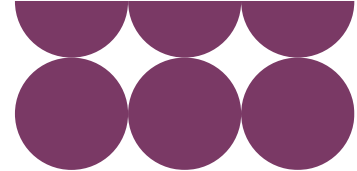
This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for Greater London and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities might like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Overall, attendees found it difficult to grasp what the SSEP pathways could mean for London. However, they highlighted that the SSEP could bring a clear opportunity for London to plan its energy transition in a more coordinated and place-based way, helping to align investment decisions with the capital's distinctive demand profile, density and infrastructure constraints. Stakeholders saw the SSEP as a way to provide clearer long-term signals for where energy infrastructure, flexibility and innovation will be needed, supporting better decisions on heat networks, transport electrification, demand-side response and local energy markets.

The main challenges identified by attendees centred on London's high energy demand but limited local generation. This creates reliance on imported energy and wider transmission infrastructure, raising questions about where investment is needed and how costs and benefits are distributed fairly across London and other nations and regions in Great Britain. Stakeholders also highlighted



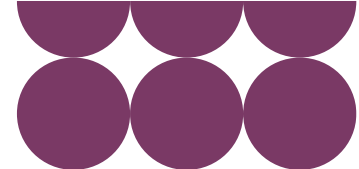
uncertainty around policy, governance and market signals as a significant barrier to delivery. Differences between boroughs, changing political priorities, regulatory gaps and unclear incentives could make coordinated implementation difficult.

Information communities would like to know

Attendees said communities would like clear information on how the SSEP could affect them locally, including impacts on bills, disruption from infrastructure works and the benefits they may receive in return. They would also want accessible explanations of how decisions are made, what trade-offs are being considered, how fairness and vulnerable consumers are taken into account, and when they can engage to influence outcomes.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 6 – Glasgow Forum

Forum Overview:

The first Scottish forum took place in Glasgow on 9 June, with 71 stakeholders attending. A second Scottish forum took place in Inverness on 19 June. The day in Glasgow consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Fintan Slye, Chief Executive Officer of NESO.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and Scottish stakeholders: Scottish Government, SPEN, SGN, Community Energy Scotland, Glasgow City Council, University of Glasgow.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

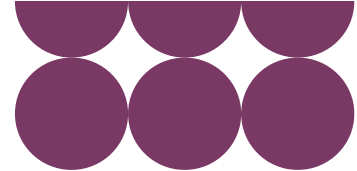
The table discussions at both the Glasgow and Inverness forums focused on the National Context for Scotland. The National Context will provide the starting point for the Scotland RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the nation.

Attendees were asked to choose two topics to focus on from the following: heat and buildings, transport, generation and storage, and industry and new demand. Within each topic, attendees were asked about the key ambitions and opportunities for Scotland, barriers for the sector and how RESP can work with stakeholders to accelerate progress.

A summary of the key themes across the table discussions in Glasgow is provided below (see Appendix 9 for a summary of the Inverness forum). In Glasgow, attendees emphasised using Scotland's renewable generation effectively to support affordable decarbonisation, local economic growth and wider system benefits. By comparison, attendees in Inverness focused more on ensuring that the Scottish Highlands, Islands and rural communities benefit directly from energy infrastructure development.

You said: Ambitions and opportunities, barriers and collaborating with the sector

Ambitions and opportunities for Scotland: The most consistent opportunity identified was the potential to match renewable generation with local demand,



including data centres, industrial demand, heat networks, hydrogen production and other energy-intensive activity. Stakeholders also highlighted the value of whole-system integration across electricity, heat, transport, hydrogen and industry, with affordable decarbonisation as a core outcome. Local economic growth, jobs, supply chain development and community-centred energy systems were recurring ambitions, particularly where benefits can be retained locally.

Key barriers: The main barriers to the energy transition in Scotland are high electricity costs, grid constraints and long connection times, policy uncertainty, weak demand signals and limited delivery capacity. Participants linked high power prices to challenges for heat decarbonisation, heat network viability, industrial competitiveness and hydrogen production. Electricity grid capacity, connection reform uncertainty and the lack of coordinated policy were also seen as limiting investment confidence.

Role for NESO/RESP and collaboration with the sector: NESO was seen as a potential strategic coordinator and whole-system convenor, bringing together utilities, local authorities, planners, transport bodies, developers, communities and government. Attendees were keen for RESP to identify where demand and generation should be co-located, provide clearer long-term infrastructure signals, support local authority capacity and help communities participate meaningfully in planning.

Examples of projects mentioned: Shawfair Heat Network, Aberdeen Heat & Power, Queens Quay Heat Network, Chapelcross Energy Hub and data centre development, Project Willow at Grangemouth, H100 Fife Hydrogen Project, and Port of Nigg.

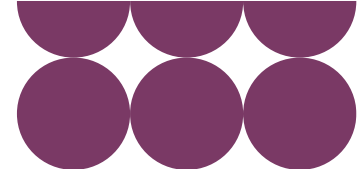
We will: Input into the National Context for Scotland

The outputs from these discussions, as well as those from the Inverness forum, will be used to inform and build the RESP National Context for Scotland.

The National Context will form the starting point for the Scotland RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the nation. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the Scotland National Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for Scotland and what information communities might like to know.



You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities might like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Stakeholders saw the SSEP as an opportunity to provide greater certainty, coordination and confidence for Scotland's future energy system. The SSEP could help to align generation, energy networks and demand, reduce speculative development and lower overall system costs. Attendees also highlighted opportunities for economic growth, jobs, skills, supply chains and innovation in areas such as hydrogen, storage and data centres, while making better use of Scotland's natural resources and potential role as a net energy exporter.

In terms of the challenges, attendees were concerned about how the SSEP will fit with local planning, devolved powers, existing strategies and wider UK policy. There was also concern about whether energy network build, generation and demand can be coordinated effectively in practice, particularly where decisions made through the SSEP could affect existing projects, investment pipelines or commercial incentives.

Fairness, affordability and deliverability were also recurring concerns. Participants highlighted questions about who pays for infrastructure, how costs and benefits are distributed across regions and communities, and whether local areas hosting infrastructure will see clear benefits in return.

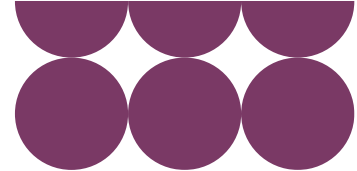
Furthermore, planning constraints, land use pressures, workforce skills, supply chains and technology readiness were all raised as practical delivery challenges.

Information communities would like to know

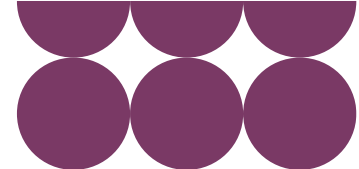
Communities will want clear, practical information about what the SSEP means for Scotland, including where infrastructure may be needed, why particular locations are being considered, how decisions will be made and how local views will influence outcomes. They will also want to understand the likely impacts and benefits, including effects on land and the environment, jobs, investment, lower bills or community wealth, and how costs, benefits and impacts will be distributed fairly.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional



insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 7 – East Forum

Forum Overview:

The East forum took place in Norwich on 16 June, with 59 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Colm Murphy, NESO Director of Connections
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders: Cornwall Insight, UK Power Networks, Cadent, National Grid Electricity Transmission, Freeport East.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

These discussions covered two topics: Local Actor Support (LAS) and the East Regional Context.

LAS is intended to help all participants engage with RESP by providing additional support where it is needed. To help shape this support, attendees were asked what barriers could prevent them from engaging with RESP effectively, and what would help to remove those barriers.

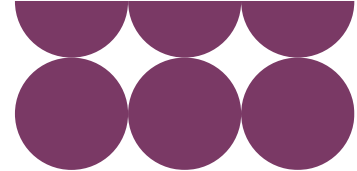
The Regional Context will provide the starting point for the East RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the region. For the Regional Context discussion, attendees were asked:

- Which sectors may place the biggest pressure on energy infrastructure in the East region?
- Where do you expect changes to energy demand to occur in the East region?

You said: barriers to engaging with RESP and how to overcome them

Defining roles and responsibilities: Attendees highlighted confusion around NESO's role, RESP's purpose, energy terminology and the relationships between different energy system actors. Attendees suggested clearer explanations of local actors, their responsibilities and the purpose of RESP.

Accessible information on energy planning: Attendees highlighted that the technical nature of energy planning can act as a barrier to participation. There



were concerns that consultations sometimes assume too much prior knowledge, making it difficult for non-specialists to contribute. Attendees suggested clearer explanations of what they are being asked to contribute, simplified materials, use of plain English, and more support for stakeholders unfamiliar with the energy sector.

Resource constraints: Another barrier identified was limited resource available within local authorities and other organisations. Participants noted that RESP is often only one small part of a wider workload, meaning stakeholders may lack the time, expertise or staffing capacity to engage fully. Capacity constraints were therefore seen as a barrier to effective participation.

We will: Input into development of Local Actor Support

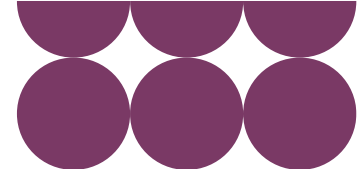
We recognise that some local actors face constraints. Where that is the case, and if the local actor is vital to the successful development and delivery of RESP or plays a key role in the energy planning landscape, they will receive targeted LAS.

While some support will be targeted, LAS will also include some self-service products that will be freely available for wider customers and stakeholders to access and use as needed. We have already used the forum insights to shape and inform the first wave of LAS and will continue to do so for future waves, as appropriate. The three aspects of the first wave of LAS are: energy planning literacy resources, signposting to external resources, and data guidance and best practice. The energy literacy resources will help build local capability by explaining NESO, strategic energy planning and energy-related policy in clear, accessible language. The signposting materials will act as a virtual library, helping stakeholders navigate the resources and support already publicly available on energy planning.

You Said: Regional priorities – future demand pressures and growth

Housing growth: Attendees identified housing growth as a major driver of future energy demand in the East. Ambitious housing targets, alongside the electrification of heat, community heat networks and increased use of air conditioning, are expected to increase overall electricity demand and change demand patterns.

Transport: Transport was identified as another major source of future demand, particularly the electrification of road freight, HGVs, private vehicles and public transport. Participants highlighted the need for extensive electric vehicle charging infrastructure, especially along strategic routes such as the A14 corridor and around ports.



Growth of digital industries: Increased data processing requirements and technology-sector expansion were seen as key contributors to future demand. Participants expected demand to grow around technology clusters, universities and business parks.

The coast: The East's coastal location was also referenced as a key area for future demand growth. Stakeholders highlighted ports such as Felixstowe and Harwich, the Bacton energy terminal, offshore energy developments and Sizewell as locations where demands on the energy system could increase substantially. Growth in shipping, logistics, hydrogen production and carbon capture could create additional pressure on infrastructure in coastal regions and along key transport routes linking ports to inland economic centres.

Water: Attendees highlighted increasing pressure from water treatment, desalination, reservoirs and other water-related assets. Population growth, climate pressures and the need for greater resilience were all seen as likely to increase the energy requirements of water systems.

We will: Input into the East Regional Context

We will use these insights to inform and build the Regional Context for the East. The Regional Context will form the starting point for the East RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the region. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the East Regional Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

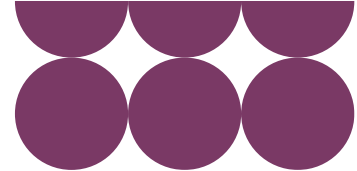
SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for the East and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities might like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Stakeholders saw potential for the East to play a leading role in the future energy system by using its natural resources, coastline, land availability and existing energy assets to support renewables, nuclear and hydrogen development. They also highlighted opportunities for economic growth, job creation and skills



development, provided that benefits from new infrastructure and investment are retained locally.

However, attendees highlighted the challenge of making strategic energy planning feel relevant, understandable and legitimate at a local level. There were concerns that communities may struggle to see how national energy priorities translate into local impacts and benefits, particularly where infrastructure is proposed near homes, farmland or valued landscapes.

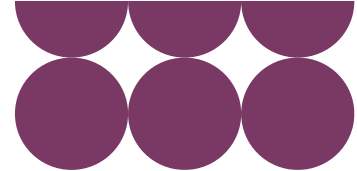
Infrastructure and spatial impacts were also a concern. Participants raised issues around the visual and environmental effects of large-scale infrastructure, including pylons and solar farms. These concerns were linked to rural and coastal areas, where there may already be pressures from agriculture, flooding, climate change and environmental protection.

Information communities would like to know

Communities would want clear, practical and locally tailored information on what the SSEP means for them. This how homes, landscapes, farmland, transport routes and local services could be affected. Information should be presented in plain language and linked to local priorities such as housing, employment, environment, flood risk, transport, farming and growth.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 8 – Central England Forum

Forum Overview:

The Central England forum took place in Northampton on 17 June, with 49 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Kayte O'Neill, Chief Operating Officer of NESO.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders: Greater South East Net Zero Hub, Community Energy Pathways, NISTA, Local Partnerships, Cadent, UK Power Networks.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP).

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

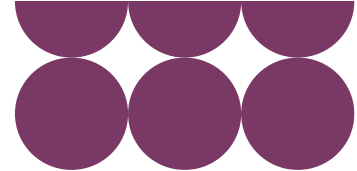
These discussions covered the Central England Regional Context. The Regional Context will provide the starting point for the Central England RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the region. Attendees were asked about the challenges and opportunities relating to local planning, community energy and industrial decarbonisation in Central England.

You said: Challenges and opportunities in Central England

Local planning

Attendees highlighted an opportunity to improve alignment between RESP and wider local planning. They felt RESP could build on existing planning activity, including Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs), local plans, and Spatial Development Strategies. However, attendees felt the differing planning timescales, governance arrangements, and the implications of local government reorganisation and devolution could make this a challenge.

Linked to this, participants saw significant value in RESP acting as a coordinating and convening mechanism across the region. Discussions highlighted opportunities to strengthen collaboration between local authorities, community energy organisations, industry, energy network operators, regulators and government bodies. Attendees emphasised that ongoing engagement should support long-term partnerships, knowledge-sharing and collective problem-solving.



Attendees also emphasised the importance of high-quality, transparent, and accessible data. Participants highlighted challenges around inconsistent data collection methods, varying LAEP methodologies, limited visibility of assumptions, and difficulties accessing or sharing local information. There is opportunity here for common data standards, improved data-sharing arrangements, and clearer explanation of how stakeholder information informs RESP outputs.

Community energy

Stakeholders highlighted that community energy groups face a mix of practical and energy system-related barriers. On the practical side, they have limited access to funding, feasibility support, technical expertise and volunteer capacity. In relation to the energy system, electricity network constraints, connection delays, and capacity limitations are seen as key barriers to progressing community energy projects.

At the same time, participants highlighted the importance of bottom-up engagement, stronger collaboration between communities, local authorities, industry and energy network operators, and greater local ownership of projects. They also saw opportunities for community energy to support local investment and innovation, particularly where projects are developed in partnership with industry and public bodies.

Industrial decarbonisation

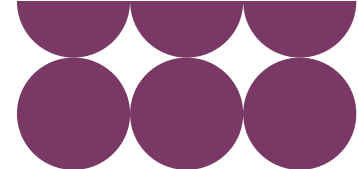
Stakeholders raised concerns about high and uncertain energy costs, electricity grid capacity constraints and long connection timescales. This uncertainty affects business planning, investment decisions, competitiveness and the ability to decarbonise.

Stakeholders also emphasised the need for clearer long-term policy and investment signals, better localised data, and stronger coordination across electricity, heat, transport, water and digital infrastructure. They highlighted the opportunity for RESP to better reflect the scale, timing and location of future industrial energy demand, so that infrastructure planning supports industrial growth, enables decarbonisation and avoids future constraints.

We will: Input into the Regional Context for Central England and Local Actor Support

Input into the Regional Context

We will use these challenges and opportunities to inform and build the Regional Context for Central England. The Regional Context will form the starting point for the Central England RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities,



opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the region. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the Central England Regional Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

Input into development of Local Actor Support

The insights on local planning and community energy also link to the Local Actor Support (LAS) element of RESP. LAS is intended to help all participants engage with RESP by providing additional support where it is needed. We recognise that some local actors face constraints. Where that is the case, and if the local actor is vital to the successful development and delivery of RESP or plays a key role in the energy planning landscape, they will receive targeted LAS.

While some support will be targeted, LAS will also include some self-service products that will be freely available for wider customers and stakeholders to access and use as needed. We have already used the forum insights to shape and inform the first wave of LAS and will continue to do so for future waves, as appropriate. The three aspects of the first wave of LAS are: energy planning literacy resources, signposting to external resources, and data guidance and best practice. The data guidance and best practice output will help address barriers around data quality and usability by clearly articulating clear expectations and processes for data submission and governance.

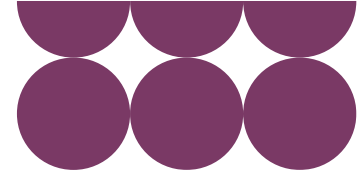
SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for Central England and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities might like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Attendees saw the SSEP as an opportunity to move away from fragmented decision-making and create a clearer pathway for investment, infrastructure upgrades and system resilience. They also pointed to the potential for the SSEP to support new technologies and approaches, including heat networks and hydrogen. This was linked to improving the efficiency of the energy system, making better use of existing infrastructure, and enabling new forms of flexibility. Economic growth was also seen as an opportunity, with attendees noting that the SSEP could support job creation, skills development and supply chain growth.



Stakeholders expressed that there was not enough clarity around what the SSEP will mean in practice. Attendees wanted more certainty about timelines, delivery pathways, decision-making processes and how national plans will translate into local outcomes. This uncertainty creates challenges for local authorities, energy networks and other delivery partners who need confidence to plan and invest.

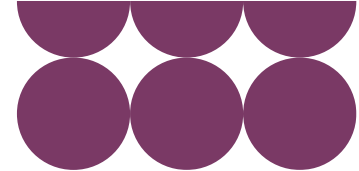
Attendees also highlighted the scale and complexity of upgrading the energy system, noting electricity grid capacity, planning constraints and land use pressures. There was recognition that the pace of delivery needs to increase to meet net zero ambitions, but that existing planning processes, coordination challenges and resource constraints could slow progress.

Information communities would like to know

Attendees felt communities would like clear, accessible information about what the SSEP means for them, including what infrastructure may be needed, where and when changes could happen and how they can influence the process. They will also want honest communication about opportunities, trade-offs and difficult choices to help build understanding, trust and support in the planning process.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 9 – Inverness Forum

Forum Overview:

The second Scottish forum took place in Inverness on 19 June, with 71 stakeholders attending. The first Scottish forum took place in Glasgow on 9 June. The day in Inverness consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Julian Leslie, NESO Director of Strategic Energy Planning.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and Scottish stakeholders: Scottish Government, Scottish and Southern Energy Networks, SGN, Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, Great British Energy, Highland Council.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

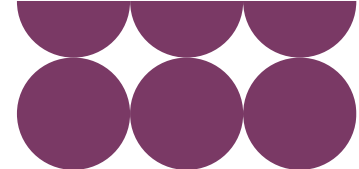
The RESP table discussions in Inverness covered the same topics as in Glasgow, focusing on the National Context for Scotland. The National Context will provide the starting point for the Scotland RESP, highlighting local issues and identify energy-related priorities for the nation.

Attendees were asked to choose two topics to focus on from the following: heat and buildings, transport, generation and storage and industry and new demand. Within each topic, attendees were asked about the key ambitions and opportunities for Scotland, barriers for the sector and how RESP can work with stakeholders to accelerate progress.

A summary of the key themes is provided below. Compared with Glasgow (see Appendix 6), attendees in Inverness placed greater emphasis on ensuring that the Scottish Highlands, Islands and rural communities benefit directly from energy infrastructure development. In Glasgow, attendees focused more on using Scotland's renewable generation effectively to support affordable decarbonisation and local economic growth.

You said: Ambitions and opportunities, barriers and collaborating with the sector

Ambitions and opportunities: A prominent theme across topics was using renewable energy locally to create economic value rather than exporting power



without sufficient local benefit. Stakeholders highlighted opportunities in hydrogen, synthetic fuels, sustainable aviation fuels, maritime fuels, ports, Green Freeports, energy hubs, pumped hydro, local manufacturing and community energy. There was also strong emphasis on supporting remote, rural and island communities, creating skilled jobs, attracting investment and helping tackle depopulation.

Key barriers: The most common barriers stakeholders identified were electricity grid capacity constraints, connection delays, workforce and skills shortages, transport infrastructure limitations, policy and regulatory mismatch, and investor uncertainty. Participants felt that national policy can under-recognise Highland and Island realities, especially for smaller-scale projects, hydrogen, access to rural transport, and community-led energy solutions.

Role for NESO/RESP and collaboration with the sector: Attendees viewed RESP as important in giving the Highlands and Islands a stronger voice in energy planning for Scotland. Stakeholders would like to see clear regional planning within Scotland, and stronger coordination between housing, transport, ports, land use, economic development and energy infrastructure. They would also like to see more direct engagement with local authorities, communities, industry groups and regional organisations.

Examples of projects mentioned: Outer Hebrides Energy Hub, EMEC Orkney innovation and hydrogen projects, Pentland Firth tidal generation opportunity, Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport initiatives, NINES Shetland smart grid project, SATE Sustainable Aviation Fuel Programme, and Moray Heat Network.

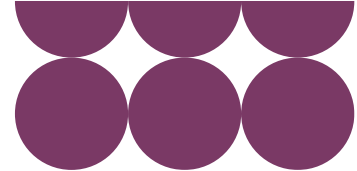
We will: Input into the National Context for Scotland

The outputs from these discussions, as well as those from the Glasgow forum, will be used to inform and build the RESP National Context for Scotland.

The National Context will form the starting point for the Scotland RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the nation. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the Scotland National Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for Scotland and what information communities might like to know.



You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities would like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Stakeholders identified a major opportunity for the North of Scotland to build on its energy generation capability, particularly through wind, offshore energy, hydrogen and storage. Attendees felt the North of Scotland has the potential to play a significant role in the future energy system, not only by generating renewable power but also by using curtailed energy more effectively and creating links to wider UK and European markets.

There were also opportunities identified around economic growth, especially through local supply chain growth, job creation and long-term regional investment. However, stakeholders emphasised that these benefits will only be realised locally if there is a deliberate focus on developing skills, strengthening local businesses and ensuring that economic value is retained in North Scotland.

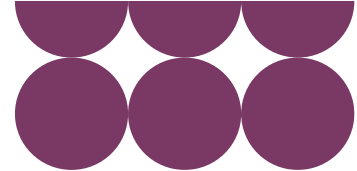
Stakeholders consistently highlighted electricity infrastructure and grid constraints as the most significant barrier to realising the North of Scotland's energy potential. Existing transmission and distribution networks were seen as insufficient, with concerns about the ability to export offshore and onshore wind, move energy from the Highlands and Islands to demand centres, and connect new generation at the pace required. Curtailment, limited storage, port capacity and the slow delivery of upgrades were all viewed as risks that could prevent the region's renewable resources from being fully used.

Information communities would like to know

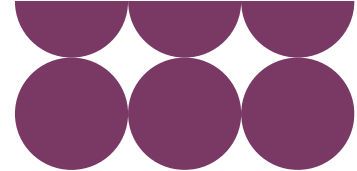
Communities will want clear, accessible information on what the SSEP means locally, including where infrastructure may be needed, how decisions will be made, what impacts and trade-offs are expected, and how local views will influence the final plan. They will also want to understand whether hosting infrastructure will bring fair and lasting benefits, such as lower energy costs, jobs, skills and wider economic opportunities.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options



Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 10 – Swansea Forum

Forum Overview:

The first Welsh forum took place in Swansea on 22 June, with 53 stakeholders attending. The second Welsh forum took place in Llandudno on 25 June. The day in Swansea consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Aled Rowlands, Head of Strategic Energy Planning Engagement.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national stakeholders: Welsh Government, Wales and West Utilities, National Grid DSO, Net Zero Industry Wales.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

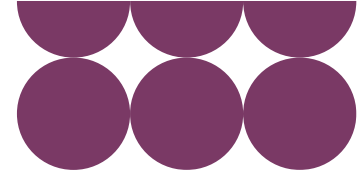
The RESP table discussions in Swansea covered the same content as in Llandudno, focusing on the National Context for Wales. The National Context will provide the starting point for the Wales RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the nation.

Attendees were asked about the priorities, challenges and opportunities for energy in Wales and how RESP can work collaboratively with stakeholders to accelerate progress.

Both Welsh forums highlighted collaboration, transparency, grid constraints and the need to move from planning to delivery. In Swansea, attendees placed greater emphasis on industrial growth, ports, marine energy, hydrogen, major infrastructure investment and energy as an economic enabler. In contrast, Llandudno attendees (see Appendix 13) placed greater emphasis on community engagement, local ownership of assets, fairness and policy certainty.

You said: ambitions and priorities, challenges and opportunities and working collaboratively

Barriers: As in Llandudno, stakeholders identified limited electricity grid capacity, connection delays and long reinforcement timescales as barriers to Wales's energy ambitions. Concerns centred on the ability of energy transmission and distribution networks to accommodate new demand, generation and industrial



growth. Uncertainty over future network investment also creates challenges for developers, local authorities and investors.

Opportunities for economic growth and innovation: Also raised as an opportunity in Llandudno, attendees in Swansea saw energy infrastructure as an enabler of economic growth, industrial development and inward investment. They linked future energy planning to opportunities in the Celtic Freeport and South Wales Industrial Cluster, alongside the creation of jobs and attracting investment. What was different in Swansea was the potential attendees saw for innovation. They emphasised the potential of marine energy, hydrogen, floating offshore wind, tidal stream and tidal range. These technologies were seen as important future opportunities for Wales, offering the potential to build on regional strengths, support innovation and create new industrial and supply chain benefits.

Ambitions for whole system planning: As in Llandudno, stakeholders wanted RESP to consider housing, transport, heat, hydrogen, storage and land use together, rather than treating technologies or sectors in isolation. Many pointed towards Smart Local Energy Systems and coordinated regional planning as practical ways to align investment, decarbonisation and local growth priorities.

Working collaboratively: While attendees were keen to increase collaborative and partnership working, a key challenge raised was the limited local authority capacity, lack of specialist energy expertise and time constraints of community organisations. Linked to this, attendees said they would like clearer explanations of RESP and what is expected of them. Technical language and acronyms were seen as barriers to collaborative engagement.

We will: Input into the National Context for Wales and Local Actor Support

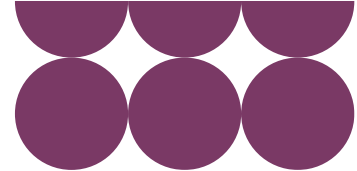
Input into the National Context

The outputs from these discussions, as well as those from the Llandudno forum, will be used to inform and build the RESP National Context for Wales.

The National Context will form the starting point for the Wales RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the nation. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the Wales National Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

Input into development of Local Actor Support

The insights on collaborative working with stakeholders are also directly relevant to the Local Actor Support (LAS) element of RESP. LAS is intended to help all



participants engage with RESP by providing additional support where it is needed. We recognise that some local actors face constraints. Where that is the case, and if the local actor is vital to the successful development and delivery of RESP or plays a key role in the energy planning landscape, they will receive targeted LAS.

While some support will be targeted, LAS will also include some self-service products that will be freely available for wider customers and stakeholders to access and use as needed. We have already used the forum insights to shape and inform the first wave of LAS and will continue to do so for future waves, as appropriate. The three aspects of the first wave of LAS are: energy planning literacy resources, signposting to external resources, and data guidance and best practice. The energy literacy resources will help build local capability by explaining NESO's role, strategic energy planning and energy-related policy in clear, accessible language. These resources will help address barriers created by technical language and acronyms.

SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

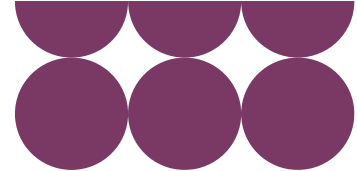
This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for Wales and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities would like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Attendees saw the SSEP as an opportunity to bring greater coordination and clarity to Wales' energy planning. Stakeholders valued the role SSEP could play in reducing fragmentation and providing clearer signals to investors. There is also a clear economic opportunity, with stakeholders linking the SSEP to jobs, skills, supply chain growth and inward investment. Attendees suggested that Wales' existing industrial strengths, renewable energy potential and ability to act as a net exporter could be used to support long-term economic growth. Land use was also framed as a potential positive, where the SSEP can help make more strategic choices, including making better use of brownfield sites.

In terms of challenges, attendees raised concerns about whether the SSEP can be delivered in practice. They highlighted planning, policy and regulatory barriers, including slow, complex processes and misalignment between UK, Welsh and local frameworks. Attendees also questioned whether the resources, supply chains and planning capacity needed to deliver at the pace required will be



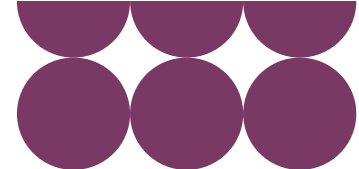
available. Network constraints were a recurring issue, particularly around grid capacity and connection delays.

Information communities would like to know

Attendees felt communities would like clear, plain-English information on what the SSEP means for them. This includes accessible explanations of why new infrastructure is needed, where it may be located and how decisions will be made. They will also want to understand how impacts on land, the environment and local places will be managed, and what tangible benefits Welsh communities may receive.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 11 – South West Forum

Forum Overview:

The South West forum took place in Taunton on 23 June, with 73 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Craig Dyke, NESO Director of System Operations.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders: Centre for Sustainable Energy, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, National Grid Distribution System Operator, Wales and West Utilities, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

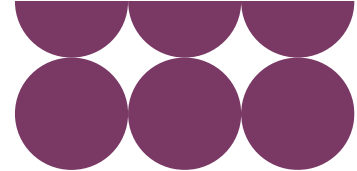
The RESP table discussions focused on the Regional Context for the South West. The Regional Context will provide the starting point for the South West RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the region.

Attendees were asked about planning priorities, opportunities and challenges in relation to consumer demand, transport and industrial decarbonisation. Tables were organised by places in the South West region. However, for the purposes of this summary report, we have pulled out themes for the South West region as a whole.

You said: planning priorities, opportunities and challenges

Transport decarbonisation a regional priority: Transport was the most prominent sector discussed across localities in the region. Stakeholders identified electric vehicle charging infrastructure, shared charging hubs, hydrogen, sustainable aviation fuels, rail electrification and freight decarbonisation as priority areas. Rurality and dispersed demand were common challenges across Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Rural geography increases transport emissions, charging infrastructure costs and network requirements.

Opportunity for place-based energy systems: Community energy, Smart Local Energy Systems (SLES), local flexibility markets, microgrids, heat networks and coordinated planning between electricity, heat and transport were repeatedly



identified as opportunities. There was strong support for solutions tailored to local circumstances rather than a one-size-fits-all regional approach.

Opportunity for coordination: Participants consistently identified gaps in information sharing, public engagement and policy and regulatory frameworks needed to support investment and delivery. Better coordination between sectors and organisations was repeatedly identified as a significant opportunity, particularly through NESO and RESP convening local authorities, businesses, community groups and infrastructure providers.

Affordability and fairness challenges: Linked to the priorities around transport, many discussions focused on ensuring the transition works for rural communities. Concerns included transport accessibility, off-gas-grid homes, dispersed populations, fuel poverty, retrofit costs and affordability of low-carbon technologies. Stakeholders emphasised that decarbonization in the South West must be equitable and deliver benefits across all communities.

Electricity network capacity challenges: Another challenge raised was the readiness of energy infrastructure to support growth and decarbonisation. Participants highlighted electricity network constraints, connectivity issues, charging infrastructure requirements, heat network viability and the need for strategic investment to unlock local opportunities. This was seen as a common barrier across both urban and rural areas.

We will: Input into the Regional Context for the South West

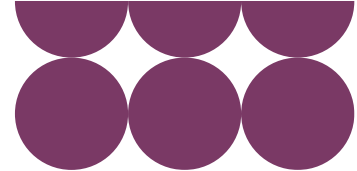
We will use the priorities, opportunities and challenges identified to inform and build the Regional Context for the South West. The Regional Context will form the starting point for the South West RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and direction of travel for the region. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the South West Regional Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for the South West and what information communities might like to know.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities would like to know

Opportunities and challenges



Stakeholders saw the SSEP as an opportunity to support economic growth across the South West by attracting investment, creating new jobs and building local skills in clean energy industries. There was particular interest in the potential for strategic energy planning to strengthen rural economies, support local businesses and ensure that communities benefit directly from future infrastructure. A second major opportunity was the potential for SSEP to provide clearer, more coordinated strategic planning. Stakeholders felt that, if well aligned with local plans and decision-making structures, the SSEP could help reduce fragmented approaches, give greater clarity on future energy priorities and support more efficient infrastructure decisions.

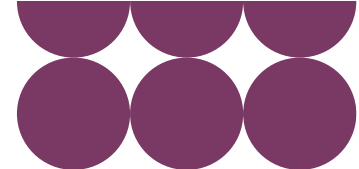
Land use, environmental constraints and public acceptability emerged as significant challenges in the South West. Stakeholders highlighted the difficulty of balancing energy infrastructure needs with protected landscapes, biodiversity, coastal and marine considerations, and competing demands for land. Visual impacts and local disruption were also raised as factors that could affect community acceptance. Additionally, attendees were concerned about affordability, value for money and whether the necessary skills, supply chains and local workforce capacity will be in place to support delivery.

Information communities would like to know

Attendees felt communities would like clear, plain-language information on what the SSEP means for the South West, including what infrastructure may be needed, how decisions will be made, and how trade-offs will be assessed. They also want reassurance that environmental, land use, cost and visual impacts will be managed transparently, and that communities hosting infrastructure will not face disproportionate costs or disruption.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 12 – North West Forum

Forum Overview:

The North West forum took place in Salford on 23 June, with 45 stakeholders attending. The day consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Julian Leslie, NESO Director of Strategic Energy Planning.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national and regional stakeholders: North West Net Zero Hub, SP ENW, Cadent, Net Zero North West, SP Energy Networks.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

The RESP table discussions covered the North West Regional Context and Local Actor Support (LAS). The Regional Context will provide the starting point for the North West RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the region. We asked attendees about existing regional datasets as well as the energy priorities, targets and ambitions in the region.

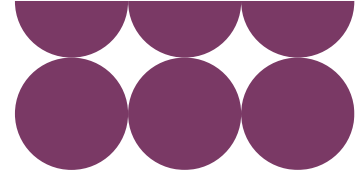
LAS is intended to help all participants engage with RESP by providing additional support where it is needed. To help shape this support, attendees were asked what barriers could prevent them from engaging with RESP effectively, and what would help to remove those barriers.

You said: energy priorities, targets and ambitions and existing datasets

Energy priorities: Attendees highlighted a range of priorities for the North West. The most prominent themes raised in table discussions are summarised below.

Heat and transport: Stakeholders welcomed progress on heat networks and zoning but emphasised that delivery must continue as a short-term priority, including decarbonising gas-based heat networks. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure was identified as uneven across the UK, raising fairness concerns. Major transport electrification plans in Greater Manchester, including electric buses and tram works, were noted as important to regional net zero ambitions.

Industry and Economy: Attendees highlighted the importance of the North West's strong industrial base, including aerospace, chemicals, glass and wider



manufacturing, and the need to clearly show the benefits of decarbonisation for industry, jobs, retention and growth. Stakeholders noted that the industrial landscape has changed since HyNet's inception and raised concerns about when sufficient power will be available, particularly in areas such as Lancashire where delays to reliable supply can affect business investment. Electricity prices, competitiveness with Europe, innovation support, alternative fuels and the appropriate roles of electrification, hydrogen and biofuels were also raised.

Generation and Storage: Participants called for greater clarity on the role of storage, including green hydrogen storage and the deployment of large-scale battery storage with robust control systems to avoid distribution network voltage issues. Stakeholders also raised the role of reliable dispatchable gas generation, noting that thermal generation did not feature strongly in tRESP.

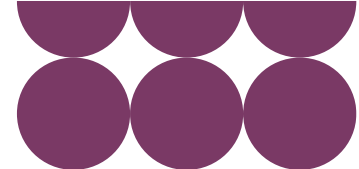
Targets and ambitions: Attendees highlighted the need to align regional net zero targets, including Liverpool City Region's 2035 target and Greater Manchester's 2038 target, with the UK Industrial Strategy. Liverpool's Advanced Zoning Programme role was noted, alongside the need to show how AI Growth Zones can support economic development.

Existing datasets: Attendees identified a range of useful datasets, including energy networks open data, Landstack, planning datasets, Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) and local growth plans. They also pointed to specialist sources such as biodiversity and nature recovery strategies, investment information and Innovate Lancashire cluster action plans. However, they stressed that the main challenge is integrating these sources into a coherent, usable picture for decision-making. Overall, attendees emphasised the need for better data integration, clearer governance and a transparent repository that addresses access, commercial sensitivity, usability and data quality.

We will: Input into the Regional Context for the North West

We will use these insights to inform and build the Regional Context for the North West. The Regional Context will form the starting point for the North West RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the region. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the North West Regional Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

You said: LAS – barriers to engaging with RESP and how to remove them



Capacity and resource constraints: Participants repeatedly highlighted that local authorities, businesses, and community groups often lack the staff, funding, time and specialist expertise needed to engage effectively with strategic energy planning. To remove this barrier, participants suggested building local capability through training and guidance and creating tools that reduce the resource burden on organisations.

Knowledge and skills gap: Attendees noted that energy planning terminology, processes and data can be difficult for local stakeholders to understand. To remove this barrier, attendees suggested providing energy literacy training, signposting to existing resources and using simpler, accessible language.

Stronger communication and engagement: Many felt that local actors do not always know who to speak to, what information is required, or how their input will influence outcomes. Suggestions included creating clear points of contact, demonstrating how feedback will influence decisions and improving visibility of planning processes and timelines.

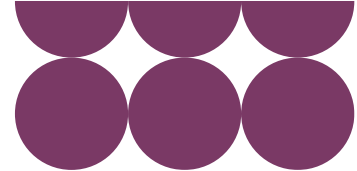
We will: Input into development of Local Actor Support

We recognise that some local actors face constraints. Where that is the case, and if the local actor is vital to the successful development and delivery of RESP or plays a key role in the energy planning landscape, they will receive targeted LAS.

While some support will be targeted, LAS will also include some self-service products that will be freely available for wider customers and stakeholders to access and use as needed. We have already used the forum insights to shape and inform the first wave of LAS and will continue to do so for future waves, as appropriate. The three aspects of the first wave of LAS are: energy planning literacy resources, signposting to external resources, and data guidance and best practice. The energy literacy resources will help build local capability by explaining NESO, strategic energy planning and energy-related policy in clear, accessible language. The signposting materials will act as a virtual library, helping stakeholders navigate the resources and support already publicly available on energy planning. These products will help to address barriers created by gaps in knowledge and skills.

SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for the North West and what information communities might like to know.



You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities would like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Attendees saw the SSEP as an opportunity to bring greater coordination, certainty and strategic direction to energy planning across the North West. They felt it could better link infrastructure, land use and growth priorities. This could help unlock constraints, identify where capacity and demand are likely to grow, and sequence projects more effectively. Stakeholders also saw potential for the SSEP to support economic growth by building on the region's strengths in industrial decarbonisation, hydrogen and manufacturing, while attracting investment and creating green jobs and skills.

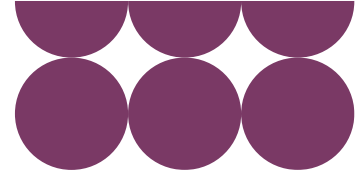
However, stakeholders raised concerns about whether the SSEP can move from strategic ambition to practical delivery. Key challenges included planning, policy and regulatory complexity, unclear governance and accountability, delivery timescales, funding routes and the risk of misalignment between local, regional and national decision-making. Cost and affordability were also recurring concerns, with stakeholders wanting clarity on who pays, who benefits and how trade-offs will be managed fairly.

Information communities would like to know

Communities would like clear, accessible information on what the SSEP is, why it matters and what it means for their local area. They will also want to understand the potential impacts, benefits and trade-offs of new energy infrastructure, when changes may happen and how disruption will be managed.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.



Appendix 13 – Llandudno Forum

Forum Overview:

The second Welsh forum took place in Llandudno on 25 June, with 33 stakeholders attending. The first Welsh forum took place in Swansea on 22 June. The day in Llandudno consisted of:

- Welcome and introduction by Aled Rowlands, Head of Strategic Energy Planning Engagement.
- Panel sessions with NESO colleagues and national stakeholders: Welsh Government, Wales and West Utilities, Ambition North Wales, SP Energy Networks.
- Table discussions on Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) and Strategic Spatial Energy Planning (SSEP)

RESP table discussions – You Said, We Will

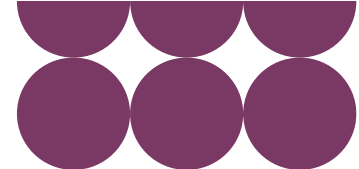
The RESP table discussions in Llandudno covered the same content as in Swansea, focusing on the National Context for Wales. The National Context will provide the starting point for the Wales RESP, highlighting local issues and identifying energy-related priorities for the nation.

Attendees were asked about the priorities, challenges and opportunities for energy in Wales and how RESP can work collaboratively with stakeholders to accelerate progress.

Both Welsh forums highlighted collaboration, transparency, electricity grid constraints and the need to move from planning to delivery. In Llandudno, stakeholders placed greater emphasis on community engagement, local ownership of assets, fairness and policy certainty. By comparison, attendees in Swansea (see Appendix 10) focused more on industrial growth, ports, marine energy, hydrogen, major infrastructure investment and energy as an economic enabler.

You said: priorities, challenges and opportunities and working collaboratively

Electricity network infrastructure: Stakeholders identified electricity grid capacity and network investment as a significant priority. Capacity constraints, connection delays, reinforcement needs and limited visibility of available capacity were seen



as major barriers to both decarbonisation and economic growth. Participants were concerned about the ability of the current infrastructure to support future demand but felt that strategic planning could help unlock investment and improve coordination.

Opportunity for economic growth: Stakeholders connected affordable, reliable and low-carbon energy with regional growth, industrial development, freeports, supply chains, inward investment and job creation. Energy was not viewed as a standalone issue, but as a fundamental enabler of wider economic opportunity and long-term regional resilience.

Local benefits should be prioritised: Attendees highlighted the importance of local and community benefit in energy planning. Participants wanted communities hosting energy infrastructure to see clearer value from it, including through community ownership, local energy markets, shared ownership models, reduced fuel poverty and more visible local economic benefits. This reflected a broader desire for energy transition to feel fair, locally relevant and beneficial to the people and places most affected.

Ambitions for whole system planning: As in Swansea, stakeholders wanted RESP to consider electricity, transport, heat, hydrogen, storage, land use and climate adaptation together, rather than treating technologies or sectors in isolation. Smart Local Energy Systems and integrated planning approaches were seen as important ways to reflect local needs and make better long-term decisions.

Transparency and clarity when working together: Similarly to concerns raised in Swansea, stakeholders would like clearer explanations of strategic energy planning activities and RESP roles and responsibilities. Technical language and acronyms were seen as barriers to collaborative engagement.

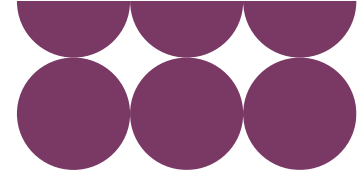
We will: Input into the National Context for Wales and Local Actor Support

Input into National Context

The outputs from these discussions, as well as those from the Swansea forum, will be used to inform and build the RESP National Context for Wales.

The National Context will form the starting point for the Wales RESP, offering a broad, long-term view of conditions, priorities, opportunities and challenges. It will help guide the evolution of the energy system by providing clarity and a direction of travel for the nation. We will use the forum feedback to strengthen our evidence base, helping to ensure the Wales National Context reflects current and future energy needs, local perspectives and the issues that matter most to stakeholders.

Input into development of Local Actor Support (LAS)



Consistent with the Swansea feedback, the insights on transparency and clarity when working collaboratively are directly relevant to the Local Actor Support (LAS) element of RESP. LAS is intended to help all participants engage with RESP by providing additional support where it is needed.

While some support will be targeted, LAS will also include some self-service products that will be freely available for wider customers and stakeholders to access and use as needed. We have already used the forum insights to shape and inform the first wave of LAS and will continue to do so for future waves, as appropriate. The three aspects of the first wave of LAS are: energy planning literacy resources, signposting to external resources, and data guidance and best practice. The energy literacy resources will help build local capability by explaining NESO, strategic energy planning and energy-related policy in clear, accessible language. These resources will help address barriers created by technical language.

SSEP table discussions – You Said, We Will

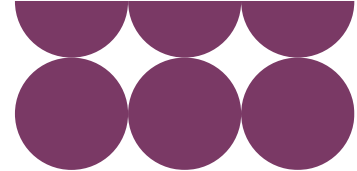
This table discussion focused on SSEP modelling insights and emerging pathway themes. Attendees discussed the main challenges and opportunities for Wales and what information communities might like to know. The table discussions at the Llandudno forum covered the same content as Swansea.

You said: Opportunities, challenges and information communities would like to know

Opportunities and challenges

Stakeholders saw the SSEP as an opportunity to provide a more coordinated and strategic approach to energy planning across Wales. A recurring theme was the need to align national, regional and local plans, bringing together decisions on generation, energy networks, demand and infrastructure within a clearer whole-system framework. Attendees also saw a strong economic opportunity. They highlighted the potential for the SSEP to attract investment, support industrial growth, create jobs and develop new workforce skills.

Attendees identified public acceptance as one of the most significant challenges for the SSEP. Attendees reflected that communities could feel decisions are being imposed on them rather than shaped with them. Building legitimacy and avoiding perceptions of top-down planning were therefore seen as essential to successful delivery. Another recurring challenge was the need to balance national strategic objectives with local priorities and impacts. Stakeholders recognised the importance of system-wide planning, but questioned how local needs,



community concerns and place-based economic priorities would be reflected in national decisions.

Information communities would like to know

Communities will want clear, accessible information on what the SSEP means for local people, including where energy infrastructure may be located and how local areas will be affected. They also want to understand the potential direct benefits for communities, such as lower bills, jobs, skills, community benefit funds, or shared ownership, rather than only national-level benefits. Stakeholders also highlighted the need for clear routes for early participation, so communities can ask questions, provide feedback and influence decisions.

We will: Input into stakeholder insights report

The insights shared have fed into the stakeholder insight report, that sits alongside the Pathway Options Report shared with the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish and Welsh governments and Ofgem. This report will highlight stakeholder views and national and regional insights associated with the pathway options. Based on the Pathway Options Report and additional stakeholder insight report, the UK Energy Secretary will choose one pathway that will form the draft SSEP for public consultation.