

Public

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29 July 2026

Dear requester

Request for Information

Thank you for your request for information which was received by NESO on 30 June 2026. Your request has been considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) as the requested information meets the definition of 'environmental information' at Regulation 2(1)(c) of the EIR.

Your request

You asked us:

....

I am writing to formally request clarity and technical details regarding the proposed (Xlinks) 1.5 GW data centre campus in our community. Given the immense scale of this development, I am deeply concerned about its implications for our local electricity supply, infrastructure, and carbon footprint. To help the local community understand the viability and impact of this scheme, please could you provide detailed answers to the following questions:

1. **Current Grid Capacity:** What is the current maximum generation and transmission capacity of the existing Alverdiscott 400 kV/132 kV substation?
2. **Impact of a 1.5 GW Draw:** A 1.5 GW continuous demand is staggering. Will the National Grid be required to build new infrastructure (e.g., additional pylons, new substations) to accommodate this facility?

3. **Queue and Constraints:** *What is the status of the local grid queue for this region? Does the Alverdiscott node have sufficient unallocated capacity, or will connecting this data centre cause supply constraints for surrounding homes and businesses?*
4. **Energy Sourcing:** *What proportion of the power supplied to this data centre will be drawn from renewable sources versus conventional baseload generation?*
5. **Impact on Bills:** *Will the transmission upgrades required to service this 1.5 GW load result in increased energy network costs or grid charges for local households? Our community deserves complete transparency regarding how much overall strain the local network can handle before it affects our daily lives and environment.*
6. **Risk of Localized Blackouts or Brownouts:** *Will a continuous, high-density demand of 1.5GW increase the risk of localized power cuts, voltage drops, or brownouts for residential and commercial consumers in North Devon?*
7. **Grid Redundancy and Back-up Failure:** *In the event that the data centre loses its primary power feed or experiences a sudden internal fault, what safeguards are in place to ensure this massive electrical drop-off does not trigger a cascading failure or blackout across the wider South West transmission network*
8. **Voltage Fluctuation and Power Quality:** *Large data centres and massive battery systems can introduce harmonics and rapid voltage fluctuations into the line. How will National Grid ensure that the local power supply remains stable and clean, preventing damage to delicate household appliances and local business equipment?*
9. **Emergency Prioritisation:** *During periods of extreme national grid stress (such as winter peaks with low renewable output), will this commercial data centre be legally required to power down or shed its load to protect domestic energy supplies, or will it be treated as a priority consumer?*
10. **System Restoration (Black Start):** *If a major regional network outage does occur, does the presence of a 1.5GW continuous load make the process of grid restoration ("Black Start") more complex or prolonged for local communities?*

Our response

Organisations subject to the EIR are required to:

- confirm whether they hold recorded information in scope of a request; and
- disclose that information, unless an exception provided by the legislation applies.

Requests framed as questions are valid requests under the information rights legislation (the EIR and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)), if a public authority holds recorded information that answers the specific question. However, there is no obligation under the legislation for an organisation to:

- provide an opinion if it's not already recorded;

- create new information to respond to a request.

For information, the various organisations within the energy sector perform different roles and the information created, collected, received and used by each organisation depends on the nature of their role. We have provided further information on these roles at the end of this letter. You have asked us for recorded information relating to a single proposed demand project (the Devon data campus - Xlinks), and for information on current and required infrastructure at Alverdiscott substation and NESO is therefore unable to provide information in response to your questions.

When we refuse an information request, we are required to issue a refusal notice outlining the reasons for refusal. We are refusing your information request because:

- we do not hold recorded information in scope of most of your questions; and
- we are unclear what information you are specifically asking for in the first part of your third question (which reads: *What is the status of the local grid queue for this region?*)

The EIR only apply to information held by the public authority at the time that the request for information is received (Regulation 3). Regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIR allows a public authority to refuse a request if it does not hold that information when an applicant's request is received. All EIR exceptions are subject to a public interest test (PIT) however the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) recognises that it is not possible to carry out a meaningful PIT where information is not held.

In the advice and assistance section below, we have provided information on NESO's role in the energy system, and the roles of other parties, to aid understanding of why we do not hold the information that you have asked for.

For the first part of question 3 ("*What is the status of the local grid queue for this region?*") we are not clear what recorded information you are asking for.

Were you to clarify the information that you are asking for in that question it is possible that NESO may hold relevant recorded information. We are not therefore refusing this part of your request under Regulation 12(4)(a). We are however engaging Regulation 12(4)(c) of the EIR with respect to that part of your request only. Regulation 12(4)(c) allows for a public authority to refuse a request where it is formulated in too general a manner i.e., is unclear or open to more than one interpretation, and the public authority has provided advice and assistance to help the requester to provide clarification should they wish to do so. The ICO recognises that it is difficult to conduct a PIT when a public authority is unsure what the requester is after and the Commissioner therefore takes the position that the public interest in maintaining the exception will outweigh the

public interest in disclosing what may be the wrong information. We have provided advice and assistance in relation to your whole request below.

Alongside the questions you have submitted you included some comment and statements. Please note that we are not responding to these as they are not requests for recorded information.

This concludes our response to your request.

Advice and assistance, and further information.

The National Grid Electricity System Operator (NG ESO) was part of the National Grid PLC group of companies until 30 September 2024. On 1 October 2024, we became the National Energy System Operator (NESO), an independent public corporation, and came under government ownership as the Independent System Operator and Planner (ISOP).

NESO operates today's electricity system and designs tomorrow's energy system. We are responsible for the system operation of the electricity transmission networks of England, Wales and Scotland (and surrounding offshore waters) but do not own or operate the network infrastructure (e.g., the overhead lines, substations). Further information about NESO's role is available here: [What we do | National Energy System Operator](#)

The '[Explainer of Electricity Transmission Networks](#)' published on our website describes:

- the electricity transmission network;
- the organisations involved in planning, building, running, regulating and delivering the network; and
- how NESO considers options to reinforce the network that minimise bill-payer costs and reduce community and environmental impacts.

Further information is available on this webpage: [Electricity Transmission Network Explainer | National Energy System Operator](#)

As you will see in the 'Explainer', the electricity transmission network is like a motorway system, moving large volumes of electricity over long distances from power stations to distribution substations and major industrial users. The companies that own the infrastructure and assets that make up the transmission system are called Transmission Owners (TOs). Distribution networks are like local roads, delivering electricity directly to homes and businesses and these regional and local networks are owned and operated by Distribution Network Operators (DNOs).

It is the responsibility of the TOs and DNOs, who own and operate the network infrastructure, to develop options required to meet future system needs, ensuring that the system remains safe, reliable and affordable, in compliance with the [Security and Quality of Supply Standard \(SQSS\)](#).

NESO's role in decision making within the energy system is to provide independent advice on system need and network development. We do not make final investment or planning consent decisions. Our latest recommendations are published in the [NESO transitional Centralised Strategic Network Plan \(tCSNP\) refresh 2026](#). Further information on NESO's role in the Strategic Planning of GB's energy system is available here: [Strategic Planning | National Energy System Operator](#).

For information, the Government's [Electricity System Restoration Standard \(ESRS\)](#) requires NESO to have sufficient capability and arrangements in place to restore 100% of Great Britain's electricity demand within five days if there was a major supply interruption. The ESRS requirements must be met by 31 December 2026. Information on NESO's progress and the assurance framework is available here: [Electricity System Restoration Standard | National Energy System Operator](#).

We stated in our response that we were unclear what you meant by the '*status of the local grid queue*'. We are unsure if you are asking us for information on the queue position of individual projects across a specific region, for aggregated information on current and proposed projects within a specific region or for information on projects with connection agreements to connect at the Alverdiscott substation.

NESO manages the contracts for connections to the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS). For information on projects with connection agreements to connect at Alverdiscott you can access the Transmission Entry Capacity (TEC) Register [here](#). The TEC Register is a list of the projects that hold connection contracts with NESO, including existing and future connection projects and projects that can be directly connected to the NETS, or make use of it. The Register can be filtered by 'Connection Site' (i.e., substation). For a regional overview you may find the Connections 360 app helpful (registration required): [Connections 360 | National Energy System Operator](#). Please note that, whilst we hold information on transmission connected demand projects, the TEC Register *does not* include demand only connections and NESO is not required under the [Connection and Use of System Code \(CUSC\)](#) to maintain or publish a demand register in the way that we are for generation connections.

Information on NESO's role in Connections and the recent Connections Reform process is available on our website:

- [Connections | National Energy System Operator](#)

- [Connections Reform | National Energy System Operator](#).

We consider all requests for information on a case-by-case basis, however we generally do not disclose information about individual projects where that information is confidential and/or commercially sensitive, unless such information has already been made publicly available, e.g, through the TEC Register. Our responses to information requests are published on a disclosure log, enabling the public to view how we managed previous requests: [Disclosure log | National Energy System Operator](#).

Next steps

We hope that the information provided is helpful. If you have any questions about the information provided or wish to submit a new request for information relating to any aspect of NESO's work, please contact us. We will consider any such request under the relevant legislation.

The TOs and DNOs are also subject to the EIR, and you may wish to contact the relevant organisations to request information relating to specific proposed projects and network infrastructure:

- TO: National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
- DNO: National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED)
- [Environmental Information Regulations \("EIR"\) 2004 | National Grid](#)

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

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

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

Regards,

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