



Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) Programme Management Review

NESO Strategic Energy Plan Assurance

Final Report

National Energy System Operator Ltd

June 2025

Redacted and disclosed under the EIR



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Background and Overview

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Background and approach to SSEP programme management review

Programme Background

NESO has been commissioned by Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) to develop a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) for the energy system across Great Britain (GB). The SSEP will serve as the foundation for future investment decisions across the energy system, aimed at delivering new energy generation and storage capabilities in line with the 2030 net-zero ambitions. The key output of the plan will be a series of energy pathways, developed by modelling various future energy system scenarios. These outputs will then input into future government policy in the energy sector, such as Clean Power 2030.

For the SSEP's outputs to be integrated into future government policy, they must be endorsed by the governments of England, Wales, and Scotland. To support this, NESO will need to engage regularly with each government throughout the development of the SSEP.

While NESO has been commissioned by DESNZ to deliver the SSEP, the modelling activities used to define the SSEP pathway options are to be carried out independently by NESO. To support the selection of a final pathway option, NESO will need to demonstrate the accuracy and completeness of its modelling.

The successful development of the SSEP will therefore depend on the Programme using its external governance structure to engage effectively with relevant stakeholders across the GB energy system to validate key modelling decisions and outputs. The Programme will also need to embed appropriate quality controls within its modelling activities to provide assurance over their accuracy.

Programme Objectives

The objective of the SSEP Programme is to define the optimal build pathway for decarbonising the energy system, taking into account economic, social, and environmental factors. To achieve this, the SSEP Programme must deliver the following:

- Provide greater clarity and confidence to industry, investors, consumers, and the public regarding the future energy system.
- Support engagement with stakeholders and the public to build consensus on how the energy system needs to change to enable clean and affordable energy for the future.
- Develop up to six pathway options that define the optimum balance of changes needed to the current GB energy system to deliver net zero ambitions.
- Integrate the SSEP into the broader energy planning frameworks across GB.

Programme Delivery Phases

The SSEP Programme is structured into the following phases:

1. **Define Methodology (Complete)** – This phase established the Programme's approach to deliver its modelling activities, quality assurance controls, and pathway options, based on the requirements outlined in the original DESNZ consultation.
2. **Deliver Modelling Activities (In Progress)** – In this phase, NESO is conducting modelling of various future energy system scenarios. Based on the modelling results, NESO will select up to six pathway options for the future energy system, to be presented to the UK Energy Secretary.
3. **Finalise Pathway Option (To be Completed)** – One pathway will be selected by the Energy Secretary to be published as the output of the first SSEP.
4. **Consult on Selected Pathway Option (To be Completed)** – Following the selection of the pathway option, consultations to gather feedback from the public, industry, and statutory bodies regarding will be conducted to assess its expected impacts and benefits.

SSEP Programme Management Review Scope and Approach

We have performed a review of the Programme management within the SSEP Programme to assess whether it is set up for success ahead of the next phase of delivery. The scope of our review included:

- Clarity of the scope, deliverables and milestones
- Plan for delivery
- Governance and Accountability
- Change Control
- Financial Control
- Resourcing and Programme Structure
- Risk and Issue Management
- Decision logs and dependency management
- Integration and alignment with other delivery organisations (internal and external).

Our fieldwork was performed during May 2025 and involved interviews with 9 key stakeholders involved with the project and a review of project documentation (see Appendix A). Our work is to support NESO to identify opportunities for improvement in the set-up of the Programme.

SSEP Project Overview and Current Status

DESNZ Commissions NESO to Develop the SSEP

In October 2024, DESNZ issued a Consultation appointing NESO as the delivery body for the SSEP. The consultation set out NESO's responsibilities for developing the SSEP, including key decision points and the external governance structures required to support effective decision-making.

Complete Modelling Activities

the Programme will use the outputs from its economic and geospatial modelling to identify optimal locations for new energy generation and hydrogen storage across the GB energy system. These will then be captured as pathway options and assessed against economic, social and environmental criteria.

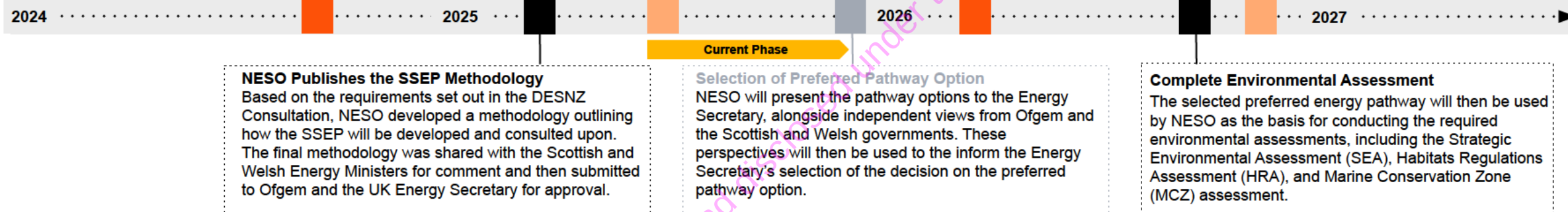
The SSEP Programme is currently in the process of completing its modelling activities.

Support the delivery of the Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP)

The selected preferred energy pathway will then serve as a critical input to the CSNP Programme, informing the design of the transmission network needed to support new energy generation and hydrogen storage units.

Monitor the SSEP's Performance Against its Objectives

NESO will monitor and evaluate the SSEP against its defined objectives. The outcomes of this evaluation will inform the approach to future iterations of the SSEP.



Key Industry Parties Impacted by the SSEP Programme

- **DESNZ** – Commissioned NESO to develop the SSEP and is responsible for ensuring that its outputs are aligned with broader UK energy policy objectives.
- **Ofgem** – The UK's independent energy regulator, responsible for providing guidance to NESO on the development of the SSEP to help align the Plan with consumer interests and with other major energy transformation programmes, such as the CSNP initiative.
- **Energy Secretary** – Responsible for approving the SSEP methodology and for selecting the preferred energy pathway from the options developed by NESO.
- **Scottish & Welsh Government** – Contributes to the SSEP through the Programme's external governance forums. They are also responsible for updating the Scottish and Welsh National Planning Framework to reflect the pathway option selected by the energy secretary.

Key Project Next Steps

- **Complete Modelling Activities** – Finalise economic and geospatial modelling to identify optimal locations for new energy generation and hydrogen storage across the GB energy system. These will be assessed against economic, social, environmental, and deliverability criteria.
- **Implement Quality Assurance (QA) Controls** – NESO will develop and apply a series of QA controls to validate the accuracy and robustness of its modelling outputs.
- **Develop and Appraise Pathway Options** – Using the results of the modelling, the Programme will develop up to six pathway options to be presented to the Energy Secretary.
- **Select Final Pathway** – The Energy Secretary will review the appraised options and select one preferred pathway to be adopted as the output of the first SSEP.
- **Conduct Public and Stakeholder Consultation** – NESO will undertake consultation on the selected pathway to gather feedback from the public, industry, and statutory bodies regarding its expected impacts and benefits.

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Executive Summary

Overall assessment summary

The Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) Programme has finalised its methodology, establishing the framework setting out the approach to develop and consult on the SSEP. As the Programme has developed its methodology, it has established effective programme management controls and embedded good practices in a number of areas and these are highlighted the 'Good practice observed' on the right-hand side of the page. However, improvements are required in how key planning assumptions are managed to support effective forward delivery.

As the Programme progresses through its modelling activities, it faces several key challenges, that if not addressed, are highly likely to impact its ability to provide a viable set of pathway options to the Energy Secretary within the required timeframes. The SSEP Programme's most significant challenge is the achievability of its delivery timescales. This is due to the current uncertainty regarding the required outputs and time needed to complete modelling activities, particularly as this is the first time NESO has undertaken modelling of this nature. While the Programme has included contingency within its plan, if the planning assumptions do not prove to be valid, this could delay the selection of the preferred energy pathway by December 2025.

Our review has identified four key challenges, including external inputs required by the Programme and opportunities for further optimisation of programme management controls that are internal to the Programme. These are as follows:

1. **There is a risk of delivery delays if planning assumptions regarding the duration of modelling activities do not prove valid:** The Programme's delivery plan has been developed using a series of assumptions defining the expected duration of its modelling activities. Given this is NESO's **first time undertaking modelling of this scale and complexity**, there is a risk these assumptions are inaccurate and could result in delays. Such delays could reduce the time available to model scenarios for each pathway option, potentially limiting the number of scenarios assessed and affecting the overall robustness of the proposed options.
2. **Define more structured engagement between the Modelling and wider SSEP Workstreams:** To enable SSEP Workstreams to proactively engage with the Programme's external stakeholders, they require clear visibility of progress on the modelling activities and the timing of key outputs. However, a structured approach has yet to be defined to support the ongoing engagement needed between the Modelling Workstream and the wider SSEP Workstreams.
3. **Capturing stronger evidence to substantiate the impact of SSEP scope changes raised by DESNZ:** DESNZ has raised scope changes for the Programme to incorporate in the development of the SSEP. While governance is in place to assess the impact of these additional requirements, the evidence to substantiate how they impact the Programme's ability to develop the energy pathways by the end of the year is not formally documented.
4. **Establish an integrated view of the broader SEP deliverables that are dependent on the SSEP Programme:** There are several programmes across the SEP portfolio which have critical dependencies on the outputs of the SSEP. However, a detailed view of the shared deliverables and cross-portfolio dependencies has not yet been defined by the SEP PMO. Until this is defined, there is a risk that the outputs of the SSEP may be misaligned with other key SEP deliverables, such as the Regional Energy Spatial Plan (RESP).

During our review, we observed that the Programme team has a clear understanding of these challenges and have taken steps to address them, including escalating issues through external governance. Our associated recommendations are provided on the next page and are intended to supplement actions already taken by the Programme to address the above challenges. We have also identified a number of other improvement opportunities, which are detailed in **Section 4** of the report.

Good practice observed:

Below, we have outlined examples of good practice observed during our review, which should be continued in future phases of delivery:

- **Developing quality assurance controls** – The Programme is working with modelling teams to embed Quality Assurance controls into future delivery activities as part of its planning processes.
- **Established external governance** – Aligned to the DESNZ consultation, the Programme has implemented an external governance structure to support the development of the SSEP.
- **Collaborating on environmental assessments** – The Programme has engaged with other SEP programmes and identified opportunities for mutual support in delivering their respective environmental assessments.
- **Framework for assessing emerging risk** – The PMO has applied a defined framework to consistently assess emerging risks across the Programme's delivery workstreams.
- **Alignment between risk reporting and the Programme plan** – An ongoing process is in place to use Programme's risk reporting to inform the contingency included within the delivery plan.
- **Development of key programme management artefacts** – The Programme has created artefacts such as lessons learned templates and change control forms to promote consistent execution of key programme management controls across the SSEP workstreams.

Key recommendations

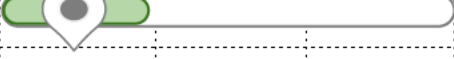
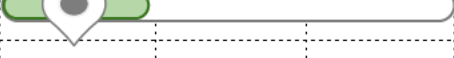
We have outlined below our key recommendations, which are aimed at supporting the Programme in further improving its programme management controls and approach to support successful future delivery. We recognise that the Programme is already undertaking activities to address the challenges we have identified, therefore our recommendations are designed to supplement and enhance the actions currently in progress. We have also provided a reference to the supporting findings and recommendations in Section 3 of our report.

Key recommendations		Priority	Target Completion Date	Action Owner	Finding Reference (Section 3)
1	Establish a formal process to continuously validate the planning assumptions: As part of the retrospectives for the Programme's agile modelling sprints, a formal process should be established to document planning assumptions and validate them based on the outcomes of each modelling sprint. This process should include a deep dive into the root causes of any variances between forecasted and actual progress (e.g. insufficient resourcing). Any new or revised assumptions should then be documented and incorporated into the planning cycles for future sprints. Where changes to planning assumptions are likely to impact critical path activities, these should be escalated to DESNZ through the Programme's external governance and clearly communicated to dependent programmes, such as CSNP.	High	01 August 2025		1
2	Establish regular meetings to support structured engagement between the Modelling and wider SSEP Workstreams: The Programme should continue to work with the SSEP Modelling Workstream to establish a schedule of regular engagement meetings between the Modelling Workstream and the wider SSEP Workstreams. The Programme should also formalise the internal reviews that are required before external stakeholder communications can be issued. (See Section 4, Recommendation 9)	High	01 August 2025		2
3	Formally document the evidence to substantiate the impact of any additional DESNZ requirements on SSEP: The Programme should continue to work with DESNZ to clearly agree and document any additional SSEP requirements that were not included in the original consultation. This documentation should provide clear evidence of DESNZ's formal request to incorporate these requirements into the development of the SSEP. The Programme should also document the outputs of the internal and external governance forums used to assess the impact of these additional requirements. This should clearly evidence any impacts on the Programme's ability to deliver the pathway options by the December 2025 deadline, as well as any subsequent impacts on dependent programmes, such as CSNP. DESNZ's confirmation of these impacts should also be formally requested and documented.	High	01 August 2025		3
4	The SSEP Programme should refresh its documented dependencies, based on the complete view of the shared SEP deliverables: The SSEP Programme PMO should formally request a timeline from the SEP PMO indicating when the forward view of shared SEP deliverables will be provided. Once the view of shared SEP deliverables is established, the SSEP Programme should identify any additional dependencies to be included within its RAID log. These dependencies should be validated with the relevant SEP programme leads and managed through the SSEP Programme's formal dependency management process.	Medium	01 September 2025	SEP Portfolio PMO	4

Summary programme assessment by scope area

Below we have provided our overall assessment against each scope area and assigned a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating based on whether an effective approach is in place to support future programme delivery. Our assessment of the scope areas has been performed using our '12 Elements of Delivery Excellence Framework,' detailed in Appendix C.

RAG Key:	 A well-defined approach is in place that aligns with the overall programme objectives and any associated risks and issues are understood and being appropriately addressed.	 The approach is partially aligned with the overall programme objectives, but risks or issues remain that need to be further address to support successful future delivery.	 The approach is not aligned with overall programme objectives, but key risks or issues exist that need to be addressed otherwise they are highly likely to impact future successful delivery of the Programme.
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Review scope area	Green	Amber	Red	Rationale	Finding Reference
Clarity of scope, deliverables and milestones				The Programme has defined its scope in line with the requirements set out in DESNZ's consultation on the SSEP. However, given this is NESO's first time undertaking modelling of this nature there is an inherent risk that unanticipated modelling activities may need to be delivered that are additional to the Programme's current scope.	Section 4, Observation 1
Plan of delivery				As this is NESO's first time undertaking modelling of this complexity and scale, there is inherent uncertainty around the assumptions defining the time required to complete each modelling sprint. Given the Programme's fixed external deadline, any delays resulting from invalid assumptions must be identified early and appropriately escalated to DESNZ and Ofgem. To support this, the Programme should establish a formal process to validate its planning assumptions at the end of each modelling sprint.	Section 3, Observation 1
Governance and Accountability				A robust internal governance structure is in place and mechanisms are in place to support delivery issues being escalated to DESNZ and Ofgem if needed.	N/A
Change Control				The Programme has adopted the SEP change control process to evaluate and approve changes to its scope, delivery plan, and budget. This process is supported by an appropriate change control form and the internal SSEP governance structure.	N/A
Financial Control				A robust process is in place to record and validate the Programme's costs. Monthly reviews are also in place to assess the Programme's financial position against its budget and forecast.	N/A
Resourcing and Programme Structure				The Programme has applied an appropriate blend of permanent and flexible resources to deliver its requirements. However, it is reliant on key NESO individuals to deliver modelling, which may impact the Programme's ability to maintain its pace of delivery during intense periods of activity.	Section 4, Observation 6
Risk and Issue Management				The PMO has established a risk and issue management process, but further action is required to embed proactive risk management across the SSEP delivery Workstreams.	Section 4, Observation 7
Decision logs and Dependency mgt				The PMO has documented the Programme's existing dependencies within the SSEP RAID log. However, a complete view of shared deliverables across the SEP portfolio has not yet been established, limiting the Programme's ability to fully define its dependencies. This also creates a risk that the outputs of the SSEP may be misaligned with other key SEP deliverables, such as the RESP.	Section 3, Observation 4
Integration and alignment with other delivery organisations				To build stakeholder confidence in the final energy pathway, the Programme must align its modelling outputs with key external stakeholders. A framework for sharing information at key checkpoints is in place, but it will need to developed to include the internal reviews required to ensure stakeholder communications are aligned with modelling outputs. Furthermore, the Programme has not yet formally documented the evidence to substantiate the impact of any additional SSEP requirements being raised by DESNZ.	Section 3, Observation 2 & 3

Findings and recommendations

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Findings and recommendations

1 Establish a formal process to continuously validate planning assumptions

Finding

A formal process to continuously validate the Programme's planning assumptions has not yet been established - The Programme's delivery plan has been developed using a series of assumptions defining the expected duration of its modelling activities. Given this is NESO's first time undertaking modelling of this scale and nature, there is a risk these assumptions are inaccurate, resulting in delays relative to the Programme's delivery plan.

To account for any potential delays in completing its modelling activities, the Programme has incorporated contingency into its current delivery plan, based on risks reported by the Modelling Workstream.

Impact

If a formal process to continuously validate the Programme's planning assumptions cannot be established, it may result in the following impacts:

- **Reduced robustness of proposed pathway options** – Given the fixed external deadline for the selection of the preferred energy pathway at the end of the year, any delays may require the Programme to reduce the number of scenarios modelled for each proposed pathway option to meet the external deadline. However, reducing the scenario testing for each option could undermine their overall robustness and increase the risk of the proposed pathways being rejected by the Energy Secretary.
- **Delays to the selection of the preferred energy pathway** - If the Programme experiences delays due to invalid planning assumptions and decides not to reduce the number of scenarios tested for each proposed option, it may be required to delay the submission of pathway options to the Energy Secretary. This could then delay the selection of the preferred energy pathway and impact the delivery of other programmes that are dependent on its outputs, such as the CSNP.

Recommendation

To enable early identification of delays to selection of the preferred energy pathway, the SSEP Programme should consider the following recommendation(s):

- 1.1 As part of the retrospectives for the Programme's agile modelling sprints, a formal process should be established to document planning assumptions and validate them based on the outcomes of each modelling sprint. This process should include a deep dive into the root causes of any variances between forecasted and actual progress (e.g. insufficient resourcing). Any new or revised assumptions should then be documented and incorporated into the planning cycles for future sprints. Where changes to planning assumptions are likely to impact critical path activities, these should be escalated to DESNZ through the Programme's external governance and clearly communicated to dependent programmes, such as CSNP.

Action Owner: [REDACTED], **Target Completion Date:** 01 August 2025

Priority

High

Findings and recommendations

2 Establish regular meetings to support structured engagement between the Modelling and wider SSEP Workstreams

Finding

Structured engagement between the Modelling and wider SSEP Workstreams has not yet been established – To support the development of the SSEP, the Programme has established a series of key checkpoints to update external stakeholders on progress and share modelling outputs for validation. However, as this is NESO's first time undertaking modelling of this nature and scale, the Programme has found it challenging to forecast when modelling outputs will be ready for external review. This uncertainty has introduced a risk of inconsistent or inaccurate communication to the SSEP Programme's external stakeholders concerning the information to be made available at each checkpoint.

To address this, the Programme has established a framework defining how information will be shared at key checkpoints with external stakeholders throughout the delivery of the SSEP. However, a structured approach to support ongoing engagement between the Modelling Workstream and the wider SSEP Workstreams and to provide transparency on the availability of modelling outputs has not yet been established. This has limited the ability of the wider Workstreams to proactively engage with external stakeholders regarding when their input required to validate modelling outputs.

Impact

If SSEP Programme's external stakeholder communication is misaligned with the Programme's modelling activities, it may result in the following impacts:

- **Deterioration of external stakeholder confidence in the preferred pathway option** – Inconsistent or inaccurate communication regarding the availability of modelling outputs may erode stakeholder confidence in the Programme's ability to reflect their requirements in the development of the SSEP. This could increase the risk of external challenge to the initiatives within the preferred energy pathway and ultimately reduce the likelihood of the required changes being made to the GB energy grid to achieve net zero ambitions.

Recommendation

To establish structured engagement between the Modelling and wider SSEP Workstreams, the SSEP Programme should consider the following recommendation(s):

- 2.1 The Programme should continue to work with the SSEP Modelling Workstream to establish a schedule of regular engagement meetings between the Modelling Workstream and the wider SSEP Workstreams. These meetings should include a standing agenda item to review the latest modelling outputs and confirm which outputs are expected to be available for the next key external stakeholder checkpoint. The Programme should also formalise the internal quality reviews that are required before external stakeholder communications can be issued. (See Section 4, Recommendation 9)

Action Owner: [REDACTED] **Target Completion Date:** 01 August 2025

Priority

High

Findings and recommendations

3 Formally document the evidence to substantiate the impact of any additional DESNZ requirements on SSEP

Finding

The evidence substantiating the impact of **SSEP scope changes raised by DESNZ** should be formally documented - DESNZ has raised scope changes for the Programme to incorporate in the development of the SSEP. To challenge and assess the impact of these additional requirements, the Programme has used its established internal and external governance forums.

However, the evidence to substantiate how the additional requirements will impact the Programme's ability to develop the energy pathways by the end of the year has not been formally documented.

Impact

If the evidence substantiating the impact of additional SSEP requirements raised by DESNZ cannot be formally documented it may result in the following impacts:

- **Reputational damage** - The additional requirements raised by DESNZ may lead to NESO requiring more time to complete the modelling activities necessary to develop the SSEP pathway options. This could result in reputational damage for NESO if delays occur and there is no clear evidence demonstrating that deviations from the original SSEP consultation were made in response to instruction from DESNZ.

Recommendation

To provide clarity on the impact of additional SSEP requirements raised by DESNZ, the SSEP Programme should consider the following recommendation(s):

- 3.1 The Programme should continue to work with DESNZ to clearly agree and document any additional SSEP requirements that were not included in the original consultation. This documentation should provide clear evidence of DESNZ's formal request to incorporate these requirements into the development of the SSEP.
- 3.2 The Programme should also document the outputs of the internal and external governance forums used to assess the impact of these additional requirements. This should clearly evidence any impacts on the Programme's ability to deliver the pathway options by the December 2025 deadline, as well as any subsequent impacts on dependent programmes, such as CSNP. DESNZ's confirmation of these impacts should also be formally requested and documented.

Action Owner: [REDACTED] Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025

Priority

High

Findings and recommendations

4 The SSEP Programme should refresh its documented dependencies based on the complete view of the shared SEP deliverables

Finding

An integrated view of the broader SEP deliverables that are dependent on the SSEP Programme is required to enable the SSEP Programme to align its outputs with other SEP deliverables - There are several programmes across the SEP portfolio which have critical dependencies on the outputs of the SSEP. To avoid the SSEP providing conflicting planning initiatives, risking potential rework of the SSEP, the outputs of the SSEP should be aligned with other key SEP deliverables, such as the Regional Energy Spatial Plan (RESP).

The Programme has recognised this risk and has raised it with the SEP portfolio PMO. However, a detailed view of the shared deliverables and cross-portfolio dependencies has not yet been defined by the SEP PMO.

Impact

If an integrated view of the SEP deliverables requiring inputs from the SSEP Programme cannot be established, it may result in the following impacts:

- **Misalignment between SEP deliverables** - Without a clearly defined view of shared deliverables across the SEP portfolio, there is a risk that the SSEP may include planning initiatives that conflict with those set out in other SEP deliverables, or fail to account for critical requirements from other programmes. Such misalignment could result in rework of the SSEP. However, given that the selection of the preferred energy pathway is prior to the delivery of the other major SEP deliverables, the risk rework to the SSEP is limited.

Recommendation

To support alignment between the SSEP and other key SEP deliverables, such as the RESP, the SSEP Programme should consider the following recommendation(s):

- 4.1 The SSEP Programme PMO should formally request a timeline from the SEP PMO indicating when the forward view of shared SEP deliverables will be provided. Once the view of shared SEP deliverables is established, the SSEP Programme should identify any additional dependencies to be included within its RAID log. These dependencies should be validated with the relevant SEP programme leads and managed through the SSEP Programme's formal dependency management process.

Action Owner: SEP Portfolio PMO [REDACTED], **Target Completion Date:** 01 September 2025

Priority

Medium

4

Additional observations and improvement opportunities

Observations and improvement opportunities to support delivery

Our review also identified several observations and improvement opportunities intended to supplement the existing programme management processes and controls established by the SSEP Programme. We recognise that the Programme is already taking steps to address a number of these observations, and our improvement opportunities are intended to support and strengthen the actions currently underway.

Scope Area	Observations	Improvement Opportunities
1 <i>Clarity of scope, deliverables and milestones</i>	The Programme has defined its scope in line with the requirements set out in DESNZ's consultation on the SSEP. However, given this is NESO's first time undertaking modelling of this nature there is a risk that unanticipated modelling activities or requirements may result in changes to the Programme's scope. Given the fixed deadline to deliver pathway options by the end of the year, any additional activities undertaken may result in delays to the completion of modelling. This could then lead to insufficient time being available the Programme to complete subsequent activities, such as the definition of the energy pathway options.	The Programme PMO should continue to work with the SSEP Modelling Workstream to track delivery progress for each modelling sprint against the agreed plan, identifying any delays or changes to scope that may impact the Programme's ability to complete modelling activities by the December 2025 deadline. (Medium priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025)
2 <i>Plan of delivery</i>	The Programme has established an external governance plan that defines the series of external governance meetings needed to validate key modelling decisions and outputs. However, as this is NESO's first time undertaking modelling of this nature and scale, the Programme has found it challenging to forecast when modelling outputs will be ready for external review. As a result, there is a risk that the external governance forums may not be scheduled in alignment with the availability of modelling outputs, which could ultimately lead to delays in the completion of the the Programme's modelling activities.	The Programme should continue to establish structured ways of working between the Modelling and Governance Workstreams to enable early visibility of expected outputs from each modelling sprint. Once a forward view of these outputs is established, the SSEP delivery and external governance plans should be updated to align with the latest expected modelling outputs. (Medium priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025)
3 <i>Governance and Accountability</i>	The Programme has established an internal governance framework that aligns with the wider SEP portfolio governance, supporting the effective escalation of delivery issues. While the governance forum design is robust, it has only recently been established so is not yet fully understood across the SSEP delivery workstreams. This has led to uncertainty regarding the information required from the Workstreams to support decision-making at each forum.	The PMO should organise an upskilling session (e.g., SEP Curiosity Corner) to refresh the SSEP workstream leads' understanding of the purpose of the SEP governance forums, supported by the existing documents describing the governance structure and associated Terms of Reference for each forum. This session should clarify what is addressed at each forum, their respective authority, when escalation is necessary, and what information is required to support decision-making at each forum. (Low priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025)

Observations and improvement opportunities to support delivery

	Scope Area	Observations	Improvement Opportunities
4	Change Control	The Programme has introduced a change control process to evaluate and approve changes to its scope, delivery plan, and budget. To support this, the Programme PMO has developed a change control form for formal change requests. However, there is no documented process in place to support consistent completion of change request impact assessments across the SSEP Workstreams.	The PMO should establish a documented process to support consistent execution of impact assessments for change requests across the SSEP Workstreams. This process should define the criteria to be used to perform impact assessments and the required timeframes for completion of impact assessments. (Low priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025)
5	Financial Control	The Programme has aligned with the broader SEP process for recording and reporting costs and works with its Finance Business Partner (FBP) to assess the financial impact of delivery activities. However, potential cost efficiencies (e.g., volume discounts in third party spend) are not proactively identified or tracked as part of existing monthly reporting against budget and forecast.	As a longer-term aspiration to align with best practice financial reporting, the Programme should work with the SSEP Finance Business Partner to refresh budgeting and forecasting processes to include a structured assessment of cost efficiency opportunities. Monthly reviews of performance against budget and forecast should then be used to track the realisation of these opportunities. (Low priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 February 2026)
6	Resourcing and Programme Structure	The Programme has applied an appropriate blend of permanent and flexible resources to meet its delivery requirements However, a process enabling the Programme to work with the SEP portfolio PMO to identify available SEP resources to address future resourcing gaps has not yet been established. This creates a risk that the SSEP Programme may procure additional or external resources as oppose to drawing on existing available resources.	The Programme should work with the SEP Portfolio PMO to establish a process that will enable the SSEP Programme to explore the use of available resources within the SEP portfolio to address future resourcing gaps. (Low priority, Action Owner: SEP PMO (Supported by [REDACTED]), Target Completion Date: 01 February 2026)
7	Risk and Issue Management	The PMO has documented the Programme's delivery risks and issues within the SSEP RAID log, supported by a monthly process through which it engages with Workstream Leads to assess their respective risks and issues. While this is effective for status reporting, the process needs to be further embedded at the Workstream level to support proactive identification and reporting of risks.	- To support proactive risk management, the Programme PMO should consider the following actions: - The PMO should provide targeted training to workstream leads to help them understand the benefits of effective RAID management to the Workstreams by demonstrating how it is being used drive action from the NESO leadership to support their delivery. - The Programme should consolidate existing risk reporting into a single, centralised RAID log. The PMO should then use monthly reviews to formally review updates to the log and assess that risks are accurately documented. (Low priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025)

Observations and improvement opportunities to support delivery

Scope Area	Observations	Improvement Opportunities
8	<i>Decision logs and Dependency management</i>	- The Programme should design and implement a formal process to manage its dependencies. This process should include: - A clear process for raising and assessing dependencies, including the assignment of designated owners from both the requesting and delivering parties. Each owner should be accountable for fulfilling the specific requirements associated with the dependency. Agreements should be documented through a 'handshake' in the Programme's RAID log. - The application of RAG assessments to evaluate dependencies on an ongoing basis based on their criticality to the SSEP Programme. - The criteria for closing a dependency, including validation that all agreed requirements have been met by the relevant external party. (Medium priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025)
9	<i>Integration and alignment with other delivery organisations (internal and external)</i>	- The Programme should develop a stakeholder map and formalise a stakeholder engagement RACI to enable coordinated stakeholder engagement across its Workstreams. (Medium priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025) - The SSEP Stakeholder Engagement Strategy should be updated to include the formalised internal reviews that are required before external stakeholder communications can be issued. These controls should validate that communications are aligned with the latest modelling activities and that no inappropriate or contradictory information will be shared. (Medium priority, Action Owner: [REDACTED], Target Completion Date: 01 August 2025)

Appendix A

Fieldwork Conducted

Redacted and disclosed under the EIR

Appendix A: Stakeholder interviews

Interviewee	Programme Role	Date
Redacted and disclosed under the EIR		19/05/2025
		19/05/2025
		19/05/2025
		27/05/2025
		29/05/2025
		30/05/2025
		30/05/2025
		05/06/2025
		05/06/2025

Appendix A: Documents reviewed

Ref	Document Name		
Clarity of scope, deliverables and milestones			
01	NESO Programme Initiation Document – SSEP - Copy.docx	13	250226_SSEP Lessons Learned Log_v2.0.xlsx
02	Copy of Stage Gate draft checklist_AS Comments - Copy.xlsx	14	250226_SSEP Lessons Learned – Survey and Suggestion Box MS Forms_v2.0.pptx
03	SSEP Plan v9May.xlsx	15	250226_SSEP Lessons Learned Workshop Template_v2.0.pptx
04	SSEP Plan v16May 2025.mpp	16	SSEP Planning Standards FINAL.pptx
05	SSEP E2E Plan v2May.xlsx	17	SSEP Planning workshop 12March.pptx
06	SSEP Appraise focus (post 12th workshop).xlsx	18	250226_SSEP Schedule Management Plan_v2.0.pdf
07	SSEP 6 WKLA v4Apr.xlsx	19	12MAR25–Planning Workshop Follow-on actions.pptx
08	SSEP_Roadmap_DRAFT_v8.pptx	20	SSEP PoaP v9May.pdf
09	Appraise Phase tracker v1May.xlsx	21	Portfolio POAP Template.vsd
10	SSEPProgRoadmap DRAFT v5–v8 / v6.pptx/pdf	22	SSEP 20025 Q2_Q4 POAP Template.vsd
Ref	Document Name	23	ProgStatus v2 26Mar.xlsx
Plan of Delivery		24	SSEP Assurance Milestones v1.xlsx
11	Phases Plan (2).pptx		
12	250226_SSEP Integrated Assurance Plan_v2.0.pptx		

Redacted and disclosed under the EIR

Appendix A: Documents reviewed

Ref	Document Name
Change management	
25	250226_SSEP Change Request Log_V2.0.xlsx
Financial Controls	
26	SSEPFinanceTracker – Copy.xlsx
Resourcing and Programme Structure	
27	SSEPResourceMASTER – Copy.xlsx
Risk and Issue Management	
28	20250226_SSEP RAID Management Strategy_v2.0.doc
29	SSEP.RAIDLOG.Master.xlsm
30	SSEP_Assurance Milestones v1.xlsx
Decision Logs and Dependency Management	
31	DESNZ and Ofgem SEP Dependencies vSSEP.xlsx
32	Interprogramme Dep_SSEP/v2.xlsx
33	SEP plans 21022025 (DDT) JoS adjusted.xlsx
34	SEP plans 21022025 (DDT).xlsx

Ref	Document Name
Integration and alignment with other delivery organisations (internal and external)	
35	electricity-networks-commissioner-letter-to-desnz-secretary.pdf"
36	Geospatial Technical Quality Approach Technical Note DRAFT – Copy.docx
37	Draft narrative on SEP REMA and Connections Reform interaction – Ofgem comments.docx
Governance and Accountability	
38	241122-Governance Cycle Changes_DRAFTv2.pptx
39	SSEP_Stage-gate_Framework_&_Governance_Structure_DRAFT_v3 - Copy.pptx
40	250226_SSEP Assurance RACI Matrix_v2.0.xlsx
41	250226_SSEP Assurance Strategy_v2.0.docx
Other	
42	Overview of technical review process at AECOM_260325.pdf
43	SSEP SEA Scoping Report_Technical_Quality_Review_Record_040325.pdf
44	15412_1_DEFRA_TOC_TOOL_SUMMARY_.pptx
45	UK-Aid-Connect-Theory-of-Change-Guidance.pdf
46	SSEP.ToC.pptx

Appendix B

Basis of our Priority Assessment

Appendix B: Basis of our Priority Assessment

High



The recommendation seeks to support an essential foundation required for successful future delivery and must be addressed as a matter of priority.

Medium



The recommendation seeks to support a significant improvement opportunity that will support successful future delivery and should be addressed.

Low



The recommendation seeks to support an improvement opportunity that will support successful future delivery and should be addressed on a discretionary basis / where time and resources allow.

Appendix C

12 Elements' of Delivery Excellence Framework

Appendix C: 12 Elements' of Delivery Excellence Framework

Our assessment of the review scope areas is underpinned by our programme assurance approach - the "12 elements of delivery excellence". This sets out the key areas that we would expect to be in place and operating effectively to help enable successful programme delivery. This framework defines our approach to appraising programme delivery and is not an appraisal of the Programme management approach used by SSEP Programme.

Insight

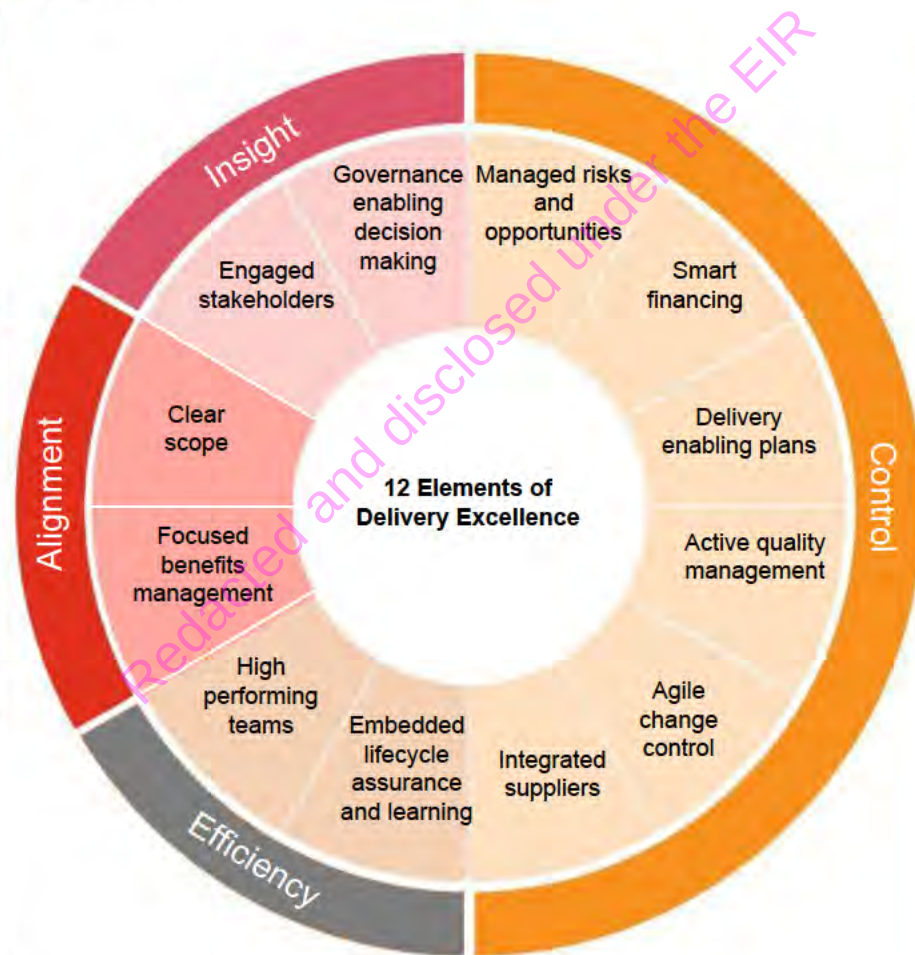
- **Engaged stakeholders** – Identifying and managing stakeholders so that they are committed, appropriately informed and contribute to the success of the Programme
- **Governance-enabling decision making** – Enabling leaders to govern with confidence, making timely decisions using high quality management information.

Alignment

- **Focused benefits management** – Developing a realistic business case subjected to an appropriate level of challenge with benefits clearly defined, owned and tracked
- **Clear scope** – The scope of the Programme is defined, complete, communicated and agreed and it supports the objectives of the business strategy.

Efficiency

- **Embedded lifecycle assurance and learning** – A clear assurance plan has been defined which outlines the nature, timing and extent of planned assurance, quality reviews and embeds learning
- **High performing teams** – the Programme team is highly motivated, has the right blend of skills and personalities and the organisation supports the team to deliver.



Control

- **Managed risks and opportunities** – Making certain that there are effective risk identification processes in place and that the key risks are mitigated and opportunities taken
- **Smart financing** – Establishing the budget and associated policies, processes and reporting standards for effective cost estimation and programme financial management and reporting
- **Delivery-enabling plans** – The plans in place must be realistic, achievable, understood and bought into by key stakeholders and suppliers
- **Active-quality management** – An agreed quality plan has been developed based on appropriate standards, it is communicated, and the right behaviours are in place
- **Agile change control** – A formal process is in place for controlling changes to programme scope according to the Programme's principles and this has been communicated to the Programme stakeholders
- **Integrated suppliers** – An effective approach has been taken to engage with suppliers, including adequate governance of their activities.

Thank you

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