

August 2026

Strategic Spatial Energy Plan

Methodology addendum



1. Introduction

Since publication of the SSEP methodology in May 2025, the SSEP programme has adapted the processes described.

This was the result of various factors, such as new insights coming to light during implementation of the methodology, the need to expand upon certain processes with further detail, or the identification and development of more effective methods as we progressed.

The SSEP programme has maintained a formal process for identifying and recording these updates. They are categorised into three groups – changes, additional detail and clarifications – and are listed below.

In line with the SSEP commission, these have been approved by the SSEP Committee.

Definitions

Changes are where we have done something different to what was set out in the methodology.

Additional detail is where we now have further detailed steps that were not set out in the methodology at the time.

Clarifications are where we have noticed something was not written clearly enough in the methodology, or where a small error has been identified.



2. List of changes, additional detail and clarifications

Changes

Topic	Type	Update and rationale
Campaign Group Forum	Change	On page 6 of the methodology appendices, we set out how we would engage with campaign groups. We noted that a consistent issue raised by campaign groups is that they have not been engaged early enough in the process to have strategic influence. The Campaign Group Forum is now planned to support stakeholder engagement during the consultation phase. Although this may be viewed as later than originally anticipated, the timing reflects constraints around data sharing, evolving stakeholder engagement plans, and associated delivery risks. Taking these factors into account, it was not considered feasible to establish the forum during the Model and Appraise phases.
Devolved Administration Advisory Group (DAAG)	Change	In section 2.3 of the methodology, we said we will set up a DAAG. The group was set up but regular meetings were not required given the number and membership of the other governance groups. It was agreed to run on an ad hoc basis if required.
Expert Advisory Group (EAG) representation	Change	In section 2.3 of the methodology, we set out that the EAG would have representation from the Societal Working Group. The Societal Working Group has only recently been established due to limited capacity from societal forum members. Representation from the Societal Working Group at the EAG is being considered in light of additional commercially sensitive information being shared with this group.
Host Area Forums	Change	Appendix 2 of the methodology (pages 8–9) said we would establish Host Area Forums. These are the areas of GB identified in the SSEP as being best placed for energy infrastructure development. Host Area engagement would see us build on our early engagement with regional community representatives and share early outputs from SSEP's work.



		To date, we have not undertaken targeted Host Area Forums. The forums have been replaced with a GB-wide engagement model. This enables us to engage broadly across GB without pre-empting consultation outcomes or revealing draft outputs and also aligns with the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessment requirements. All 19 SSEP Publication Zones will be treated as Host Areas to provide a consistent engagement approach across GB. Once information can be published through formal consultation, we will provide more detailed engagement and additional support in those Host Areas likely to be most affected.
Interconnectors	Change	In February 2025, CRE, the French Energy Regulatory Commission, and Ofgem, published a letter to say that they were considering only 1 GW of further interconnection between the UK and France. More information on this announcement can be found here: <u>Ofgem-CRE Joint Statement</u> Originally, section 3.3.1 of the SSEP methodology stated projects with regulatory funding will be included in the baseline, including those with interconnector 'cap and floor' arrangements. There are currently two projects with Initial Project Assessment (IPA) regulatory approval between the UK and France. We have since updated the SSEP baseline in line with the CRE and Ofgem announcement, removing both prospective UK-France interconnectors with IPA regulatory approval from the baseline, whilst considering 1 GW of further interconnection to France, optimised alongside all other interconnection expansion in the modelling. This change was agreed at the SSEP Committee by DESNZ, NESO, and Ofgem.
Low regrets	Change	Our methodology describes the development of a 'low regrets pathway', defined in the SSEP commission as having a higher level of consistency in the pathway elements across the plausible futures considered. The SSEP Committee approved that the SSEP would no longer develop a low regrets pathway. This was later confirmed via a letter from the SSEP co-commissioners and Ofgem. Advice on low regrets actions will instead be embedded within each pathway and presented



		consistently across the pathways in the Pathway Options Report. These could set out actions or investments that are common across pathways or create significant option value for the energy system. This will enable low regrets actions to be considered in context, reflecting robustness across a range of futures while improving clarity for decision-makers.
Marine zones	Change	In section 3.3.11 we said that in the SSEP model, we will consider offshore wind as being located in the SSEP onshore economic zone to which it connects, rather than having its own offshore zone. The previous approach modelled offshore wind according to the onshore SSEP zone it connected to, rather than its location offshore. We now model for each of The Crown Estate (TCE) marine zones. Modelling offshore zones means we can directly use the build-limit for each offshore zone without needing a complex conversion to the onshore zone. It also allows us to model which onshore zones each region connects to and limit this to the landing limit (the capacity available to land cables onshore). In addition, we can apply different costs depending on the length of the connection between the offshore wind farm and onshore zone. These improvements were not possible with the original method and better reflect how offshore wind connects in practice.
Sensitivities	Change	Due to the decision to include a planning line (see 'SSEP ranges' in the additional details section below, and Figure 1 on page 12) and the use of ranges, the SSEP did not use the approach described in the SSEP methodology Appendix 9 on robustness testing. Sensitivities will still be carried out as described. However, they will be used to construct a range around the planning line that reflects uncertainty, instead of being used to inform the planning line itself. Planning line robustness was tackled through the Appraise process, which assessed viability, deliverability and overall performance across areas such as security of supply, economics, spatial feasibility, deliverability, policy alignment, and



		societal/environmental impact. Recommendations from the assessments were triaged and, where appropriate, used to remodel and refine pathways.
Spatial Evaluation Framework (SEF) – Weighting at pillar level	Change	Section 4.2.4 of the methodology stated: If modelling outputs are not deliverable due to the degree of impact on any of the SSEP pillars, we may undertake a process of ‘swing’ or ‘pairwise’ weighting to achieve a deliverable outcome. We will not apply weighting in the SEF. This is to avoid policy trade-offs between pillars. In other words, we did not want to judge that one pillar (environment, for example) is more important than another (societal, for example). The SEF is an evidence base, not a decision-making layer. The SEF is used to identify constraints and opportunities spatially. Building on the work of the SEF, economic modelling and pathway appraisal helped us to understand what is actually feasible, to identify trade-offs transparently and the risks associated to pathways. Application of the SEF has optimised geospatial inputs to the economic model, and robust quality assurance of the geospatial outputs has been undertaken, ensuring the SEF has been accurately applied.
Spatial pillars assessment	Change	As described in the methodology, pathway deliverability was initially intended to be assessed through an analytical review of impacts across the SSEP pillars, drawing on relevant principles from HM Treasury’s Green Book. However, during pathway development, potential deliverability concerns were found to arise from specific spatial indicators rather than from a consistent imbalance across pillars as a whole. For this reason, pathway appraisal considered whether stakeholder-defined or expert-derived overlap thresholds were exceeded for individual spatial indicators. These thresholds represented the level at which overlap with a particular spatial indicator could present a potential deliverability risk. Assessing pathways against these thresholds provided a more targeted understanding of where deliverability



		risks existed. Where threshold breaches were identified, the wider appraisal process was used to explore mitigations, including redistributing technologies within or between zones, or reducing the spatial extent available to particular technologies. This iterative process reduced overlap with sensitive indicators and improved the overall deliverability of pathways while maintaining visibility of impacts across all pillars. Identifying and addressing specific indicator-level risks provided a more transparent and effective mechanism for improving pathway deliverability than aggregating impacts into a single pillar weighted assessment.
SSEP data input groups	Change	The data input groups are as listed in the table in section 3.3.8 of the methodology. However, who provided the data is different to what is set out. For Demand Side Response (DSR), DESNZ provided the flexibility proportion of various demand segments. Some of the detailed DSR modelling parameters (e.g. utilisation constraints) were provided by NESO.
SSEP zones	Change	In the methodology section 3.3.10 on economic zones, we described the 17 zones for modelling. We will use 19 land zones in the publication of the draft SSEP. These zones were developed by using the 11 Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP) nations and regions (which reflect common geographical boundaries), and subdividing some areas by key electricity system boundaries, creating zones that balance the energy system and national and / or regional areas. The economic zones could not be used as publication zones as these were based on key electricity network boundaries which do not consider nations and regions. Nations' borders were upheld to support alignment with RESP and to recognise the different energy policies across the jurisdictions. Additionally, we have confirmed the 19 marine zones that will be used for publication. These zones have aligned to, or are adaptations from, current marine zones used for spatial marine planning.



		The zones have been updated in response to stakeholder feedback and to improve modelling efficiency as outlined in earlier data transparency updates.
TO projects with only delivery track funding	Change	The SSEP methodology stated that projects needed for Clean Power 2030 and those with regulatory funding were included in the baseline. We had initially included electricity network reinforcement projects with delivery track funding into the SSEP baseline in line with the above approach. However, upon further engagement with the SSEP Committee, it was decided to remove the delivery track projects from the baseline. These projects only receive limited pre-construction funding to support early-stage delivery activities rather than full regulatory funding as intended by our methodology.
Use of modelling scenarios	Change	The methodology said that each modelling scenario (initially referred to as demand scenarios in early drafts) will be considered independently to determine the optimum outcome for that scenario. Originally DESNZ supplied four scenarios, and we planned to test all four of them against the six pathways. However, for consistency in decision making we agreed with DESNZ that we would use one central scenario supported by demand sensitivities.

Additional detail

Digital tool for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping report	Additional detail	A digital tool was created for the scoping stage of the SEA. This an additional step to the methodology which aimed to improve the way stakeholders engaged with the scoping report. It supports NESO's efforts to innovate and be digital first.
Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	Additional detail	We have added an additional criterion at down-selection, utilising the outputs of the HRA screening stage. These outputs were used to develop a tool which assigned a derogation risk per zone. This was an



derogation risk at down-selection		additional step to bring HRA influence on decision making earlier in the process.
Integration of SEA into the Appraise Phase 1 and 2	Additional detail	In section 5.4.3 of the methodology, we explained how the SEA would assess the environmental impact of the selected pathway. To add robustness to the SSEP process, we introduced an additional stage into phases 1 and 2 of the appraise process, using the SEA framework. This meant the SEA was considered during pathway creation, rather than solely to assess the environmental impacts of the selected pathway.
Investability	Additional detail	One component of deliverability is investability, which considers the timing and pattern of investment. This will be included in the Pathway Options Report. This adds detail to our commitment to consider relevant economic factors in the methodology.
Pathway down-selection	Additional detail	A more detailed down-selection methodology was developed, in addition to section 5.3.1 of the methodology, to determine the shortlist of pathways to be appraised in full. The down-selection process is required to select a shortlist of pathways from a longlist of pathway options. A longlist results from the modelling of policy and energy system sensitivities. The down-selection process was developed to align with HM Treasury's Green Book, using longlist appraisal principles to identify a shortlist of pathways for further appraisal. Appraise and the down-selection process remain guided by the Appraise principles referred to in our published methodology and the ability of pathways to achieve SSEP objectives. We will document and publish the updated Appraise process (including down-selection) by the time we launch the SSEP consultation.
SEF approach to offshore wind	Additional detail	Rather than using SEF to identify offshore development areas from scratch, the SSEP aligned offshore wind development with existing marine planning and leasing frameworks, including areas identified by The Crown Estate and the Scottish Sectoral Marine Plans. The SEF was still used to identify environmental, spatial and other constraints, but within these predefined offshore opportunity areas. This approach builds on existing marine planning evidence and helps ensure



		offshore wind deployment is more realistic and deliverable. As a result, the location of offshore wind deployment changed in some parts of Great Britain, but the overall amount of offshore wind in the pathways remained the same at a GB-wide level. This was not a change to the SSEP methodology itself, but a refinement to how offshore wind was considered within the spatial planning process. This improved alignment with existing marine plans and reduced the risk of conflicts between different planning and environmental considerations.
SEF approach to Pumped Hydro Storage (PHS)	Additional detail	The approach used to assess PHS was refined during pathway appraisal. PHS is highly dependent on local geography and engineering requirements, meaning it cannot be assessed accurately using spatial planning data alone. Feedback from stakeholders and further technical analysis found that the previous approach of exclusively using the SEF could overestimate the amount of suitable capacity in some locations. To address this, the SEF was used in addition to supplementary appraise assessment information to support engineering and feasibility analysis, including assessment of reservoir availability and more detailed technical requirements. This additional approach provides a more realistic view of where PHS could be developed and improves confidence that identified sites are deliverable in practice. The SEF, as described in 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 of the methodology, continues to be used to locate PHS but it is now applied alongside additional technical and feasibility information to better reflect real-world constraints. As a result, the additional analysis informed changes to pathway assumptions and the geographic distribution of PHS capacity. A supporting technical report has been produced to explain the assumptions, feasibility considerations and



		analysis underpinning the refined and improved approach.
Societal approach	Additional detail	In Section 2.5.2 we committed to a societal opinion survey supported by a series of focus groups. We also conducted a second societal survey and focus groups. Establishing two data points for survey data provides greater insight to inform an assessment of societal views on potential pathways.
SSEP ranges	Additional detail	Since the publication of the SSEP methodology, it has been decided the SSEP will include a planning line for all technologies for all zones, with a range over the time period (see Figure 1 on page 12). The planning line provides more certainty for network planning, and the pathway ranges account for future uncertainties against the planning line.

Clarifications

SEA section error	Clarification	Within the Foundations chapter of the methodology, we set out that we will prepare supporting advice on pathway options. This would be informed by an SEA reasonable alternatives assessment, including environmental, community and technical appraisals, as set out in the commission, and submitted to the SSEP advisory groups and SSEP Committee for review and feedback. To clarify, the SEA reasonable alternatives assessment is a regulatory assessment that will be informed by the SEA Pathway Options Report and therefore happens later on in the process. The advice we provide will be informed by environmental, community and technical appraisals, and will be accompanied by a suite of environmental assessments in the Environmental Pathway Options Report (EPOR). The methodology stated that it would be submitted to the SSEP advisory groups and SSEP committee (DESNZ, Scottish Government, Welsh Government, and Ofgem). Note that it has, in draft form, been sent to DESNZ, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Ofgem, as well as Defra, and it will also be going to the Environmental Working Group for review.
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Third line assurance	Clarification	Within the appendices of the SSEP methodology, the external technical assurance applied to the SSEP programme was described as ‘third line assurance’. Given NESO’s corporate organisational structure, this description is not organisationally accurate: third line assurance within NESO is delivered by the Internal audit function. The supporting descriptions included under the ‘third line assurance’ heading in the SSEP methodology remain accurate in substance. However, moving forward, we will no longer refer to the external assurance applied to SSEP as ‘third line assurance’. It will instead be referred to as ‘independent external assurance’.
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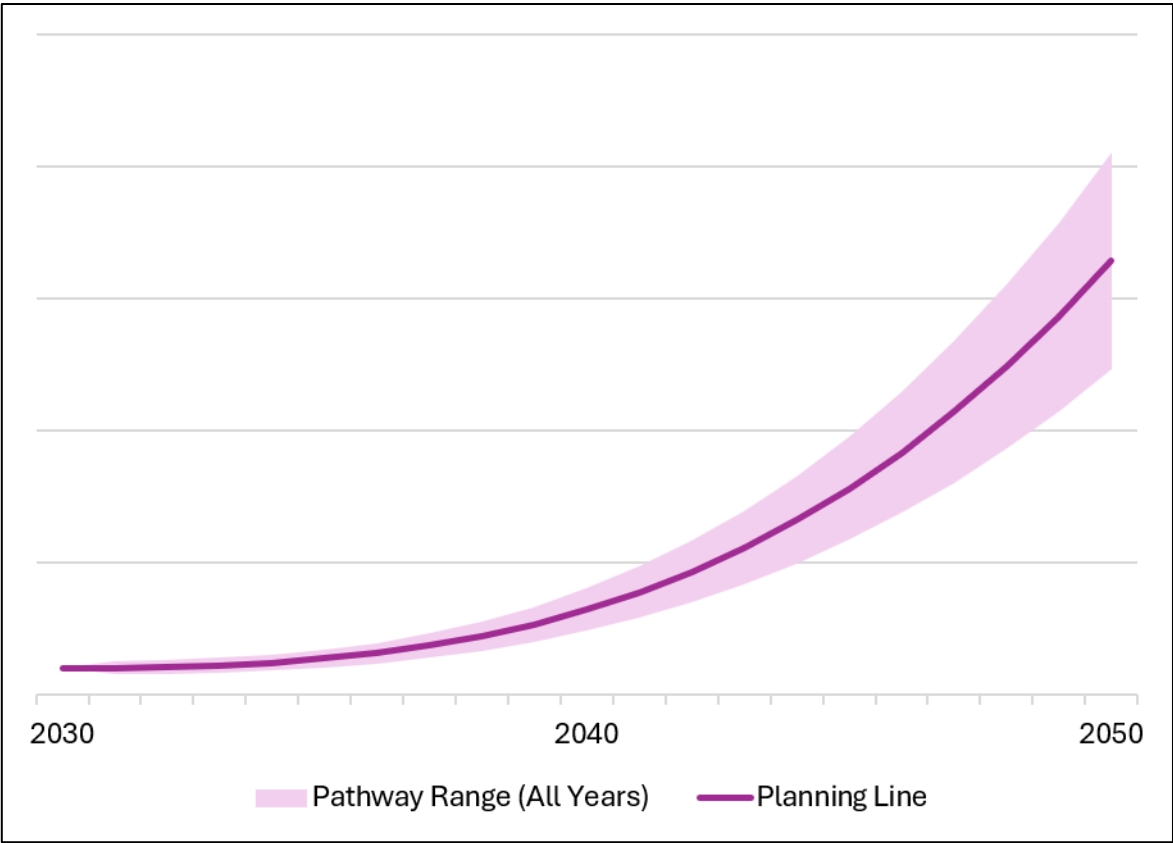


Figure 1: An illustrative example of the SSEP planning line with ranges over time



3. Legal notice

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