

Issue 4 - March 2025

Switched On

Local Authority Newsletter

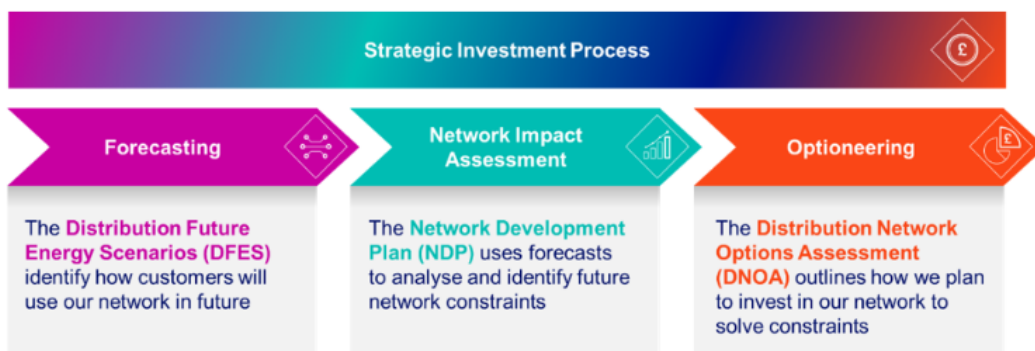


Hello and welcome to our latest local authority newsletter. This edition covers the final stage of our strategic investment process, optioneering, and how it informs our investment decisions. We also recap our local authority webinar on 13 February to launch our latest DFES data and we introduce our new Network Opportunities map. Finally, Emma Wakeham, the Local Area Energy Plan Programme Manager at Cardiff Capital Region, shares her experiences with Local Area Energy Planning. We hope you find this issue useful and informative.

Optioneering – our final stage of strategic planning

In our last two newsletters, we have explained the first two stages of our strategic investment process – forecasting and network impact assessment. Our strategic investment process is how we are ensuring that the electricity distribution network in your area not only meets local needs but also meets net zero targets.

We are now going to explain our final part, Optioneering.



In our optioneering stage, we look at the solutions identified in our network development plans and consider what would be the best value for the consumer. This could be reinforcement, it could be by procuring local flexibility (more about this later on), or other innovative solutions.

We then produce our Distribution Network Options Assessment (DNOA) publications. These outline the reasons behind the investment decisions we make to continue to grow and maintain a safe, reliable network that meets the needs of consumers now and into the future. It is the final stage showing that we are planning our network developments at the right time, in the right place, and at the lowest cost, while supporting national decarbonisation.

[View our Distribution Network Options Assessments \(DNOA\)](#)

The role of flexibility

Our optioneering process works in tandem with Flexible Power, helping inform flexibility providers of future opportunities. To help local authority colleagues better understand flexibility including the role it has in helping to keep the power flowing as we see a growth in demand for electricity, we have created a useful guide to flexibility.

[Guide to flexibility](#)

DFES 2024 now live

In January we released our latest DFES data outlining how we expect demand and generation to grow on our network up to 2050, aligning with the national Future Energy Pathways (formerly scenarios) produced by the National Energy System Operator (NESO).

The publication of the DFES follows a year's worth of data-gathering including incorporating the plans of 120 local authorities across our region, including almost 8,000 local projects and plans.

For the first time, the DFES includes four newly added sectors: maritime, aviation, rail and agriculture machinery. This is part of our proactive approach to future network forecasting, ensuring we can provide the connections customers need as we move to a decarbonised future.

You can view all the DFES documents on our website and explore our [DFES interactive map](#) to see our forecasts for each year up to 2050.

We also ran a webinar especially for local authority stakeholders to explain the new data and answer any questions. You can view the slides and recording of the [webinar here](#).

Including our new Local Authority DFES workbook

During our Local Authority DFES webinar we introduced a new feature - our Local Authority DFES workbook. This allows easy access to all your DFES data in one place and is accessible using MS Excel. We explain how you can use the workbook during our webinar but will also be running a training webinar very soon.

[View the Local Authority DFES workbook](#)

Our new Network Opportunities Map

We're excited to share a 'first look' at our upcoming Network Opportunity Map. We've listened to stakeholder feedback and made this tool simpler, more intuitive, and easier to use.

For the first time, we've combined network capacity and EV capacity into a single, streamlined resource, helping stakeholders like you better visualize and navigate connection opportunities on our distribution network.

This interactive map provides a clear view of both current and future 'headroom' for generation and demand, reflecting real-time changes as projects connect and energise.

We would love to hear what you think.

[View the map](#)

For a hands-on demo with support from our team, join us at our upcoming DSO Stakeholder event on 20th March in Birmingham (also available online). Further details about the event and how to book your space are at the end of this newsletter.

Spotlight on Cardiff Capital

Emma Wakeham, Local Area Energy Plan Programme Manager talks to us about her experiences of Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP)



Prifddinas
Ranbarth
Caerdydd

Cardiff
Capital
Region

Tell us a little bit about your role and the part you have played in Local Area Energy Planning in Wales

I was seconded into my current role working for Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) in January 2023. The CCR is a regional body (also known as a Corporate Joint Committee) made up of the 10 councils across South East Wales. My role was established to lead on the development and implementation of Local Area Energy Planning across the region.

This is a Welsh Government funded programme which produces a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) for each local authority area across South East Wales. Before joining the CCR I worked for Newport City Council and coordinated the Newport LAEP pilot.

Each of the plans collates evidence to identify the most effective route map for the area to reach a net zero energy system by 2050. It also sets out an action plan for the next five years to start us on that journey. Each LAEP is data-driven and evidence-based and uses a whole energy system approach led by local government and developed collaboratively with local, regional and national stakeholders.

How have you found the Local Area Planning Process?

It has been incredibly rewarding to work across the region, building relationships with stakeholders and learning more about the diversity of our region.

As an example, we have developed much closer working relationships with National Grid DSO and the GDN which has been invaluable throughout the LAEP process. This has developed links between NGED and the local authorities and has enabled a whole system approach, providing data, help, support and feedback at every stage. Also being there to provide an overview of the DSO strategic planning process and capturing the granular details of local authority future aspirations.

The connections that have been fostered during the development process will be key as we take forward the LAEPs to the implementation phase.

What challenges have you faced along the way?

The scale and size of what will need to be achieved to reach a net zero energy system across the region is huge and the biggest challenge is yet to come.

Where are you now and what are your aspirations for energy planning in Wales going forward?

Developing LAEPs is just the start. We now need to source investment and funding, investigate innovative solutions and continue to work in partnership to deliver on the milestones and actions set out in each of the LAEPs across the region.

Wales are in front of many of the Local Authorities in England, what advice would you give to organisations starting the Local Area Energy Planning process?

It is really important to engage with key local, regional and national stakeholders, especially those that are high energy users in the area. Engage with stakeholders early on and keep all internal and external stakeholders updated throughout the process and build on those relationships. Secondly, there is a lot of information for stakeholders to take on board throughout the process. Factor in plenty of time for stakeholders to review information prior to workshops and also at key stages in the programme.

We thank Emma for taking the time to share her experiences of Local Area Energy Planning with us.

National Grid DSO's Spring Stakeholder Engagement Event

National Grid DSO invites you to a stakeholder engagement event, Delivering Now and Thinking Future, on Thursday, March 20th 2025, at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Birmingham.

We'll share how we've implemented your feedback into our 2-Year Strategic Action Plan in this interactive event. Ultimately, we want to hear from you, so your insights will help shape how National Grid DSO delivers long-term value to consumers and supports the energy transition.

You can expect:

- Exclusive updates on our Strategic Action Plan and progress so far
- Insightful discussion on evolving DSO performance measures and future priorities
- Innovative approaches required to deliver whole-system benefits, and smarter grids
- Opportunities to shape consumer value and flexibility market design
- Expert panel discussions featuring senior industry leaders, and key regional partners

The event will be hybrid, but we encourage you to attend in person to make the most of networking opportunities and a complimentary lunch.

[Register to attend in person](#)

[Register to attend online](#)

Get in touch

Our Strategic Engagement team are available to support you with local area energy plan and local decarbonisation planning. You can get in touch with the team by emailing nged.energyplanning@nationalgrid.co.uk or contact your local Strategic Engagement Officer.

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