

IMPACT

FROM INSIGHT TO INFLUENCE

SSEN Transmission ISES 2024

Final report

Prepared for SSEN Transmission

Prepared by Impact

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Project No. 1558



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

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1. Executive summary

Under RII0-T2, Ofgem has set out a requirement for Transmission Operators to run an Infrastructure Stakeholder Engagement Survey (ISES), as a way to look for continuous improvement in their stakeholder engagement.

In early 2022, SSEN Transmission commissioned Impact to create and implement an independent ISES to understand the experiences of stakeholders who could have been impacted by recent infrastructure projects. Due to the success of this project, Impact was commissioned to run a similar survey in 2023 and again in 2024.

The objectives of the survey are to:

- Understand stakeholders' **perceptions and attitudes** towards particular infrastructure projects and any engagement/communications from SSEN Transmission regarding the project(s).
- Identify **challenges** faced by stakeholders with regard to infrastructure projects and engagement/communications from SSEN Transmission.
- Understand **improvements** that could be made and identify future opportunities for stakeholders with regard to infrastructure projects and engagement/communications from SSEN Transmission.

Impact adopted a two-stage approach to meet these objectives, which has been updated for 2024. Firstly, 297 online surveys were completed with stakeholders of SSEN Transmission, followed by three 90-minute focus groups, each with some half dozen of the stakeholders that took part in the initial interviews (18 Stakeholders in total).

Overall knowledge of SSEN Transmission was high, and the majority of respondents had engaged with them over the last 12 months. Mostly this was engagement related to a specific project, such as the Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection.

Satisfaction was down heavily from 2023 levels, with very few stakeholders saying they were satisfied with either their overall relationship with SSEN Transmission or the engagement they have received from SSEN Transmission. When asked for suggestions on how they could improve satisfaction overall, they gave suggestions such as:

- being more open and honest about proposed work,
- providing more information on the projects and
- showing how stakeholder feedback is taken on board, following consultation events.

Around two-thirds of stakeholders that took part in the survey had been engaged with SSEN Transmission in the planning and development of a local project. Of those that had been, the most common engagement was via email, with others either attending a town hall event or seeing a letter or leaflet.

Stakeholders in the focus groups felt there was a great deal of room for improvement in the engagement conducted by SSEN Transmission, which included:

- increased coverage of mail drops,
- improved quality of information shared
- better action on the back of engagement events

They felt the aims of the engagement were suitable, but questioned whether the engagement that had been conducted to date was achieving any of these aims.

Over half of the stakeholders in the survey believe SSEN Transmission should be helping those in the local community, but very few had benefited from a support scheme SSEN Transmission had put in place. Nearly all stakeholders had been negatively impacted by a local infrastructure project and the majority of the feedback given was as a result of an experience on a local project.

2. Background & Objectives

Under RIIO-T1, which ran from April 2013 to March 2021, Ofgem measured the stakeholder engagement progress of Transmission and Distribution Operators under the Stakeholder Engagement Incentive, and there was a small financial reward based partly on performance in this area.

Under RIIO-T2, which runs from April 2021 to March 2026, the system has changed slightly and now there is an Infrastructure Stakeholder Engagement Survey (ISES) for Transmission Operators (TOs). Ofgem has set the requirement for TOs to continue to improve their stakeholder engagement, using a qualitative and quantitative survey as a measurement, run on an annual basis.

Ofgem's intention for this survey is to encourage engagement with stakeholders that may have been impacted by recent infrastructure projects to understand their experience, and ultimately how this can be improved. This will ensure a transparent feedback loop exists between the TO and their stakeholders. There is no financial incentive for SSEN Transmission to carry out this survey.

With this in mind, in early 2022, SSEN Transmission commissioned Impact to create and implement an ISES to understand the experiences of stakeholders that recent infrastructure projects could have impacted. Due to the success of this project, Impact was commissioned to run a similar survey in 2023 and again in 2024.

As with previous years, the following project objectives were set:



3. Method

Impact conducted a two-stage approach to this research, laid out below, to meet the research objectives:



Quantitative engagement

- Online survey with 297 stakeholders of SSEN Transmission in February 2024
- All respondents had previously engaged with SSEN Transmission



Qualitative engagement

- Three x 90-minute online focus groups were conducted in March 2024
- Invitation to 88 stakeholders who took part in the online surveys were sent, after suggesting they would be happy to take part
- 18 stakeholders attended across the three groups

Quantitative engagement

The first stage of the project was an online survey. This represents a change in approach from 2022 and 2023, to allow for more respondents to take part. Previously, telephone interviews were conducted with approximately 50 stakeholders, but online surveys allow for more to take part more cost-effectively. The questionnaire lasted approximately 15-20 minutes and was completed by 297 stakeholders who had previously engaged with SSEN Transmission.

The interview length and content were carefully designed to keep respondents fully engaged throughout, to maximise the response rate and to ensure no stakeholders dropped out mid-survey. The survey contained predominately closed questions (including scale yes/no type questions) with a few open questions, designed to elicit detailed feedback on the objectives. The questionnaire was similar to that asked in previous years, but the number of open-ended questions was reduced to help keep respondents engaged. It covered the following topics:

- Awareness of SSEN Transmission
- Satisfaction with current levels of service
- Engagement with SSEN Transmission
- Impact of recent and ongoing projects
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- SSEN Transmission's sustainability strategy

A full copy of the questionnaire is given in [Appendix 1](#).

Qualitative engagement

At the end of the online survey, stakeholders were asked if they would be willing to take part in further research, in the form of a focus group, and 88 out of 297 indicated they would. Of these, 18 were able to attend one of the sessions conducted, at various times throughout the days of Thursday 21st, Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th March. There were a number of others that indicated they would like to take part, but were unavailable to at the times provided. The reasons included holidays and only being available in the evenings or at weekends. It is worth, therefore, considering the timing of these sessions in future waves of the survey, to ensure all different types of stakeholders can attend.

The three sessions each lasted 90 minutes, and the discussion guide was designed to explore the results from the online surveys in more detail, to understand how SSEN Transmission can improve the service it offers to its stakeholders. The discussion guide covered the following content:

- Satisfaction and engagement with SSEN Transmission
- Impact of recent and ongoing projects
- Engagement aimed at mitigating the impact of any issues

A full copy of the discussion guide is given in [Appendix 2](#) and the stimulus material is shown in [Appendix 3](#).

4. Results

Stakeholders participated in the online surveys from a range of locations across Scotland, from four postcode regions: AB, DD, IV and KW.

- 50% of stakeholders were affected by or involved with the Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection,
- 27% by the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400kV Connection and
- 21% by Beaully to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project.

The remaining stakeholders were affected by or involved with a range of other projects, including the Beaully to Denny Upgrade and the New Beaully Area Substation. 62% of stakeholders described themselves as community members and 29% as landowners.

The focus groups were made up of stakeholders who had participated in the surveys and came from a variety of backgrounds, with the majority being local to ongoing work linked to an infrastructure project. Some were attending the groups in a personal capacity, with others representing local groups, such as an 'Action against pylons' group or other public bodies.

Awareness and contact with SSEN Transmission

During the online surveys, stakeholders were first asked if they had heard of SSEN Transmission, and the majority (84%) claimed they had at least some knowledge of them. This value is high, but as all respondents were pre-contacted and potentially impacted by an SSEN Transmission Infrastructure project, it is not surprising.

The majority of stakeholders (88%) that completed the survey had engaged with SSEN Transmission within the last year, and 30% within the last month. Just under half of stakeholders (42%) had been in contact with SSEN Transmission three or more times in the last 12 months, with 29% having done so twice and 23% once. The remaining 5% were unsure. These numbers were all slightly down from last year, when all stakeholders had engaged with SSEN Transmission in the last year.

Stakeholders were also asked in the survey what they thought SSEN Transmission could do to promote a better understanding of its role, with the most common answer expressing a desire for SSEN Transmission to be more open and transparent with contracts, procedures, and policies (72%). Over half of the respondents also felt SSEN Transmission needed to prioritise the environmental impact more (67%), hold more consultation events (56%) and be available for meetings and one-to-ones more (55%).

All these points show a significant increase in respondents from 2023. However, a change of the survey method is likely to be a major factor in explaining why this is. In 2024, respondents were shown a pre-coded list and asked to select which they thought SSEN should be doing, whereas in 2023, the question was open-ended, and the response was coded into one or more answer codes.

The full breakdown of suggestions is given below, along with responses to the survey from last year:

Communication type	Percentage of respondents 2024	Percentage of respondents 2023
Be more open/ transparent relating to contracts, procedures, and policy	72%	38%
Prioritise environmental impact	67%	16%
More consultation/ communication/ contact/ seminars/ Trade fairs etc.	56%	30%
Be available for meetings, more one to ones	55%	30%
Provide a list of future projects and dates	46%	6%

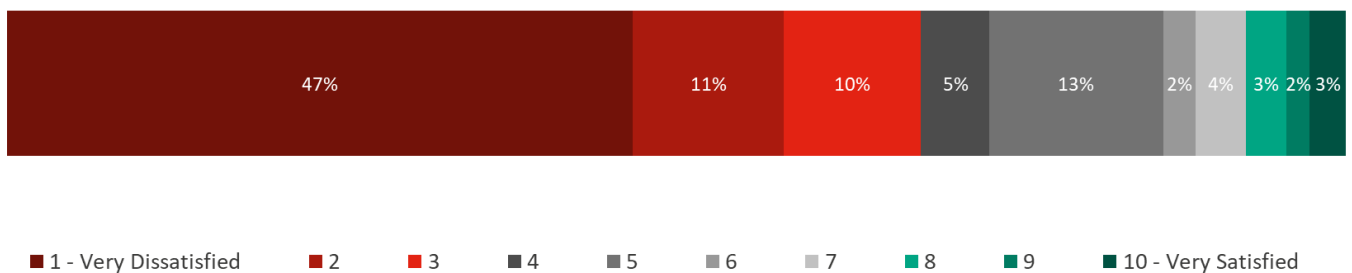
Communication type	Percentage of respondents 2024	Percentage of respondents 2023
Be upfront/proactive about informing stakeholders about connection delays and other project issues	42%	24%
Be more sustainable	28%	6%
Prioritise Health and Safety / safe working practise	16%	0%
Social media	9%	16%
Television	7%	4%
Stronger presence online	6%	6%
Show more interest in non-SSEN companies	6%	0%
Print media	5%	14%
Speed up delivery of projects/ access to the network	3%	0%
Don't Know/ nothing	2%	28%

Satisfaction and engagement

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction scores quoted in the text below are NET scores based on combining the percentages for 8, 9 and 10 when looking at satisfied overall ('Top 3 Box' or T3B) and 1, 2 and 3 for dissatisfied overall ('Bottom 3 Box' or B3B) on a 10-point scale. The full spread of responses is shown in the charts.

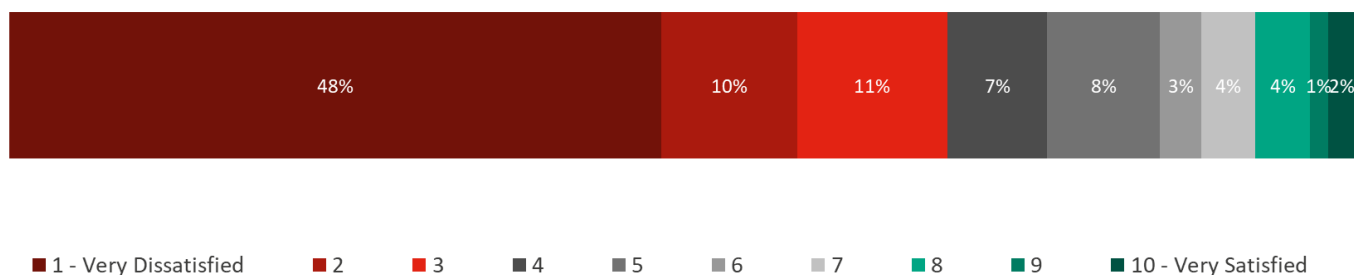
Stakeholder satisfaction with their overall relationship with SSEN Transmission was low, with only 8% saying they were satisfied (score of 8+) and 68% saying they were dissatisfied (Score of 3 or less). These scores are dramatically lower than last year, when 36% said they were satisfied and 16% said they were dissatisfied, but it is worth noting again that the method has changed since last year, with more stakeholders being able to take part than previously. In addition, it may also be the case that 2024 provides a more honest response, as stakeholders may have been less willing to be critical when talking to interview, as when answering online. Nearly half of the stakeholders (47%) gave a very low score of 1/10. The full breakdown is given below.

Overall stakeholder satisfaction with their relationship with SSEN Transmission



Overall satisfaction with the level of engagement received followed a similar pattern of much lower scores compared to last year. 7% said they were satisfied (compared with 34% in last year's survey) and 70% said they were dissatisfied (14% in last year's survey). Again, nearly half (48%) gave a score of 1/10.

Satisfaction with SSEN Transmission's engagement



Several different suggestions for improvements were given, but a quarter of stakeholders wanted SSEN Transmission to be more open, honest and transparent with the work that was going on, and many others requested that more information be shared about the project.

Stakeholders who did not give a score of 10 out of 10 for their level of engagement from SSEN Transmission were asked for suggestions on how SSEN Transmission could improve. The most popular responses were:

- **Be more genuine and open** about communication for proposed work, particularly around timelines and the details behind what work is being done
- **Provide more information** and communication generally regarding the projects, but focus on those most affected, i.e., local residents and landowners
- **Give more advanced notice** of meetings and consultations being held
- Provide more **face-to-face engagement** options
- **Provide evidence that stakeholders' feedback is taken on board**, as many feel that any communications channels with SSEN Transmission are merely a formality and none of their feedback is taken on board

The attendees at the focus groups were not surprised that satisfaction was so low, with some even suggesting that 7% was higher than expected.

"I'm surprised that there's as much as seven percent, to be honest, for satisfaction, because really, when you go to these meetings, you don't actually come across anybody who knows anything much. You get given the people who are from the office. They're admin people, you ask to speak to an engineer, "No, we haven't got an engineer." You ask to speak to one of the visual impact team, which is another specialisation, no, we haven't got one of those either" Stakeholder, Group 3

"Well, I'm not at all surprised, I'm afraid. I've been to two consultations now, and I was promised so much the first consultation. "Oh, yes, we'll be walking the route, we'll be consulting with you, we'd like you to come with us and point out the heritage that you're maybe worried about," just from that one aspect, and this next consultation was a full year later, having heard nothing at all. Not even an email from the person, and I asked about it." Stakeholder, Group 3

Many had attended consultation sessions or tried to contact SSEN Transmission relating to a specific issue and had been unimpressed with the response they had received. One stakeholder explained how they had contacted SSEN Transmission and spoken to someone from the office, but were unable to speak to anyone who could help, such as an engineer or someone from the impacts team.

Stakeholders felt that there was little action completed on the back of any engagement they had had with SSEN Transmission. One told a story that there was a full year between the first and second consultation events, and nothing had been done to alleviate concerns from stakeholders during that time.

Methods of communication/engagement

Around two-thirds of stakeholders that took part in the survey (65%) have been engaged with SSEN Transmission in the planning and development of a local project. 7% had been engaged with at the construction or delivery stage, 3% post-completion and 8% knew they had been engaged with but were not sure at what stage. A quarter of stakeholders (24%) said they have not been engaged about a local project.

Of those that have been engaged with, the most common engagement was via email (62%), and around a third had attended a town hall event (35%) or received a letter (34%). Generally, engagement was much lower than it was in 2023, but again, this could be partly down to the survey method change, with more stakeholders taking part this year.

The full breakdown of communication methods used, including 2023 figures, is given below:

Communication method	Percentage of respondents 2024	Percentage of respondents 2023
Email	62%	79%
Town Hall events	35%	23%
Letter	34%	51%
Leaflet	22%	53%
Consultations	18%	51%
Webinars	12%	9%
Surveys	11%	9%
Face-to-face visit	8%	47%
Telephone calls	7%	40%
Community Liaison Groups	7%	19%
Website/Blogs	7%	19%
E-bulletin	7%	5%
Local Press	4%	23%
Social media messages	4%	12%
Workshops	2%	2%
Conferences/Events	1%	16%
Insight Reports	0%	5%

When prompted directly about consultation sessions run by SSEN Transmission, 72% of stakeholders said they have attended, either in person or virtually. Among those that did not, some were not able to attend due to personal reasons (such as mobility issues or being too busy) while others said they either were not aware of the consultation or they found out too late to be able to attend.

Only 22% of stakeholders felt the information available on SSEN Transmission’s projects is accessible, easy to find and understandable, which is again down from last year when 72% felt it was. 29% of stakeholders said email was their preferred method of engagement, 19% said face-to-face visits and 12% said town hall events.

Just under a third of stakeholders (29%) felt they were knowledgeable of SSEN Transmission’s Net Zero plans, with 21% saying they were not (B3B). When asked what they believed to be the most challenging factor for SSEN Transmission to achieve their targets, 28% said it would be local communities and public outcry getting in their way, 21% thought affordability would be the key challenge, with 7% saying decarbonisation and 6% saying security of supply.

Stakeholders in the focus groups were shown the methods of engagement that SSEN tend to use. Most were broadly supportive of the different methods but felt the quality of information, or the breadth of people that they covered were not up to scratch.

“The problem is, it’s the quality within this type of information. It doesn’t tell you anything.” Stakeholder, Group 2

Mail drops were picked out specifically in each of the three groups, with stakeholders suggesting they didn’t reach as many local residents as they should have. One resident explained that it had missed out a whole street which made them feel like they didn’t exist. In the end, they heard about the work through the community council, and have since been added to the mailing list, but were disappointed to not have been included initially.

“The postcard maildrop was sent out, and hardly anyone receives it, but from what I gather, it was sent out on a Monday, it was round and about an A5, arrived with everyone’s junk mail, looked like junk mail, and people just have no recollection of receiving it.” Stakeholder, Group 3

“I don’t think there’s much of a problem with the actual engagement, however, it’s what they do with it and how much they take on board.” Stakeholder, Group 1

A resident in the second group said that around 20% of affected people didn't receive anything relating to a local project, suggesting that the mailing list was out of date, and someone in the third group said 'hardly anyone' had received a mail-drop, and those that did felt it looked like junk mail.

The timing of communication was raised by stakeholders as a key issue. Many felt that engagement happens too late in the set-up of a new project after a decision on what is going to happen has already been made. They felt the decision-making process didn't involve local people, it wasn't personalised enough and the consultation meeting set up to discuss the project was just a box-ticking exercise. There was also a reference given by some stakeholders to a letter that had been delivered in the lead-up to Christmas, which was seen as insensitive.

"Going to some of the stakeholder consultation, the sense that the decision already has been made, nothing said is going to be taken in. Stakeholder, Group 1"

"I feel that there is a real disconnect with the customer, and the example that I gave you, the first thing that we heard was a letter dropping in ten days before Christmas. I think the timing was very poor. There was a lack of sensitivity, that Christmas and New Year was the biggest celebration, families were gathering and it ruined people's Christmas and New Year. How can you expect good will from that when there is so little understanding." Stakeholder, Group 1

When asked about the website, stakeholders felt it wasn't fit for purpose. One stakeholder explained they found it very hard to navigate, and said they had to dig around for the information they were looking for. They suggested that the software behind the website should be upgraded, as when they tried to increase the text size, the website failed. Others were also unimpressed with the website, with a different stakeholder saying they'd been told it would be updated, but it hasn't been.

"Then, when you look at their Transmission website, frankly, I could write a better website myself, it's dreadful. It's impossible to get round, and if you try to look at our basic audience here and imagine us all trying to get round that website, it is absolutely dreadful. The maps don't blow up well, as has been pointed out. You really, really have to dig. It's not intuitive, it's badly organised" Stakeholder, Group 2

Consultation events came up as a key topic of conversation during the focus groups, with many stakeholders being underwhelmed by the experience of attending. Some explained that the sessions they had attended were too one-way, with SSEN Transmission colleagues turning up to run the session with a script and being unwilling to deviate from that. They also said there was little time for conversations with SSEN Transmission employees or any sort of Q&A session.

"Because of their inability to be flexible and to respond constructively to questions and challenges that are put their way. So, they've got their script, they've got their answers to the key questions they know. So, for example, they refused, at the Drumoak Primary School, they refused to engage in an interactive question and answer with the audience, right? Because they don't have that degree of flexibility to be able to respond constructively" Stakeholder, Group 2

"Because they turned up to that with their slides and their little telly, and what they thought they were going to do was just tell us what was on their slides and then go home" Stakeholder, Group 2

"The idea that this is a consultation at the moment is just a travesty of definition of what consultation is." Stakeholder, Group 2

One stakeholder was scathing in their feedback of one event they'd attend, suggesting it was a 'travesty' that it was defined as a consultation. They explained they had been to an event held at the local rowing club, and were told of where the route of the power line had changed.

Other feedback on consultation events related to the perceived lack of action as a result of these events. Stakeholders felt there was a need for them to feel

reassured after attending a consultation, with mechanisms for feedback seemingly existing, however, they weren't sure if they were being used. One particular stakeholder referenced an event they had attended, where no one from SSEN Transmission was there to take notes, they were only referred to the back of the brochure for questions to be asked or feedback given. This stakeholder felt that SSEN Transmission colleagues were only there to provide clarification on points they had discussed, rather than answering questions relating to the project more widely.

Stakeholders raised concerns about how they found out about the events themselves, with some only coming across it by chance, from reading a poster someone had printed and stuck at a local bus stop. Others had found out through word of mouth, from neighbours or social media, and would have liked to have seen something put through their letterbox. They felt this would help encourage as many residents to attend as possible. One other stakeholder knew that less than 600 people had attended consultations in May last year, which is not a lot of people given the size of the local community. They thought that few people knew the event was going on, suggesting it might have only been advertised on social media.

"At these stakeholder meetings, you raise an issue, the people that are there, the SSEN employees or some contractors that were there, appreciate what you're saying, but there's no one there to take a note of it. What they do is they say, "Oh..." They refer you to the form at the back of their brochure that they handed you. So, you would have thought that there would have been someone there taking notes about, "Oh, right, they've raised this as an issue," and feed that back. But the people there are simply there to say, "Oh, do you need any clarification on anything?" Stakeholder, Group 1

"I heard about it from neighbours, because we were not on their mailing list, and that is a problem." Stakeholder, Group 2

"The fact that less than six hundred people attended the six face-to-face consultations up and down the line back in May last year, obviously a reflection there wasn't a lot of numbers. Social media, again, people were not following SSEN on social media, so they'd absolutely no idea of the consultations" Stakeholder, Group 3

During the focus groups, stakeholders also suggested there was room for SSEN Transmission to work with partner organisations more. They thought that they should be talking to organisations like housing associations and charities or companies like Citizens Advice, to ensure that local residents are getting the support they need through ongoing projects. They also highlighted the need to make sure all communications are inclusive to those who either have disabilities or whose first language is not English.

"Because the other thing that I'm concerned about is about wider access. They're missing out a lot of older people and people with disability, and people who might actually not speak English, and for me, those are really vulnerable people that should be included. If it's a real inclusive culture, they should be taking those bits into account. It's about equal opportunities, equal access" Stakeholder, Group 1

"I think that they should be talking to third-sector organisations like housing associations, like I said at the very start, because I think there is a potential to do some good in all of this, and linking in with them at the start, there might be things that we can do as well. It might be a win-win." Stakeholder, Group 1

Perceptions of SSEN Transmission being “genuine and open”

When asked what SSEN could do to become more “genuine and open”, stakeholders felt the key thing was to be more honest with what was going on. There was a perception among some stakeholders that SSEN Transmission only shared some of the information at consultation events, or in communication materials. Others said that there is a need to ensure information across certain events need to be consistent, suggesting that there had been discrepancies in the information shared at events they had attended.

“Make sure that everyone involved in these meetings have some pre-meeting themselves, SSEN, and get their stories straight, so they’re all singing from the same hymn sheet, and that it is honest, and transparent, and straightforward, so that they’re not telling different stories to different people at the same event, never mind elsewhere.” Stakeholder, Group 2

Related to the point on honesty, stakeholders also felt SSEN Transmission needed to address the negatives of the projects more and explain how they are helping to mitigate against these negative impacts. There were clear concerns raised by stakeholders across the groups, so if SSEN Transmission were to be more open about how their projects could bring some negatives and how they were going to help keep these as minimal as possible, it could help ease these concerns across stakeholders.

“I think it's about minimising the damage...It's not just about short-term gains, it's about long-term losses as well, that I think are really important, and I think that alternatives should be considered and put out there for the community and discussed openly. And I think cost is not just about money, it will affect people health, there will be irreversible damage to our natural landscape, it will affect farming, there will be loss of food security, there will be loss to wildlife and their habitat, and there'll be impact on house prices.” Stakeholder, Group 1

Aims of the engagement

Stakeholders in the focus groups felt that SSEN Transmission had the correct aims laid out for their engagement strategy, but didn't feel they were being delivered against. They felt that SSEN Transmission wasn't being held accountable for delivering against these aims, therefore there was nothing to guarantee they would be doing it. Some stakeholders suggested that improvements could be made in how SSEN Transmission disseminated the feedback given at consultation events. One said that a report that had been published at the end of a particular event they had attended had been too generic and didn't address the individual points discussed at the event. Others said they had not seen anything published, which led them to think no action had been taken as a result of the consultation.

“I think these aims are possible decent enough aims, but it's, what if they don't actually achieve the aims? There's no consequences. So, everyone can write, “Oh, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that.” It's a bit like when you're a child and your New Year's Resolution. Yeah, there's actually no consequences if you don't do it. So, these aims are actually, while they should be carried out and get there, they actually won't bother doing it, so it is just absolutely irrelevant.” Stakeholder, Group 3

“If you ask for feedback, then you need to actually demonstrate that you have actually used feedback and provided some kind of response...There's no point asking for feedback if you're not prepared to act on it.” Stakeholder, Group 1

“After the first consultation, there was a report came out, and they did seem to capture some of the generic feedback that we know everybody was going to put in, but I don't know whether they looked at the individual comments.” Stakeholder, Group 1

It was the suggestion of one stakeholder that SSEN Transmission could have a page on their website or on other communication materials that gives the responses to 'real life' questions asked at the event. This would show that SSEN Transmission was giving a real response to consultations.

"It's about feedback, it's about what did we say and what did you do on the basis of what we said? So, maybe SSEN should have a page where they put the questions that people have asked and put answers on them, and then people will know that they haven't just been dismissed, they've actually been considered." Stakeholder, Group 1

Sustainability strategy

During the interviews, stakeholders were introduced to several local community support initiatives that have been introduced by SSEN Transmission, these included:

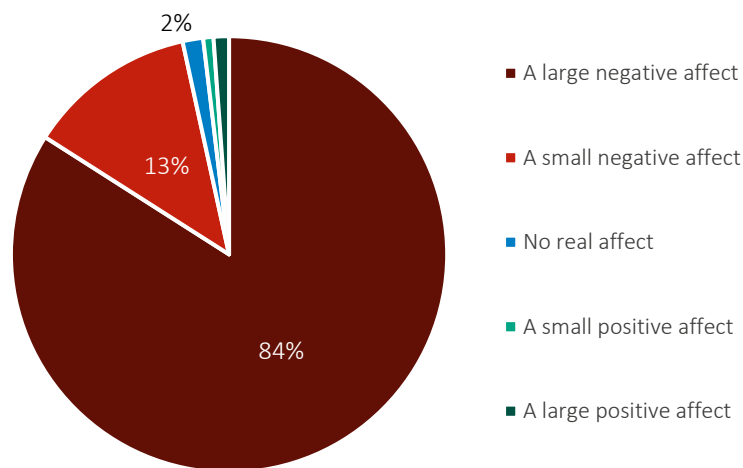
- Increased funding for local projects
- Local reuse hubs
- Support for vulnerable customers
- Local fuel poverty
- Supporting domestic energy transition
- Increased community engagement/Communities of Practice
- Local Skills & Education Support
- Nature-based solutions
- Land use & Utility
- Culture & Heritage

Over half of stakeholders (57%) believed that SSEN Transmission community support initiatives such as these were important, but only 5% said they or their community had been supported by one of them. Increased funding for local projects was the initiative that had supported the most stakeholders, but this had still only reached 4% of the total stakeholders that completed the survey. These numbers are considerably down on last year, where 80% suggested they are important and 30% had been supported by one, but again it is worth noting that many more stakeholders completed the survey this year.

A wide range of suggestions were given in the survey for how SSEN Transmission could better support the local community, with many revolving around engaging with residents more and being open and honest about the work that is being done and the impact it will have on the local area.

Impact of recent projects

Stakeholders in the online survey were also asked questions about particular infrastructure projects that have affected them. 89% of stakeholders said that they had been impacted, with 74% saying they had been impacted directly and 15% saying it had impacted them indirectly. Nearly all of these stakeholders (97%) said the impact on them was negative. The full breakdown of responses is given below.



When asked to describe how they had been impacted, stakeholders in the online survey gave a variety of reasons, with the most popular being related destruction of the natural landscape of the area. They explained the project impacted the visual appeal of their local area and in some cases impacted the local environment and wildlife living in the area. In addition, stakeholders explained some pylons had been erected or work was being undertaken very close to their homes, which they expected would impact its value, and some had faced additional stresses or mental health concerns as a result of the work. Others also explained how the ongoing projects have brought a great deal of extra traffic.

Only 12% felt that engagement with the SSEN Transmission project team has improved the impact of the project on the local community. When asked how it co

Stakeholders were also asked about the location of the projects being completed, in relation to where they lived. Most lived within a mile of the project (68%), with a further 21% living between 1 and 3 miles away. In addition, the majority of these stakeholders felt they had at least some knowledge of the project (44% saying they had good knowledge and 46% some knowledge). Half of the stakeholders affected by local projects knew who the key contacts were for the project.

The feedback given by stakeholders in the focus group was often specific to a project, given all either lived or worked near a particular project. None had seen any engagement conducted by SSEN Transmission mitigate the impact of an infrastructure project, with some commenting that engagement had only happened once the project was underway, therefore the engagement process was happening all too late.

“At the start of the consultation, they have to be able to present the whole scope of works, and that comes from the reason why... We need the need, the reason why, all the way through the process, and this is just not being done.” Stakeholder, Group 2

Traffic management was a key point mentioned by several different stakeholders, as something that SSEN Transmission could have done more about. They told stories that there had been no traffic management plan in place where nearby work was going on, which was causing safety concerns. Another mentioned how traffic had to be diverted down a local road following road closures, and SSEN Transmission lorries carrying equipment travelling at dangerous speeds, again resulting in safety concerns.

"I pointed out to the guy, "Where's your traffic management plan? You shouldn't be blocking the road," you know, whatever, and he turned round and he said, "What is a...?" He hadn't even heard of a traffic management plan and he said, "Oh, if you're not happy, you better take it up with the health and safety executive." So, I was so incensed, after we got finished our hill walk, I went to the substation office and raised it with them, and they passed it on, and at one point, nobody got in touch with me, SSEN never got in touch with me. So, I rang them back and said, "Look, nobody's been in touch with me about this. What the hell is going on?" and I threatened that I was going to be reporting them to the health and safety executive. What happened then was that I got a phone call from the SSEN's project manager for the substation, really apoloising, say it shouldn't have happened, that we'll be looking into it and investigating." Stakeholder, Group 1

"In terms of things like the vehicles and the trucks, they are all fitted with trackers, so the trackers will tell them if they're breaking the speed limit. But given that my single-lane, farm track road is a sixty-mile limit, a track carrying eighty tonnes of stones, going at sixty mile down a bendy, single-track road. Okay, he's not breaking the law, but when he drives an old lady in her car off the road, that's not mitigating the circumstances" Stakeholder, Group 3

"They have absolutely no consequences for their actions or lack of actions with regards to construction traffic etc., road closures, transportation of equipment" Stakeholder, Group 3

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Stakeholders that participated in the online survey had good knowledge of SSEN Transmission and the majority had engaged with them in the last year. Just under half had been in contact with SSEN Transmission three or more times over the last year. The majority had engaged with SSEN Transmission regarding a specific project, most commonly the Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection.

Stakeholder satisfaction with their relationship with SSEN Transmission and satisfaction with SSEN Transmission's engagement, were both heavily down from 2023, but, as noted in the findings section, this could be in part down to the effect of including more people in the survey and using an online method, where survey respondents are generally inclined to express their views more critically.

That said, stakeholders in the focus group were, at times, very scathing in their feedback, with some even suggesting that an overall satisfaction score of 7% was too high.

There were several reasons stakeholders gave that could help explain why these scores were so low. These included:

- Mail drops giving information on ongoing projects and consultation events are not being delivered to everyone in the local area
- The quality of information shared at either events or in leaflets is poor
- The SSEN Transmission website is hard to navigate and find relevant information on
- Perceived lack of action following a stakeholder consultation
- A lack of genuineness, openness and honesty relating to the impact of a project on a local area
- Not knowing that consultation events were being conducted
- A lack of preparedness for the impact on the local area using e.g., traffic management plans

In addition to the above, some stakeholders felt that the information shared was not always personal or specific enough to a particular project.

With these points in mind, our recommendations for SSEN future engagement are as follows:

- **Work with local authorities and partner organisations** to set up and run these events. This will help ensure that as many residents, or affected members of the community, are made aware of the project and the engagement sessions relating to it. If possible, introduce a tool to measure the implementation of these initiative, such as understanding if direct mail campaigns are reaching all intended respondents.
- **Engage with stakeholders at the earliest opportunity**, to ensure they felt part of the decision-making process. If meetings are held after key project decisions have been made, then stakeholders will not feel they have been part of it and the consultation process is not genuine.
- Ensure there are **SSEN Transmission colleagues at any consultation events** who are willing to take questions and are knowledgeable enough about the project and local area to be able to answer them. If not, then ensure questions raised by stakeholders are answered in any event follow-ups.
- **Be more open to the negative impacts of a project on the local area** and offer more proactive solutions to help mitigate against the impact, such as the implementation of a traffic management plan, if local roads are going to be closed.
- **Give clearer dissemination after a consultation event** has taken place. Create a dissemination plan within SSEN Transmission, to include answers to any questions raised as part of the discussion and a summary of what was covered. Ensure this is then available for residents to view on a variety of channels, not just published on the website.

6. Appendix

Appendix 1: Online survey questionnaire

1558 SSEN ISES 2024 questionnaire	ONLINE SCRIPT FV2 30/01/2024	Steve Morley Guto Hunkin Thomas Chisholm
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Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey which should take no more than 10 minutes to complete, depending on the answers you give us.

We are conducting research on behalf of SSEN Transmission. They are responsible for maintaining and investing in high-voltage electricity transmission networks in the north of Scotland. SSEN Transmission's network comprises over 4,800km of high voltage overhead lines and underground cables. They serve around 70% of the landmass of Scotland, transporting high voltage electricity from where it's generated to areas of demand. SSEN Transmission is part of the SSE Group which includes their other Networks Business, SSEN Distribution who maintain the lower voltage network that supplies electricity directly to homes and businesses in the North of Scotland. You may have spoken to them if you have experienced a power outage or damage to the network during a storm. This survey will focus on your experience of engaging with SSEN Transmission only.

In a rapidly changing industry, one challenge they face is meeting the industry's future needs and energy consumers. Effective decision making relies on people's input from outside their business to make sure they are meeting expectations.

This research is about your experience of how SSEN Transmission have engaged with you when they have been developing, or constructing Infrastructure Projects that affect (you, your community, or your organisation. SSEN is a stakeholder-led business, and we are always striving to maintain high quality standards in our stakeholder engagement processes across the Transmission business. By completing this short anonymous survey, you will be helping SSEN continuously improve and offer the highest quality of service to our customers, communities, and wider society.

This is a genuine market research study, and no sales call will result from our contact with you. The interview will be carried out in strict accordance with the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct and GDPR.

If you require any further information about how we store and use the data you provide, please see our privacy policy on our website: <https://www.impactmr.com/privacy-statement-research>

If you have any queries, you can contact Impact Research Ltd on 01932 226 793 and ask for a member of the Utilities team. If you wish, you may also confirm our credentials by contacting the Market Research Society on 0800 975 9596.

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INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

SHOW ALL

First of all, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

O ASK ALL

Q1 This survey is anonymous. However, we would like to ask for your postcode sector so we can attach or associate your feedback with the project that directly affects you.

Please enter your postcode sector in the box below. Your postcode sector is the first half, plus the first letter of the second half. E.g., if your full postcode is AB12 3DE, the postcode sector would be AB12 3.

M ASK ALL

Q1b And which of the following SSEN projects have you been affected by or involved with? If you have been affected by more than one project, then please select all that apply.

1. Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL Project
2. Beauly to Denny Upgrade
3. Blackhillock 2 Substation
4. Kintore to Fiddes to Tealing 400kV Connection
5. Loch Buidhe Substation
6. Netherton Hub (Longside)
7. New Beauly Area Substation
8. New Deer 2 Substation
9. Spittal Substation
10. Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400kV Connection
11. Other (please specify)
12. Don't know

S ASK ALL

Q2 From the list below, which of the following best describes the type of Stakeholder you are?

1. Academia/Innovation
2. Community Member
3. NGO's (non-government organisation)
4. Statutory Consultee
5. Consumer Groups/Trade Bodies
6. Developers
7. Environment
8. Local Authorities
9. Government
10. Industry
11. Land owner
12. Supply Chain
13. Transmission Operator
14. Other (please specify)

S ASK ALL

Q3 Before today, had you previously heard of SSEN Transmission and the strategic role they play in maintaining and operating the high voltage electricity network in the North of Scotland, and supporting the delivery of the UK and Scotland's Net Zero Targets??

1. Yes – and have good knowledge about them
2. Yes – and have some knowledge about them
3. Yes – but have little knowledge about them
4. No – never heard of them/don't know anything about them **CLOSE**

M ASK ALL

Q4 From your perspective, what do you think SSEN Transmission could do to promote a better understanding of its role? Please select all that apply from the list below.

1. Be available for meetings, more one to ones
2. Be more open/transparent relating to contracts, procedures, and policy
3. Be more sustainable
4. Be upfront/pro-active about informing stakeholders about connection delays and other project issues
5. More consultation/communication/contact/seminars/Trade fairs etc.
6. Prioritise environmental Impact
7. Prioritise Health and Safety / safe working practise
8. Provide list of future projects and dates
9. Show more interest in non SSEN companies
10. Speed up delivery of projects/access to the network
11. Stronger presence online
12. Social media
13. Print media
14. Television
15. Don't know/nothing
16. Other (please specify)

S ASK ALL

Q5 When did you last have contact with SSEN Transmission?

1. Within the last week
2. Within the last month
3. Within the last 3 months
4. Within the last 6 months
5. Within the last year
6. More than a year ago
7. I have not had contact with SSEN Transmission
8. Don't know

S ASK IF Q5=1-5

Q6 In the last 12 months how many times have you had contact with SSEN Transmission?

1. Once
2. Twice
3. Three or more times
4. Don't know / can't remember

S ASK ALL

Q8 As a stakeholder of SSEN Transmission, how satisfied are you with the overall relationship that you have with them on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 10 is very satisfied?

Very Dissatisfied									Very Satisfied	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	98

S ASK ALL

N3 Please rate your knowledge of SSEN Transmission’s plans to deliver the Transmission Network Infrastructure required to put us on a pathway to Net Zero, including meeting 2030 targets, a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not at all knowledgeable and 10 is very knowledgeable?

Not at all knowledgeable									Very knowledgeable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

S ASK ALL

N4 Which of the following factors do you think will be most challenging for SSEN Transmission in the delivery of 2030 targets?

- Decarbonisation
- Security of supply
- Affordability
- Don’t know
- Other (please specify, and explain)

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

SSEN have a introduced a number of initiatives, aimed to support the local community. These include:

Increased funding for local projects

Funding to support communities to identify, establish and deliver community led sustainability projects for community utility and gain.

Local reuse hubs

Setting up local reuse hubs for excess material from our projects, such as timber, aggregates etc. This would support the reuse of materials for community led initiatives and projects.

Support for vulnerable customers

Guidance, information and signposting to communities enable the identification, address and take proactive actions to support vulnerable individuals or groups in the community.

Local fuel poverty

Guidance, support and signposting for local communities to find options to reduce fuel poverty

Supporting domestic energy transition

Provision of resources to aid communities to move away from fossil fuel based heating systems toward renewable forms of home heating.

Increased community engagement/Communities of Practice

Supporting and building the capacity of local groups or social enterprises to engage with SSEN Transmission to understand needs and co-create solutions.

Local Skills & Education Support

Engaging more with schools, colleges and skills development programs to provide local individuals and community groups with the opportunity to learn and develop skills. This could include opportunities for younger community members through apprenticeship and intern programs.

Nature based solutions

Working with communities or community groups to prioritise the improve the environment in the local area. Providing information about and access to examples of ongoing projects which aim to develop biodiversity, environmental resilience and natural capital.

Land use & utility

Maintaining community stewardship of the local environment – retaining and enabling utility of land for recreation, public and private use, retaining a sense of place, improving and upgrading shared spaces.

Culture & Heritage

Community led initiatives to support, maintain or improve local culture and heritage. This could be related to language, creative arts and spaces or places or items of historic significance.

S ASK ALL

N6 How important is it to you that we provide community support through initiatives such as those given above. Please rate their importance on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not at all important and 10 is very important?

Not at all important										Very important	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		98

S ASK ALL

N7 Have you or your community been supported by SSEN Transmission through any of the above?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

M ASK IF N7b=1

N7b Which initiative have you been supported by? Please select all that apply.

1. Increased funding for local projects
2. Local reuse hubs
3. Support for vulnerable customers
4. Local fuel poverty
5. Supporting domestic energy transition
6. Increased community engagement/Communities of Practice
7. Local Skills & Education Support
8. Nature based solutions
9. Land use & utility
10. Culture & Heritage

O ASK ALL

N8 Are there any OTHER ways you would like the local community, community groups, schools etc. to be supported by SSEN Transmission? If so, please explain what these are.

INFRASTRUCTURE QUESTIONS – OVERALL

An important part of SSEN's relationship with stakeholders is how it engages with them. In practice, engaging with stakeholders includes; phone calls, emails, community consultation events, newsletters, website updates, social media and face to face visits.

M ASK ALL

Q9 At which, if any, of the following stages of a local project have you been engaged by SSEN Transmission? If they've engaged with you at more than one stage, then please select all that apply.

1. Planning / Development
2. Construction / Delivery
3. Post completion
4. They have engaged with me, but I don't know at which stage **(EXCLUSIVE SINGLE CODE)**
5. None of the above – they have not engaged with me about a local project **(EXCLUSIVE SINGLE CODE)**

M ASK IF Q9=1-4

Q10 How do they typically engage with you?

1. Letter
2. Leaflet
3. Email
4. E-bulletin (e.g., electronic newsletter)
5. Telephone call
6. Face to face visit
7. Social media message
8. Webinars
9. Insight Reports
10. Local Press
11. Consultations
12. Town Hall events
13. Workshops
14. Community Liaison Groups
15. Surveys
16. Conferences/Events
17. Website/Blogs
18. Other (please specify)

S ASK ALL

Q11 SSEN Transmission often carry out consultation at different stages of their projects. Have you taken part in any of the consultation events, either in person or virtually?

1. Yes
2. No

O ASK IF Q11=2

Q12 Is there a reason why not?

S ASK ALL

Q13 Do you think the information available on SSEN Transmission's projects is accessible, easy to find and understand?

1. Yes
2. No

O ASK IF Q13=2

Q14 What could they do to improve this?

S ASK ALL

Q15 What is your preferred method for SSEN Transmission to engage with you?

1. Letter
2. Leaflet
3. Email
4. E-bulletin (e.g., electronic newsletter)
5. Telephone call
6. Face to face visit
7. Social media message
8. Webinars
9. Insight Reports
10. Local Press
11. Consultations
12. Town Hall events
13. Workshops
14. Community Liaison Groups
15. Surveys
16. Conferences/Events
17. Website/Blogs
18. Other (please specify)

O ASK ALL

Q15b What specific areas would you like to hear about from SSEN Transmission, regarding infrastructure projects?

S ASK ALL

Q16 Thinking overall, as a stakeholder of SSEN Transmission, how satisfied are you with their engagement?

Very Dissatisfied									Very Satisfied	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	98

O ASK IF Q16=1-9

Q17 How could this be improved?

IF Q16=1-6, SHOW:

“That’s a shame to hear you’ve scored low. You can contact SSEN to update your contact preferences and how they engage with you.”

IF Q16=7-10, SHOW:

“That’s great to hear you are satisfied overall. Don’t forget, if you want to change the way you engage with SSEN you can contact them and update your preferences any time.”

O ASK ALL

Q18 Thinking ahead, is there anything, not covered in the earlier questions that you would like to see SSEN Transmission do differently in the future.

INFRASTRUCTURE QUESTIONS – PROJECT SPECIFIC

SSEN Transmission's work can be very complex and affect communities in a variety of ways depending on many contributing factors. This can lead to stakeholders and communities being impacted both positively and negatively throughout the lifetime of a project. It is important for us to understand both the positive and negative impacts of our infrastructure work upon our stakeholders and communities.

S ASK ALL

Q19 Have you been impacted by an infrastructure project?

Note: impacted could theoretically be positive or negative, not just negative

1. Yes, directly affected - *Someone directly impacted might be a community member, a landowner or a local business affected by our infrastructure works due to road closures, proximity to a substation or towers for overhead lines, access to private land, environmental concerns, noise etc.*
2. Yes, indirectly affected - *The stakeholder might not be directly impacted but will likely be indirectly impacted in some way, even if this is a very low impact. Stakeholders that are indirectly impacted but could be an elected member who has seen an influx of constituent complaints being emailed, a land agent acting on behalf of an owner, a supplier, or a local business somewhere on the supply chain. These might also be secondary impacts from stakeholder who are directly impacted such as the supply chain, local charities and third sector organisations.*
3. No

S ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

Q20 How close do you live to the project?

1. Less than 1 mile
2. 1-3 miles
3. 4 – 5 miles
4. 6-10 miles
5. 11-19 miles
6. 20 miles +

S ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

Q21 How much of an affect does the project typically have on you or your organisation/the customers that you represent?

1. A large negative affect
2. A small negative affect
3. No real affect
4. A small positive affect
5. A large positive affect

O ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

Q22 Please describe how you have been impacted? Please explain both the positive and negative impacts, if applicable.

S ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

Q24 Has the engagement with the SSEN Transmission Project Team improved the impact the project has had on you/your community?

Please consider the following:

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- How the project would have impacted you if there was no engagement.
- Additional support that was provided i.e., info on the project sent out, phone calls, questions answered, Community Liaison staff being easy to contact, ongoing support to handle issues when projects are in construction etc.
- Even if the outcome of a project route or location wasn't the outcome you wanted, did the engagement from SSEN staff (either in development or construction) provide the context and understanding or support to reduce the direct impact to them/their community.

1. Yes
2. No

O ASK IF Q24=1

Q25 Please describe how it could be improved.

S ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

Q26 How much do you know about the project? The needs for it, the duration, the route etc.

1. I have good knowledge about it
2. I have some knowledge about it
3. I have little knowledge about it
4. I have no knowledge other than that it exists.

O ASK IF Q19=1 OR 2

Q27 Do you know who the key contacts are for the project?

1. Yes
2. No

O ASK ALL

Q28 Is there anything, not covered during today's survey, that you would have liked to have seen SSEN Transmission do differently while the project is ongoing? Please, in your own words, describe what this is.

S ASK ALL

Q29 Impact Market Research and SSEN Transmission would like to invite stakeholders that have completed the survey to take part in a facilitated focus group session with other stakeholders in a virtual setting to draw from people’s experiences and identify key improvements to our stakeholder engagement.

A focus group will bring together 6-8 stakeholders who have had similar experiences engaging with SSEN, allowing for more detailed feedback and discussion around key findings from the telephone surveys. These sessions will be conducted online, likely towards the end of February 2023 and will last up to 90 minutes.

Would you be interested in participating in these groups?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

In order to contact you for this focus group we need to collect your name, email address, and contact number.

Could you please give us your name?

O ASK IF Q29 = 1

Q30 In order to contact you for this focus group we need to collect your name, email address, and contact number.

Could you please give us your name?

O ASK IF Q29 = 1

Q31 Could you please give us your email address, so we can contact you regarding the focus group.

O ASK IF Q29 = 1

Q32 Could you please give us your contact number, so we can contact you regarding the focus group.

WRAP-UP QUESTIONS

INFO We are very interested in hearing your views on our survey design.

G ASK ALL

D1 Using the rating please let us know how you would rate each of the following:

	1 Very Bad	2	3	4	5 Very Good
Length of survey					
Ease of completion					
Ability to express my true opinion					
Overall experience					

If you have any additional feedback, please enter your comments here:

S **ASK ALL**

D2 Have you experienced any technical difficulties while taking the survey?

1. No
2. Yes (Please specify)

INFO

Thank you so much for taking part in our survey. We really appreciate your honest feedback and I'll be sure to send this over to SSEN who will review the finding and continue to make improvements. The results of this survey will be published and a copy of the report will be circulated to those who took part in the survey,

Appendix 2: Focus group discussion guide

21st/25th/26th March 2024

Overall Objective – understand how SSEN Transmission can improve the experience their stakeholders have during Infrastructure Projects

FOCUS GROUP STRUCTURE (90 MINUTES):

AREA OF DISCUSSION	TIME ALLOCATION
1. Moderator introduction	5 minutes
2. Warm up	5 minutes
3. Satisfaction and engagement	35 minutes
4. Impacted by recent projects	35 minutes

Moderator Introduction (5 minutes):

- Introduce yourself
- Explain that the research is being conducted on behalf of SSEN Transmission

Moderator show Showcard A

- Explain purpose of discussion (*This research is about your experience of how SSEN Transmission have engaged with you when they have been developing, or constructing Infrastructure Projects that affect (you, your community, or your organisation).*)
- The aim of today is to develop tangible actions for SSEN Transmission to improve and enhance their engagement practices on infrastructure projects.
- Confidentiality is guaranteed, no right/wrong answers, interested in everybody's opinions, in as much detail as possible. **All suggestions are welcome.**
- Explain audio and video recording, and members of the Impact and SSEN team observing. **Please ask each respondent to confirm they are happy to be recorded.**

Moderator note:

The SSEN team are only there to observe and take notes. There won't be a Q&A session and will be involved as little as possible. Respondents should just imagine they are not there.

Additionally, the projects most likely to be discussed are in development phase, due to be completed by 2030. Information on other projects has recently been released for projects going beyond 2030, so if respondents have concerns, please let them raise them, but the discussion is most likely to be around projects in development stage already.

- Any questions?

Moderator show Showcard B

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- A reminder that SSEN Transmission is part of the SSE Group which includes their other Networks Business, SSEN Distribution who maintain the lower voltage network that supplies electricity directly to homes and businesses in the North of Scotland. You may have spoken to them if you have experienced a power outage or damage to the network during a storm. This interview will focus on your experience of engaging with SSEN Transmission only.

Moderator hide Showcards

Warm-up (5 minutes):

Please each introduce yourself:

- Name
- What type of stakeholder are you?
 - PROMPT if don't know: Academia/Innovation / Community Member NGO's (non-government organisation) / Statutory Consultee / Consumer Groups/Trade Bodies / Developers / Environment / Local Authorities / Government / Industry / Land / Supply Chain / Transmission Operator / Other (specify)

Satisfaction and engagement (35 minutes)

The overall level of satisfaction was significantly down on last year's figure, 8% from 44%, as was satisfaction with level of engagement, 7% down from 34%.

Moderator note:

This year's survey was completed online, by 297 respondents, whereas last year's was done over the phone, with 50 respondents. Respondents can be told this if they ask.

- Does these figures surprise you?
 - Why?
 - What would you expect them to be?
- Would you expect satisfaction with engagement be higher or lower than with the overall relationship?
 - Why is that?

Moderator read out:

Communication was raised a key theme throughout the interviews, relating to various aspects of engagement. Typically, SSEN Transmission will communicate with their customers using the following methods, and engage with the following audiences.

Show showcard C

- What are your thoughts on these methods?

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- Have you been engaged with in these ways before?
 - Were you happy with it, at the time? Why?
- Do you think SSEN Transmission need to engage with any other audiences?
 - Who?
- Should they be tailoring their engagement methods to particular audiences?
 - How would methods differ across different audiences?

Looking specifically at events that SSEN Transmission run.

- Has anyone been to an engagement event conducted by SSEN Transmission? Please describe how it went
 - Was it relating to a specific project?
 - Were you satisfied with the information supplied?
 - How did you find out about the event?
- Speaking generally, what are your thoughts on how these events are promoted?
- How could this be improved?
 - What channels could be used?
 - How far in advance should they be promoted?
- Do you think the terminology for promoting these events is engaging?
- Are the materials used easy to understand?
- How could you improve these materials?
- Would you say your feedback on this is specific to this/these project/s or could relate to SSEN Transmission as a whole?

Moderator read out:

Moving on from events, there were mentions in the interviews about SSEN Transmission needing to ensure they are 'Genuine and open' when engaging with their stakeholders.

- What does this mean to you?
- How could SSEN Transmission be more genuine and open with you as a stakeholder?
- Have you got any examples of when SSEN Transmission have been genuine and open?
- Could you please describe a process of engagement that would demonstrate SSEN Transmission engaging with you in a genuine and open way?

Moderator read out:

Now we are moving on to talk about stakeholders inputting into project decisions.

Show showcard D: Stakeholder input

Moderator read out:

Stakeholder input is valuable to SSEN Transmission on all infrastructure projects and is imperative to shape proposals and identify concerns and opportunities.

Our engagement aims to:

- engage holistically with impacted stakeholders.
- inform stakeholders and communities of project updates
- gather critical feedback on proposals
- acquire essential local knowledge
- use feedback to further develop proposals

All engagement is documented and supplied to consenting bodies to evidence how public engagement has shaped the proposals. These are all publicly accessible.

- What are your thoughts on this?
- Do you think these are the right aims for SSEN Transmission to focus their engagement around?
 - Why is this?
- Do you think their engagement delivers against these aims?
 - Why?
- Have you ever seen any of these 'in action'?
- What can SSEN Transmission do to better communicate that stakeholders do have an impact in project decisions?
 - What channels should they use?
- Is there work to be done on how we communicate the overall process for project development?
 - How would this be improved?
- Would you say your feedback on stakeholder engagement is specific to a local area or does it relate to SSEN Transmission as a whole?

Engagement aimed at mitigating impact (35 minutes)

Moderator read out:

We would now like to cover how SSEN Transmission could better engage with their stakeholder to help mitigate the impact of infrastructure projects on their stakeholders.

- Has anyone engagement with SSEN Transmission either before, or during an infrastructure project, that has mitigated the impact, overall?

- Please explain the process of how it happened, and how the impact was mitigated.

Show showcard E: Mitigating impact

Moderator read out:

During the development and construction of an infrastructure project, SSEN Transmission will engage with and support communities to mitigate any potential impact such as:

- **Construction traffic**
 - **Road closures**
 - **Transportation of equipment**
 - **Noise**
 - **Visual impact**
 - **Economic impact**
-
- Does anyone have any experience of being engaged with by SSEN Transmission in these ways?
 - Did their engagement help mitigate the impact of the ongoing project?
 - Thinking specially to you, and projects that have been completed that have impacted you, how could engagement have reduced the impact?
 - Aside from not doing the project, what else could SSEN Transmission done to help mitigate the impact?
 - Would you say your feedback on this is specific to a local area or does it relate to SSEN Transmission as a whole?
 - How do SSEN Transmission 'tell the story' of this engagement better? i.e., explain to people what was done and how it helped people?

Final thoughts (10 minutes):

- Thank you for your time today
- Anything else to help us ensure the experience our stakeholders get whilst an infrastructure project is ongoing is better?
 - What one thing would you change about your relationship with SSEN?

Show showcard H: Thank you

Invite SSEN to re-join the group and thank participants for their time

Appendix 3: Focus group stimulus material



Showcard A

AIM OF THE SESSION

Develop tangible actions for SSEN
Transmission to improve and enhance their
engagement practices on infrastructure
projects.

WHO ARE SSEN TRANSMISSION?



SSEN Transmission are responsible for the electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland, maintaining and investing in the high voltage 132kV, 220kV, 275kV and 400kV electricity transmission network.

COMMUNICATION

Methods

- Postcard maildrop
- Email mailing list
- Social media
- New SSEN Transmission Website
- Feedback forms
- Newspaper adverts
- Press releases
- Local networks

Audience

- Elected members
- Local Authorities
- Community members
- Statutory Consultees

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Stakeholder input is valuable to SSEN Transmission on all infrastructure projects and is imperative to shape proposals and identify concerns and opportunities.

Our engagement aims to:

- engage holistically with impacted stakeholders.
- inform stakeholders and communities of project updates
- gather critical feedback on proposals
- acquire essential local knowledge
- use feedback to further develop proposals

All engagement is documented and supplied to consenting bodies to evidence how public engagement has shaped the proposals. These are all publicly accessible.

MITIGATING IMPACT

During the development and construction of an infrastructure project, SSEN Transmission will engage with and support communities to mitigate any potential impact such as:

- Construction traffic
- Road closures
- Transportation of equipment
- Noise
- Visual impact
- Economic impact

THANK YOU

For further information on the Infrastructure Stakeholder Engagement Survey or to follow up with SSEN Transmission on any of the themes discussed today, please contact

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