

SSEN Transmission Draft Annual Engagement Plan 2024/25



Introducing our Draft Annual Engagement Plan

Every year we prepare our Draft Annual Engagement Plan which sets out our planned engagement priorities for the year ahead. We use our draft plan to consult with external stakeholders to ensure we are engaging on the topics that matter most to them.

As a stakeholder-led business, it is important for us to plan, deliver and review our stakeholder engagement to ensure we:

- Address customer, societal and environmental issues as we deliver a Network for Net Zero
- Maintain an up-to-date understanding of stakeholders' needs
- Capture and incorporate stakeholder views into the day-to-day operation of our business

The consultation period for the Draft Annual Engagement Plan will run for two weeks from 19 August to 11:55pm on 2 September.

Our request to our stakeholders

- ✓ Review the key themes in this Draft Annual Engagement Plan
- ✓ Let us know your thoughts on our engagement priorities and initiatives by completing our [Draft Annual Engagement Plan survey](#) or emailing us via: transmission.stakeholder.engagement@sse.com.

Further information on how we use your feedback can be found on page three.



Our commitment to being a stakeholder-led business means **we use every opportunity to converse with you** and that starts with checking we are **talking to you about the right things.**

Prioritising our engagement with you

To create our Draft Annual Engagement Plan we:

- Reviewed feedback received from our stakeholders during 2023/24 and identified common areas that they encouraged us to engage on.
- Reviewed feedback from our stakeholders through direct engagements and measured satisfaction in our Quality of Connections; Infrastructure; and Stakeholder Engagement Surveys.
- Researched Government, Regulator, and other Transmission Operators' priorities.



How we use your feedback:

Following the closure of our consultation period on our Draft Annual Engagement Plan, we will conduct a materiality assessment to help analyse and prioritise feedback received. This assessment will include factors such as the expected benefit of the engagement and the impact to our business, the wider sector or society. This assessment will help shape **our final Annual Engagement Plan which will be published on our website.**

Feedback received on our Draft Annual Engagement Plan will not be associated with specific individuals or organisations. As one of our contributing stakeholders, we may publish your feedback in any reports or submissions we subsequently produce, but we will anonymise this.

Thank you in advance for your feedback and constructive participation in this Annual Engagement Plan.

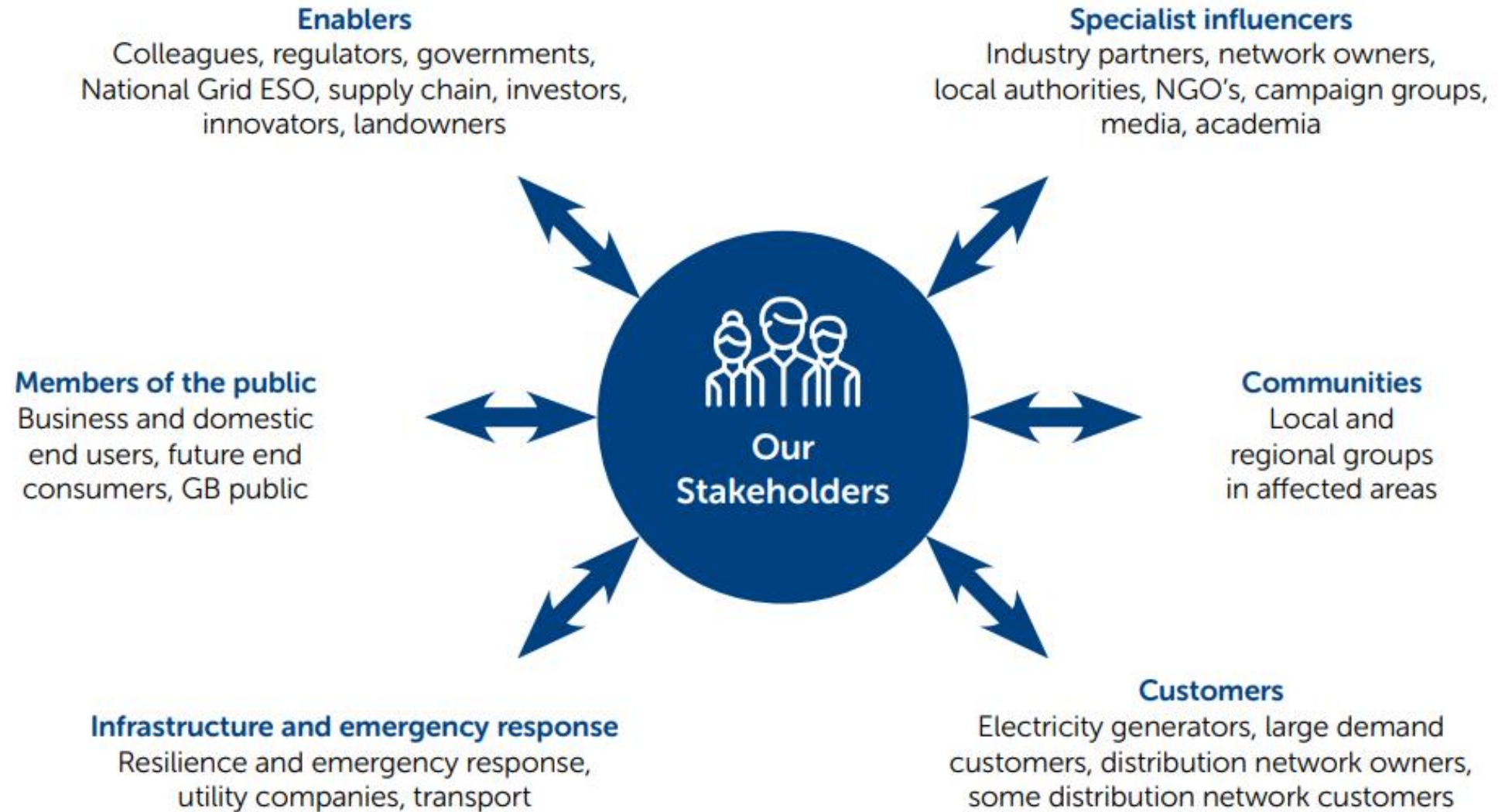
Our stakeholders

Our [Stakeholder Engagement Strategy](#) defines our ambition for stakeholder engagement within our business and outlines how we will achieve this through a number of strategic objectives.

This diagram is taken from our strategy and highlights our stakeholder groups, which will evolve as we transition to meet the changing needs of our network.

By developing a full picture of our stakeholders and understanding exactly who they are, we are able to tailor our engagement with each audience on every activity by level of influence, interest, impact, knowledge and value.

In the autumn/winter of 2024, we will be engaging with stakeholders on the refresh of our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.



Stakeholder themes we will engage on

Our proposed engagement topics for 2024/2025

| Page | Theme | Summary | Example Stakeholder Groups | Example Engagement Methods |
|------|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| 7 | Staying safe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting safety as a priority in all our work Supply Chain Delivery Charter | All stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maildrops and physical literature/flyers Technical webinars & Q&A sessions Bilateral meetings with strategic partners Social media content (various) Dedicated project pages on our website with tailored FAQs On-site academies in places of learning Face-to-face community-based engagement events Conferences and workshops with our supply chain Attendance at career days and industry fairs Published literature and strategies Volunteer activity in the communities we operate in Partnering with member-based organisation to deliver complex messaging Representation on strategic boards and economic forums Consultations and surveys Email communications and newsletters |
| 8 | Pathway to 2030 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of projects to increase capacity of the transmission network in northern Scotland to deliver net zero targets and energy security | Communities, landowners/occupiers, decision makers, regulators, supply chain, elected officials, other business sectors, public bodies | |
| 10 | Leaving a positive lasting legacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community benefits Housing Strategy Environmental improvement | Local authorities, local communities, housing associations, community groups/organisations, supply chain, recreational organisations, nature charities | |
| 12 | Future of our network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our next business plan RIIO T2 commitments Beyond 2030 Legislative frameworks | Ofgem, National Electricity System Operator, local authorities, elected members, UK and Scottish Government, wider decision makers, generation developers | |
| 14 | Customer engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer connections Quality of connections | Connections customers, Industry Groups, Ofgem, Government departments | |
| 15 | Digital engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Strategy | Employees, Ofgem, website users, connections customers, transmission operators | |
| 16 | Engaging our people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career opportunities Engaging employees | Education providers, skills development organisations, employees, future workforce | |

Key themes

Staying safe



At SSEN Transmission, safety is our prime focus, and our Safety, Health and Wellbeing team have an engagement programme planned for 2024/25 to keep safety at the forefront of our colleagues' minds.

We are also committed to promoting safety as a priority in our work with stakeholders throughout 2024/25. **This year SSE launched Scotland's only immersive safety training centre**, which will welcome 7,000 people (including our contract partners) through its doors annually over the next three years.

As we continue to maintain, upgrade and build our network across the north of Scotland, we know that there are safety risks and concerns both for our colleagues and those living and working nearby that must be mitigated and managed. We are also aware that these risks become more complex as we progress multiple large capital projects including those in the marine environment.

Late last year, **our supply chain signed up to our new ASTI Delivery Charter** which commits all those working on our Pathway to 2030 programme across the north of Scotland to the key principles of safety, innovation and collaboration. In 2024/25, we will continue to bring together our supply chain and contract partners to embed our safety, health and wellbeing strategy across our contract partner workforce.

We will continue to engage with industry partners and other network operators both directly and through other industry bodies, such as the Energy Networks Association, to embrace continuous improvement opportunities across our industry in terms of safety, health and wellbeing. We will also maintain our strong working relationship with the Health and Safety Executive, collaborating effectively to identify issues, support actions, and reduce risks wherever possible.

Our engagement on public safety issues will increase this year and we will stay vigilant in terms of emerging themes as the scale of our work increases. We will continue to make use of public safety campaigns and engage with stakeholders such as those using working around or using large industrial or agricultural machinery near our network assets.

Pathway to 2030

Introduction

[Pathway to 2030](#) is a £20bn investment programme to deliver a series of projects which will increase the capacity of the transmission network in the north of Scotland. It is part of a national effort to upgrade power lines across Great Britain to connect and transport renewable electricity, especially from new offshore wind farms. These projects present a huge opportunity to bring significant socio-economic benefits to the region and the communities within it.

Our approach to engagement

We are committed to working closely with all stakeholders including communities and community representative groups, landowners, statutory bodies and local authorities. We are also working closely with our supply chain to ensure a coordinated approach to delivering the Pathway to 2030 projects and leaving a positive legacy for communities.

Over the last 12 months, we directly contacted nearly 300,000 people within 10km of our proposed projects, inviting them to attend our events and have their voices heard. In total, we have undertaken over 220 consultation events and public meetings which have been attended by over 10,000 people and received and analysed over 12,000 written responses in what we believe is one of the biggest listening exercises in Scotland's history.

We always aim for transparency and open communication, this includes sharing project plans, potential environmental and social impacts and proposed mitigation measures. By listening closely to communities, we have already made significant changes to project plans, including moving substation locations and altering overhead line routes. We will continue to be clear about demonstrating where stakeholder feedback has resulted in changes to our project designs. You can read more about how stakeholder feedback influences our proposals [here](#).

Reports on Consultation

We will shortly publish our Reports on Consultation following the latest round of consultations. These reports detail how feedback received during recent consultations has been considered and will outline next steps in the development process. We will continue to engage proactively with stakeholders as our projects progress through each stage of project development, construction and during their operational lifespans.



Pathway to 2030



Continuing to learn and adapt

Throughout 2024/25 we will continue to use a variety of traditional and new engagement initiatives to proactively engage on current and additional themes in an inclusive way. For example:

- Working with industry experts to help explain technology limitations through Q&A webinars
- Presenting planned mitigations to address environmental concerns through consultation literature and website FAQs,
- Outlining traffic management plans via letter drops and social media
- Showcasing socio-economic benefits such as job creation and skills development opportunities from SSENT Transmission and our supply chain

Our dedicated Community Liaison Managers will continue to provide a point of contact for community members and their representatives, and we will continue to engage with decision-makers, such as planning authorities and local government officials and work closely with MPs, MSPs and Government officials as we move towards submitting planning applications later this year.

Partnership working

Throughout 2024/25 we will also continue to work with member-based groups and organisations in key sectors such as agriculture, tourism and economic development to deliver tailored messaging and target individual stakeholder groups or help us reach underrepresented stakeholder groups. This includes working with agencies such as Scottish Enterprise and Highland and Islands Enterprise to ensure the economic opportunities for Scotland are realised and working with National Farmers Union Scotland to address specific areas of interest in relation to land access and biosecurity. We have already built strong relationships with many organisations across the country and look forward to continuing to expand these relationships and undertake further key engagements throughout this year.

Leaving a positive lasting legacy

Background

Our significant planned investment in the electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland is critical to powering change and meeting Scotland and the UK's renewable energy targets. We also want our projects to leave a positive legacy to ensure that we are delivering not only for our business and customers but also our communities across the region.

Community Benefit Fund

Last year we consulted on our first ever [Community Benefit Fund](#) which will support initiatives in communities in the north of Scotland. We understand that the work that we are doing can have an impact on the communities close to our projects, therefore we are committed to minimising our impacts and maximising the long-term benefits that our developments can bring.

This year we will continue to engage with stakeholders on our initial **£10 million Community Benefit Fund** which will support the communities who will be hosting our critical national infrastructure. Our engagement with strategic stakeholders such as local authorities, third sector bodies, and relevant community groups will ensure that the fund addresses local needs and delivers against three priority areas of people, place and fuel poverty. The regional element of the fund will launch in September 2024, and we will continue to engage on the structure of the fund to ensure that our communities understand eligibility criteria and the application process.

Peter Peacock has been appointed the inaugural Chair of the regional part of the Fund. Peter, a former Scottish Government Minister and Convener of Highland Council, will chair a panel made up of three independent advisors and a representative from Transmission, that will assess applications and allocate funding. We will launch a communications campaign in September to highlight the opportunities that the fund presents to our stakeholders.



Leaving a positive lasting legacy

Housing Strategy

Late last year we confirmed our ambition to contribute to the development of **at least 200 new homes** in the north of Scotland which, upon completion of our projects, will be handed to local organisations to provide accommodation for local people, delivering a legacy for future generations. This will also help to ensure that we can accommodate our own workers as we begin work on a transmission network that delivers net zero.

To help inform our **accommodation strategy** we have been engaging with our project teams, local authorities, landowners, housing associations, community organisations, elected members and government agencies to help identify local property needs, including helping to address the rural housing crisis. Following the launch of our Strategy later this Summer, we will continue with focused engagement with our stakeholders to ensure we deliver a positive housing legacy as part of our Pathway to 2030 programme.

Environmental improvement

We are committed to achieving [10% biodiversity net gain](#) (BNG) from our projects. This ensures that we don't just restore our natural habitats but actively improve them for the benefit of local communities, wildlife, flora and fauna. For example, in Angus we have worked with Balfour Beatty, RePollinate and Angus Council to create [bee beds that will help pollinators thrive](#).

Throughout 2024/25 we will collaborate with local experts, community groups and conservation organisations throughout the project development process to inform our understanding of local priorities for BNG. We will also engage with key stakeholders throughout the north of Scotland to identify opportunities to improve our environment.

You can read more about our commitments to delivering legacy through Pathway to 2030 Projects [here](#).



Future of our network

Introduction

Certainty on future network requirements is crucial to secure investment and help ensure UK net zero targets can be met. This year we will work with our industry partners to advocate for clarity and transparency on future development of the transmission network. This will involve engagement on whole system solutions, area system planning and local area energy planning, as well as expanding our engagement with local authorities, generation developers and other stakeholders focused on network development needs.

RIIO-T2 Commitments

As we approach the final year of the RIIO-T2 price control period, we are focused on delivering our obligations and commitments on time. We will continue to develop and deliver activities necessary to achieve the 5 Clear Goals set out in our [RIIO T2 Business Plan](#).

This includes continued engagement on RIIO-T2 capital projects, a focus on maintenance of our existing assets, developing our Aberdeen and Dundee City Strategies which involve taking a strategic, whole systems approach to meeting electricity network demands as cities decarbonise. We will engage with local authorities, transport bodies, SSEN Distribution, National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO), businesses and communities as they deliver these decarbonisation initiatives. Having received our most recent Asset Management ISO55000 recertification this year, continued engagement and audits will be carried out internally over the next three years to help inform and improve our performance in the lead up to the next reaccreditation.

RIIO-T3 - Our 2026-2031 Business Plan

We are developing and refining the contents of [our next business plan](#) for submission to Ofgem in December. Investment in our network is vital to operating a reliable and available network, increasing future capacity, as well as ensuring the UK's long-term energy security. This investment will also provide significant economic and employment opportunities across the north of Scotland. Three ambitions have been identified for the second half of the decade: **Accelerating the Pathway to Net Zero; a Network that is Safe, Reliable and Resilient; and a Transition that is Fair and Sustainable**. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to develop our goals in these areas to make sure we set the right level of ambition, deliver on stakeholder expectations and maintain our focus on deliverability.

Our Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG), the [Network for Net Zero Stakeholder Group](#), will continue to represent the interests of consumers and stakeholders in holding us to account in respect of our RIIO-T2 and RIIO-T3 commitments. ISGs provide challenge and scrutiny on RIIO-T3 plan development and implementation thereafter. Importantly, this includes the approach taken to stakeholder engagement at all stages of plan development, decision-making and delivery.



Future of our network

Beyond 2030

This year Ofgem published the [Beyond 2030 report](#) which follows the [Holistic Network Design](#) report of 2022. Beyond 2030 outlines a series of recommended upgrades to the GB electricity network throughout the 2030s to ensure the transition to net zero. We welcome Ofgem's consultation on its proposed 'Beyond 2030' projects and will continue to work constructively with the regulator and wider stakeholders to obtain approval and unlock the investment required for these vital projects.

We aim to engage closely with the [new National Electricity System Operator](#) (NESO) throughout 2024/25 to positively influence and provide representations ahead of the publication of the Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP). The CSNP is anticipated to provide an independent, coordinated, and longer-term approach to wider network planning in Great Britain to meet net zero ambitions.

We will work closely with stakeholders including communities, local authorities, statutory bodies and elected members to support the accelerated delivery of the network upgrades necessary, we will encourage Ofgem to build on the success of their Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment programme when determining the framework under which these recommendations will be taken forward.



Legislative frameworks

The policy and regulatory landscape will continue to evolve, with major institutional reforms planned by both the new UK Government and Ofgem, as well as the launch of the National Energy System Operator this summer. These reforms are intended to ensure that the energy system continues to deliver for all stakeholders whilst also maintaining an attractive investment climate to deliver net zero and energy security.

This year we will engage with stakeholders on the planning landscape currently in place in Scotland and the UK. We will work with elected members around timely consents to ensure we can deliver projects on time to contribute to Government targets. We will continue to work constructively with Government, including engagement on the Transmission Acceleration Action Plan (TAAP) actions, with the aim of positively influencing the legislative programmes with the priorities of our business and stakeholders in mind.

Customer engagement

Customer Connections

We are committed to a robust and efficient connections process that works for customers in a changing environment. We have been engaging with our customers and partners across the industry on reform to the customer connections process and will continue to do so across 2024/25, as we continue to work on longer term reform which delivers faster, better coordinated and more efficient delivery of connections. We will continue to engage through established working groups, customer facing events, newsletters for customers, website updates and webinars.

We will positively influence connections reform and changes to market codes to enable the energy transition and will engage with key stakeholders on shaping the future of the industry through the Connections Action Plan, and contestability in onshore transmission infrastructure. We will collaborate with the relevant government departments, Energy Networks Association, Ofgem and the ESO to achieve a new reformed connections process that supports achievement of net zero targets. Throughout 2024/25, we will continue to work closely with our industry partners to shape the regulatory framework and policy environment that supports SSEN Transmission as well as our customers and stakeholders.

Quality of Connections

The Quality of Connections (QoC) survey was introduced to measure customer satisfaction and drive continuous improvement in the customer experience across the full project lifecycle. Engaging with customers at key stages of the connections journey enables us to understand our customers' needs, proactively identify improvements, capture insights and understand more about the experience customers have with us. In 2023/24 we achieved an overall QoC score of 8.6/10, maintaining our sector-leading performance for the last two consecutive years. Throughout 2024/25 we will continue to engage with customers through the survey, utilising the feedback provided to further enhance the customer experience.



Digital engagement

Introduction

Customers and stakeholders are central to our digital investments, and we continue to progress the delivery of new digital products and experiences that enhance our stakeholder engagement and service to customers. Earlier this year we implemented around **40 technical website enhancements** to improve the information we provide about our critically important infrastructure projects. We will continue to improve our website in response to direct feedback from our customers and stakeholders.

Artificial Intelligence

We have implemented a new **secure artificial intelligence (AI) tool** that can analyse stakeholder feedback received through our public consultations and in correspondence. This provides us with faster feedback analysis and allows us to take action more promptly, combining the strengths of AI-driven insights with the invaluable expertise and human intelligence of our people. We will continue to utilise AI to support our ongoing engagement with stakeholders to understand their material concerns and explore further opportunities to embrace AI across our business that will improve service, engagement and operations.

Customers

In the customer connections space, we will continue to seek feedback from our customers through surveys and personal interactions and feed their requirements into our digital projects such as our **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) project**. This system provides capability for improved data recording, increased automation and internal efficiencies, achieved through system integrations which support us in meeting Ofgem's Data Best Practice and interoperability aims. We will continue to engage with the Electricity System Operator (ESO) to progress our integration ambitions and over time will provide self-service options to customers through a new Customer Portal. We will also continue to engage with customers to help them access and understand our new digital services and to receive value from them.



Engaging our people

Career opportunities

For the second year running SSEN Transmission has been awarded gold-accredited membership from The 5% Club and we aspire to have at least 5% of all employees across the business in 'earn as you learn' roles, from apprenticeships to graduate placements, whilst also providing opportunities to upskill our current colleagues. We're creating hundreds of new green jobs to deliver a just transition to net zero and throughout 2024/25 we will continue to promote and engage on these opportunities.

We believe that our engaged workforce makes SSEN Transmission a great place to work and will look to further engage our potential future workforce by highlighting the [opportunities available at SSEN Transmission](#) as we continue to grow our business. Throughout 2024/25, we will attend recruitment fairs across the north of Scotland, continue to build our relationships with schools, colleges and universities as well as key employment stakeholders such as Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) promoting the range of opportunities available within our business both now and in the future. We will also partner and engage with education authorities at different age demographics to help prepare the future workforce for entering the job market.

Engaging employees

Internally for our colleagues, in 2024/25, we are focused on enabling an engaged workforce that is motivated to deliver our priorities by continuing to develop our team culture here at SSEN Transmission. Our internal communication team is focused on enhancing the reach of communications by pursuing a programme of engagement which includes leadership calls, our annual leadership conference, quarterly all-employee calls, and continuing to promote internal news across various channels to keep our colleagues informed and engaged across the business.

We will continue to engage our new colleagues with a comprehensive onboarding programme and this year we have already launched a new colleague development programme aimed at future leaders called 'Enabling Transmission Careers'. Later in the year we will celebrate the appointment of our 2000th colleague when they join team Transmission by hosting a 'One Team Transmission' event for our colleagues.



Share your feedback

Next steps

Share your feedback on our Draft Annual Engagement Plan

Click on the link below and share your feedback on the Draft Annual Engagement Plan.

[Draft Annual Engagement Plan – Web Survey](#)

The survey will close at 11:55pm on 2 September 2024.

We welcome your comments or suggestions on any aspect of the plan. You can also request further information or for us to call you back, if you prefer to provide verbal feedback.

We will publish a summary of anonymised responses within a Feedback Report on our website alongside the final Annual Engagement Plan.

Keep in touch:



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