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DISTRIBUTION**

Serving the Midlands, South West and Wales

Incentive on Connections Engagement

ICE 2021/22 Plan

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Introduction

The Incentives of Connections Engagement (ICE) remains key to our stakeholder engagement programme and ensures we continue to deliver improvements in all aspects of connections delivery based upon your feedback.

Welcome to our new ICE Plan for 2021/22; our seventh annual ICE Plan since the introduction of the incentive in 2015. The plan sets out our ambition for improving services for our connections customers.

These past twelve months has proven a challenging time for all in the face of the Covid pandemic and it has required new ways of working to maintain the high levels of customer service that you deserve. Thanks to the resilience and hard work of our staff, we have kept the lights on and continued to deliver connections even through these most testing of times.

Many of our staff have been working from home but this has not affected our ability to engage effectively with our connections stakeholders and develop the processes and policies needed to deliver on our 2020/21 ICE Plan. Engagement during the last year has changed but with the help of various virtual platforms, we have managed to keep in touch and obtain the important feedback from you that helps us to ensure we remain on-track and to develop our plans for the future.

Much of our recent stakeholder engagement has been focused on our plans for the next distribution price control period from 2023 – 2028, called RIIO-ED2. We are currently putting our Business Plan together and I am pleased to confirm that part of our task is to create a Connections Strategy that sets out our vision for RIIO-ED2.

ICE continues to be hugely important to us during this current price control period and we will continue to focus on the immediate task in hand, as I hope you can see from the initiatives we have included in this ICE Plan. Nevertheless the creation of the Connections Strategy is an exciting development which allows us to take a longer term view and to be even more ambitious in our plans for the future.

Our 2021/22 ICE Plan contains twenty initiatives, the majority of which are new and others that build on previous initiatives but all are created as a direct consequence of stakeholder feedback. The ICE Plan focuses on four key areas; policy guidance, customer support, communication and process improvement.

As you might imagine, accommodating the connection of low carbon technology such as heat pumps and electric vehicles to meet the Governments UK Net Zero targets features heavily as does the delivery of flexible connection solutions as an alternative to conventional reinforcement. We are also investing a great deal of resource in the use of the latest digital technologies and data innovations to deliver a more efficient, flexible and responsive customer service.

As this pandemic hopefully recedes in to memory we will look forward with optimism and push on with our intent to be at the forefront of connections services through the delivery of excellent customer service.

I trust that you find our new ICE Plan suitably reflective of your needs. Your views are invaluable to us, so please do not hesitate to contact us at: wpdconnpolicysupport@westernpower.co.uk



Graham Halladay
Operations Director



Connections Strategy

RIIO-ED1

Our strategy in respect of connections customer engagement is built upon well-established principles. Our simple ethos is to listen to what our customers tell us in terms of their requirements and translate that into a set of high-level connection objectives designed to fulfil those needs.

We then take these high level objectives and define more specific initiatives for inclusion in the ICE Plan that focus on key deliverables and how we measure our success.

Our aim is to deliver an exceptional connections service for our customers. To help us in our quest, high quality, frequent and challenging engagement with our stakeholders is therefore crucial to achieving this. As part of our approach we have to take into account the differing needs of our stakeholders and tailor our service accordingly.

Our primary connections objectives are shown below:

To provide a faster more efficient connections service	The key output is to improve the overall time to connect by 20%, whilst still maintaining excellent customer service such that WPD continues to be the top ranked DNO group by customer satisfaction surveys.
To improve communications with customers	This objective centres on delivering outputs that improve how our stakeholders can communicate with us and the information that we can provide them. There is a focus on developing and enhancing online information and interaction for connections customers.
To enhance engagement with major customers	Outputs for this objective centre on ensuring we communicate effectively to gain feedback to better understand the requirements of the major customers. Enhancing our engagement leads to improved focus on these customer requirements and drives the development of our priorities for ICE Plan initiatives.
To achieve guaranteed standards of performance	The target to achieve zero failures of connections GSOPs ensures that we maintain our focus on the core connection activities required at each stage of the connection process.
To enable facilitation of the competitive market	WPD has a key role in the facilitation of competition in connections and it is important that we continue to work with customers and connection providers to ensure that we further develop competition in connections to ensure a level playing field in the connections market.



Stakeholder Engagement

We have followed an enhanced and expanded approach to stakeholder engagement in order to co-create our ICE Plan. To ensure that we cater for all our connections customers' needs we engage with stakeholders by various means, including Connection Stakeholder Workshops, connection surgeries and regular expert panel meetings.

Our Customer Connections Steering Group (CCSG) meets regularly which has proven to be an excellent source to challenge us throughout the ICE process, and has been instrumental in the design of our plan. CCSG members have encouraged us to be ambitious and industry leading in our approach.



Identify stakeholders

- Recognise emerging stakeholders
- Maintain stakeholder contacts



Understand their needs

- Identify the range of interest areas from unmetered to DER



Always engage with a purpose

- Avoid talking shops, demonstrate we have listened via the actions we undertake



Range of methods

- Use a variety of mechanisms e.g. expert panels, workshops, surveys etc.
- Tailor to suit the audience



Listen, act and measure benefits

- Engage on priorities ICE Plan identified
- Publish ICE 2021/22 Plan, KPIs and updates



Use feedback to improve service

- Short-term: policies, procedures, processes
- Long-term: shape our strategic priorities



Make feedback available

- Publish finding and WPD's response
- Clear line of sight to ICE 2021/22 Plan

	Action Number & Subject	Initiative Stakeholder Feedback	Initiative Outcome	Measure	Target Date (Q2;Q3;Q4;Q1)	Connections Area			
						MD	UMS	DER	ICP
Policy Guidance	1 Unmetered Connection Eligibility	Provide clarity on policy relating to eligibility as an unmetered connection.	Further improve transparency and communication on information “when do you need a meter in street furniture”. Provide external and internal guidance in a plain English statement on the website page and an internal bulletin.	Guides developed by target date.	Q4 Dec 2021		•		
	2 Cancellation Charge relating to NGENO Wider Works	Improve information sharing with regard to potential requirement for liabilities and securities relating to larger connections having impact on the transmission system.	To work collaboratively with all DNOs and ENA on a good practice guide to drive some improvements and consistency, to form the best working practice for WPD. To produce and share information on a WPD best practice guide with links to our connections webpage.	Provide a best practice guide by target date.	Q1 March 2022	•	•	•	
	3 Connections Queue Management	Improve transparency with regard to how WPD facilitates its connections queue management process.	Identify and implement any improvements to existing guidance to improve consistency, transparency and fair application of queue management principles. Have regard to concurrent work being undertaken by the ENA following Open Network consultation on the policy mechanisms and implement any changes as necessary. (Continuation from ICE 2020/21 Plan Action 4).	Provide clear and concise information to stakeholders via various means including the website.	Q2 June 2021	•		•	•
	4 Statement of Works (SoW)	Provide guidance relating to how the Statement of Works process will develop following codification.	To update external guidance document, information on WPD's website and template letters following the outcome of CMP298, which is designed to formally codify the Appendix G process into CUSC and is expected to conclude at the end of 2021. (Continuation from ICE 2020/21 Plan Action 2).	Updated document issued to stakeholders. Positive feedback from stakeholders through a questionnaire in relation to the updated document.	Q4 Dec 2021			•	•
	5 Heat Pump Trial	Understand the impact of higher levels of Heat Pumps on the distribution system.	To understand the network impact of Heat Pumps, and to assess the practicalities of installation, we are working with a partner to develop new houses with LCT heating systems. The learning from this project will inform a revision to our Heat Pump Strategy document in 2021. (Continuation from ICE 2020/21 Plan Action 27).	Completion of Trial.	Q3 Sept 2021	•			

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Customer Support	6 Interactive Costing Tool	<p>Set up some kind of an outline platform with mapping of cables and assets. That way, customers would be able to self-serve and work out whether their scheme would be suitable.</p> <p>Provide a provision for a "Self Service Budget Estimate". E.g. detailed enough information for connections customers to carry out their own assessment on a budget basis.</p>	<p>Development of a customer-friendly on-line LV self-serve budget estimates costing tool (LV 210kVA).</p> <p>Users will have access to a new automated tool that will allow them to self-serve and generate their own LV budget estimate.</p>	<p>Number of users from target implementation date.</p> <p>Stakeholder Feedback.</p>	Q1 March 2022	• (LV only)		•	•
	7 'Enquiry Tracker' Process for Non ICP Customers	<p>Provide definitive updates including timescales through an online portal. This would allow users to see progress without having to contact WPD and being passed through several departments every time an update is needed.</p>	<p>Expansion of 'enquiry tracker'/online application process to include non-ICP major customers.</p> <p>To trial the on-line 'enquiry tracker' with repeat major connection customers. Survey and review feedback, before full roll-out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create & route connection enquiries • Enable tracking of individual schemes stage by stage • Manage two-way activities • Upload and exchange documents. 	<p>Positive survey feedback on enquiry tracker.</p> <p>Number of customers making use of the new process.</p>	Q1 March 2022	•		•	
	8 Scoping of Flexible Connections	<p>Provide more clarity on availability of specific flexible connection options and volunteer up the most suitable consideration for a connection.</p>	<p>To provide additional customer facing documentation to recognise the changing energy use of customers and the ability of flexible connections to provide an alternative to conventional reinforcement, providing targeted advice and guidance to customers.</p>	<p>Improved number of hits to the webpage.</p>	Q1 March 2022	•		•	•
	9 Recording and Provision of Historical Curtailment Information Relating to Active Network Management (ANM) systems	<p>Improve the level of curtailment information.</p>	<p>To provide a high level measure of network congestion in active ANM zones by recording the number of half-hourly time periods during which an ANM system issued curtailment signals to customers.</p>	<p>Availability of "Periods Constrained" data for each ANM zone, updated on a quarterly basis.</p>	Q1 March 2022			•	
	10 Digitalisation Programme Updates	<p>Provide improvements to data quality, including the heat map information.</p>	<p>To inform customers on the latest data available and digitalisation developments.</p> <p>Provide customers access to the latest available data and help understand, how the data can assist planned developments to support their activities.</p> <p>(Continuation from ICE 2020/21 Plan Action 32)</p>	<p>Releasing new data sets via social media posts and news articles.</p>	Q2 June 2021	•		•	•

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Communication	11 EREC G99 Operational Notification Process	Provide clarity on how the G99 process works on the ground and with on-site testing.	To review and improve transparency of the G99 operational notification process including timescales, on when we issue the documentation or commissioning, energisation and witness information to the generator/customer. Develop a guide with clear implementation timescales both internally and externally, provide clear links on our website.	Positive feedback.	Q3 Sept 2021			•	
	12 Competition in Connections (CiC) Understanding	Sometimes customers struggle to understand the whole network ownership, especially the Independent Distribution Network Operators (IDNO) interface. They understand they can go to a Connections Provider but not necessarily understand the IDNO possibilities and what that means to them.	Undertake a review and improve the existing information on CiC. Update the connections webpage to enhance clarity in relation to the options available to customers.	Positive feedback from customers.	Q3 Sept 2021	•		•	•
	13 Connections Jargon Buster	Provide clarity surrounding the use of technical terms by explaining terms in greater detail.	Provide granular information for customers and stakeholders to find connections and technical acronyms in a jargon buster guide/factsheet on the WPD Connections website.	Positive feedback.	Q3 Sept 2021	•		•	
	14 Connections Planning - Internal Communication	Create best practice and consistency throughout WPD on Connections process and policy, to ensure customers receive an excellent service.	Develop communication pathways between the policy team, front line design engineers and planners to ensure customers received a consistent approach across our four distribution areas. Collaborate with internal connections representatives, to understand any feedback, concerns or constructive suggestions, on connection areas for improvement/change.	Actions and changes identified as a result of this initiative.	Q1 March 2022	•	•	•	•
	15 Reinforcement Trigger Level	Create something that identifies 'tipping points' where connection costs change. Allow the planner/designer to be pro-active in contacting the customer giving feedback on the connection. (Tipping point).	Improve the application process for major connections at 33kV and above to provide the reinforcement trigger level for relevant customer applications. The process will allow WPD to inform a customer of the level of reduction in capacity required to not trigger reinforcement, so that a customer can make an informed choice as to whether to proceed with their full capacity and pay for reinforcement, or to reduce capacity and avoid reinforcement.	Positive feedback from stakeholders on the improvements completed.	Q4 Dec 2021	•		•	•

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Process Improvement	16 Domestic LCT Acceptance	Make it as easy as possible for customers to connect LCTs and reduce times to provide approval to install LCT equipment.	<p>To prepare for increased volumes of LCT notifications and connections we plan to adopt an automatic acceptance process for most domestic LCTs. The work which we would normally complete as part of the acceptance process, such as network modelling, will now be completed in retrospect for connections where reinforcement works are socialised. We will also make more use of data provided by installers to assess the service which feeds the customer.</p> <p>Any works to upgrade the service connection will also be completed in retrospect. Some LCTs with a known high level of duty on our network will be excluded from the automatic process.</p>	Update of LCT acceptance policy documents.	Q3 Sept 2021	•			
	17 Network Capacity Map for ANM - Provision of Indicative Curtailment for ANM	Continue to improve the network availability/ headroom capacity map data - Transmission ANM and curtailment levels for the different DG technologies.	<p>Continue to improve the Network Availability Capacity Map to provide better information for Transmission ANM (TANM) and explore options for providing indicative curtailment information.</p> <p>(Continuation from ICE 2020/21 Plan Action 8).</p>	Positive feedback from stakeholders on the improvements completed.	Q3 Sept 2021	•		•	•
	18 Provision of Outage Information for DER Customers	Provide e-mail communication to DER customers for any new outage plans and altered plans going forward so that the DER community do not have to log into our portal to check to see if there was anything new that would be of relevance to them.	To work with our consultants to establish a firm framework with a view to deliver a solution. Proposed solution is that updates created within the portal will auto-generate an e-mail to the relevant party.	Positive feedback on the revised DG portal.	Q4 Dec 2021			•	
	19 Smart Meter Load Data	Improve LV data through Smart Metering, to help with capacity levels and connectivity for new connections.	To generate load profiles from feeders with Smart Metering data to improve accuracy of current load profiles. This will provide better data visibility and enhanced modelling, allowing more accurate feeder analysis and earlier identification of potential capacity constraints. Improved data will optimise network assessment, identify reinforcement works ahead of need and increase our ability to accommodate new connections and the installation of LCT's.	Feedback of progress to stakeholders, and use of profiles in WPD planning tools.	Q1 March 2022	•			
	20 Developers Guide through Visual Context	Provide enhanced guidance for inexperienced developers wishing to apply for connections.	<p>Following on from our initiative from ICE 2020/21 Plan - Action 6.</p> <p>We will improve information available to facilitate new entrants on our processes and procedures for a connection application by establishing a new customer focussed guide on our website area, including the provision of animated guidance.</p>	Number of hits on the website area.	Q2 June 2021	•			•

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If you would like to share your thoughts and feedback throughout the year, please contact our Connections Policy Team at wpdconnpolicysupport@westernpower.co.uk

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