



Major Connections Strategy RIIO-ED2

December 2021

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How this strategy impacts other areas of our plan

Our focus is to achieve the best possible positive outcomes for our customers, by utilising innovative solutions and smarter working practices to drive efficiency in all we do. This strategy forms part of a suite of wide ranging, ambitious and interconnected strategies that we will be implemented in RIIO-ED2. Each one is designed to contribute towards the delivery of the same four overarching strategic outcomes we will achieve for customers:



1. Sustainability

Lead the drive to net zero as early as possible.



2. Connectability

Customers can easily connect their electric vehicles, heat pumps and renewable generation.



3. Vulnerability

First class vulnerable customer support programme where everyone benefits in a smart future.



4. Affordability

Maintain excellent customer service, safety and network performance and transform the energy grid for future generations, while keeping bills broadly flat.

Each of our strategies is embedded across our operations and never delivered in silos. This will lead to joined up delivery, utilise opportunities to share knowledge and expertise across WPD teams, and achieve maximum benefits for customers. By doing so we will ensure each of our strategies has a far reaching impact and identifies opportunities to improve our service, performance and efficiency in every possible area of our business. Our strategies are therefore highly interrelated and co-dependent.

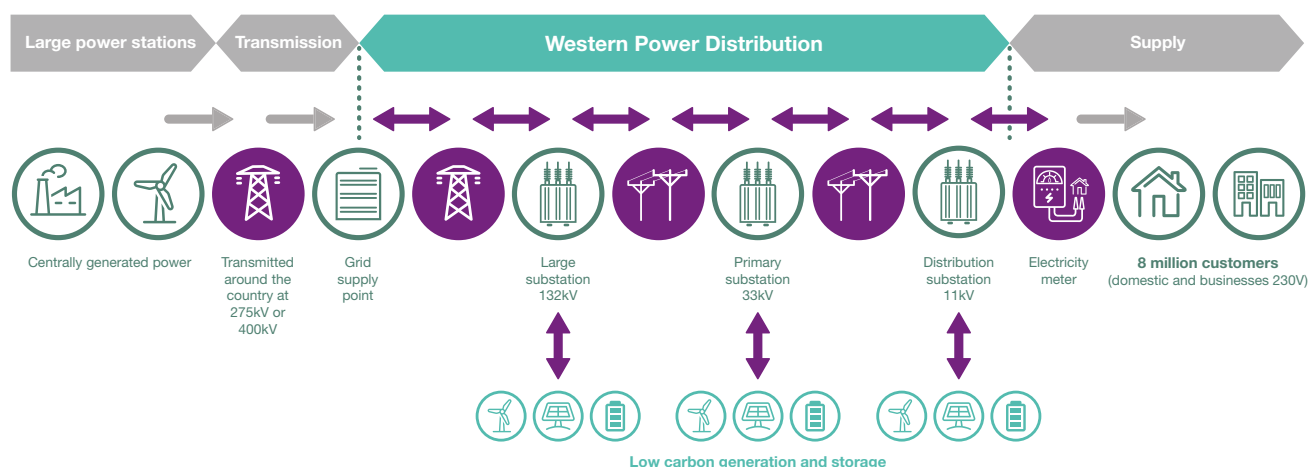
The following table provides a snapshot of some of the extensive impacts of this Major Connections Strategy, and signposts to other areas of our plan upon which its successful delivery will be dependent.

Strategy	Reference within the strategy:		
Climate Resilience	-	-	-
Customer Vulnerability	-	-	-
Destination Net Zero: Business Innovation and Efficiency	✓	Facilitating the uptake of huge volumes of low carbon technologies through connections processes that are easy to access and understand	Page 30
Digitalisation Strategy and Action Plan	✓	Improving data enables customers to make more informed decisions on where and how to connect. We will launch an innovative self-serve online tool to improve the ease and simplicity of our connections process for customers	Page 10 and 20
DSO	✓	Ensuring that we meet the future energy needs of our major connections customers to enable them to participate in DSO services	Page 8
Environment & Environmental Action Plan	-	-	-
Innovation	✓	Using innovation to understand customer requirements for future system access and developing tailored solutions to better support customers	Page 10
Major Connections			
Network Visibility	✓	Making data more visible and interactive for customers through a centralised data mapping functionality	Page 19
Net Zero Communities	-	-	-
Social Contract	✓	Supporting community energy groups that have ideas for innovation projects	Page 10
Whole Systems	✓	Working with Independent Connections Providers and Independent DNOs to deliver the best value solutions for customers; and offering a suite of flexible connections options to make it easier to connect without the need for conventional reinforcement	Page 31 and 41
Workforce Resilience	-	-	-

Who we are

Western Power Distribution delivers electricity to 8 million customers over an area of 55,000km².

This electricity is distributed over 220,000km of overhead lines and underground cables, fed from 185,000 substations. The area served by WPD is shown in the map below and covers four licence areas, East Midlands, West Midlands, South West and South Wales.



Our core responsibilities as part of RIIO-ED1 are to keep the lights on, maintain equipment, fix the network and connect new customers. We are developing a Distribution System Operator (DSO) capability within our operations and these additional roles within the developing energy system will require an increased level of coordination with existing operators and consumers, as well as the creation of new forms of coordination with emerging energy participants.



1. Introduction

Our long term Major Connections Strategy (MCS) is central to delivering continuous improvement for our connections customers.

Our strategy sets out the benefits we will deliver for our major connection customers during the RIIO-ED2 price control period which runs from 2023 to 2028.

Setting the scene for RIIO-ED2

Providing new and augmented connections to the electricity network is one of the core activities that we have responsibility for as a licenced Distribution Network Operator (DNO). Each year we build the electrical infrastructure and end connections to feed approximately 30,000 new premises, across four distribution service areas.

Our network must support a wide range of connection types. This includes predominantly demand developments consisting of domestic, commercial and industrial premises together with generation units that harness energy such as solar and wind to export power to the distribution system.

We also modify and upgrade existing connections to adapt to our customers' ongoing needs. This may be due to an increase in required supply capacity, for example to cater for new machinery, or to change the operational characteristics, such as installing generation capability at a demand site.

Regardless of the type or size of connection, our customers want to be able to connect to the network in accordance with their timescales and operational requirements. In order to do this the customer must have at their fingertips, sufficient and appropriate information to help them understand and assess the connection options that are available to them.

Generation and energy storage operators wishing to export energy to the network want to know where the most expedient location to connect is. They also want to understand whether they may experience any level of curtailment in capacity constrained areas. They may also look to provide flexible services to ease those constraints and so rely on the accuracy of available information to help them to decide how and where to connect to the distribution system.

UK government's road to net zero strategy sets the ambition that almost every car and van will be carbon neutral by 2050 and that the planned date for ending the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles will be 2030. This transition to Electric Vehicles (EVs) means that demand for charge points is rising and we need to be ready to meet that demand, whether that be at home, at work or in transit. Stakeholders are telling us that this is one of their top priorities

so we have been engaging with developers and local authorities to understand their needs both now and in the future and consider how we can best facilitate the anticipated significant increase in take up of EVs.

The recently published Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution focuses on the changes that we will see.

Decarbonisation of heating to reduce carbon emissions is a key priority with government aiming for 600,000 heat pump installations per year by 2028.

It is clear that we have many challenges ahead if we are to connect such large volumes of low carbon technology (LCT). We are already focusing on the task of ensuring that our distribution system is capable of supporting the government initiative during RIIO-ED2 and beyond. As a DNO and a Distribution System Operator (DSO), we will strive to develop innovative ways to deliver new and augmented connections during a period of significant increase in the number and type of LCTs.

We will continue to invest in the network to ensure that the system is efficient and reliable, as well as prioritising solutions which minimise the time and expense associated with conventional network reinforcement schemes, such as using Flexibility Services to manage peak loads. Our role as a DSO is pivotal in this respect. To enable a greater volume of demand, generation and storage to be connected, our networks are becoming smarter and more active. Creating a more efficient and flexible system will benefit all customers and empower them to be at the centre of the energy revolution.

It is increasingly important to provide guidance and information through various medium that is easy for the customer to understand. It needs to be readily available and tailored to the specific needs of the customer. The availability and utilisation of good quality and accessible data is key. We recognise that improving our data and delivering on our digitalisation commitments are key to turning data in to information that benefits customers, produces better insight in to asset capability for customers and develops new connection and service propositions.

Our Major Connections Strategy for RIIO-ED2

We have independent strategies for DSO, Digitalisation, Innovation, Electric Vehicles (EVs) and Heat Pumps. Whilst they can be considered in isolation, they are all integral to our overall strategy and together they combine to ensure we are best placed to drive the business forward and meet our RIIO-ED2 objectives.

We have made significant progress during RIIO-ED1 but we believe we still have much to do and our MCS sets out a roadmap showing how we will innovate further and improve processes during RIIO-ED2 and ensure we continue to provide excellent service for our connections customers.

The RIIO-ED2 framework focuses on three consumer facing outputs that are critical to delivering value for money for consumers, namely to:

- **Maintain a safe and resilient network.**
- **Deliver an environmentally sustainable network.**
- **Meet the needs of consumers and network users.**

The provision of new and modified electricity connections to the network forms an integral part of meeting the needs of our consumers and network users. Our ambition is to deliver a high quality and reliable service to all customers wishing to connect to our network.

As part of our RIIO-ED2 Business Plan, we are required to develop a MCS that details our long term plan for delivering quality services for connection customers. This mechanism serves to incentivise DNOs to improve service standards for major customers. We consider this as an opportunity to build upon the foundations laid during RIIO-ED1 that will enable us to continually drive improvements and efficiencies in our connection processes.

The MCS adheres to three high level principles which seek to improve the customer journey beginning at pre-application stage, through the application process itself and finally delivery post offer acceptance.

Associated with these high level principles are a number of baseline expectations which are intended to embed an appropriate minimum level of service. Our supplementary document to this MCS sets out in detail how we intend to meet these baseline expectations through both existing and future planned services. We have also included a number of specific initiatives surrounding data visibility, application processes and online enquiry tracking that we believe are key to helping us deliver customer service in RIIO-ED2.

Central to our MCS are our two 'core commitments'. These commitments have been developed and refined following extensive stakeholder engagement and form part of our overall Business Plan.

They focus on key areas that are central to delivery of the MCS and further demonstrate our undertaking to deliver excellent customer service.

As we deliver our MCS, we will remain mindful of the changing electricity landscape and the potential for this to alter the needs of our customers. We will continually review, update and adapt our MCS to ensure we deliver innovative solutions and excellent service which meets our customers' needs for the future.



Graham Halladay
Operations Director



2. Major connection customers

Under RIIO-ED2 a network operator is required to develop a Connections Strategy that meets the specific needs of its major connections customers.

2.1. Who are our major connection customers?

Our major connections customers include metered demand, metered generation and unmetered connection customers. The concept of major connections customers was first introduced under the Incentive on Connections Engagement (ICE), the aim of which was to replicate the type of activities Ofgem expects network operators to undertake in market segments that are subject to effective competition. The relevant market segments are described below.

Table 1: Relevant market segments under RIIO-ED1

Connections relevant market segments								
Demand connections				Distributed generation		Unmetered connections		
Low voltage (LV) work	High Voltage (HV) work	HV and Extra High Voltage (EHV) work	EHV work and above	LV work	HV and EHV work	Local Authority (LA) work	Public Funded Initiative (PFI) work	Other work
Connections to metered premises for demand customers at all connection voltages e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Domestic houses.Commercial and industrial units.EV charging points.Independent Distribution Network Operator (IDNO) networks.				Connections to metered premises for generation at all voltages e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Rooftop solar installations.Large scale windfarms.Battery storage.		Connections to unmetered premises for demand connections for local authorities or private sector e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Street lights.Bus shelters.Telecoms kiosks.		

Under the new price control period, RIIO-ED2, the relevant market segments remain unchanged. Smaller low voltage single service and small project demand connections are excluded market segments and are not covered by this MCS.



2.2. Targeting major connections customers

All of our customers are important to us and we do not discriminate between them. Our aim is to provide excellent service across the whole spectrum of connections customer.

However, we understand the particular relevance of major connections customers example, through the facilitation of renewable generation or participation in a Demand Side Response (DSR) programme.

It is important that we help the economy to grow by ensuring the electrical infrastructure is in place to support development, whilst also helping the government to achieve its net zero emissions target. Major connections customers can help us to expand the existing roll out and application of network solutions to the higher voltage networks, prioritising areas which are the most likely to benefit.

Taking on the additional role of DSO is essential to driving performance and efficiency from our network and to ensure it can meet the future energy needs of our major connections customers. To ensure we fully understand their needs we will engage with them on the development of our own initiatives and through industry led work streams such as the Open Networks project. Central to delivery will be to increase the availability and utilisation of good quality and accessible data and to continue our industry leading approach to innovation work.

Our ongoing dialogue with local authorities, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and other authorities will help us to build an accurate picture of potential future energy scenarios in to RIIO-ED2 and beyond that will allow us to balance the need for building additional infrastructure and the use of flexibility through smart networks.



3. Developing our Major Connections Strategy

Our MCS has been developed with the help of our connections stakeholders to ensure we deliver improvements that will best meet their needs throughout the course of RIIO-ED2.

3.1. Engagement under this Major Connections Strategy

To ensure we have correctly identified customer priorities we have undertaken an extensive course of stakeholder engagement. This has included both wider engagement at a higher level and liaison with a number of expert groups.

Preliminary engagement with stakeholders began back in 2019 when a number of workshops were held. Stakeholders were given a blank canvas to discuss the issues which were most important to them. We used an independent body to analyse the feedback, grouping it into high level topics – starting with Ofgem’s three output categories, before adding two more for feedback that lay outside of those. Detailed points were then grouped into sub-topics, based on the volume of discussion in each area.

A detailed report was created that consolidated the stakeholder feedback and allowed us to zone in on the key areas of concern.

A second stage of engagement in 2020 built on the previous ‘preliminary engagement’ work by exploring the detailed stakeholder opinions around each priority, including proposed commitments. Feedback was collected and our proposals drawn together in to our core commitments. These were further revised following our Connections Workshop in November 2020.

In February 2021 we played back our draft outputs again at a connections stakeholder event and feedback received helped us to finalise our draft Business Plan submission to Ofgem in July.

“A further workshop in September 2021 allowed us to test our proposals with stakeholders one more time before submitting our final Business Plan to Ofgem. As a consequence we revised and consolidated our core commitments to ensure they described clearer outcomes. We believe these core commitments form the spine of our overall strategy and serve to support the initiatives we have committed to deliver under this MCS.”

External stakeholder engagement on the Major Connections Strategy 2020-21

Event	Date	Number of attendees
Connections Workshop	November 2020	53
WPD Stakeholder Workshops	November 2020	86
WPD Stakeholder Workshops - connections	February 2021	63
Customer Connections Steering Group	February 2021	20
Business Plan Stakeholder Workshops	September 2021	47

For further information regarding our Engagement Strategy please refer to section 9.

3.2. Aligning our strategies

Our MCS is key to delivering benefits for connections customers. We recognise that many of the benefits will be delivered through improved network information and flexible connection solutions. Therefore, it is critical that our strategies are aligned and coordinated to meet our wider needs and aspirations, providing a foundation to develop solutions to meet the changing needs of the business and customers.

Our data and digitalisation team has a programme to improve the quality of available pre-application information by providing more granularity and combining separate sets of data into a centralised mapping function. Improved data enables customers to make more informed decisions on where and how to connect to the distribution system.

Our DSO Strategy has been developed with our connections customers at the forefront of our decision making process and by working together we will ensure that we widen the range and frequency of flexible alternatives to traditional reinforcement to facilitate quicker connections at a lower cost.

We will also use innovation to understand customer requirements for system access and to develop the solutions that are needed to support all of our customers. Working with our community energy engineers, we will support community energy groups that have great ideas for innovation projects that can provide benefits to communities. This will also support our Social Contract and vulnerability commitments where we will roll out solutions proven in innovation.



We will continue to strengthen these links to shape and deliver effective connections solutions delivering tangible and measurable benefits for our customers.



4. Delivering our Major Connections Strategy

Our MCS is built around extensive engagement with stakeholders undertaken prior to RIIO-ED2.

As with the overall Business Plan, its development has been constructed using a common principle: to start with a blank piece of paper, ensuring that we deliver the needs of our customers and not those based upon pre-conceived ideas. It combines our core commitments with the high level principles and baseline expectations identified by Ofgem in their sector specific methodology decision document.

4.1. Our core commitments

Our core commitments are constructed on the basis that they must:

- **Be based on stakeholder feedback.**
- **Provide a measurable stakeholder benefit.**
- **Be well justified and supported by evidence to show that it's the right course of action.**
- **Demonstrate that alternative options have been evaluated prior to selection of the most effective method of delivery.**
- **Identify how we are going to measure the impact and success of delivering that output.**

Our Business Plan sets out the full list of our 42 core commitments. Core commitments 31 and 32 of the Business Plan relate specifically to connections and are shown below.

Core commitment 31	Make it as easy as possible for customers to apply to connect individual domestic low carbon technologies by providing a same day connections response via an online self assessment tool.
Core commitment 32	Provide quicker and cheaper connections options for customers by increasing the number of flexible connection offers made, ensuring 100% of schemes receive a flexible alternative to reinforcement where the reinforcement cost is >£75k for LV, 11kV and 33kV connections and >£100k for 66kV or 132kV connections and/or where works will take more than 12 or 18 months respectively to complete.

Both of these core commitments will be underpinned by specific initiatives to be delivered against our MCS. Each of the specific initiatives will contribute toward our overall commitment to meet the principles and baseline expectations as set out in Ofgem’s sector specific methodology decision document. Further detail on the core commitments can be found in the Annex to [Chapter 2 of our Business Plan](#).

4.2. Delivering best practice

The need for best practice is clear and we are committed to ensuring our activities are in line with obligations set out under various regulations, licence conditions, engineering recommendations and Energy Networks Association (ENA) guidance. Specifically, our MCS is developed in accordance with;

- **The Electricity Act 2003.**
- **The Electricity (Connection Charges) Regulations 2017 (ECCR's).**
- **The Electricity (Connections Offer Expenses) Regulations 2018.**
- **Connection Guaranteed Standards of Performance (GSoP).**
- **Licence Condition - LC13.**
Charging Methodologies for Use of System and connection.
- **Licence Condition - LC14.**
Charges for Use of System and connection.
- **Licence Condition - LC15.**
Standards for the provision of Non-Contestable Connection Services.
- **Licence Condition - LC19.**
Prohibition of discrimination.

5. High level principles and baseline expectations

Ofgem's sector specific methodology decision document sets out three high level connection principles and 20 associated baseline expectations that it expects network operators to adhere to in the provision of customer service.

The foundations of our MCS are underpinned by services that we already provide. We have used this as the baseline for standards of performance and will build upon these services through RIIO-ED2 to improve the services provided to major connection customers and ensure we continue to lead the way on connections provision.

In RIIO-ED2 we will further improve our end to end connections service as follows:

- Continue to explore innovative ways of connecting LCTs and build on initiatives, to introduce large capacity, rapid EV charge points at strategically important locations such as motorway service areas.
- Enhance our online service to provide a wider range of online quotations.
- Ensure that customers have a single point of contact at both the quotation and the connection stage to provide updates and advice.
- Achieve a minimum 9 out of 10 average customer satisfaction score for connections activities.
- Improve our ability to provide quotations and connections in a timely manner and in line with customers' expectations.
- Improve clarity concerning the availability of flexible connections and promote access to deliver more efficient network utilisation.
- Develop tailored processes for meeting different customer groups' needs for initial application stage, the final connection and energisation.
- Introduce local authority engagement engineers dedicated to supporting local authorities, LEPs and major connections customers.

5.1. High level connections principles

The three high level connections principle that network operators are to adhere to are set out below:



These three connection principles form the core of our MCS and act as the framework under which we will deliver proposed initiatives to provide excellent customer service.

The following section details how we will deliver on the three key connections principles, ensuring we meet (and where possible exceed) baseline expectations.

Connection principle

1

Support connection stakeholders prior to application by providing accurate, comprehensive and user-friendly information.

How we will meet connections principle 1

In accordance with connection principle 1 we will ensure that we provide sufficient and high quality information to connection stakeholders so they are able to make informed decisions about connecting to the distribution network prior to application stage.

Stakeholders require up to date data to help them to decide how, and where, to connect to the distribution network so we will ensure that all the information we provide to connection stakeholders is accurate and set out in plain English. We will also ensure all information is sufficiently comprehensive and tailored to the needs of the specific customer group.

We will ensure that information about the connections process is clear and simple for customers without technical backgrounds, especially for LCTs such as Electric Vehicle charge points and heat pumps.

Connection principle

2

Deliver value for customers by ensuring simplicity and transparency through the applications process.

How we will meet connections principle 2

In accordance with connection principle 2 we will ensure that we take all appropriate steps to make connection processes simple and transparent, so that customers receive a streamlined service from application to connection completion.

In particular, we will ensure effective communication and engagement processes are in place, not only to respond to customers' needs when they arise but also to ensure we are proactively engaging with stakeholders, understanding their needs and improving our processes accordingly.

We will review our guidance documentation and application process and make enhancements to ensure that requirements for application are easily found and understood and that the application process is straightforward.

We will review and enhance our online application process and widen our existing portal for Independent Connection Providers (ICPs) to include other major and/or frequent use customers.

Connection principle

3

Facilitate the delivery of timely and economical connections that meet customers' needs.

How we will meet connections principle 3

In accordance with connection principle 3 we will ensure that we take all appropriate steps to identify efficiencies in the connections process to deliver timely and economical connections for customers.

In particular, we will develop more efficient ways of doing things as well as introducing innovative connection solutions to reduce costs, and improve connection timescales, for customers.

We shall explore innovative connection solutions for customers which may include, amongst other things, improved coordination with other utility connection providers and between connection customers.

5.2. Baseline expectations

Ofgem has outlined the baseline expectations that we must align our service provision to. There are 20 baseline expectations which are categorised under the three high level connection principles, ensuring a minimum level of service provision at three key stages of the connections process.

Pre-application: requires information to be provided which ensures clarity over the connections process and enables customers to make informed decisions about how and where they may connect to the network.

This stage includes methods by which customers may engage with us to discuss their connection needs prior to being ready to make an application for a specific site.

Application process: requires processes to be simplified, ensuring they are well explained and easy to follow. This stage includes clear explanation of the options available in the application process, such as flexible connections and identified 'fast track' applications.

Connection delivery: requires clear communication between all parties throughout the delivery of a connection, ensuring timely and economical provision of connection works. This stage includes providing specified points of contact and clear explanation of queue management processes. Our supplementary document to this MCS details the connections principles and their associated baseline expectations. It includes the market segments the baseline expectations are relevant to and the metrics by which we can evidence successful delivery of associated improvements.

It should be noted that not all baseline expectations apply to all relevant market segments in the scope, nor do they apply where WPD has passed the Competition Test against the relevant market segment.

Further information relating to the market segments that have been passed is given in 'Competition Test under DPCR5'.

5.2. Baseline expectations

High level principle 1	
1	Provide access to up to date and relevant information to enable a connection stakeholder to decide whether, and where, to connect to the distribution network. This should include, but not be limited to, graphical network records that show the location, size and type of assets.
2	Communicate a clear connections process for all customers. This should include providing clarity of DNO, customer and third party responsibilities. This should also include providing clarity on how issues that arise can be raised and resolved.
3	Provide clear explanations of the types of connection products available, the associated costs of each and the information that would need to be provided by the customer to make an application. Where appropriate, this should also include the provision of generation information on the potential implications for a customer's connection offer if they change their own requirements, if other customers are seeking to connect in the same area or if they do not accept an offer within its validity period.
4	Provide support and help to customers through appropriate channels which should include, but not be limited to, connections surgeries.
5	Have robust processes in place to proactively engage with stakeholders. This should include how the DNO plans to both identify and address connections issues.
6	Provide clearly signposted information on capacity available to enable points of connection to be identified.
7	Provide guidance that explains to customers the criteria to allow an unmetered connection to be made, ensuring compliance with the unmetered supply regulations.
8	Provide support in the form of tailored pre-application communication to suit different stakeholder needs.
High level principle 2	
9	Have clear and simple customer application process, which accounts for the particular needs of different groups of customers and which can be shaped by the parties involved. This should include but not be limited to, providing options for how customers can apply for new connections and ensure these are clearly communicated.
10	Provide tailored communication plans to suit different customer needs, including the provision of specified points of contact during the application process. This should include the provision of various channels through which customers can access support or help.
11	Provide customers with clear connection quotation cost breakdowns, listing out the cost components and any assumptions used in the formulation of connection offers.
12	Have processes in place to help customers identify how they could make changes to their connection requirements, that would meet their needs and allow them to get connected more quickly or cheaply.
13	Specifically, in relation to flexible connection customers, provide clarity around conditions and circumstances of current and future curtailment associated with a connections offer.
14	Provide guidance that explains to customers the criteria to allow a DG connection to be made to ensure compliance with relevant engineering recommendations (G98/G99).
15	Have in place options for 'fast track' reconnections of critical infrastructure such as internet cabinets that have been damaged in road traffic incidents or similar.
High level principle 3	
16	Provide tailored communication plans to suit different customer needs, including the provision of specified points of contact during the delivery process. Ensure various channels are available for customers to access support or help.
17	Complete any cost reconciliation in a timely manner.
18	Where there are slow moving projects and where these may impact on other customers, have processes in place for releasing capacity that is not being used.
19	Have processes in place for the promotion of certain types of customers (such as storage) in connection queue in circumstances where they will help others connect more quickly/cheaply.
20	Provide access to services that facilitate the delivery of timely and economical connections such as 'rent a jointer' services.

5.3 Non-contestable service

We are still responsible for completing non-contestable connection activities in RMSs that have passed the Competition Test. To ensure that we deliver best practice in the provision of non-contestable activities, our MCS captures these activities, even where these have passed the Competition Test.

Non-contestable connection activities are those services that only the network operator can provide and are not generally open to competition. Typically this might be carrying out any works for reinforcement of our distribution system where the conditions for such activity being contestable work are not met.

We understand that even where we have passed a RMS, there will be a non-contestable element of the works and that as a consequence we have a responsibility to deliver best practice and excellent customer service for those non-contestable works.

We will seek as a minimum to meet the baseline expectations for performance where they impact on the delivery of non-contestable services even where we have passed the RMS.

5.4 Understanding the baseline expectation tables

We consider that the services we provide meet the minimum benchmark standards set by Ofgem. We endeavour to exceed the baseline standards with proposed future improvements.

The tables in Section 11 “Future Improvements” set out the relevant connection principle, its associated baseline expectations and a description of the initiatives we are committing to provide in relation to those expectations. We will identify the relevant market segments to which each baseline expectation applies; green indicating it does apply and white indicating it is not applicable.

With the exception of Consumer Value Proposition 2, referenced under Baseline Expectation 5, each of our future improvements will be delivered through business as usual activity and therefore will not require additional funding.

For each of the baseline expectations we will describe the expectation itself, the commitment area it applies to, how we currently meet the minimum expectations and finally those future improvements that we are committing to undertake in order to exceed the baseline expectation and meet the evolving needs of customers throughout RIIO-ED2.

5.5 Target dates

While our aim is to provide a MCS which sets out the improvements we will make during the Business Plan period RIIO-ED2, we recognise that some identified initiatives should not be unduly delayed. Therefore some of these initiatives will be delivered during the remainder of RIIO-ED1, although they will be continually reviewed, refined and measured through RIIO-ED2.

Where we have indicated future improvements for each of the baseline expectations we have set a target date for completion. As our thinking evolves, we will refine the target levels.

6. Our key initiatives

Our MCS will ensure we deliver against baseline expectations, but we also want to develop a number of key initiatives that demonstrate our wish to target specific areas we believe are integral to meeting the needs of our connections customers throughout RIIO-ED2.

Beyond meeting the baseline expectations, we will also undertake a number of specific initiatives which are key to ensuring that we continue to deliver excellent customer service during RIIO-ED2.

6.1. Issues prevalent in WPD's four licence areas

During the extensive engagement undertaken in the development of the overall Business Plan and the associated strategies for the RIIO-ED2 period, stakeholder feedback identified a number of areas in which they feel WPD could make changes to provide industry leading improvements.

These issues relate to three key themes:

- **Availability of information.**
- **Timeliness of response.**
- **Targeted engagement.**

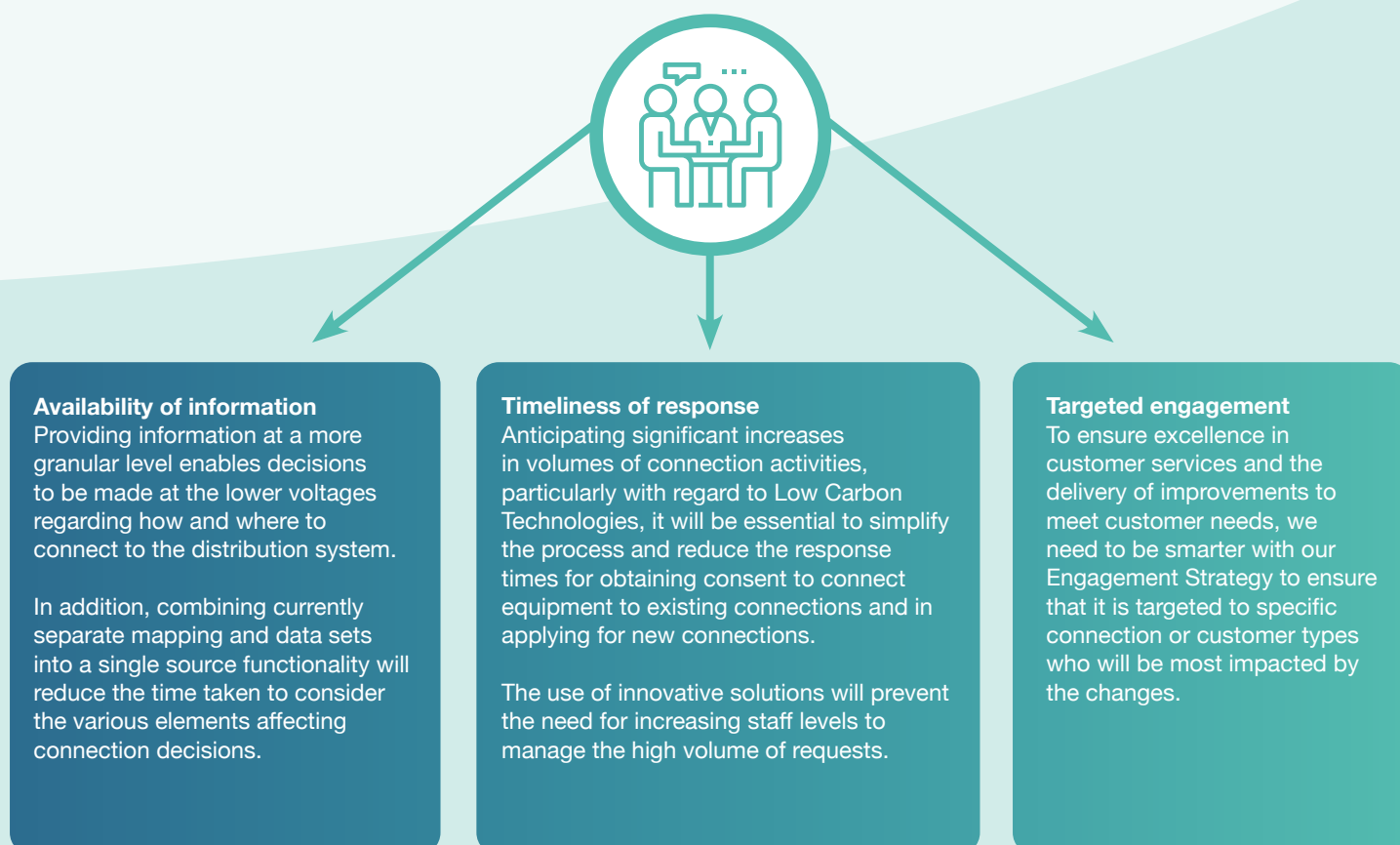
6.2. Addressing the three key themes

In addressing the key areas raised by our stakeholders we have committed to ensuring we provide an enhanced approach to improvement and not simply take the minimum solution available to address the areas of concern. We want to ensure to deliver a high standard of improvement, ensuring the greatest possible benefit for our connection customers.

To facilitate this we have developed six key initiatives which together cover all three high level principle areas.

6.3. Key initiatives

The following initiatives are set out under the relevant high level principles. Each initiative sets out a description of the improvements we are looking to undertake during RIIO-ED2, the benefits to be provided, targets including dates and measurable outputs plus the associated metrics.



High level principle 1 - key initiatives

Support connection stakeholders before they make a connections application by providing accurate, comprehensive and user-friendly information.

Initiative	Initiative description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
We will make data more visible and interactive for customers through centralised data mapping functionality.	<p>Improve the visibility of real time data by combining separate mapping systems into a centralised data mapping functionality with a number of overlays.</p> <p>Ensure that the data provided is more granular and refreshed to provide a real time understanding of the availability of capacity or flexibility opportunities across WPD's distribution system.</p>	<p>Providing a centralised mapping functionality with multiple overlays will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access to the right information at the right time. • Improve the visibility of connection opportunities. • Remove the requirement to utilise separate and more complex Geographic Information System (GIS). • Provide easy access to data for local authorities and LEPs. 	<p>Centralised mapping functionality delivered in RIIO-ED2 Year 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hits on centralised map. • User satisfaction with the centralised map. 	50% increase in the use of the centralised map by 2028.
We will use targeted stakeholder engagement to ensure that improvements identified are specific to the relevant subject area, market segment and customer types.	<p>In addition to the broad range of connection customer engagement, such as the Connections Customer Steering Group (CCSG) and the Distributed Generation Owner Operator (DGOO) Forum, we will request consent to engage directly with stakeholders for specific areas.</p> <p>This will include targeted engagement relating to the digitalisation of data, implementation of scheme tracking systems, introduction of automated LCT responses.</p>	<p>Providing more targeted engagement will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture issues affecting specific users of systems, processes and information resources. • Ensure improvements identified are relevant to the user. • Keep users informed of the development and implementation of changes which impact upon their day to day interaction with WPD. 	<p>Methods for identifying engagement groups implemented in RIIO-ED2 year 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engagements. • User satisfaction with engagement. 	Customer satisfaction score greater than 90%.

We will make data more visible and interactive for customers through centralised data mapping functionality.

During RIIO-ED1 we developed a number of maps which provide essential information, such as the EV Heat Map, Capacity Map and network constraint data. Whilst we will look to provide the detail at a more granular level as requested during stakeholder engagement events, ensuring that our customers can make decisions based on more specific information, we recognise that customers would benefit from a single source approach to viewing the available information. By combining the various data sets into a single mapping functionality with multiple layers, users will be able to better interrogate their connection opportunities at a specific location.

We will use targeted stakeholder engagement to ensure that improvements identified are specific to the relevant subject area, market segment and customer type.

Through targeted engagement we can ensure that information made available pre-application is easy to understand and clearly delivers against their specific needs. This engagement at a targeted level can then feed into further developments in the application and post acceptance processes through a cycle of reviewing, amending and implementing changes. This will ensure that improvements are specific to the user and relevant to their needs in any particular market segment, customer type or subject area.

High level principle 2 - key initiatives

Deliver value for customers by ensuring simplicity and transparency through the connections applications process.

Initiative	Initiative description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
We will implement a customer portal to provide an online facility to manage the end to end process, from application through to delivery.	<p>Develop the Online Portal to enable all customers to request and track connection activities, from application through to delivery. Provide user accounts for repeat and major customers whilst enabling guest user access for one off applicants.</p> <p>Provide enhanced functionality to recognise regular user patterns to direct the user to their most frequently used area of the portal. For example, regular applicants of large scale generation to be directed to a portal version of the G99 application form in the first instance.</p> <p>Refer to principle 3 for further information relating to additional functionality of the customer portal for post-acceptance processes.</p>	<p>Providing an online portal for end to end application and tracking will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the time taken to submit an application since information relating to specific user, such as correspondence details, will be automatically stored. • Simplify the process by directing users to their most commonly used areas within the portal. • Ensure that one off applicants receive the same level of service and visibility of scheme progress as regular applicants. 	<p>Single system for end to end tracking implemented by RIIO-ED2 Year 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of registered accounts for the customer portal. • User satisfaction with the customer portal. 	75% increase in the use of online accounts by 2028.
We will empower the customer to co-create connection offer agreements through a self-serve online tool.	<p>Develop self-service online tools to allow customers to self assess their connection requirements, obtain a cost of connection and enter into connection offer agreements.</p> <p>This will include co-creation tools to identify the differences in cost and timescales to connect associated with trigger levels for more significant works.</p>	<p>Providing a self-serve connections journey will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable and quicker and simpler connection offer process. • Enable customers to co-create the connection offer agreement based upon their needs. • Improve response times for providing connection solutions and the associated costs. 	New self-serve connections journey for connection customers up to EHV by RIIO-ED2 Year 5.	Overall major customer satisfaction score >90% with the self assessment and connection offer agreement co-creation process.

We will implement a Customer Portal to provide an online facility to manage the end to end process, from application through to delivery.

The use of customer accounts will minimise the amount of information customers need to provide where they make a number of applications. We want to ensure that any account based system provides more than a simple one way application process but delivers an end to end job tracking functionality. We are also proposing to make this system intuitive.

There are various types of connection requests that may be made, from new domestic developments to generator unit installations to the addition of LCTs such as Electric Vehicle charging. By recognising patterns for specific users, we can direct them to their most frequently used areas within the portal, improving their connections journey and minimising the time it takes to undertake activities such as completing an application for connection.

We will empower the customer to co-create connection offer agreements through a self-serve online tool.

We will digitalise the customer connection journey for co-created connection offer agreements.

We recognise that customers want to identify the costs and timescales for connection in a timely manner. We will utilise digitalisation to provide an end to end customer journey for those who wish to use it. This will include tools for self assessment, estimating the cost of connection, entering into connection offer agreements and work scheduling as set out in our Digitalisation Strategy.

This self-service journey will include provision to assess the trigger levels for design solutions which will result in significantly different costs or timescales for delivery to be identified. This will enable customers to consider the alternative connection solutions open to them and to determine which solution may ultimately be best suited to take forward as a viable project through the co-creation connection offer agreement process.

High level principle 3 - key initiatives

Facilitate the delivery of timely and cost efficient connections that meet customers' needs.

Initiative	Initiative description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
We will implement a Customer Portal to provide an online facility to manage the end to end process, from application through to delivery.	<p>Develop the online portal to enable all customers to request and track connection activities, from application through to delivery. This should include enhanced functionality to combine job tracking of WPD tasks with tracking of the legal and consents process.</p> <p>Provide contact details for the WPD responsible person at each stage of the connections process.</p> <p>Enable document upload functionality to ensure that information, such as changes to site layout plans, can be provided to WPD and a timely and simple manner.</p> <p>Refer to principle 2 for further information.</p>	<p>Providing an online portal for end to end application and tracking will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable the customer to clearly track the progress of their scheme, including where third parties are involved such as solicitors for legal consents. • Provide clarity on the relevant WPD point of contact at each stage of the scheme, from system planner to wayleave officer to delivery technician, including relevant contact details. • Enable document upload functionality to ensure that information sharing between the customer and WPD is quick and easy. 	<p>Single system for end to end tracking implemented by RIIO-ED2 Year 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of registered accounts for the customer portal. • User satisfaction with the customer portal. 	75% increase in the use of online accounts by 2028.
We will provide an online tool for interactive work scheduling.	<p>Develop an online interactive work scheduling tool, enabling customers to have visibility of team availability, self select suitable work dates and update, amend or cancel their scheduled works.</p>	<p>Providing an online interactive work scheduling tool will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable customer visibility of engineering team availability and work lead times. • Provide a quicker and easier approach to agreeing dates for full or partial work completion. • Facilitate quicker and more efficient connections to suit customers needs. 	<p>Online interactive work scheduling tool to be implemented by RIIO-ED2 Year 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of customers self-scheduling dates to suit their own needs. • User satisfaction with the customer portal. 	50% increase in the use of self-scheduling by 2028.

We will implement a Customer Portal to provide an online facility to manage the end to end process, from application through to delivery.

As discussed under principle 2 improvements, we want to ensure that any account based system provides more than a simple one way application process but delivers an end to end job tracking functionality. We want to enhance existing processes and combine them into a single location resource for tracking the status of a particular scheme, understanding the progress made towards any legal permissions, consents and land rights whilst ensuring to provide clear contact details for the WPD responsible person should further discussion be required.

Enabling document upload functionality will also ensure that information is shared with WPD in a timely manner.

We will provide an online tool for interactive work scheduling.

We are committed to ensuring that we deliver connections in timescales to meet the needs of customers. To better facilitate this and ensure we are transparent in our approach, we want to develop an interactive work scheduling tool.

This will provide customers with clear visibility of the availability of our teams and enable them to self select dates which are most suitable to their own needs and scheduling activities.

7. Measuring success

Our MCS and associated initiatives must be effectively tracked and measured to ensure we are delivering benefits for all. We have a number of methods by which we can measure success of delivery, from dedicated targets for specific initiatives to overall satisfaction with connection services measured through the major customer survey.

Feedback on progress to date to shape our future development and delivery will be vital and to that end we will continue to extensively engage with our stakeholders through various means. We will also, as with our ICE Workplan during RIIO-ED1, provide regular updates on the progress we are making. This will provide visibility that initiatives remain on track whilst providing an opportunity for customers to challenge us should they feel we are not going far or fast enough with our development.

7.1. Understanding our employees' and customers' needs

We will continue to engage both internally and externally to better understand the changing needs of our stakeholders. We will clearly highlight the progress we are making in the delivery of our initiatives and identify new areas for improvement as they arise.

7.2. Delivering value from our solutions

We must measure the impact of our improvements, understanding how they benefitted our customers and where they can be further improved to ensure that we provide excellent customer services.

7.3. Effectively collaborate

Capturing our collaborative approach to connection improvements will demonstrate our continuing commitment to ensure that our actions are driven by the requirements of our customers. We will ensure to capture not only directly collaborated improvements but to recognise best practice within the wider industry where we agree that our customers would benefit from adapting improvements made by other DNOs and IDNOs.

7.4. Accountability

DNOs that fail to demonstrate how they meet the connection principles and baseline expectations could be subject to a financial penalty under the Business Plan incentive.

To ensure that DNOs are incentivised to deliver best practice in the provision of non-contestable activities, Ofgem has decided that non-contestable activities the MCS Output Delivery Incentive (ODI) will operate on a reputational basis in relevant market segments that pass the Competition Test.

For RIIO-ED2, an ex post evaluation will be introduced to assess companies' performance against the baseline expectations and in delivering their strategies. This will ensure companies remain accountable for delivering their strategies in line with baseline expectations within period and incentivise them to develop ambitious and best practice initiatives which exceed the levels of service we would expect from an economic and efficient DNO.

The timing of assessment is not yet decided although will likely be mid term and at the end of the RIIO-ED2 price control. It will be confirmed once the approach to assessing performance has been developed more fully. Regardless of the exact timings of assessments during the price control, Ofgem consider that annual reporting will be key to ensuring DNOs are both accountable and ambitious in the delivery of their strategies. We will publish an annual report that describes how we are progressing initiatives against each of the baseline expectations.

7.5 Performance measures

When delivering new initiatives it is important to measure performance in order to show that real benefits have been provided to customers.

Some initiatives will lend themselves to specific measures whereby we can capture information to clearly evidence an improvement in that commitment area. Where this is the case we have set out the specific metric to be applied.

In other initiatives, it may be difficult to measure improvements without exposing customers to numerous surveys relating to multiple individual improvements. Rather than survey customers in multiple subject areas, we will look to capture overall performance in key areas such as satisfaction with published information. We can then use verbatim comments provided to identify specific areas for further improvement. Where required, we will note against the future improvement that performance will be measured using overall metrics, including which overall metrics will be relevant. The overall metrics to be applied are set out below:

Metric area	Performance measure
Customer satisfaction	Overall major customer satisfaction score >90%.
Awareness of competition	80% of connection customers aware of competition.
Connection guaranteed standards of performance	100% compliance with connection guaranteed standards of performance.
Stakeholder engagement	Increase in the annual number of stakeholders engaged during RIIO-ED2 compared to final year RIIO-ED1.
Published information	Website information satisfaction score >90%.
Time to Quote and Time to Connect for low carbon technology (LCT)	Improve performance by 1% from RIIO-ED1 level (small schemes).

7.6. Ofgem performance measuring metrics

Ofgem will use a number of metrics to measure DNOs' success in meeting their obligations under the connection principles and baseline expectations. The full extent of those metrics is yet to be decided but they will consider each of the three connection principles and likely cover customer satisfaction areas as shown below.

1

Metrics monitoring performance of baseline expectations under principle 1

- Customer satisfaction with pre-application.

2

Metrics monitoring performance of baseline expectations under principle 2

- Customer satisfaction with quotations.

3

Metrics monitoring performance of baseline expectations under principle 3

- Customer satisfaction with connections completed.

In each of the three areas it is likely that an outturn metric performance scorecard including, for example a customer satisfaction survey, measures against Time to Quote (TTQ) and Time to Connect (TTC), will form part of an annual assessment.

7.7. Feedback

We will seek customer feedback through stakeholder engagement for the duration of RIIO-ED2 and revise and refine our MCS, as required. If you would like to share your thoughts and feedback and please contact our connections policy team at: wpdconnpolicysupport@westernpower.co.uk



8. The Competition Test

In the Distribution Price Control Review Period 5 (DPCR5) that ran from 2008 to 2015, Ofgem introduced a Competition Test to understand the extent to which competition existed effectively in the market for new connections. DNO's were able to apply to Ofgem to have price regulation lifted if they could demonstrate that competition was successfully effective.

8.1. Competition Test under DPCR5

The result of the DPCR5 Competition Test by our licence areas against the relevant market segments is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Market segments passed under the Competition Test under DPCR5.

Licence area	Relevant market segment								
	Demand connections				Distributed generation		Unmetered connections		
	LV work	HV work	HV and EHV work	EHV work and above	LV work	HV and EHV work	LA work	PFI work	Other work
WPD East Midlands	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
WPD West Midlands	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
WPD South Wales	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
WPD South West	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗

Although the incentive framework for RIIO-ED2 excludes market segments that passed the Competition Test, our commitment is to deliver improvements across all the relevant market segments.

8.2. Competition Test under RIIO-ED1

During the sector specific methodology consultation, Ofgem consulted on the potential to re-run the Competition Test in order to reassess the current level of market penetration by ICPs. It was decided that the Competition Test should be re-run.

A template to collect information and data from DNOs to show the extent of competition penetration in each licence area and for each relevant market segment was issued to DNOs in October 2021. Completed templates were submitted to Ofgem in November 2021 for review.

Depending on the outcome of the new Competition Test, the relevant market segments covered under this MCS may change.

We remain responsible for completing non-contestable connection activities in relevant market segments that have passed the Competition Test. To ensure that we deliver best practice in the provision of non-contestable activities, and to maintain our commitment to deliver improvements across all market segments, our MCS captures these activities even where these have passed the Competition Test.

9. Our Engagement Strategy

Our approach to engagement, both leading up to the creation of our MCS and for its future evolution, will not radically change from that which we have used during RIIO-ED1 under the ICE.

9.1. External engagement

It is vital to the success of the development of our MCS and the delivery of initiatives that we continue to provide a clear programme of stakeholder engagement.

Develop initiatives which help us continue to provide excellent customer service. By obtaining input from a broad range of stakeholders we can represent all areas of connections activity.

Part of the feedback we rely on comes from a major customer survey, carried out monthly by an independent body on our behalf. Using this feedback helps us to understand how we are performing and identify main areas for improvement.

For example, the areas customers asked us to prioritise regarding the lead up to and following issue of a quotation for a connection, for the period April 2020 to March 2021, are set out in figure 1.

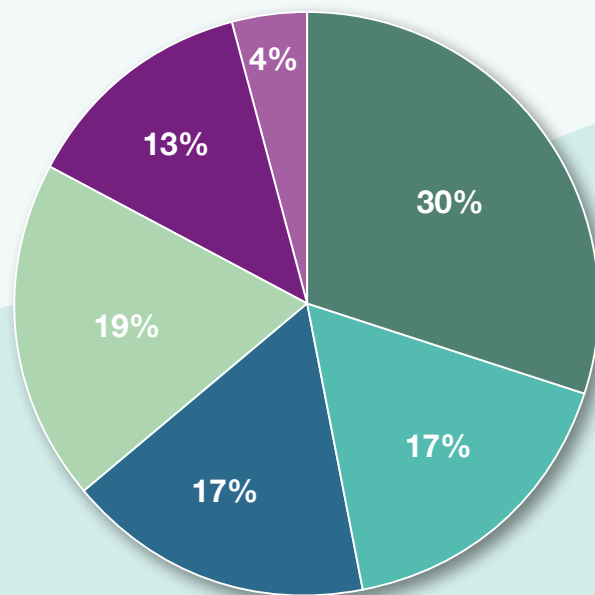
We have also liaised with a number of expert groups to co-create this Connections Strategy to ensure it delivers the improvements our customers want and not necessarily what we think they want. The Customer Engagement Group (CEG) it provides input, challenges our proposal and holds us to account and is fundamental to this process. As an independent group they provide input, challenge our proposals and hold us to account if we do not deliver on our commitments.

In relation specifically to our Major Connections Strategy and the associated core and wider commitments in our Business Plan, these have been substantially scrutinised by the CEG. In particular they have reviewed and challenged the justifications for our commitments (see Annex SA-02a Our commitments – Justification analysis) and ensured that every commitment has been co-created with stakeholders, including that a range of performance targets and delivery options were considered (see SA-05 Giving customers a stronger voice - Enhanced engagement). As part of the CEG sub-group process they have met with the responsible WPD senior managers on multiple occasions to discuss our stakeholder engagement and customer research specifically in relation to this topic area, key policies, processes and stages of our strategy development, as well as deep dives on other key associated strategies including Innovation, Digitalisation and DSO.

Our Connections Customer Steering Group (CCSG) comprises a panel of experts representing a broad range of connection types across the market who inform, influence and feedback on our connection plans and activities. The outputs from this group also feed into our overarching customer panel.

Figure 1: Major connection customer survey areas to prioritise.

Major customer survey April 2020 - March 2021





- Communication - pre application/site visit
- Quotation cost (cheaper)
- Quotation timescales
- Quotation simplified/jargon
- Customer service (responding to customers)
- One off issues


The Distributed Generation Owner Operator forum (DGOO) it meets regularly to help us gain an understanding of DG owner/operator needs. They continue to provide input into the development of actions to improve the services we provide and the associated connections processes.


In addition to these established groups, we hold workshops and events targeted to cover specific topics such as local area investment, community energy and Low Carbon Technologies. Figure 2 summarises our external Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.


Figure 2: External Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.


- 

Engagement must lead to action
We never host talking shops or tick box exercises.
We always engage for a reason and feedback always drives outputs
- 

Engagement is everyone's responsibility at WPD
Core connections engagement activities are centrally coordinated, but delivery is embedded locally and led by those who will be directly responsible for acting on the feedback.
- 

Utilise a range of engagement methods, but face-to-face is always best
We tailor to suit stakeholder preferences to maximise reach. Direct interaction is preferred for discussion/dissemination of complex issues with other methods complementing rather than substituting for this.
- 

Be transparent about feedback and accountability
We publish all presentations, reports and actions - stakeholders can see how their feedback is directly incorporated into WPD's ICE Plan and track the success of the initiatives they generate.
- 

Build long term relationships with stakeholders
We earn trust by continually demonstrating that feedback leads to action. As stakeholders' knowledge and confidence grows, the breadth of their influence and ability to critically challenge will increase.
- 

Collaborate wherever possible, but if it slows progress, take the lead
We share best practice openly, learn from others and encourage co-delivery in common areas. If industry is slow to act we do not wait but will share our learning to inform industry wide solutions.

Well established and effective

Our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy is firmly entrenched in our culture. Established in 2007, the strategy firmly underpins our connections improvement activity, driving how and why we engage.

It is fundamental to how we do business and drives a continual cyclical engagement programme. Its longevity has established a mature and effective approach, which has built long term stakeholder relationships facilitating meaningful engagement with vital feedback and challenge.

The fundamentals of our approach are enduring, and guided by steadfast principals providing its foundations. However, to maintain effectiveness, the strategy is evaluated and updated each year with sign off from our CEO and directors.

This ensures that our engagement approach continues to deliver effectively our initiatives, demonstrating we are adaptable to changes in the connections environment and better positioned to meet our stakeholders' priorities and expectations.

9.2. Internal engagement

Our staff are pivotal to the successful operation of our business. Empowering staff to be effective and efficient in their roles is integral to our strategy and the delivery of our action plan.

Staff at all levels feed in to the strategy, which is critical to highlight their needs and expectations and encourages them to 'own' the policies that sit behind the connections process.

We engage regularly with our staff to understand their connections related needs. Since they are at the sharp end of the delivery of connections activities they have invaluable insight as to what customers want and, just as crucially, how we might provide an enhanced service that meets the customers' needs.

Our primary engagement is with Network Services (locally based teams delivering low and high voltage connections up to 11kV) and primary system design, regionally based teams designing the EHV and 132kV network infrastructure and connections.

We also engage with other teams that are critical to delivering connection activities. These include:

- **Records.**
- **Call Centre.**
- **Information technology.**
- **Estates and wayleaves.**
- **Regulatory compliance.**

We recognise that internal systems and processes must be fit for purpose if we are to deliver excellent customer service and that this can only be achieved by engaging with internal staff.

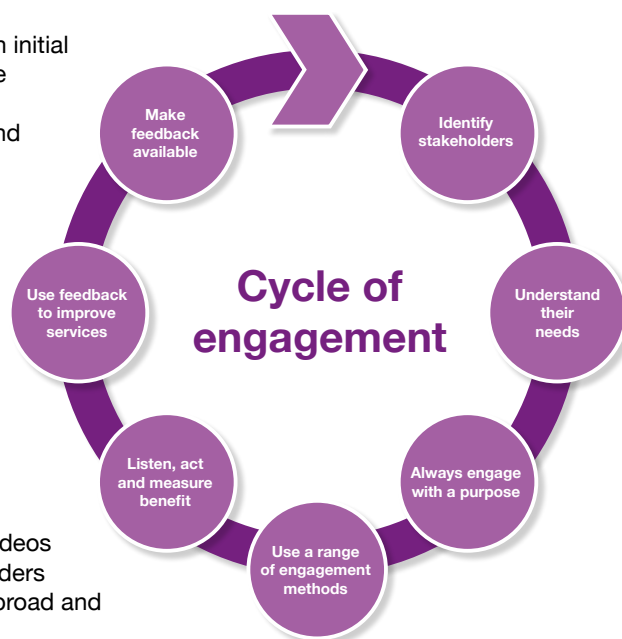
9.3. Continuing engagement

Our engagement has served us well to this point, enabling us to establish an initial strategy, roadmap and programme of connections activity to deliver tangible benefits to a wide set of users. It is important that we continue to engage effectively throughout RIIO-ED2, ensuring we react to changing customer and regulatory requirements. This will ensure we maintain a MCS that meets the needs of both our stakeholders and staff.

We continue to recognise the invaluable benefits of workshops and other face-to-face events in acquiring feedback. We equally recognise that other means and media are available, enabling stakeholders to interact more informally or from a remote location where their time is limited. We will ensure that there is a balance between formal, large scale engagement and opportunities for more informal and smaller face-to-face surgeries or online engagement sessions. We will continue to focus on targeted engagement, enabling discussion on specific topics to improve the level of detail provided by our stakeholders.

We will expand our use of other methods of interaction through webinars, videos and social media. It is important that we are able to reach as many stakeholders as we can, so these methods ensure that our engagement continues to be broad and inclusive of all groups.

Having a cycle of engagement which listens to our customers, develops the required improvements and provides feedback to check whether the changes are delivering the anticipated benefits or further improvements are required is integral to our MCS. This approach ensures customers are at the heart of what we do, that they feel we are listening to their concerns and actively working within them to deliver the changes to best suit their needs.



9.4 Have your say

You can influence our strategy going forward. We will seek customer feedback through stakeholder engagement for the duration of RIIO-ED2 and revise and refine our MCS, as required. If you would like to share your thoughts and feedback please contact our connections policy team at: wpdconnpolicysupport@westernpower.co.uk

10. Governance

WPD's governance arrangements for the development of improvements to connections services include extensive stakeholder engagement, publication of information and, where applicable, standardisation across the industry.

We have engaged extensively with industry working groups to develop standard approaches to connection activities thus ensuring consistency of approach. Examples of such collaboration include the application of milestones in connection offers and changes to the interactivity processes for customer looking to connect in the same locality.

This collaboration has not prevented us from developing our own policies and processes to improve the customer experience and ensure connections are delivered in a timely and efficient manner. One such example is the implementation of our new approach to the reservation and allocation of network capacity.

Combining industry discussions with feedback provided through the broader measure of customer satisfaction and major connection customer surveys ensures that areas for improvement are clearly identified and can then be address through extensive engagement to ensure we deliver real benefits for customers.

We engage with customer representatives at an early stage, to present issues and identify solutions. We maintain a cycle of engagement to ensure that stakeholders have every opportunity to provide feedback throughout the development of process and policy changes.

This puts customers at the forefront of development, ensuring that the improvements can be adapted to better suit their needs and that they understand and support the changes at the point of implementation.



11. Future improvements

Baseline expectation 1		Relevant market segments						
Provide access to up to date and relevant information to enable a connection stakeholder to decide whether, and where, to connect to the distribution network. This should include, but not be limited to, graphical network records that show the location, size and type of assets.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Charging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statements of methodology and charges for connection.• Use of system charging statements.• Guidance document and podcast to help customers' to understand WPD's charges for using our distribution system.							
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easy to access asset data available through Dataportal2 including guidance on how to locate and understand the information provided.• Real time and historic network data provided via the Live Data Viewer.• Long Term Development Statement (LTDS) published and regularly updated.• Access to the Common Information Model (CIM) to provide a consolidated view of our network assets and their connectivity.• Access to generation outage report.							
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connecting Low Carbon Technology, such as electric vehicle (EV) charging and heat pumps including WPD's Electric Vehicle Strategy.• Connecting energy storage.• Connecting community energy.• Flexible Connections, e.g. Active Network Management.• Statement of Works process.• Guest user access to technical policy and engineering documents.							
Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EV Capacity Map.• Flexibility Map providing visibility of locations for which we are seeking flexibility solutions.• Distribution Future Energy Scenarios Map to outline the range of credible futures for growth.							
	Future improvements							
	Description		Benefits provided		Target		Metric	
	Update guidance on installation of EV charging and heat pumps to clarify the steps to be taken.		Clearer understanding of the process for connecting low carbon equipment with easy to understand step by step guidance.		RIIO-ED1		Overall metrics for customer satisfaction and published information.	

Baseline expectation 2		Relevant market segments						
Communicate a clear connections process for all customers. This should include providing clarity of DNO, customer and third party responsibilities. This should also include providing clarity on how issues that arise can be raised and resolved.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Competition in Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on extent/availability of Independent Connection Providers (ICPs) to undertake works under CiC.• Guidance on any necessary agreements that will need to be in place, e.g. Bilateral Connection Agreement.							
Roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on the roles and responsibilities for obtaining permissions and consents.• Advice on the different roles and responsibilities of market participants, including customers, ICPs and Independent Distribution Network Operators (IDNOs).							
Building Network Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on the process for connecting multiple occupancy buildings for Building Network Operator (BNOs).							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Competition in Connection	Work with ICPs and IDNOs to minimise the number and scope of non-contestable services.	Through ICP/IDNO liaison and trial arrangements we can further reduce the reliance on WPD input services to facilitate competitive connections.	RIIO-ED1/ RIIO-ED2	Reduction in the number of non-contestable activities by 2028.
Roles and responsibilities	Provide animations setting out the connections process and associated roles and responsibilities.	Increased understanding of the roles of WPD, customers, ICPs and IDNOs.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, awareness of competition and published information.

Baseline expectation 3		Relevant market segments						
Provide clear explanations of the types of connection products available, the associated costs of each and the information that would need to be provided by the customer to make an application. Where appropriate, this should also include the provision of generation information on the potential implications for a customer’s connection offer if they change their own requirements, if other customers are seeking to connect in the same area or if they do not accept an offer within its validity period.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on the types of connection offer available, e.g. budget estimate.• Signpost connection charging statements containing associated costs for different types of offer.• Guidance on the electricity (connection charges) regulations, known as assessment and design fees.• Guidance on connection options in terms of security and associated costs.							
Capacity allocation and reservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on allocation and reservation of capacity for multiple demand connections.							
Application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on completing the connections application forms.• Guidance on the process relating to interactive connection requests.• Guidance on allowable changes to connection requests.							
	Future improvements							
	Description	Benefits provided			Target	Metric		
Capacity allocation and reservation	Publish guidance on allocation and reservation for large scale generation connections.	Understanding the method of reserving capacity to enable a phased ramp up as large scale generators build out.			RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics.		
Application process	Improve guidance on the information needed to submit an application for connection.	Ensure customers provide all relevant information at the outset to reduce potential delays in issuing a connection offer.			RIIO-ED1	Reduction in number of requests for further information by 2028.		

Baseline expectation 4		Relevant market segments						
Provide support and help to customers through appropriate channels which should include, but not be limited to, connections surgeries.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Indicative pricing tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an interactive costing tool. Provide indicative guide price tables. 							
Customer support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide connections surgery appointments. Provide community energy surgery appointments. Provide net zero surgery appointments. 							
Website information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated connections area of the website for information. 'Chatbot' facility to direct users to the most relevant area of the website. 							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Indicative pricing tools	Improve interactive costing tool to combine with mapping system, allowing a cost to be determined from a pin location.	More accurate price indication or the required supply location based on network location and available capacity.	RIIO-ED2	Interactive pricing tool satisfaction score >90%.
Customer support services	Provide an Any Questions 'request a call back service'.	Dedicated queries line for general connection related enquiries.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics.
Customer support services	Provide a 'Strategic Planning Information' request service for Local Authorities (LA) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).	Dedicated information relevant to an LA or LEP area.	RIIO-ED2	Increase in the number of requests by 2028.
Website information	Continually review and improve connections related website information.	Information remains up to date and easily accessible for both new entrants and existing experienced customers.	RIIO-ED1/ RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for published Information.

Baseline expectation 5		Relevant market segments						
Have robust processes in place to proactively engage with stakeholders. This should include how the DNO plans to both identify and address connections issues.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Annual workshop	• Annual Connections Workshop to discuss connections matters.							
Regular targeted meetings	• Hold regular meetings with expert stakeholders under the Customer Connections Steering Group (CCSG). • Hold regular meetings with LAs and LEPs to discuss Network Strategy. • Hold regular meetings with generation owners through the Distributed Generation Owner Operator Forum (DGOO).							
	Future improvements							
	Description		Benefits provided		Target		Metric	
Regular targeted meetings	Broaden engagement on Network Strategy to include housing and commercial developers, and strategic landowners.		Ensure strategic network planning accounts for the plans and needs of large scale developers and landowners.		RIIO-ED2		Overall metrics for stakeholder engagement.	
Consumer value proposition 2	Introduce local authority engagement engineers dedicated to supporting local authorities in the development of their plans.		Providing local authorities with the technical expertise necessary to help them understand the options available to them to develop ambitious local development plans.		RIIO-ED2		90% customer satisfaction with the local authority engagement engineer process.	

Baseline expectation 6		Relevant market segments						
Provide clearly signposted information on capacity available to enable points of connection to be identified.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generation EHV constraint maps.• Network Capacity Map for large scale developments.• EV Capacity Map.							
Capacity registers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embedded capacity register.• Generation capacity register.							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Maps	Improve EV Capacity Map to show capacity at distribution level.	Better understanding of the likelihood for triggering reinforcement or identifying connection opportunities, such as where and how to connect.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for published information.

Baseline expectation 7		Relevant market segments						
Provide guidance that explains to customers the criteria to allow an unmetered connection to be made, ensuring compliance with the unmetered supply regulations.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Guidance on eligibility for a connection to be unmetered.							
Technical information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Technical information relating to standard arrangements for unmetered connections through standard technique SD5P.							
	Future improvements							
	Description		Benefits provided		Target		Metric	
Guidance	Improve guidance on eligibility for a connection to be unmetered, including the implementation of unmetered EV charge points.		Better understanding of unmetered LCT options.		RIIO-ED1		Overall metrics for customer satisfaction and published information.	

Baseline expectation 8		Relevant market segments						
Provide support in the form of tailored pre-application communication to suit different stakeholder needs.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance on connecting Low Voltage (LV) or High Voltage (HV) connections. Guidance on connecting Extra High Voltage (EHV) or above connections. Guidance on connecting energy storage. Guidance for community energy. Guidance on connecting EV charging or heat pump. 							
Publication formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application forms and guidance documents available in braille or audio format upon request. 							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Guidance	Provide guidance on the eligibility criteria and end to end process for unmetered connections.	Better understanding of the application process, timescales and potential costs.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, awareness of competition and published information.
Guidance	Improve guidance for connecting heat pumps.	Improved understanding of the application process, timescales and potential costs.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction and published information.
Guidance	Provide jargon buster for connections related terminology and acronyms.	Improved new user journey with better understanding of terminology used in the industry.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for published information.

Baseline expectation 9		Relevant market segments						
Have clear and simple customer application processes, which accounts for the particular needs of different groups of customers and which can be shaped by the parties involved. This should include, but not be limited to, providing options for how customers can apply for new connections and ensure these are clearly communicated.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Online services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an online application form.• Online portal for ICP/IDNO applications.							
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signpost Energy Networks Association (ENA) guidance on the process for applying for EV charge points and heat pumps.• Guidance on applying for an unmetered connection.• Guidance on applying for generation/storage including G98, G99 and G99 fast track.• Guidance on applying for a modification to an existing connection.							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Core commitment 31	Make it as easy as possible for customers to apply to connect individual domestic low carbon technologies by providing a same day connections response via an online self assessment tool.	Simple and quick connections process. Quicker response times to provide approval to connect.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, Time to Quote and Time to Connect.
Guidance	Provide WPD guidance, aligned with the ENA information, on the process for applying for EV charge points and heat pumps.	Information immediately available to WPD customers without directing to the ENA website.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, awareness of competition and published information.

Baseline expectation 10		Relevant market segments						
Provide tailored communication plans to suit different customer needs, including the provision of specified points of contact during the application process. This should include the provision of various channels through which customers can access support or help.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Points of contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide major customers with a senior manager point of contact for them to liaise with. Provide team contact details upon acceptance of a connection offer. 							
Scheme tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking progress of specified tasks for ICP works via an online portal. 							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Points of contact	Provide customers with a single point of contact in our planning team at the quotation stage.	Dedicated contacts with knowledge of the progress of an application for connection.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction and stakeholder engagement.
Points of contact	Contact customers who have a senior manager point of contact on a regular basis.	Regular checkpoint to identify areas for improvement and ensure we continue to hold the correct contact details.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for stakeholder engagement.
Points of contact	Provide customer service training to dedicated points of contact, to include methods of tailoring communication to suit the customers' needs.	Consistency of approach between regions in the service and methods of communication provided.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, awareness of competition, connection guaranteed standards of performance and Time to Quote and Time to Connect.

Baseline expectation 11		Relevant market segments						
Provide customers with clear connection quotation cost breakdowns, listing out the cost components and any assumptions used in the formulation of connection offers.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Connection cost breakdown	• Provide clear connection offer cost breakdowns tailored according to type of customer.							
Guidance	• Guidance on potential variations to the connection charge.							
Connection offers	• Highlight any assumptions that have been made in the connection offer.							
	Future improvements							
	Description	Benefits provided		Target		Metric		
Connection cost breakdown	Review the breakdowns with stakeholder input to identify whether any improvements can be made.	Clarity of breakdown to suit customers needs.		RIIO-ED2		Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, and stakeholder engagement.		
Guidance	Provide guidance on the assumptions that may be made in a connection offer and the impact this may have on the connection works or associated costs.	Understanding the potential impacts may encourage applicants to provide more accurate information at the outset.		RIIO-ED1		Overall metrics for customer satisfaction and published information.		

Baseline expectation 12		Relevant market segments						
Have processes in place to help customers identify how they could make changes to their connection requirements, that would meet their needs and allow them to get connected more quickly or cheaply.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Connection options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Network Management (ANM) options offered to applicants within ANM zones where the cost of reinforcement is greater than £600,000 and the works will take longer than 18 months to complete. Provide capacity sharing options (where appropriate) to avoid reinforcement costs and delays. 							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Core commitment 32	Provide quicker and cheaper connections options for customers by increasing the number of flexible connection offers made, ensuring 100% of schemes receive a flexible alternative to reinforcement where the reinforcement cost is >£75,000 for LV, 11kV and 33kV connections and >£100,000 for 66kV or 132kV connections and/or where works will take more than 12 or 18 months respectively to complete.	Customers can make more informed decisions about their connections solution based on costs and timescales.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, Time to Quote and Time to Connect.
Information	Publish information relating to diversity that can be applied to specific applications, e.g. EV charge points and heat pumps.	Improve accuracy of required capacity to better facilitate customers' understanding of where and how to connect.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for published information.
Information	Provide tipping point information for the capacity that could be provided whilst avoiding the need to trigger reinforcement.	Increased choice for customers to enable them to change their requirements to obtain a quicker and cheaper connection.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction and published information.

Baseline expectation 13		Relevant market segments						
Specifically, in relation to flexible connection customers, provide clarity around conditions and circumstances of current and future curtailment associated with a connections offer.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Indicate anticipated system outage conditions that the connection may be curtailed for.Indicate anticipated level of curtailment according to connection type at the connection offer stage.Provide information relating to historic outages on the relevant section of network upon request which may indicate potential future curtailment.							
	Future improvements							
	Description	Benefits provided		Target		Metric		
Outages	Provide historic outage information for EHV connections at the application stage.	Information readily available without being requested.		RIIO-ED1		Overall metrics for customer satisfaction and published information.		

Baseline expectation 14		Relevant market segments						
Provide guidance that explains to customers the criteria to allow a DG connection to be made to ensure compliance with relevant engineering recommendations (G98/G99).		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance on G98 eligibility criteria and notification procedures. Provide guidance on G99 eligibility criteria and connection procedures (including 'fast track'). 							
Commissioning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice on commissioning requirements, e.g. witness testing. 							
Statement of Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance on the requirement to provide securities and liabilities under the SoW process. 							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Commissioning process	Improve guidance on commissioning process, including which documents should be provided to WPD and at which stage in the process for each generator type.	Improved understanding of the end to end generation connection process.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, published information, Time to Quote and Time to Connect.



Baseline expectation 15		Relevant market segments						
Have in place options for ‘fast track’ reconnections of critical infrastructure such as internet cabinets that have been damaged in road traffic incidents or similar.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Guaranteed standards	• Ensure compliance with the electricity (connection standards of performance) regulations 2010.							
Reconnection process	• Informal arrangement for local managers to prioritise reconnection of critical infrastructure.							
	Future improvements							
	Description	Benefits provided		Target		Metric		
Reconnection process	Formalise arrangements for expediting the reconnection of critical infrastructure, including internet cabinets.	Consistent approach in all areas for fast track reconnection.		RIIO-ED2		90% reconnected within agreed fast track timescales.		

Baseline expectation 16		Relevant market segments						
Provide tailored communication plans to suit different customer needs, including the provision of specified points of contact during the delivery process. Ensure various channels are available for customers to access support or help.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Competition in Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tracking progress of specified tasks for ICP works via online portal including notifying them of approval to proceed with live jointing.Processes to allow ICPs to operate on WPD network under their own DSRs.							
Legal permissions and consents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Online tracking of legal permissions and consents process to view progress made and whether the current outstanding task is with WPD or customer lawyers.							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Point of contact	Provide customers with a single point of contact with one of our technicians at the connection delivery stage.	Dedicated contacts with knowledge of the two key stages of the connections process.	RIIO-ED1	Overall metrics for stakeholder engagement.



Baseline expectation 17		Relevant market segments						
		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Complete any cost reconciliation in a timely manner.								
Commitment area	Currently available							
Payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice on payment terms. Allow payment through our online Connection Portal for small services. 							
Refunds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once final reconciliation is complete, initiate all customer refunds within ten working days. 							
Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onsite variations available to agree work changes and additional costs in real time with the site contact to enable the works to continue as planned and reduce the reconciliation of costs at the end of the project. 							

Future improvements				
	Description	Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Payments	Improve online services to allow online payments for larger connections.	Payment options aligned irrespective of size or value of connection scheme.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction and published information.
Variations	Advise customers as soon as is reasonably practicable if we become aware of the requirement to amend the connection charge at any point during the course of the scheme.	Keeping the customer informed in a timely manner and reducing reconciliation timescales at the end of the project.	RIIO-ED2	Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, Time to Quote and Time to Connect.

Baseline expectation 18		Relevant market segments						
Where there are slow moving projects and where these may impact on other customers, have processes in place for releasing capacity that is not being used.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Connection offers	• Include milestones in connection offers in accordance with good industry practice.							

Future improvements				
Description		Benefits provided	Target	Metric
Capacity allocation and reservation	Undertake a capacity review with connected customers who are underutilising capacity on an enduring basis.	Unutilised capacity released for use by others whilst demand customers will see a reduction in capacity charges.	RIIO-ED1	Unutilised capacity returned to the network.

Baseline expectation 19		Relevant market segments						
Have processes in place for the promotion of certain types of customers (such as storage) in the connection queue, in circumstances where this will help others connect more quickly/cheaply.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
DG consortium	• Facilitate sharing of information for potential DG connections consortiums.							
Connection queues	• Connections queues managed fairly in accordance with ENA guidance on allowable changes and interactivity.							
	Future improvements							
	Description		Benefits provided		Target		Metric	
DG consortium	Promote the option of DG consortium option.		Raised awareness may increase the take up of this approach to reducing timescales and/or costs.		RIIO-ED1		Increased take up of DG consortium approach.	
Connection queues	Manage network connections queues more effectively for flexible assets such as storage that can bring wider system benefits.		Reduction in timescales and/or costs for connection where flexible assets are promoted to make capacity available to others.		RIIO-ED1/ RIIO-ED2		Overall metrics for customer satisfaction, Time to Quote and Time to Connect.	

Baseline expectation 20		Relevant market segments						
Provide access to services that facilitate the delivery of timely and economical connections such as ‘rent a jointer’ services.		Demand				Generation		UMS
		LV	HV	HV/EHV	EHV and above	LV	HV and above	Other
Commitment area	Currently available							
Online services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online portal to enable ICPs to submit live jointing requests and receive approval in a timely manner.• Access provided to WPD network information through project tracker to minimise WPD input services.• ICPs can submit their design at the time of issuing a jointing notification, requesting consent to connect the new cable to the existing network. This enables them to proceed without requiring advanced design approval, reducing the timescales for low risk, high volume connections.							
	Future improvements							
	Description	Benefits provided		Target		Metric		
Rent a jointer	Evaluate the need to re-introduce rent a jointer services.	Services provided as required to better facilitate competition in connections.		RIIO-ED1		Publication of process if deemed required.		



Western Power Distribution (East Midlands) plc, No2366923
Western Power Distribution (West Midlands) plc, No3600574
Western Power Distribution (South West) plc, No2366894
Western Power Distribution (South Wales) plc, No2366985

Registered in England and Wales
Registered Office: Avonbank, Feeder Road, Bristol BS2 0TB

www.westernpower.co.uk

