

# Connections

## Frequently Asked Questions

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# Contents

Connections Action Plan (CAP) and Connections Process Advisory Group (CPAG) .....	3
Letter of Authority (LoA) .....	3
Queue Management (QM).....	4
Transmission Works Review (TWR) .....	5
Transitional Offers.....	5
Request For Information (RFI) .....	7
Accelerated Storage .....	7
Technical Limits.....	9
Two Step Offers .....	9
<b>Connections Reform</b>	
Application Submission.....	11
Gate 1.....	11
Gate 2.....	12
Fees / Charges / Securities.....	15
Existing Queue .....	15
General Offshore .....	16
Embedded (Distribution-Connected) Projects .....	16
Other Questions.....	17

All information in this document is correct as of **06 September 2024** and may be subject to future updates or changes. This guide aims to provide customers and stakeholders with responses to frequently asked questions. Should you require additional information, please submit an enquiry through the **[Connections Portal](#)**.

## Connections Action Plan (CAP) and Connections Process Advisory Group (CPAG)

- Will policy papers / recommended actions on CAP be published? (Updated August 2024)

We do not publish specific policy papers taken to the Connections Delivery Board (CDB) or the Connections Process Advisory Group (CPAG). However, in practice, all agreed recommendations are communicated in some way to customers, e.g. Our TMO4+ publication [here](#), or our reform code mods, which are on our website. Minutes of the CDB (ENA website) and CPAG meetings are published and Ofgem also publishes a blog after most CDB meetings on its website.

Minutes of CPAG meetings and the CPAG terms of reference are on our website [here](#).

## Guidance and Policy Papers

- What guidance or policy papers are the ESO developing and when are these likely to be published? (Updated July 2024)

We are currently drafting several guidance documents on Modification Applications, technology changes for transmission-connected customers, Independent Distribution Network Operator (IDNO) connections, and substation bay sharing. We are expecting to publish the documents over Summer / Autumn on our website and may update them in line with developments around Connections Reform. Updates will be shared via usual communication channels including our monthly newsletter and Connections Forum.

- What is the status, governance route and legal basis of ESO guidance documents? (Updated July 2024)

We publish documents to clarify our interpretation on the application of code provisions and our position on processes and the principles that we will employ where these matters are not fully detailed in the codes. They are not intended to change the underlying terms and conditions but aim to aid parties in understanding how we will interpret / apply them, and always remain consistent with the underlying terms and conditions.

We engage across our internal teams and senior management to ensure any documents are fit-for-purpose and will seek industry engagement on their development where appropriate.

## Letter of Authority (LoA)

- What is the new Letter of Authority Requirement? (Updated May 2024)

The Letter of Authority (LoA) provides us with confirmation that the project developer has either formally engaged in discussions with the landowner(s) in respect to the land rights needed to enable the construction of the project on the land, or to demonstrate land ownership. From March 28, 2024, all new onshore transmission connection applications are required to submit an LoA, alongside existing application criteria, in order to be considered valid and complete ([CUSC modification CMP427](#)). Failure to provide a valid LoA will result in an application being rejected.

- If Gate 2 requires land rights, won't the LOA become redundant? (Updated May 2024)

The Gate 2 requirements / criteria is currently under development as part of the Reforms Connections modification. Regardless of the outcome of the Reform Modification the LOA will still be required at application stage to get a gate 1 offer.

- What is the validity period for LoAs? (Updated May 2024)

We will only accept LoAs that have been signed by the landowner not more than one year from the connection application submission date. The LoA can be signed and dated either via wet or electronic signature.

- **How do applicants complete the LoA process for larger projects that require multiple landowners? (Updated May 2024)**

Where multiple landowners are involved, the applicant must ensure that the required number of LoAs are submitted to meet the minimum acreage per MW requirements.

Customers should reference the Energy Land Density table which can be found within the LoA Guidance document on the ESO website [here](#), to identify the minimum acreage per MW requirements we will expect for each plant type.

- **How can customers determine the minimum acreage requirements for their project? (Updated May 2024)**

Customers should reference the Energy Land Density table which can be found within the LoA Guidance document on the ESO website [here](#), to identify the minimum acreage per MW requirements we will expect for each plant type.

- **Will the ESO seek to strengthen this LoA requirement in the future? (Updated August 2024)**

We proposed a number of elements within CMP434 which seek to further strengthen the LoA requirement. This includes expanding the LoA requirement to include offshore projects on an equivalent basis.

You can find more information on the LoA process, including guidance documents, more FAQs and a recording of our LoA Teach-in webinar [here](#), under the 'essential resources' tab.

## **Queue Management (QM)**

- **What happens after the 27 May 2024 deadline for QM? (Updated July 2024)**

27 May 2024 was the deadline for the Queue Management Notice. Those Customers that had submitted a Mod app would need to have Clock-started by 27 June 2024 and for those who did not respond, we will be issuing an ATV.

For more information on the queue management process please refer to our Queue Management Guidance document [here](#), webinars [here](#) and QM FAQ document [here](#).

- **How do you make customers aware of queue changes via the queue management? e.g. capacity made available earlier for new applications? (Updated July 2024)**

One of the CAP Actions is about capacity reallocation. It is being worked through with CPAG and CDB currently as per the agreed governance process and we will keep customers updated on this in our future Connections Forums. You can register for these [here](#).

- **For existing projects who do not wish to modify the connection date, will the milestones be based on the CMP376 implementation date or the date the ATV is issued? (Updated July 2024)**

The User Progression Milestones will be based on the date the Agreement to Vary is issued working backwards from the connection date.

- **For an ATV how are QM Milestones included? (Updated July 2024)**

Queue Management milestones will be applied in the form of an Appendix Q

- **What happens to Construction Milestones if the TO Connection Works are delayed resulting in a delayed Connection Date? (Updated July 2024)**

The User would apply for an exception and if accepted, the Milestone duration will be amended. If the impact of connection date is more than 6 months, then discussions will be had with the relevant Transmission

Licensee, User and ESO to align all Milestones to the new completion date. The exception below is in the [guidance document](#):

*“Any delay in the achievement of a milestone by the User which is caused by a Relevant Transmission Licensee or The Company.”*

- Will queue management milestones be applicable to all direct connections across all TOs including Scottish TOs? (Updated July 2024)

Yes, QM milestones are applicable across the whole of Great Britain.

- Does the queue management process apply for all projects i.e., those connected via distribution and transmission or just those connected via transmission? (Updated July 2024)

Transmission Queue Management does not apply to BEGA / BELLA or anyone with a Connection Agreement with a DNO. DNOs have their own Queue Management Milestones.

- What are the assumptions on timelines for Queue Management milestones in Step 2 offers based on the timing between NG informing where a substation will be located, and when planning needs to be submitted? (Updated July 2024)

The milestones were developed and supported by a working group with industry. Following the approval of CMP 376 we sent a notice to all customers with an active agreement with the ESO providing two options: either a) have queue management milestones applied to their current connection date; or b) to submit a modification application before 27 of May this year to have queue management milestones applied to a new connection date.

If you are planning on submitting a modification application, then please do so before 27 of May. In regard to two step offers, all two-step offers will contain Queue Management Milestones.

- How will queue management work for existing connections that have QM milestones but haven't yet reached Gate 2 due to a connection date in the 2030s? (Updated July 2024)

Under TMO4+ proposals queue management milestones would not be applied until a project meets Gate 2.

- Queue milestones need to be amended to take into account the uncertainty over new GSP locations for TNO projects. We can't progress planning without these (Updated July 2024)

Queue management milestones will be reflected or amended on the outcome of TMO4+

## Transmission Works Review (TWR)

- Can you provide an update on the TWR? (Updated May 2024)

The TWR is underway for all three regions, and we look forward to being able to contact customers that participated in the Expression of Interest last year and are continuing to demonstrate that they are meeting their contracted milestones in Appendix J of their Construction Agreement. We expect to be in contact with successful customers in the summer and with a view to updating relevant Agreements by Autumn 2024.

## Transitional Offers

- What is a Transitional Offer and when will applications start to receive Transitional Offers? (Updated August 2024)

Transitional Offers cover the process between now and the start of the new reformed process and will have full front-end clauses, blank appendices, will confirm capacity (TEC),. Transitional Offers will be very similar to what is expected for a Gate 1 Offer (if our TMO4+ proposals are approved) where an indicative connection date and location will be provided. If the Connections reform process is approved there will not be any

updates required to Transitional Offers as they will become Gate 1 offers (if the Gate 2 criteria has not been met by the project). Transitional offers will be issued 3 months after clock start and will have 3 months to accept. The only change will be if the project meets the Gate 2 criteria and therefore is then issued a Gate 2 offer as part of the process being developed under CMP435/CM096.

Following Ofgem's decision on 21 August, any new applications for a directly connected transmission connection that **apply** to the ESO from **2 September 2024**, will receive a Transitional Offer similar to the proposed Gate 1 offers referred to within the Connections Reform CUSC modifications.

Further information, together with ESO's Request to Ofgem Letter and Ofgem's decision letter, is available [here](#).

- **Should I be in a contracted arrangement by TMO4+ or is it worth waiting until TMO4+ begins? (Updated June 2024)**

When a customer should apply is entirely up to the customer, we cannot advise on this.

- **How are Mod Apps by a TO and DNO affected in transitional and enduring arrangements? (Updated July 2024)**

They will be subject to transitional arrangements however the dates for these are yet to be agreed and will occur nearer to the start of the reformed process. To start, only new applications will be subject to transitional arrangements.

- **BEGA, BELLA and Mod Apps will not be included in the Transitional offers. Does this mean the standard "first come first serve" queue position principles will apply? (Updated August 2024)**

For BEGA, BELLA and Mod Apps, the current process will be applied as per CUSC.

- **How are Transitional Offers treated at Gate 2 if they have or have not applied for acceleration? (Updated August 2024)**

Transitional contracts will receive an updated contract if they meet the Gate 2 requirements (subject to approval of our TMO4+ proposals), and this will provide a confirmed connection point and connection date, and the offer will include a full set of appendices.

- **When will Modification Applications, Project Progressions, BEGAs and BELLAs be included? (Updated July 2024)**

Phase 1 of the Transitional Arrangements will refer to **new** transmission directly connected applications, and Phase 2 will refer to Modification Applications, embedded applications (BEGAs and BELLAs), as well as Project Progressions.

- **Will the application fee change because of the content of the offer? (Updated August 2024)**

No, the application fees will be invoiced as per current methodology. We would encourage customers to request the variable fee option as the works expected to be required to produce the transitional offer should result in a credit note going back to the customer at the end of the process.

- **Will transitional offers have a queue position? (Updated August 2024)**

As Transitional Offers will mirror the proposed Gate 1 offers and have an indicative connection date, this does not provide the correct circumstances to assign a queue position. However, once the project is studied for a Gate 2 offer (subject to approval of our TMO4+ proposals), the connection date and point will be confirmed, and a queue position will be assigned.

- **What timescales are being used for Transitional offers? (Updated August 2024)**

The offers will be issued at a maximum of 3 months after clock start but the relevant TO and ESO will endeavour to accelerate them wherever possible. Customers will have 3 months to accept.

## Request For Information (RFI)

- **What is the RFI? (Updated June 2024)**

As we seek to deliver the TMO4+ reformed connections process via code modifications CMP434 & CM095: implementing connections reform and CMP435 & CM096: application of Gate 2 criteria to existing contracted background, we are looking to establish whether developers hold secured land rights for the proposed location of each contracted connection. We are actively looking at transitional arrangements to ensure an efficient transition between now and Connections Reform implementation (subject to introduction of associated code modifications). Under the proposed code modifications, retaining existing connection dates or being in a position to accelerate that date will be dependent on meeting specified criteria such as having secured land rights. Therefore, we are using the RFI to understand where parties are in the process and using the data as part of an impact assessment on the proposed Gate 2 criteria set out in CMP434 and CMP435.

- **What are you doing with the data? (Updated August 2024)**

The RFI closed on 28 June 2024. The data will be used to support the impact assessment for the TMO4+ connections reform model. Under the proposed code modifications, retaining existing connection dates or being in a position to accelerate that date will be dependent on meeting specified criteria such as having secured land rights; so having an early understanding of projects in that position will enable us to understand the potential impact of the proposals.

## Accelerated Storage

- **What is the Accelerated Storage policy? (Updated August 2024)**

We have developed a policy that will enable some storage projects to connect earlier than their contracted connection date would have been if all the enabling works stipulated under the Connect and Manage criteria had been delivered.

The principles of the 'Variation to Connection Designs' of the Security and Quality of Supply Standard (SQSS) are being applied to offer an earlier connection to storage projects on the basis that, should they be contributing to the constraints, they would need to adjust their output at times when the network is constrained even under intact system conditions.

It should be noted that restrictions will only be uncompensated, where the works to resolve the restrictions would be considered enabling works for the project. These restrictions will be a list of circuits stated in the customer's connection agreement.

Current version of the policy is [here](#), and a revised policy will be published in due course.

- **Why are you rolling out this policy? (Updated May 2024)**

Energy Storage Systems (ESS) are a relatively new technology that are applying to connect in large numbers to GB transmission and distribution networks. They have the potential to play an important role in the transition to a net zero system by providing the operational flexibility required to maximise electricity supply from renewable energy sources whilst also supporting the operability needs of the system.

Engagement with selected BESS developers suggests that the adopted assessment approach does not necessarily align with how the storage assets are intended to be operated and that generally these assets will behave in a way that will not be detrimental to the system and can even support system operation. For example, BESS are more likely to be importing during conditions when the electricity price is low (during off-peak rather than peak demand and when the output from renewables is high) and are more likely to be exporting at times when the electricity price is high (during peak demands and/or when the output of renewable plants is low).

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a risk that under some circumstances, the operation of storage systems can potentially exacerbate network constraints, there are measures that can be implemented to ensure that such risk is managed, which has resulted in the Accelerated Storage policy.

- **Who is eligible? (Updated May 2024)**

All energy storage projects connecting to the transmission network will be eligible to request this type of connection.

Embedded energy storage projects including large power stations connecting to the distribution networks will have the opportunity for an accelerated connection through the GSP technical limits initiative being undertaken by the DNOs. There is ongoing work with ENA to define Primacy Rules which could impact how BEGAs subject to technical limits will operate.

Large embedded generators connecting through a dedicated SGT will not benefit from GSP technical limits and will be eligible for acceleration under this policy as they are very similar to directly connected generators. An embedded Storage User is considered to be connected through a dedicated SGT when the power import/export of the User can only flow through the dedicated SGT and there are no other Users that contribute to the flows on the dedicated SGT.

Where storage projects are co-located with other technologies at a hybrid site, only the storage component will have the opportunity to opt for an accelerated restricted connection arrangement and have their connection date brought forward on this basis. It should be noted that all types of energy storage connections such as pumped hydro will be eligible for an accelerated restricted connection under this policy and not only BESS.

- **How will these restrictions apply? (Updated May 2024)**

Energy storage projects to be restricted based on forecast system impact rather than being automatically restricted on the basis of asset outages. This restriction will be directional i.e., only the export capability of the storage project will be restricted at times of export constraints and only the import capability of the storage project will be restricted during import constraints.

In practice, this non-firm arrangement (via their BCA) will give us the right to restrict these parties up to gate closure, however we want to create a new process that will indicate to storage by 1330 day ahead if we think there will be a restriction.

- **What information will be provided to customers to understand the nature of their restrictions? (Updated May 2024)**

We have created a network data guide to help identify the data needed to understand the nature of the restriction(s). The majority of the data is from public network data sources (ETYS, FES and TEC register), but in addition we will also supply site specific data (asset outages and queue position). Using these different data sources, the customer can create a GB system model and hence quantify the potential curtailment of a non-firm connection.

- **How is this policy implemented? (Updated August 2024)**

The ESO and Transmission Owners have prioritised implementing this policy to those parties who have submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI).

Scottish Power Transmission has concluded the study of the EOIs within its region and none have been able to be accelerated.

For EOIs in SSEN-T region, SSEN-T has identified 11 projects with 3.3 GW capacity that could potentially benefit from the policy.

In England & Wales, the plan is to review the remaining England & Wales transmission connected EOI submissions (along with an aim to consider certain large embedded customers who have submitted an EOI) as part of a tranche 2 alongside the Transmission Works Review. This means work on tranche 2 is planned to align with TWR timescales.

Large Embedded: There are two initiatives that large embedded can be accelerated through (Accelerating Storage or Technical Limits). These two initiatives interact, and we are working with the DNOs to understand what the best initiative is to accelerate these customers as it might not be the same for each customer.

- **Can everyone else (apart from projects who responded to EOI) benefit from Accelerating Storage? (Updated August 2024)**

We intend to roll out this policy wider as part of Connections Reform (TMO4+) and we will look to update you in future Connections Forums and our communications channels in how this will work.



## Technical Limits

- **What is the latest update on technical limits? (Updated May 2024)**

Setting technical limits (Import / Export limit) at GSPs where customers are currently held off by transmission reinforcement works.

Providing customers on the distribution network with an interim non-firm connection arrangement, which is curtailable and uncompensated. Enabling more agile and shovel ready customers to connect earlier, thereby releasing capacity that is not currently being utilised.

We have been working closely with the ENA to publish a paper that explains technical limits in more detail. [Please click here for further information.](#)

- **What are the benefits of technical limits, and will Two Step offers benefit from this? (Updated June 2024)**

(England & Wales) Phase 1: 72 GSPs benefitting up to 30GW, 750 customers.

(England & Wales) Phase 2: Up to 80 GSPs, Benefiting up to 36GW, 890 customers. (In progress)

(Scotland) Phase 1: 45 GSPs, benefitting up to 268 MW, 215 customers. (In progress)

Yes, Two Step offers will benefit, this will be communicated through the DNO.

- **What are the next steps for Technical Limits? (Updated May 2024)**

England & Wales phase 1A & 1B have been completed and DNOs have been sending out offers. Each DNOs will complete their own EOI programme to identify specific projects to accelerate.

E&W phase 2 has started this month and will complete in August/ September.

Scotland Technical Limits programme has now started and DNOs will start their EOI programmes in the coming months.

## Two Step Offers

- **Why has my connection application date been delayed? (Updated May 2024)**

In 2023, there was an unprecedented increase in connections applications resulting in approximately 500 contracts impacted by the Two Step offer process, which is over double the original estimate. This volume, alongside the scale of the network reinforcements work required, has reached a level significantly above and beyond the requirements suggested in the Leading the Way to Net Zero FES scenario. The transmission connected queue has grown by 25GW a month for last 6 months and by 200GW over last year to nearly 500GW in total. This is nearly 9 times the existing transmission peak demand of 58.5GW.

- **How are you improving the current situation? (Updated June 2024)**

As of November 2023, we have powers to actively manage the queue and ensure that customers are actively progressing. With the introduction of CMP 376 (Queue Management), we can now insert Queue Management milestones into certain customers agreements. This means where projects are stalled, we can terminate agreements that are not progressing against their appendix Q Milestones.

Notice was sent to all customers with a live Construction Agreement in November 2023, with the option to have Queue Management Milestones applied to their existing Connection Date or to submit a Modification Application to have the Milestones applied to a new Connection Date. Queue Management will take time to have a significant impact on the pipeline. Therefore, further measures will be required to tackle the current oversubscribed pipeline. This action was included within DESNZ / Ofgem's Connections Action Plan, with the Connections Delivery Board scheduled to assess further options in Q1 2024. Furthermore, we consulted on

how the Connections process can be reformed on an enduring basis with Final recommendations published in December. It is important that Government, Ofgem and industry work together to assess and implement actions as soon as possible. We are currently taking forward a series of code modifications to implement the reformed connections process in 2025.

- **What is the CSNP? (Updated May 2024)**

The release of the [Connections Action Plan](#) (CAP) and the [Transmission Acceleration Action Plan](#) (TAAP) at the end of 2023 marked a new Government position on the way the connections landscape is managed, and how key new transmission infrastructure needs to be delivered to enable net zero.

This stance was further recommended and explored within the TAAP- and one of the key areas identified was the formation of a new plan for strategic network delivery. It recommended the development of a Strategic Spatial Energy plan (SSEP), which would span across government departments and industries to transition to net zero and boost the UK economy. The report also recommended the development of a Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP) based on and in conjunction with the SSEP. This CSNP will form the high-level plan for both on and offshore electricity transmission networks in the future, helping to drive strategic investment ahead of customer need in our high voltage infrastructure.

- **Why is there a 'transitional' CSNP (tCSNP) (Updated May 2024)**

The extensive work necessary to complete an initial SSEP and then the following CSNP was recognised, and a transitional approach was therefore adopted. Our [Transitional Centralised Strategic Network Plan \(tCSNP\)](#), has been published, you can find more information [here](#). This will consider Networks Option Assessment methodologies and relevant technological appendices according to the current contracted background.

- **Why will the tCSNP influence Two Step offers? (Updated May 2024)**

As the tCSNP provides a new holistic approach to network investment, any works in the Second Step offers will be examined in the light of this tCSNP to ensure the works detailed are in line with the move towards strategic network investment and the measures outlined in the connections action plan. This will ensure customers have the most relevant assessment of the works needed for their connection. By aligning with the tCSNP (Transitional Centralised Strategic Network Plan), we expect to improve the range of customer dates overall.

- **Why have so many new substations been triggered and when will design plans be confirmed? (Updated May 2024)**

The volume and location of new substations are determined by several factors. Firstly, the requirements of projects which are contracted to connect to the network, such as a connection for a certain capacity in a particular region. From there, the availability of current substation assets is assessed, and a new site is offered if needed- for example where a current substation is at capacity. The current magnitude of customers applying to connect to the network drives a requirement for a considerable number of new substations. Many of these new projects are not expected to connect, meaning there can be great uncertainty around substation build requirements. This can mean proposed new substations may not be built and may change location or size depending on the current and future need.

Therefore, until full project certainty is achieved, and siting studies completed, the exact details of each new substation cannot be shared. Once these details are confirmed, the key stakeholders are notified, and plans are then shared according to public planning processes in each region. ESO is working with NGET and the industry to reform network planning processes to better understand wider asset requirements for new connections and increased demand.

- **How were offers considered under Two Step? (Updated May 2024)**

To consider Second Step offers in the context of other applications, a batching method was undertaken that considered the applications in eight previously defined regions. This meant that each application was placed into a batch and assigned a region (based on the offered Point of Connection), which considered offers

according to its clock start date. Each batch was processed according to NGET system studies and the Construction Planning Assumptions that the ESO provided at the beginning of this process.

- **Why do some years have a high proportion of connection dates? (Updated May 2024)**

When issuing recent offers and determining timelines, consideration has been given to a variety of factors. Firstly, the increase in projects applying to connect has driven significant enabling works to ensure these connections can be delivered effectively. The necessary works identified are essential to ensure the continued safe and efficient operation of the transmission system. Therefore, connection dates in those areas will all follow those network reinforcements.

Secondly, with Ofgem's approval of Queue Management and other efforts to reduce connection timelines, as well as the high volume of connection applications, we expect some attrition in project numbers as the connection dates draw closer. This may equally allow for changes in other project timelines. Reallocation of capacity will be assessed when these initiatives have taken effect, and current dates could shift. Therefore, certain years have been given to allow the flexibility needed as the pipeline changes, and enabling works shift, as future reforms take effect.

## **Connections Reform: Application Submission**

- **Why is the application submission only once a year and not once a quarter? (Updated August 2024)**

Following a review of Work Group consultation responses, we are proposing to introduce a bi-annual process for the application submission of a Gate 1 (now optional) or Gate 2 application. We do not believe the process operating once per quarter is practicable.

- **Will there be an application freeze before application windows? (Updated August 2024)**

There are no current plans for an application freeze. However, see above FAQs on Transitional Offers.

## **Connections Reform: Gate 1**

- **What is the difference between Gate 1 and Gate 2? (Updated August 2024)**

Gate 1 (now optional) provides an indicative connection point and connection date, without user commitment / final sums, or queue management milestones. At Gate 1 the ESO can, in certain circumstances, reserve a Connection Point and/or capacity, eg for long lead-time projects that are considered as part of a coordinated network design exercise.

Gate 2 provides a confirmed connection point and connection date, with associated user commitment / final sums, and queue management milestones.

- **Why have a Gate 1 and how long can a project remain there? (Updated August 2024)**

Gate 1 can provide useful information to the ESO and TOs and in some cases may result in earlier connection dates than would have otherwise been the case. It also allows the ESO to, in certain circumstances, reserve connection point and/or capacity where there is a case to do so, eg for long lead-time projects that are considered as part of a coordinated network design exercise. If this is for a specific project, then this will be for a bilaterally agreed period of time. Where connection point and/or capacity has not been reserved for a specific project at Gate 1 then there is no time limit on how long a project can remain at Gate 1.

- **Why does it take a year to develop an indicative offer? (Updated August 2024)**

Following a review of Work Group consultation responses, we are now proposing a shorter period for providing an offer for Gate 1 projects (if connection point and/or capacity is not reserved by the ESO). For these projects, we expect that Gate 1 offers will be provided in a considerably shorter period of time, potentially no more than 3 months.

- **If Gate 1 helps trigger TO works then should they not also trigger securities? If they don't then what's the point of Gate 1? (Updated August 2024)**

Gate 1 provides a view of pipeline and provides information to support more coordinated network design. However, we do not believe securities should be requested from Gate 1 projects.

- **Is there any advantage to a developer going through Gate 1 and not just holding off until land has been secured and go straight to Gate 2? (Updated August 2024)**

Possibly, as going through Gate 1 sends an important signal to us and the TO on what type of capacity is trying to connect and important upfront information on what is required to connect. This helps make Gate 2 more effective by ensuring that network can be designed efficiently ahead of Gate 2. Without a Gate 1, there may be a risk that network would be delivered significantly later than desired by the project developer, given that network typically takes longer to consent and build than the project it is connecting. In addition, Gate 1 provides the opportunity for the ESO to reserve connection point and/or capacity in certain circumstances.

- **Will the Gate 1 indicative offer provide a best-case scenario for a connection date? (Updated August 2024)**

No. The Gate 1 date (unless connection point and/or capacity has been reserved by the ESO) will be an indicative connection date. The confirmed connection date at Gate 2 could be earlier or later. It is not possible to provide a best-case date at Gate 1 as the date will depend on how quickly a project reaches Gate 2 at its desired connection location compared to other projects.

## **Connections Reform: Gate 2**

- **Where can I find information on Gate 2 criteria? (Updated June 2024)**

Our proposed Gate 2 Criteria are set out in our CMP434 CUSC Modification. This will be assessed by industry workgroups: <https://www.nationalgrideso.com/document/316816/download>

- **Will priority be given to contracted offers that have not met the Gate 2 criteria, but have been contracting for a longer-term connection date compared to new applications? (Updated August 2024)**

On an enduring basis we currently envision that queue position could typically be determined by when a project meets the Gate 2 criteria and in which Gate 2 batch they are assessed. The first time we run the Gate 2 process by applying Gate 2 to the current queue, there may be more appropriate criteria for determining queue position for projects that meet the Gate 2 criteria, particularly given Government's intentions around Clean Power by 2030. We are considering this further over the coming weeks and intend to set out more information within the connections methodologies we will develop as part of connections reform.

- **What is the analysis on the technology which would connect with Gate 2 whole queue approach? (Updated August 2024)**

The mix of projects and technologies that meet the Gate 2 criteria will be influenced by a number of factors such as the size of the market / market appetite, Government's Clean Power 2030 plans, and how quickly / easily a project can secure land options or otherwise meet the Gate 2 criteria. Government recently commissioned us to provide recommendations around Clean Power by 2030.

Clean Power 2030 has potential to set out a plan for what generation mix can best help us deliver clean power by 2030. We are considering whether and how the reformed connections process (TMO4+) could operationalise Clean Power 2030. We will make recommendations to the Connections Delivery Board at the end of September. Following the Connections Delivery Board we intend to set out more information on whether and how TMO4+ could operationalise Clean Power 2030, including within the connections methodologies we will develop as part of connections reform.

- **If someone ahead of me rejects their Gate 2 offer, how would this affect my Gate 2 offer if issued around the same time? (Updated August 2024)**

Capacity that becomes available due to Gate 2 offer rejections and terminations will be reallocated as part of the next possible Gate 2 window. The window this takes place in will be determined by when the offer is rejected or when the project terminates, relative to the opening of the window. The projects eligible for this reallocation could be projects with existing Gate 2 offers as well as projects who have applied within the latest Gate 2 window. How this capacity will be reallocated will be outlined in the proposed Connections Network Design Methodology (CNDM).

- **Could Gate 2 criteria change over time? (Updated July 2024)**

Yes, it is possible. However, it depends on whether the criteria provide (or continue to provide) the right balance between project viability and project deliverability. It will also depend on longer term reform programmes such as Government's Clean Power 2030 ambitions, Strategic Spatial Energy Planning and Net Zero Market Reform and the extent to which they impact the connections process. We will consider timescales for review of the Gate 2 criteria and any other part of the reformed process in due course.

- **Is there scope for Gate 2 criteria to look different for Transmission and Distribution? (Updated June 2024)**

We are currently proposing the same Gate 2 criteria for Transmission and relevant Distribution connected projects (ie distribution connected projects that require access to the transmission system). However, we are verifying this as part of the code modification process to ensure there is no undue discrimination between Transmission and Distribution connected projects.

- **Will we still be able to fix our securities once we get to Gate 2? (Updated June 2024)**

Yes. We are not currently seeking to change the current User Commitment/Final Sums provisions once projects have reached Gate 2.

- **When will Gate 2 offers be issued? (Updated August 2024)**

It is our current intention to group projects together and potentially have a bi-annual process for Gate 2 offers.

- **Will there be a requirement to show continual compliance with Gate 2? (Updated June 2024)**

Yes. This will be via continued requirement to have secured land for the project Site with restrictions on how much the red line boundary for the project Site can change and via Queue Management Milestones where ongoing compliance is, under CUSC, required against the pre-consent Milestones (M1, M2 and M3). Gate 2 is strongly linked to Queue Management Milestones M1 and M3.

- **Acquiring land rights or submission of planning does not provide project certainty. Should TMO4+ be based on projects achieving consent? (Updated May 2024)**

We have set out that our current view is that a Gate 2 Criteria of project achieving planning consent, or a Gate 2 Criteria of a project having to submit an application for planning consent, is too late in the project

development cycle as the absence of a confirmed connection date and location until Gate 2 would not provide project developers with sufficient information / certainty on where to locate their project at the point of submission of their planning consent. Our proposed Gate 2 Criteria are set out in our [CMP434 CUSC Modification](#). The Gate 2 criteria will be considered further by the code modification workgroups.

- **Is there going to be any project prioritisation or scoring to determine allocation speed or outcome? (Updated August 2024)**

On an enduring basis we currently envision that queue position will typically be determined by when a project meets the Gate 2 criteria and in which Gate 2 batch they are assessed. The first time we run the Gate 2 process by applying Gate 2 to the current queue, there may be more appropriate criteria for determining queue position for projects that meet the Gate 2 criteria, particularly given Government's intentions around Clean Power by 2030. <https://www.nationalgrideso.com/news/eso-commissioned-provide-key-advice-and-expertise-how-great-britain-can-achieve-clean-power-2030>. We will be considering this further over the coming weeks and intend to set out more information within the connections methodologies we will develop as part of connections reform.

- **How can an application realistically start planning its application without knowing either its connection date or location – especially for a new substation? (Updated June 2024)**

Under our proposals developers will have a period of time after meeting Gate 2 and determining their connection location / date to submit their planning consent application.

As part of the code modification process, we are considering the challenges that an indicative connection date and location provides developers and how we can give developers confidence to proceed towards Gate 2. Part of the solution will be providing developers with the ability to self-serve up to date information on the connection queue and planned works at different locations.

- **Will there be any consideration given to technology types who have met Gate 2 when assessing projects for acceleration? (Updated August 2024)**

Government recently commissioned us to provide recommendations around Clean Power by 2030 as follows.

<https://www.nationalgrideso.com/news/eso-commissioned-provide-key-advice-and-expertise-how-great-britain-can-achieve-clean-power-2030>.

Clean Power 2030 has potential to set out a plan for what generation mix can best help us deliver clean power by 2030. We are considering whether and how the reformed connections process (TMO4+) could operationalise Clean Power 2030. We will make recommendations to the Connections Delivery Board at the end of September. Following the Connections Delivery Board we intend to set out more information on whether and how TMO4+ could operationalise Clean Power 2030, including within the connections methodologies we will develop as part of connections reform.

- **Why is forward-calculated planning application date for queue management milestones being considered? (Updated June 2024)**

We are considering a forward-calculated planning application date for queue management milestones from Gate 2 in order to provide an appropriate incentive for projects to continue to progress onwards towards connection after Gate 2. This is being discussed further as part of the code workgroup process.

- **Will there be a restriction on the distance for changing the point of connection between Gate 1 and Gate 2? (Updated August 2024)**

Gate 2 will confirm the connection point as well as the connection date. This could be different to the indicative connection location provided at Gate 1.

- **If a project is offered an accelerated connection date post Gate 2, will they be required to accept an earlier date, or can they still keep a later date? (Updated August 2024)**

For new applications at Gate 1, projects would receive an indicative date (unless the ESO has reserved a connection point and/or capacity). Once a project meets the Gate 2 criteria, it will receive a confirmed connection date and it can decide to accept, reject or dispute this, as with any Offer received today.

For projects in the current queue that have a confirmed connection date, and that demonstrate that they have met the Gate 2 criteria, they will have the opportunity to seek an accelerated connection date when TMO4+ goes live. They would not be required to accept any earlier date.

- **How do I raise dispute at Gate 1/ 2, or appeal a decision if not happy? (Updated June 2024)**

For both gate 1 and 2, we are proposing a fast-track dispute process, which allows us to investigate and resolve disputes on criteria not met/not met within the window time frame. This does not supersede any dispute process set within the CUSC or anywhere else and customers do not have to use this. It is simply an informal process where low level disputes can be dealt with quickly and fairly, without the additional time and resource of a representative with authority being required to deal with these.

- **Are QM milestones now obsolete/superseded by TMO4+? (Updated June 2024)**

No, QM Milestones will still apply from Gate 2. They will be disapplied for pre-Gate 2 projects as those projects would only have an indicative connection date.

## **Connections Reform: Fees / charges / securities**

- **Will there be two different fees to pay? (Updated July 2024)**

This is being discussed in the industry code workgroups, but we currently consider that there would be cost reflective application fees at Gate 1 and Gate 2. Additional financial instruments at Gate 1 and/or Gate 2 are no longer being considered as part of CMP434 and CMP435 and we are keeping the need for a separate code modification under review in relation to additional financial instruments.

- **If there is a capacity holding charge / security, will there be a charging code modification proposed and would this cost be non-refundable? (Updated June 2024)**

Additional financial instruments at Gate 1 and/or Gate 2 are no longer being considered as part of CMP434 and CMP435. However, we are keeping the need for a separate code modification under review in relation to additional financial instruments.

- **Is there any update on no security payments until after Gate 2? (Updated July 2024)**

It is still proposed that securities would not apply before Gate 2 i.e. to projects at Gate 1. We have proposed customers with existing contracts that do not meet Gate 2 criteria will no longer incur securities. This wider reform process is currently being worked through with the code modification workgroups and via consultation.

## **Connections Reform: Existing Queue**

- **Will contracted connection dates be altered to indicative connection dates to align to Gate 1 when the new process is implemented? (Updated June 2024)**

Yes, if a project has not met the Gate 2 criteria (subject to the relevant code modifications being approved on time).

- **If TMO4+ is applied retrospectively, what stands valid in current connection agreements? (Updated June 2024)**

We are proposing under the code modification process that there is a grace period for projects with connection contracts to show they have met Gate 2. If they have met Gate 2, they can retain their existing queue position or seek to accelerate if they wish to do. Projects in the current queue that have not met Gate 2 during the grace period would not retain their queue position and connection dates and locations would be indicative.

- **When is the proposed grace period for existing projects? (Updated June 2024)**

The length of the grace period will be considered as part of the code modification process. The length of the grace period will depend on both when Ofgem makes its decision and the nature of any final approved code modifications. If for example the Gate 2 criteria are significantly different from those proposed by ESO then a longer grace period may be warranted to allow developers sufficient time to mobilise.

## General Offshore

- **Is the TEC the maximum export at the offshore substation (connection site) or the onshore substation (transmission interface point) (Updated June 2024)**

TEC (Transmission Entry Capacity) and CEC (Connection Entry Capacity) is the value at the Grid Entry Point which in offshore case is in the interface between Generator and OFTO (Offshore Transmission Owner), so it is at offshore. We assume negligible loss along the offshore circuit for the Transmission Owner (TO) to do their studies.

- **When they have demand and generation in the same agreement, in case the demand has an earlier completion date compared to generation, are they allowed to energise the generation plant for tests before generation completion date? (Updated June 2024)**

We have a back feed date if being requested to be included in the connection agreement to allow generation to energise for testing before completion date.

## Embedded (distribution-connected) projects

- **What is Distribution Forecasted Transmission Capacity (DFTC)? (Updated August 2024)**

The ESO have removed DFTC from code modification CMP434. The original purpose of DFTC was to allocate Gate 1 capacity under previous proposals. However, DFTC had evolved into an information exchange between the ESO, TOs and DNOs/transmission connected iDNOs to assist with efficient and coordinated network planning, akin to the annual Week 24 DNO data submission.

Grid Code Modification GC139 is looking to enhance planning data to facilitate whole system planning and it is being explored if DFTC can be incorporated into this modification. If DFTC cannot be incorporated, the ESO would look to raise a subsequent Grid Code modification to achieve this information exchange. It is expected that this can be done in a timely manner as the proposed DFTC data is not a critical component for 2026 network planning and therefore not require to deliver the Minimum Viable Product for CMP434 Go Live.

- **When will the first window open for Gate 2 applications? (Updated August 2024)**

The dates for Gate 2 applications are subject to the Code Modification process and will be informed by CUSC modification CMP434 and CMP435.

- **What will I get back at Gate 2? (Updated August 2024)**



DNOs and transmission connected iDNOs would receive back a firm transmission connection date, firm connection point, costs and a transmission queue position. This would feed into an updated Offer between the ESO and the DNO/transmission connected iDNO, and User Commitment would apply once the contract is signed.

If an Embedded Generator is applying for a BEGA/BELLA, they will receive a BEGA/BELLA agreement from the ESO.

- **What happens if an embedded project doesn't meet Gate 2 criteria? (Updated May 2024)**

Until such time as a project meets the Gate 2 criteria it would have an indicative transmission connection date and location. When the project meets Gate 2 criteria, it can be put into the next available Gate 2 application window and receive a confirmed transmission connection date and location.

- **How does this process affect BEGA projects looking to connect? (Updated August 2024)**

In response to feedback we propose that Small, Medium and Large Embedded Generators can apply for a BEGA or BELLA at any point of the year. The ESO will continue to send a Modification Notice to the respective DNO or transmission connected iDNO requesting the submission of a Modification Application in the next available Application Window. The alignment of information between the applicant and the relevant DNO or transmission iDNO is required to deem a BEGA or BELLA application competent.

- **DNO applications require land rights and a red line boundary, so by default have they already met the requirements for Gate 2? (Updated May 2024)**

DNO land rights only relate to a Letter of Authority for application and for the land rights queue management milestone includes the option of an exclusivity agreement. Our proposed Gate 2 criteria in TMO4+ represents a higher bar / later stage of development than these requirements.

- **Will this process make SoW/PP process redundant? (Updated May 2024)**

There will be a review/amendment of Statement of Works, Confirmation of Project Progression and Transmission Impact Assessment processes.

- **What is ESO doing to standardise the response and engagement from DNOs to customers at the Gate 2 stage for embedded projects? (Updated May 2024)**

Within the code change process we expect there to be obligations/timescales on DNOs in respect of the submission of Gate 2 applications for EG. We are aware that Ofgem are also considering and will be consulting on relevant obligations and incentives on network companies.

## **Connections Reform: Other questions**

- **What licence changes associated with our Connections Reform Modifications would be needed? (Updated June 2024)**

Our initial view is that licence changes will be required in order to align with the new connection application and offer timescales. We have identified the areas of licence that we believe need to be amended and shared these with Ofgem ahead of them running the required statutory consultation process for licence changes.

- **Will there be additional focus on TO's milestones too, to ensure this process runs smoothly? (Updated June 2024)**

TMO4+ is only part of the solution for delivering better connections outcomes for customers and consumers. The Connections Action Plan sets out a number of other actions for improving these outcomes, including

obligations and incentives on network companies, contestability and revised network modelling assumptions. Government's Transmission Acceleration Action Plan also sets out a number of initiatives to deliver transmission network more quickly (eg in relation to supply chain and planning consents).

- **How would ESO deal with a situation where a project is ready to connect, but the connection capacity is not available, or the costs are very high? (Updated June 2024)**

Connection capacity, dates and costs are determined by the amount and nature of transmission reinforcement (enabling works) required as a result of the connection. Significantly reducing the size of the connections queue, as well as other initiatives being taken forward (such as revised network modelling assumptions) should increase capacity that is available and significantly reduce the amount of transmission reinforcement required, therefore reducing connection dates. However, dates and costs will still continue to be strongly influenced by where a project seeks to connect and the nature and size of other projects connecting into that location.

- **How does the reform tie in with Clean Power 2030 and interact with government technology deployment targets, i.e. amount of GW of wind/solar/storage deployed by 2035/2040? (Updated August 2024)**

Government recently commissioned us to provide recommendations around Clean Power by 2030 as follows.

Clean Power 2030 has potential to set out a plan for what generation mix can best help us deliver clean power by 2030. We are considering whether and how the reformed connections process (TMO4+) could operationalise Clean Power 2030. We will make recommendations to the Connections Delivery Board at the end of September. Following the Connections Delivery Board we intend to set out more information on whether and how TMO4+ could operationalise Clean Power 2030, including within the connections methodologies we will develop as part of connections reform.

We are also engaging with Government and Ofgem to explore if and how the connections process should interact with government targets and reform programmes beyond Clean Power 2030, e.g. Strategic Spatial Energy Planning and Net Zero Market Reform. We expect to engage more with industry on this area in 2025.

- **How does the reform tie in with the SSEP to come? Or how do you ensure a systems perspective is applied to the selection of applications to connect? (Updated July 2024)**

We considered links to SSEP in the development of TMO4+ and as part of connections delivery board discussions. The conclusion is that it is currently too early to tie TMO4+ to SSEP. However, we are working with Ofgem and government to fully consider interactions between the connections process and longer-term strategic programmes such as Government's Clean Power 2030 ambitions, SSEP and Net Zero Market Reform to ensure the connections reformed process is appropriately aligned with wider Net Zero objectives. (See separate Q&A on impact of Clean Power 2030.)

- **How will this new process prevent the queue getting this big again? (Updated August 2024)**

We consider that the combination of meeting the Gate 2 criteria in order to secure queue position, combined with queue management milestones, to ensure that projects continue to progress beyond Gate 2, will ensure that the queue does not return to its current size. Our Future Energy Scenarios estimate that GB requires no more than 350GW of total connected capacity (transmission and distribution), so market forces are also likely to play a role in reducing the queue. We are also considering whether and how the reformed connections process (TMO4+) could operationalise Clean Power 2030 and any future Strategic Spatial Energy Plan.