



Network planning and development process steps

1. Purpose

The document sets out an overview of the roles, responsibilities and interactions between the SP ENW DSO and DNO teams in network planning and development. This is an internal summary document, published for transparency. The current version of this document is stored on the SP ENW corporate database. Any copy in electronic or printed format may be out of date.

2. Roles and responsibilities

DSO Capacity Strategy team – Forecasting, flexibility requirement identification and technical oversight of asset solutions

DNO Strategic Planning team - Network impact analysis and asset solution optioneering

DSO Technical team – Flexibility needs specification and flexibility analytics

DSO Commercial team - Flexibility procurement, dispatch, pricing, and flexibility analytics

Head of DSO, Head of Strategic Planning - Approvals

DNO Project Management Office and Operations Teams – Delivery

DSO Load-Related Investment team – Delivery tracking

3. Process steps

3.1. Forecasting

The DSO Capacity Strategy team is responsible for all forecasts that inform network planning, compliance reporting and DSO publications at SP ENW.

DSO Data inputs can be split as follows:

- third party data: includes expert forecasting partner data inputs such as forecasts of sales of LCTs and renewable generation installations, as well as building stock, demographics, economic growth projections and other factors that can affect future trends in demand and generation
- corporate data: this includes connections activity (all EHV and HV demand and generation connection applications), as well as planned developments from engagement with all local authorities and their developers (including Local Area Energy Plans).

- NESO Regional Energy System Plan (RESP) and transitional RESP (tRESP) inputs: this includes pathways, Common Planning Assumptions (CPAs) and Strategic Energy Needs (SENs) as defined in NESO's tRESP and RESP

The ATLAS forecasting methodology including in-house and third-party tools is followed to produce the full set of forecasting outputs.

Subsets of the ATLAS forecasting outputs include Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES) reporting and regulatory reporting including Week 24 Submission to NESO and the Long-Term Development Statement (LTDS).

3.2. Network impact assessment

The DFES includes long-term forecast demand and generation growth, that considers, among others, stakeholder planned developments.

The DNO Strategic Planning team utilises the DFES forecast to conduct a detailed network impact analysis, considering a view of wider non-load related needs and additional information around parameters such as asset health and other asset replacement considerations provided by the DNO Asset Management team, and network resilience considerations from DNO Operations.

The Strategic Planning network analysis identifies the impact of forecasted demand, generation and storage on the network and produces a range of asset solutions to meet these needs.

In parallel the DSO Capacity Strategy team conducts an empirical network impact analysis (i.e. not using detailed power flow analysis) which defines a forecast of flexibility service requirements across a range of flexibility service products.

The outputs of this analysis include a list of identified Constraint Management Zones (CMZs) with detailed flexibility requirements per zone, including product type, MW requirements, service windows (days in a year and times within a day), as well as ceiling price (calculated using the Common Evaluation Methodology (CEM) and associated Tool) for each flexibility requirement.

3.3. Optioneering

The DNO Strategic Planning team undertakes optioneering and cost benefit analyses of asset solutions to identify a preferred solution. The options and proposed solutions are summarised in a needs paper.

Alongside this, the DSO Commercial team runs regular flexibility tenders (six-monthly prior to January 2026, monthly from January 2026 onwards) with a view to procuring flexibility services to:

- manage existing or forecasted constraints on the network.
- accelerate network connections

- mitigate risks of security of supply

Flexibility procurement details are provided by the DSO Commercial team to the DSO Load-related Investment team, the DNO Asset Management team and the DNO Project Delivery team in order to build this into the programme delivery process.

3.4. Decision-making

The decision-making process is managed through an online workflow where the needs paper prepared by the DNO Strategic Planning team is reviewed by the following teams.

- DNO Asset Management team – enters the scheme into the approvals process and is responsible for managing and reporting on the overall network investment programme
- DSO Capacity Strategy team – confirms that optioneering across asset solutions is adequate and meets stakeholder needs, and that flexibility has been appropriately considered (in coordination with DSO commercial team)
- DSO Load Investment team – reviews against existing load-related investment programme and the implications of any variance to the original programme and budget. Tracks delivery plan and programme delivery against budget
- DNO Head of Strategic Planning – approves proposed solutions
- Head of DSO – approves reinforcement/flexibility solution spend
- DNO Head of Capital Delivery – responsible for managing the planning and delivery of the solution

3.5. Delivery

On completion of the decision-making process the project passes to the DNO Capital Delivery teams for implementation.

Project and programme delivery is tracked by the DSO Load Investment team for performance against budget and regulatory allowances providing monthly updates to relevant management teams.