

# CiC Stakeholder Workshop 2017

## Stakeholder feedback report

1<sup>st</sup> June 2017

# Competition in Connections

## Introduction

WPD's Competition in Connections workshop, hosted by Network Services Manager Simon Pett, took place on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017 at the company's Gloucester depot, with 57 stakeholders in attendance. It began with a short presentation followed by a Q&A session with Operations Director Phil Swift taking questions from the floor; after which there was a single roundtable workshop, where stakeholders were asked a series of broad questions relating to the Competition in Connections process. This was followed by two rounds of topic specific surgeries facilitated by senior WPD personnel.

The overarching purpose of the workshop was to identify ways in which the Competition in Connections process could be improved for IDNOs and ICPs, and to identify areas where WPD could learn from the work undertaken by other DNOs.

In the surgery sessions, attendees were asked to focus in more detail on the following topics: Design Approval; Legals and Consents; Provision of Technical Information; and Self Determination. Attendees were again asked to cite examples of best practice from other DNOs. All feedback was recorded by independent scribes.

This report aims to provide WPD with a series of recommendations relating to the above four topics. It also aims to identify further areas where stakeholders would appreciate an improvement in the levels of service they receive.

## Design approval

- It was commented that charges for design approval are excessive in comparison to other DNOs. Stakeholders would clearly like to see these costs decreased.
- It was also noted that the design approval process could be somewhat onerous. Part approval, if accompanied by guidance through an ongoing dialogue, was widely supported.
- Other DNOs, especially NPG, were felt to have better staged design approval. It was felt that WPD could learn from this.
- It was noted that there was a relatively quick turnaround from WPD in most stakeholders' experiences. However, at 33kV, this was not always the case. Examples were given of where response times were slow and there was a will for this to be looked into and addressed.
- It was commented that WPD could pre-approve certain things e.g. switchgear. The WPD representative stated that this is something that was already in place. However, this had not been communicated to stakeholders. This is something that should be addressed.
- It was felt that there is a lack of consistency in Design Approval across the four WPD licence areas. Examples were given of parts of a design that are fine in one area but not in another. This should be addressed.
- There was frustration that some pieces of equipment such as switchgear and cables have a long lead-time to buy, meaning that ICP's need approval for them quickly so they can be ordered in time. Part approval for standard pieces of kit would therefore be welcomed.
- It was noted that there are cases where some pieces of equipment not flagged up by WPD as being unsuitable at first but are then flagged when designs are

submitted a second time. This is understandably frustrating and it was commented that this should not happen.

- There are occasions where a design is submitted but stakeholders then hear nothing for up to 20 days – at which point WPD responds with very simple suggestions. It was felt that this could have been addressed far more quickly.
- It was widely felt that WPD should be more proactive in sending back network data as IDNOs and ICPs often have to chase for this.
- ICPs and IDNOs expressed frustration that designs are sometimes submitted but WPD's own mailbox isn't big enough to receive them. This is not the case with other DNOs. To address this, WPD should either increase the size of document it can receive or use file sharing software.
- The creation of an interactive Excel spreadsheet would be welcomed as this would give clarity of what is approved and what is not.
- Stakeholders would welcome more interaction with the relevant WPD staff member when submitting designs. Most valued face-to-face or telephone contact rather than email.

## Legals and consents

- WPD is considered by its stakeholders one of the best DNOs in providing advice to IDNOs and ICPs on legal processes and there was a good deal of praise for the work the company does in this area.
- IDNOs and ICPs emphatically stated that they appreciate regular reporting and updates on timescales in the legal process so they can plan accordingly. There were a number of requests for more regular updates and this is something WPD should act upon.
- Updates and transparency in the process was a common theme throughout the discussions. For example, stakeholders requested more information on what stage the legal process is at with every landowner.
- WPD explained that its analysis of legal transactions shows that most delays are due to customers' solicitors and not its own.
- WPD is developing a protocol under which its lawyers will adopt a collaborative approach to the lawyer:lawyer relationship to reduce delays on both sides. This idea was well received by stakeholders, but the following comments were made:
  - It is important for customers to understand what the legal process comprises
  - Customers' lawyers very often adopt a commercial approach to the negotiation of legal documents. This is not always conducive to a fast progress.
  - IDNO/ICP is very often one-step removed from its customer's lawyer. Insufficient information is provided by WPD to IDNO/ICP to enable IDNO/ICP to prompt its customer to prompt its lawyer when there is a delay.
  - ICP/IDNO often have to act as go-between. There should be more emphasis on IDNO/ICP customers chasing their own lawyers.
- The example of UKPN was given. UKPN's solicitors have their own portal. This was praised and it was commented that WPD could learn from this.
- It was felt that often WPD's lawyers could be slow in acting at times. Many stakeholders wanted to see a more proactive approach from WPD's lawyers and

would welcome the opportunity to contact WPD when there is a blockage in the process.

- It was commented that WPD should use performance monitoring data and stakeholder feedback to identify further improvements to the Legals and Consents process. Of particular focus should be the exchange of information between lawyers acting for WPD and landowners.
- It was noted that the WPD website is password protected, which provides a barrier to those who need to access information. There is a will from stakeholders for WPD to make this information more accessible.
- UKPN also has a 'strike off system' which speeds the process up and means that fewer changes are needed.
- Other DNOs are happy to pass on (with permission) landowner's granters. It was wondered why WPD does not use this approach.
- Sub-station leases are considered problematic by many stakeholders.
- It was commented that WPD should collaborate more with ICPs and DNOs on Legals and Consents. A workshop dedicated solely to this subject was suggested and was widely supported.
- Stakeholders commented on there being insufficient guidance on WPD's criteria for deciding on a wayleave or easement. WPD explained that this guidance is explicitly available in its Technical Information website relating to the legal process. Stakeholders were satisfied with this when a copy of that guidance was presented.

### **Provision of technical information**

- There was strong agreement that improvements could be made to the technical information available on the website. Several stakeholders said that it was often difficult to find documents and that links did not work.
- It was commented that the search function on the website is lacking and this makes it hard to find documents. It was pointed out that many documents are scanned. As a result, the search function for key words does not work.
- It was agreed by all stakeholders that a more definite description of documents or, even better, a direct link would be extremely useful as this would make it easier to find relevant documents.
- It was felt that WPD should carry out an audit of all documents available on its website and seek to address the issues detailed above.
- There was support for a function on the website where stakeholders could report any broken links so that WPD could quickly rectify this.
- Finding information on the UKPN website is seen as easier. It was also noted that UKPN are always at the first name that comes up on search engines. WPD should therefore improve its SEO.
- It was felt that certain information could be updated more quickly, or even in real time.
- The point was made that there is a lack of WPD staff members with a good knowledge of CIRT. WPD should therefore ensure that relevant members of staff are better trained.
- It was also felt that WPD could provide training for IDNOs and ICPs too.

## Self determination

- It was commented that the self-determination and self-approval process is easier with UKPN. UKPN produces more information and the process feels easier.
- There is conflicting information on whether unmetered connections need to go through CIRT. This needs to be clarified as many stakeholders were confused about this.
- The matrix often fails for ICPs and IDNOs with LV connections. The result is that some have simply stopped using it. This needs to be addressed.
- Stakeholders felt it would be helpful to have some training on the CIRT system. NPG runs a two-day training session on this and Scottish Power hosts targeted workshops. This is something WPD should look to do as well.
- Other ideas that WPD should roll out include hosting webcasts (a service offered by NPG) and putting a CIRT tutorial on YouTube, as UKPN does. UKPN also offers a quarterly face-to-face meeting with ICPs and IDNOs and it was felt that WPD should do the same.
- Stakeholders really valued the opportunity to talk directly with a trained DNO representative. Having a telephone number they could call to speak to a well briefed member of staff would be welcomed.
- It was commented that each step for self-determination takes 24 hours, so the five steps takes one working week. Stakeholders would welcome being able to go through these stages concurrently to speed up the process.
- IDNOs supported the idea of being able to complete more than one activity at a time as this would speed up the process.
- According to stakeholders, there is no process for a transfer from an unmetered service to a metered service. This results in a lack of consistency, with IDNOs and ICPs unsure of what they can and can't do.
- There is no formal self-approval application process through CIRT at the moment. This means that ICPs and IDNOs are not able to say that they will be self-approving the design at the outset. The system currently means that they need to upload a fully approved design at the application stage, which is difficult to do.
- It was felt that CIRT should automatically send notifications to IDNOs and ICPs as, at present, they need to check in.

## Other recommended areas of focus

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As well as comments relating to the four topics above, there was a good deal of more general feedback given at the workshop. For the purpose of this report, we have broken this down into the following broad categories.

### Code of practice

- Within the Code of Practice, Auditing and Inspection was the area deemed most in need of improvement with stakeholders demanding a firmer framework for planners to audit consistently.
- It was recommended that WPD should consider either making engineers more available to inspect sites or, alternatively, should allow ICPs to use their own engineers.
- It was pointed out that the auditing process should be transparent, as the Code of Practice states. It was added that there should be information on what the DNOs audit, and that this needs to be consistent.
- It was commented that WPD should create a framework for planners to audit and inspect areas so that it is consistent and less subject to human error.
- The point was made that the Energy & Utility Skills Register (EUSR) allows for 'commonality of verification', which makes it possible to check whether service providers have the competence to do a job. It was recommended that a system similar to the EUSR be applied to all DNOs and there was support for WPD rolling out an equivalent.

### Technology and equipment

- Stakeholders pointed to examples where they were asked to use equipment that had been superseded and was now out-of-date. In some cases, certain pieces of equipment were recommended in one licence area but not another. Work undertaken by WPD to rectify this and improve consistency was widely supported.
- Early warnings of any changes to specifications would be welcomed.
- It was noted that delivery of WPDs switchgear can take a long time and that this should be looked at to speed up processes.
- It was felt that WPD did not lead the way in introducing new equipment. Stakeholders suggested looking at certain pieces of equipment which are common in Europe, which aren't yet used in UK, and working to roll these out.
- Battery storage is seen as an increasingly important issue. Stakeholders would like WPD to support innovation in this area.

### Communications and engagement

- All stakeholders would welcome more engagement in the form of workshops, seminars, forums and training sessions.
- Without exception, stakeholders said they would value more face time with trained WPD personnel. It was widely noted that issues often arose as a direct result of a lack of engineer contact.
- It was suggested that WPD should have Key Account Managers who are on hand to address their specific concerns. The example of SSE was given as they have New Connections Managers. It was thought that WPD should look to introduce something similar.

- WPD was praised for being communicative. However, it was commented that when certain members of staff are away or on holiday this results in problems. WPD should therefore ensure that there is appropriate cover at all times in this eventuality.
- Stakeholders clearly value contact, especially face-to-face and over the phone – rather than via email. Being more available would be welcomed. Scottish Power was given as an example of a company with a good approach to communications.

### **Costs**

- It was thought that WPD should provide a more detailed cost breakdown at all stages in the process. Stakeholders repeatedly said that do not like surprises when it comes to budgeting, especially if this means that their own costs increase and they are unable to plan for this.
- The cost of loading joints was singled out as being high in comparison with other DNOs.
- It was suggested that WPD should use 'Ramping Agreements' like Scottish Power.
- SSE were cited as one DNO that is consistently a lot cheaper than WPD. They also proved a 'flat fee' which is popular with stakeholders.
- It was commented that WPD should make it easier to contextualise its connections offers with those of ICPs and IDNOs so easy comparisons can be made.

### **Consistency**

- Lack of consistency was the most common theme that came up in discussions throughout the day. Whilst it was accepted that, to a certain extent, this might be inevitable, it was nevertheless thought that every effort should be made to standardise policies, equipment and practices within the company.

### **Policies and processes**

- It was suggested that WPD adopts a process similar to that of UKPN, which allows ICPs to act more swiftly in connecting unmetered supplies. If there is a need to do something urgently, paperwork can be done retrospectively, which is not the case with WPD.
- It widely felt that WPD should do more to improve the adoption completion process, and that some of its competitors performed better in this area.
- Scottish Power provides a map for developers so they are able to see if a development is appropriate in a certain location. WPD does not do this but it was suggested that it should.
- It was suggested that any big changes in policies or processes should be discussed with IDNOs and ICPs at forums, not just communicated via email. It was added that IDNOs and ICPs should have the opportunity to provide feedback before such changes are implemented

### **Auditing**

- It was felt that audits should be reported, making the process more transparent. This would reassure stakeholders that there is equal treatment for everyone and that there is no favouritism.

### **Training**

- Apprenticeship schemes were seen as being vital, particularly in new, emerging areas such as electric vehicles and battery storage.
- Many stakeholders felt that knowledge and expertise in the industry is being lost and that DNOs, including WPD, should ensure that they plan to address this.

## Appendix 1: Attendees

<b>Name</b>	<b>Company</b>
Agnieszka Hanczuk	UK Power Reserve
Ben Clargo	Resourcing Solutions
Ben Lloyd	Hawker Siddeley Switchgear Ltd
Chris Russett	J. Murphy & Sons Limited
Dave Heslop	Aptus Utilities Ltd
David Batty	Future Utility Solutions Ltd
David Richards	UK Power Solutions
Dean Smith	Electrical Testing Ltd
Edward Ward	Infrastructure Gateway Limited
Gareth Bone	Resourcing Solutions
Gareth Corcoran	Engineered Systems (Electrical) Ltd
Gareth Furlong	Energy Connection Services
Gary Devereaux	Nexans
Gary Madgwick	AA Lighting
Graham Uwaezuoke	UK Power Reserve
Huw Crocombe	Green Frog Connect Ltd
Ian J Addison	ABB
James Barker	Electrical Testing Ltd
Jeff Jones	Power On Connections
John Mackenzie	Integrated Utility Services
Justin Clegg	Enviro Engineering
Kevin Ryan	Dragon Infrastructure Solutions
Laura Crumpton	Dragon Infrastructure Solutions
Laurence Fielding	Ormazabal UK
Malcolm Varley	Integrated Utility Services
Mark Nicks	UK Power Solutions
Mark Tanner	Powersystems UK
Matthew Collins	Ormazabal UK
Matthew Ross	Power On Connections
Michael W Slevin	Morgan Sindall Construction & Infrastructure Ltd
Mike Barnard	Jones Lighting
Mike Coombs	Cable Services Limited
Mike Giles	Pascon Limited
Neil Warren	Integrated Utility Services
Nick Balbuena	SSE Enterprise
Nimesh Modha	Power On Connections
Patrick Nicholas	UK Power Reserve
Paul Brown	Schneider Electric
Paul Lynch	Balfour Beatty

Paul Watkins  
Scott Bradley  
Scott Taylor  
Sharon Incerti  
Shaun Crosbie  
Simon Dawson  
Simon Deacon  
Simon Witt  
Steve Bentley  
Steve McElveen  
Steve Smith  
Stuart Batty  
Sue Montague  
Terry Hutchins  
Thomas Cunningham  
Tim Bourne  
Tom Shanley  
Trevor Lowen

Engineered Systems (Electrical) Ltd  
Altitude Services Limited  
Altitude Services Limited  
Interserve  
Fulcrum  
GTC Limited  
RES Group  
W T Parker Ltd  
Integrated Utility Services  
SMS Plc  
Polypipe Civils  
Energetics  
Powersystems UK  
W T Parker Ltd  
Future Utility Solutions Ltd  
Balfour Beatty  
O' Connor Utilities Ltd  
Morrison Utility Connections

## Appendix 2: Written feedback

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Stakeholders were asked to fill out a feedback form after the event. Of the 57 people who attended, 46 feedback forms were returned.

- When asked how they found the workshop, 71% said 'very interesting' and 29% said 'interesting'. No one who attended told us they found the workshop to be 'not very interesting'.
- When asked: 'Did we cover the right topics for you on the day'; 81% answered 'strongly agree' and 19% said: 'agree'. No one told us we did not.
- When asked what they thought of the way the workshop was chaired by the table facilitators, 70% said 'very good' and 30% said 'good'. No one answered 'not very good'.
- 100% of those who filled out a feedback form told us they would be interested to attend a future event.
- When asked which areas of Competitions in Connections WPD should look to improve, by far the most prevalent comment was 'consistency', particularly in design approval. The next most prevalent comment was 'communications'.
- Stakeholders were asked to rank 'Provision of information'; 'Legals and Consents'; 'Design Approval' and 'Self Determination' in order of importance. By some margin, 'Provision of information' was deemed the most important. The next most popular area for improvement was: 'Design Approval', followed by 'Legals and Consents'. 'Self Determination' was by far the least supported area of focus, with almost half of all attendees ranking it fourth out of four.
- Stakeholders were asked to identify any other areas in the ICE workplan that are of particular importance to them. Most thought it was already comprehensive and there were very few suggestions. However, 'offers and agreements' was cited by two stakeholders.