

## DELIVERING AN ELECTRICITY SYSTEM READY FOR FUTURE ENERGY NEEDS – WEBINAR SUMMARY

On 21 January, leaders from across the UK electricity sector came together to explore how the grid must evolve to meet rapidly growing future energy demands. The webinar, chaired by Barnaby Wharton of RenewableUK, brought together expert voices from consultancy, legal, investment and network operations to assess progress on connections reform and the wider transformation required to build a modern, resilient electricity system.

### WHY THE GRID MATTERS NOW MORE THAN EVER

The UK continues to make significant progress on low carbon generation, securing more than 8 GW of new offshore wind in the most recent CfD auction and building a pipeline of around 35 GW. This places the country within reach of its clean power ambitions. Yet, as the panellists highlighted, securing new generation is only half the challenge. Connecting it to the grid at pace and scale is now the defining obstacle to delivering a decarbonised power system.

### CONNECTIONS REFORM - PROGRESS AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

A major theme of the discussion was the shift from a “first come, first served” system to a readiness based and more strategic approach. This transition marks an important step towards creating a more credible queue that prioritises viable projects capable of progressing. However, speakers stressed that the true test lies ahead, as the sector now moves into a delivery intensive phase. Studies, offers and infrastructure upgrades must be completed far faster than previously required.

Legal and financial uncertainty remains a challenge for developers. Many projects are not expected to receive Gate 2 modification offers until late 2026, prolonging uncertainty and complicating investment decisions. New security requirements and queue management milestones are also likely to increase attrition, particularly among projects without planning consent.

Several panellists raised concerns about emerging imbalances in the pipeline. Battery projects are heavily oversubscribed, with around 90 GW in development compared with an estimated future need of 40 GW. Meanwhile, more than half of wind and solar projects in Gate 2 are not yet consented.

Without careful management, this imbalance could hinder the UK's wider decarbonisation trajectory. Independent Distribution Network Operators (IDNOs) were highlighted as important contributors to accelerating delivery, particularly for major 132 kV projects. However, delays in consenting, especially in Wales, continue to slow progress.

## CROSS CUTTING PRIORITIES FOR THE SECTOR

Across the discussion, several themes consistently emerged. Clearer and more confident communication from NESO will be essential, particularly during upcoming application windows. At the same time, demand side pressures, from data centres to electrified transport, are increasing rapidly, meaning future reforms must address demand connections as urgently as generation.

The sector continues to face structural bottlenecks, including supply chain constraints, skills shortages and limited capacity within transmission and distribution operators. To overcome these challenges, panellists emphasised the need for a coordinated national delivery strategy, supported by the forthcoming Strategic Spatial Energy Plan.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Given the scale of work required on the current queue, panellists agreed that the next Gate 2 application window is unlikely to open before late 2026. Priorities for the sector include accelerating the issuance of Gate 2 offers, increasing investor certainty, strengthening supply chain resilience and improving planning and consenting efficiency.

## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

These topics will be explored further at Connecting Projects to the Grid 2026 on 9 June in London. Attend to hear more on the implications of connection reforms for existing and future schemes, delivery challenges across the transmission and distribution landscape, practical guidance for developers seeking to gain a faster grid connection, and much more. Sign up now at <https://www.connectingprojectstothegrid.co.uk/>

This webinar took place on 21st January and the panellists included:

- **Barnaby Wharton**, Head of Grid and Flexibility, RenewableUK
- **Charles Deacon**, Managing Director, Eclipse Power Solutions
- **Kate Laidlaw Singh**, Senior Associate, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer
- **Dr Arshad Khan**, Grid Connections Manager, Cubico Sustainable Investments
- **Kieran Savage**, Customer Connections Manager, Green Gen Cymru