

# Cross-Party Group on Renewable Energy and Energy efficiency

26 February 2025, 18:30 – 20:00

Minute

Present

MSPs

Sarah Boyack (online)  
Brian Whittle (Chair)  
Audrey Nicoll  
Lorna Slater

Invited guests

Lauren Logan (SPEN)  
Phil Hendersen (SPEN)  
Niall Murphy (SSE)  
Jordan Agnew (SEEN Distribution)

Non-MSP Group Members

Elaine Waterson  
Amanda Fairman  
Simon Kemp  
Ruxandra Cazan  
Natalie Bain-Reguis  
Antione Reguis  
David Somervell  
James Corbett  
Alan Beal  
Colin Pritchard  
Amy Keast  
Peter Roche  
Nathanael Smith  
Doug McAdam  
Colin Campbell

Apologies

Hazel Johnson  
Kirsteen Wood

David Thomson  
Laura Fordyce  
Io Hadjicosta

## Agenda item 1 – Introduction by chair

Brian Whittle MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting, the focus of which was the role of electricity networks for net-zero and energy security.

## Agenda item 2 – Approval of minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on January 14, 2024, had been sent round to group members in advance and the secretariat received no requests for additions or corrections. The group agreed that these provided an accurate account of the meeting (proposed by Amanda Fairman, seconded by Lorna Slater MSP).

## Agenda item 3 – Presentation from Lauren Logan, Head of Transmission Regulation & Policy, SP Energy Networks

Lauren was joined by Phil Henderson (SPEN) for this presentation. Lauren's presentation began with an outline of the role of SP Energy Networks (SPEN) within the SP Group. Lauren went on to note that SPEN is one of three transmission network owners across Great Britain and highlighted the challenges of upgrading the grid, originally built in the 1920s, to meet modern demands such as electric vehicles and smart homes.

Lauren stated that SPEN is preparing for the next price control period (2026-2031) and highlighted that SPEN's RIO3 business plan proposes £10.6 billion of investment to deliver critical electricity infrastructure noting that this is triple the amount detailed in the previous plan. Lauren also noted that the SPEN part of electricity bills was set to rise to £12 per year for consumers, but noted that bill payers would experience a £167 saving per household every year by 2030 – due to constraint savings. Lauren also emphasised that the RIO3 business plan meets and exceeds the UK Government's clean power 2030's expectations.

Lauren also discussed the impact on communities, noting that SPEN were looking to increase funds for communities in addition to any community benefit fund. Efforts to reduce environmental impacts are a priority particularly actions to reduce emissions for the supply chain as well as making sure that there is a biodiversity net gain during construction.

In terms of next steps, Lauren highlighted that the RIO3 business plan was published at the end of 2024 and that a draft determination is expected by summer, followed by a final determination before the price control in April.

## Agenda item 4 – Presentation from Niall Murphy, Head of Public Affairs, SSEN

Niall was joined by Jordan Agnew (SSEN distribution) for this presentation. Niall noted that SSEN operates as the distribution operator for northern Scotland and parts of England, serving almost 800,000 customers with over 30,000 km of overhead lines. SSEN is headquartered in Perth and houses c. 2,500 SSE colleagues.

The presentation then covered connections reform with Niall noting the importance of removing barriers to viable projects. Niall then discussed the UK Government's commitment to the local power plan aiming to decentralise energy production and empower local authorities and communities. Niall went on to note that collaboration with local authorities has led to the development of the geospatial planning tool LENZA (Local Energy Net Zero Accelerator) which allows the integration of local network data into local area plans.

Niall also talked about resilience, noting significant investments in network resilience and automation projects to prepare for adverse weather events, and highlighted efforts to support the public during such events, exemplified by the response to Storm Eowyn, which caused over 600 points of damage to the network.

## Agenda item 5 -Q&A and discussion

- **Zonal Pricing:** Audrey Nicol MSP noted that there were industry concerns about zonal pricing and its potential impact on investment and economic opportunities in Scotland.
- **Capacity Planning:** Brian Whittle MSP asked about ensuring headroom for future energy demands.
- **Decarbonizing Heating:** David Somervell asked about modelling increased power consumption and the role of heat networks as buffer/grid balancing mechanisms.
- **Biodiversity Net Gains:** Lorna Slater MSP asked about where advice on measuring biodiversity net gains is coming from and about how it is being measured.
- **Community Benefits:** Nathaniel asked about enhancing community benefits and addressing concerns about infrastructure impact.
- **Levels of investment.** Alan Beal asked for clarification about the investment figures presented by Lauren Logan.
- **Planning Resources:** Brian Whittle MSP asked about the impact that the shortage of planners was having.
- **Regulatory Agility:** Doug McAdam asked about ensuring Ofgem and government support for ambitious investment plans.

## Agenda item 6 – Dates for future meetings

The next meeting will be on June 3, 2025 and will be the group's AGM.

## Agenda item 7 - AOB

No other business was raised.