# Local Authority Data Gathering recommendations
## Open Networks WS4 P3

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**The voice of the networks**

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

### Authorities

| Version | Issue Date | Authorisation | Comments |
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| 1.0 | 21/12/21 | Open Steering Group<br>Gas Goes Green Steering Group | |

### Related documents

| Reference 1 | |
|-------------|--|
| Reference 2 | |

### Change history

| Version | Change reference | Description |
|---------|-----------------|-------------|
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### Distribution

| Published on ENA website |
|--------------------------|

# Introduction

## About ENA

Energy Networks Association (ENA) represents the owners and operators of licenses for the transmission and/or distribution of energy in the UK and Ireland. Our members control and maintain the critical national infrastructure that delivers these vital services into customers' homes and businesses.

## About Open Networks

Britain's energy landscape is changing, and new smart technologies are changing the way we interact with the energy system. Our Open Networks project is transforming the way our energy networks operate. New smart technologies are challenging the traditional way we generate, consume and manage electricity, and the energy networks are making sure that these changes benefit everyone.

ENA's Open Networks project is key to enabling the delivery of Net Zero by:

- opening local flexibility markets to demand response, renewable energy and new low-carbon technology and removing barriers to participation
- providing opportunities for these flexible resources to connect to our networks faster
- opening data to allow these flexible resources to identify the best locations to invest
- delivering efficiencies between the network companies to plan and operate secure efficient networks

## Product background

Product 3 (Coordinated Regional Data Gathering) aims to develop a methodology for a consistent and co-ordinated approach to gathering regional data. The purposes of 'regional data' in this context is that each network gathers from Local Authorities and other stakeholders. This data helps outlines the potential growth of new customer connections in each network area, which can be combined with national level targets and scenario frameworks allows networks to undertake strategic investment planning. The use of external data and services in this regard ensures that networks are proactive in assessing the energy requirements of customers, in doing so demonstrating that network development planning is coordinated and efficient.

Currently all of the networks gather this data independently so consistency would deliver efficiencies for the parties being requested data and consistency for industry. This was identified as a recommendation from the Investment Planning opportunity analysis work done in 2019 by Workstream 4. The Product identified two different approaches to coordinate regional data gathering:

- **Network led –** an approach where networks agree to share data that is collected with other networks (gas and electricity) that share geographic areas as part of their network boundary. Note that there are different approaches for how this interaction can take place.

- **Local Authority led –** an approach that encourages alignment in how and where regional data is published rather than aligning processes to gather data in the existing format.

This paper outlines the work undertaken to progress the Local Authority-led approach to gathering regional data and outlines any recommendations for how the process can be implemented in future.

## Recent Activities

**Network-led approach**

As part of the work delivered in 2021 a Regional Data Repository was established. This allowed networks to upload data collected as part of the business as usual activities for strategic forecasting and make this available to share with other network operators. A user guide for the Regional Data Repository was published in June 2021 and feedback from users is due later in 2021.

The advantage of a network-led approach is that it could remove the requirement for duplicate requests for regional data by different networks. This is subject to the data gathered meeting the criteria as outlined by networks. Where a consistent set of regional data is used by energy networks for the strategic planning functions, this promotes a more whole energy system approach to how energy networks are developed to meet the UK net-zero targets.

A disadvantage of a network led approach is that any data collected will be recorded at a snapshot in time, which does not ensure that a network-led repository contains the most up to date information available. In addition, a network-led approach does not address the issues with variability in quality, quantity and format of regional data currently provided to networks. As a result, manual data processing is required to translate any regional data into a format suitable for integration with network analysis tools.

**Local Authority-led approach**

As part of a wider stakeholder engagement activity exercise for the Investment Planning product of the Whole Energy Systems Workstream, feedback was collected a range of Local Authority and Combined Authority stakeholders on the following question:

> *Thinking about networks requesting and using local development plans do you think there is value in the ENA establishing a coordinated approach for networks to access these growth plans and associated energy requirements?*

The response was that there is significant value in helping to coordinate network access to local growth plans both for networks and for Local Authorities. In particular, using a common set of information that is used in a consistent manner by both gas and electricity networks can help to ensure that a coordinated approach is taken to long term development across both gas and electricity vectors.

As a result the product team held further bilateral discussions with Greater London Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority to discuss existing trials and practical implementation of a Local Authority led approach. Projects such as the Planning London Data Hub demonstrate the benefits of a combined authority collating data for the boroughs within London and presenting this data using bespoke dashboards for the relevant utilities in the area. This ensures that on a regional basis each network can use a set of data which would be consistent with the other utilities in the area.

The main advantage of a local authority-led approach is the data owner is responsible for making information available in a standardised format which is updated on a regular basis. A single access repository drives many tangible benefits; reducing the time to access the right data, increased trust in data and greater understanding of the data through it being well described.

However; a couple of common themes were raised throughout the stakeholder engagement which should be considered as part of any wider implementation of a coordinated approach to regional data gathering.

- **Readiness level of regional stakeholders –** it was noted that there is a range of capacity among Local Authorities and Combined Authorities to make data available in a format that can be easily interpreted by networks. Resource constraints at a Local Authority level may limit the capability to deliver the required level of coordination between gas and electricity networks (as well as other non-network stakeholders). As a result, an approach whereby each partner network works with the relevant local and combined authorities to develop a solution and drive best practice across each network area is the most plausible course of action.

- **Clarity from networks on how data is used** – issues were raised that regional stakeholders who regularly provide information to networks do not fully understand how the data is used and translates to an investment plan. Linkages to the stakeholder engagement aspects of the Whole System FES & Central Scenario product as part of Open Networks (Workstream 1B Product 2) will better signpost to stakeholders how data provided translates into an actionable investment plan. This should aim to provide

greater clarity on how regional data is used by networks; however noting that this product only considers electricity networks. It is recommended as part of the ongoing monitoring and development of Local Area Energy Planning work the associations with network-led strategic planning are well defined.

## Recommendation(s) / Considerations

The Regional Data Repository demonstrates one method of sharing and using common datasets among gas and electricity networks to drive whole energy system benefits for stakeholders. Whilst this exercise demonstrates how networks are working together, accessing regional data from a single source will further drive consistency and whole energy system benefits - for stakeholders by reducing the number of requests for similar data and for networks by ensuring a common dataset is used by both gas and electricity for strategic planning purposes. In order to deliver a local authority-led approach to coordinated regional data gathering, the following steps must be taken.

### Finalising the data scope

The 2020 report for the Coordinated Regional Data Gathering (previously Workstream 4 Product 5) product outlined a scope of regional data that is required by networks to inform strategic planning. This included the following categories:

- Planned developments for new residential and non-domestic developments published as part of a Local Authority Development Plan.
- Infrastructure planning and decarbonisation strategies for Local Authorities (or as part of a wider geographic area strategy), including (but not limited to):
  - Heat
  - Transport/air quality
  - Renewable generation
  - Waste

This scope is closely related to the work being undertaken through the Whole System FES & Central Scenario product as part of Open Networks (Workstream 1B Product 2). This outlines a standardised approach to the creation of a Best View scenario, which electricity distribution network operators can use for the Network Development Plan due in 2022 as part of the Electricity Distribution Licence Condition SLC25B

It is recommended that a data scope is agreed between networks, encompassing any additional data outlined to evidence a Best View scenario.

### Working towards a standardised data format

Linked to the data scope, providing regional data using a common format allows network be transparent in the approach taken to strategic network planning. By utilising publicly available data in a common format, this provides stakeholders with a clearer picture of how projections for different technologies are accounted for in the strategic and investment planning processes. This also provides benefits to reduce the amount of manual data processing done by networks to translate information held in a variety of data sources.

It is recommended that as part of a wider implementation plan a standardised data format is agreed between networks and local stakeholders.

**Stakeholder engagement**

It is recommended that as part of the stakeholder engagement activities for strategic network planning a consistent and clear message is presented by networks for how regional data is collected, used and translated in a network impact assessment. A clear and consistent position will help address the concerns raised by stakeholders for how networks use regional data and how this relates to any regional projects to assess Local Area Energy Plans.

**Implementation**

The ideal method to coordinate this approach to regional data gathering would be the introduction of a wider instruction on regional stakeholders to provide regional data (using a common scope and format) as part of any local planning policy framework. This would ensure that standardisation of regional data is delivered in line with the wider data and digitalisation principles which energy networks are working to as part of the Energy Data Taskforce recommendations . It is noted that this recommendation is not one which networks can actively manage – as a result the proposed recommendations and implementation actions below outline how energy networks can build on work delivered during 2020 and 2021.

It is proposed that a series of trials could be used to demonstrate and quantify the wider benefits of a coordinated approach to regional data gathering. This would allow the data scope and format to be agreed on a bilateral basis between the partner gas and electricity networks for a common geographic area. As the Open Networks Whole Energy Systems Workstream is a forum for all gas and electricity networks, it is recommended that any collaboration that could drive whole energy system benefits is shared with the Workstream.

It is noted that any such trials may involve repetition of activities and discussions as part of other Whole Energy System initiatives, such as Local Area Energy Plans. It is recommended that any activities consider how a coordinated approach to sharing data between local stakeholders and networks could be implemented. Any trials and best practice shared can be used to initiate trials on a wider scale implemented by partner networks with different sets of regional stakeholders to improve the consistency of data used for strategic planning.

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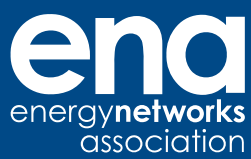
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