

COVID-19 CRISIS

SSE PLC STATEMENT OF SUPPORT TO CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES AND COMMUNITIES

27 MARCH 2020

Fulfilling an essential purpose

SSE is a purpose-led company. Our core purpose is to provide energy needed today while building a better world of energy for tomorrow.

In line with this core purpose, SSE's over-riding priority is to play our part in the fight against Covid-19 by supporting the safe and reliable supply of electricity, at local, regional and national level, on which the people and organisations whose work is critical to the Covid-19 response depend.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic reaches every single person and businesses have a key role to play in supporting customers, employees and communities in what is a rapidly evolving crisis. This statement therefore summarises the actions we have taken so far (27 March 2020) to provide assistance while continuing to fulfil our core purpose. We will continue to update this statement as our response develops and all statements (current and previous) will be posted on sse.com/sustainability.

While Covid-19 is presenting challenges that are unprecedented in the modern era, certain fundamentals hold true. These include SSE's long-term commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth.

Customers

Through Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), SSE distributes electricity to 3.8m homes and workplaces in the north of Scotland and central southern England. We also supply electricity, gas and related services to businesses and public and third sector organisations across the UK and Ireland; as well as supplying electricity, gas and related services to households across the island of Ireland.

Electricity Distribution customers

There are three million homes and workplaces connected to SSEN's electricity distribution network in central southern England; and 800,000 homes and workplaces connected to its network in the north of Scotland. To support these customers SSEN is:

- **Promoting the Priority Services Register:** SSEN is using this existing and well-established channel through which vulnerable customers are provided with additional support. We are in constant communication with stakeholders and we are working closely with local agencies to make sure those who are vulnerable can be reached as quickly as possible in the event of an electricity network fault.
- **Social distancing in customers' homes:** We will now only visit customer properties as necessary, in support of essential operational activities. We've introduced new stringent protocols for our employees when working in customers' homes, keeping a 2m distance and ensuring all work areas are left clean.

- **Focusing on what's important:** SSEN has cancelled planned maintenance of the network where we must interrupt supplies to ensure people have the energy they need, when they need it. We are identifying and carrying out work that is critical to safe and secure supply of energy to our customers.
- **Thinking ahead:** We know the current situation may endure and that's why we are thinking ahead and taking the necessary steps to safeguard customers further down the line. We are progressing the installation of a new submarine electricity cable between Jura and Tayvallich, Argyll, ensuring a safe and secure supply of electricity to customers on the islands.

Household customers

Across the island of Ireland, SSE Airtricity provides electricity and gas to household customers. With the safety of employees and customers paramount, operations are continuing as normal, with most employees being able to work safely from home. Furthermore, to ensure our most vulnerable customers are being supported we are:

- **Providing support with bills:** We have published FAQs and our customer service team is available on web chat or phone. We are encouraging any customers with concerns around their energy bills to contact us so we can find an appropriate resolution together.
- **Increasing emergency credit:** For customers with prepayment meters in the Republic of Ireland, the emergency credit for gas meters has been increased tenfold, from €10 to €100, during this period.

Business, public sector and third sector customers

Across the UK and Ireland, we provide energy and related services to over a million business, public sector and third sector customers. We understand this is a challenging and uncertain time for many of these organisations, and are therefore providing additional support:

- **Remaining contactable and flexible:** We're inviting business customers concerned about their energy bills, for example because they've had to close their doors, to contact us so that we can work together to find a resolution. We are making sure our customer service team remains contactable during this time.
- **Prioritising emergency metering:** To keep customers and employees safe, from 25 March only emergency metering work is being carried out for GB customers. This means work will only be carried out where customers are off supply – and need assistance restoring this supply – due to meter faults, with all meter installations suspended.

Employees

As a major employer of around 12,000 people across the UK and Ireland, our priority is their health and safety as well as the resilience of critical teams. SSE is carefully tracking the direct impact of the virus on its workforce as well as taking the following actions to help protect and support them:

- **Protecting those providing a critical service:** There are critical roles across our operations which are required to continue to work from site locations to provide the essential energy people need. Measures are in place to protect key personnel, on SSE sites which are critical to supporting the supply of electricity, from being exposed to the virus. This includes increased hygiene procedures and enforcement of social distancing rules. Teams critical for the operation of the electricity network and key electricity generation assets have also been segregated and where possible split into smaller teams, to ensure no cross contamination.

- **Workers on construction sites:** Paying close attention to the differing government guidance in the UK and Ireland, SSE has set out its own definition of critical activity (see [here](#)), ensuring that only work which meets this criterion continues, subject to the additional measures above.
- **Working from home:** Having invested significantly in recent years in the technology needed for agile working, everyone in SSE who can work from home (around 65% of the total workforce) is doing so. IT systems were tested at an early stage to check their resilience to significantly increased numbers of employees working remotely.
- **Flexibility and support:** SSE employees who become ill or must self-isolate receive full sickness benefit from the company. Paid emergency leave has also been granted to assist with school closures and we are also seeking to be highly flexible for employees who now have additional childcare responsibilities during the working day.

Suppliers and contractors

SSE spends between £2bn and £3bn per year with around 10,000 suppliers. Whilst to date there is limited evidence of any material impact on the most critical elements of our usual supply chain, this remains an evolving and fast-moving situation which is complex and as such will involve close management in the coming weeks and months.

- **Continued supplier engagement:** The impact of the virus on key products and contracts for our business units has been reviewed and we are in close contact with suppliers, especially in relation to our core electricity networks and renewable energy businesses. This dialogue covers everything from their business continuity plans through to their stock-holding positions and countries of manufacturing to assess the potential impact of supply chain disruption.
- **Supporting critical suppliers:** More broadly, we understand the pressure our suppliers are under. It is clearly in our interests that they can survive the economic shock of the virus and we stand ready to support them where necessary and appropriate.
- **Commitment to the real Living Wage:** SSE was one of the UK's earliest accredited Living Wage employers. Our commitment to the principles and values enshrined in the real Living Wage is without question and all directly employed SSE workers on the Living Wage will receive an increase to the new rate from 1 April as usual. However, following dialogue with Living Wage Scotland and some suppliers, to avoid placing additional pressure on the supply chain we have agreed to postpone our usual requirement for them to implement the annual Living Wage increase for supply chain workers.

Communities

Our support to communities in the areas where we operate is long standing. Through the SSE Renewables Community Investment Fund and SSEN's Resilient Communities Fund, we directly invest over £10m per year in some of the most rural communities across the UK and Ireland.

Communities, services and organisations are facing huge challenges as a result of Covid-19. We believe the best support we can provide to communities is ensuring our funds can be easily accessed by the organisations best placed to deliver a front-line emergency response. To date we have adapted our approach to community funding to ensure we can provide significant support for communities by:

- **Making £1m immediately available:** We immediately brought forward up to 10% of our annual funds, worth over £1m, making this available to communities to ready themselves for and respond to the impact of the virus. Where possible, and in agreement with stakeholders, funds will go directly to support the Covid-19 effort.

- **Providing future resilience:** As well as providing support in the early stages, we will continue to grant over £10m every year to these communities. We anticipate the need to adapt the funds so they can play a critical role in the recovery period.
- **Taking a flexible approach:** We have always taken a flexible approach to our funding, breaking down barriers and assisting organisations to leverage other funds. We have contacted more than 250 organisations so far to offer reassurance and discuss their existing funding arrangements. We will continue to be available to provide advice and support.
- **Providing support remotely:** While we might not be able to support communities face-to-face, we remain open and available. We are set up to work remotely and are working hard to ensure that the impact of the virus will not significantly impact our ability to deliver our services to applicants, grant holders and communities.
- **A co-ordinated funding approach:** Our response to Covid-19 is not being delivered in isolation. We believe that is important for our funding to complement, not duplicate, that of other funders. Through existing funding networks, we are working closely with other funders and keeping abreast of what funds are available.

Summary

It is much too early to forecast with accuracy the human, social and economic impact of Covid-19 in the coming months. Halting the spread of the virus and recovering from its long-term impacts will require businesses to play their part and SSE stands ready to do so. We continue to have regard to the expectations of all our key stakeholder groups, in line with our commitment to be a sustainable company for the long term, and will develop our response as the situation evolves in the weeks and months ahead.