

COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) CRISIS

SSE PLC STATEMENT OF SUPPORT TO CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES, SUPPLIERS AND COMMUNITIES

UPDATE AS OF 30 APRIL 2020

Fulfilling an essential purpose

SSE's over-riding priority through the coronavirus pandemic is to play our part in the fight against the virus 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 coronavirus response depend. From generating power at our wind farms and power stations, distributing it around the country, supporting homes and businesses and installing vital infrastructure needed by the NHS and other organisations, we're playing our part.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic reaches every single person and businesses have a key role to play in this evolving situation. This statement therefore summarises the actions we have taken so far (30 April 2020) updating the previous statement published on 27 March 2020. The purpose is to disclose the detail of the support provided to customers (p2), employees (p4), suppliers and contractors (p5) and communities (p6) while continuing to fulfil our core purpose to provide the energy people need now.

We will continue to update this statement as our response develops and all statements (current and previous) will be posted on www.sse.com/coronavirus along with the stories of how our critical workers on the frontline are helping in their own, individual ways.

Collaborative action

We believe that coronavirus has demonstrated the central importance of effective engagement between businesses and their stakeholders, with a collaborative approach to ensure optimal outcomes at a time of great human, social and economic challenge. In line with that, in March 2020, we joined forces with a host of businesses in signing the [C-19 Business Pledge](#) to support the UK through the coronavirus pandemic and the recovery efforts. SSE's commitment to stakeholder engagement and a collaborative approach extends to Ireland also.

The C-19 pledge, established by The Rt Hon Justine Greening and leading businessman David Harrison, aims to unite the business community behind three key aims:

- supporting their own employees throughout and beyond this challenging time;
- publishing clear and simple advice for customers; and
- doing what they can to help communities through the pandemic.

SSE is also a member of the C-19 Business Pledge Steering Group, and is committed to playing an active part in a positive business response to the challenges faced by people, communities and the country as a whole.

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; and supply 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 has been taken the actions detailed below.

Supporting those most vulnerable and isolated

We continue to promote our Priority Services Register (PSR), an existing and well-established channel through which vulnerable customers receive additional support. In addition, we have:

- temporarily expanded the PSR criteria to include those at increased risk who have been instructed to self-isolate for a 12-week period based on public health guidance; and
- established a dedicated team to proactively call customers who may be at risk of social isolation during the lockdown period, checking on their welfare and signposting to further community support where required. More information can be found [here](#).

Prioritising the frontline healthcare response

- We're accelerating connection works and associated network studies to support the NHS and healthcare response, such as temporary hospitals and research centres.
- Hospitals, health centres and care homes are being prioritised. We have introduced a dedicated phone line for this critical group of frontline sites to ensure optimisation of incident response.
- In power cut situations, we'll prioritise mobile generation to these sites where backup generation facilities are not in place.

Social distancing to keep customers safe

We now only visit customer properties as necessary, in support of emergency and critical operational activities, postponing all non-emergency work that requires access to customer homes. We've introduced new stringent protocols to ensure our teams observe social distancing rules, keeping a 2 metre distance and ensuring all surfaces are left clean before leaving.

We have rolled out clear signage at our work sites to make the general public aware we're undertaking critical work and we have introduced a 'one person, one vehicle' rule, which must be strictly adhered to in all but emergency situations where no other option is viable.

Focusing on high priority work

We're prioritising operational activities to focus on critical work that ensures a safe, reliable and resilient supply of electricity to our customers and progressing timely connections to sites that are vital to the coronavirus response. We will also continue to deliver work required for medium-term network resilience. This will also continue to deliver work required for medium-term network resilience or priority connections. This will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis, following strict social distancing guidelines and other measures to protect our customers, communities and workforce. More information can be found [here](#).

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 taking the following actions:

- **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 Ireland, the emergency credit for gas meters has been increased tenfold, from €10 to €100, during this period.
- **Reduced energy prices:** Our standard unit rates for home electricity and gas customers are reducing in the Republic of Ireland from 1 May by an average of €102 annually.
- **Suspending disconnections:** Since 12 March, SSE Airtricity voluntarily imposed a moratorium on all disconnection activity for home energy customers across the island of Ireland.
- **Prioritising safety:** In keeping with Government and HSE advice on social and physical distancing, ESB Networks and Gas Networks Ireland have currently suspended meter readings for a period. We are happy to support customers who may wish to take their own meter readings and submit these readings to us online. This will enable us to more accurately calculate the energy used for calculation of the next bill.
- **Regular updates for customers:** We are providing up to date information about our response to the crisis and support available to customers via our websites.

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:

- **Payment processes to help those in financial crisis:** We've put in place payment processes in GB to help customers who are in financial crisis because of the pandemic. They will not be required to cancel direct debits, which could affect their customer credit scores. Instead, businesses are being encouraged to talk to our team and reach a solution with us.
- **Suspending disconnections:** Our systems in GB automatically generate customer letters, including disconnection letters when customers have not paid their bills. We are working hard to stop these going out and are not currently carrying out disconnections except in emergencies. Across the island of Ireland, SSE Airtricity voluntarily imposed a moratorium on all disconnection activity for business energy customers from 12 March.
- **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.
- **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.

Employees

As a major employer of around 12,000 people across the UK and Ireland, our priority is their health, wellbeing and safety as well as the resilience of critical teams. We have introduced a new online approach for reporting and tracking confirmed or suspected cases of coronavirus in our workforce, as well as taking the following actions to help protect and support our employees.

Coronavirus testing for critical workers

Our employees in critical control centres, on whom the security of the energy system on a minute-by-minute basis depends, have been completing coronavirus testing from late April, allowing for early identification of infection and avoiding unnecessary transmission risk or isolation. We appreciate there is a limited supply of testing kits nationally, so we are focusing exclusively on those in critical control room roles to ensure we only use the minimum number required to support the supply of electricity.

On 24 April, new government guidance stated all essential workers in England and members of their households who are showing symptoms of coronavirus are now be able to get tested. This testing is separate from and in addition to our internal programme of testing for control room employees.

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 our workforce) is doing so. Resilience of IT systems were tested at an early stage and structured learning modules have been put in place on a weekly basis to offer employees hints and tips to help them be effective in this changed environment.

We are using our partnership with Nuffield Health to give employees resources to help take care of themselves while at home. This includes access to Nuffield Health's emotional care guide, advice from their physiotherapists and free access to the 'My Wellbeing' app which provides home workout videos and tailored programmes. All employees also have access to SSE's Employee Assistance Programme, which is available 24-hours a day for confidential advice, information and counselling.

Close contact with Trade Unions

Our ongoing response to coronavirus has been the subject of enhanced and continuous engagement with our Trade Union representatives. Weekly Company level discussions have centred on the fact that the majority of SSE's business operations must continue to operate, with a focus on essential work and support for critical workers, and ensuring everyone's safety remains our priority. These are being supported by detailed Business level discussions.

Sickness benefit

SSE employees who become ill or must self-isolate as a result of coronavirus continue to receive full sickness benefit from the company.

Support for those with caring responsibilities

We have created a range of options for all carers affected by disruption to normal care provisions. This includes working more flexibly, temporarily changing contractual hours, utilising leave options including five days of additional paid Emergency Leave and consideration of an annualised approach to hours. We are also allowing employees to bring forward some of their holiday balance from the next leave year and are offering a salary sacrifice holiday purchase scheme.

Employee volunteering

Where we can accommodate requests for employees to volunteer under the UK Government Emergency Volunteering Leave Scheme, we are offering one week (five days or pro rata

equivalent) of full-pay for employees who are volunteering. Where possible, we will also accommodate requests to carry out short volunteering tasks, such as delivering groceries or other supplies to vulnerable people, during working hours.

Suppliers and contractors

SSE spends between £2bn and £3bn per year with around 10,000 suppliers. To date there is limited evidence of any material impact on the most critical elements of our usual supply chain, however this remains an evolving and fast-moving and complex situation.

Continual supplier engagement

The impact of the virus on key products and contracts for our business units is continually under review 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.

SSE has an established approach to engagement with its strategic suppliers, with normal practice being face-to-face meetings with these suppliers on a quarterly/six-monthly basis. When coronavirus first became a serious issue, we contacted our critical strategic suppliers to understand what risk mitigation they were taking and to understand impact on their supply chain as well as their own organisation (employees, manufacturing, construction etc.).

Working with suppliers to protect people on our sites

Coronavirus has undoubtedly been a significant challenge at site-level and has demonstrated the importance of our close working relationships with our Tier 1 contractors. This was particularly evident at Keadby 2 in our work with Siemens Energy to ensure the correct steps were taken on site in the best interest of our employees and contractors. Keadby 2 work was temporarily suspended on site and the following changes were made by SSE and Siemens Energy:

- A renewed site induction process taking the current situation into account.
- Use of card scanner to access turnstiles which were previously fingerprint readers
- Enhanced cleaning regimes.
- Changes to barrier and walkway arrangements to ensure social distancing.
- 2 metre markings when approaching turnstiles at site access points and in smoking areas.
- Split shift working and staggered breaks to ensure social distancing can be achieved in the site welfare areas.
- Each subcontractor must submit revised management plans and risk assessments to demonstrate how they will ensure social distancing requirements are followed.
- Each individual attending site is required to complete a health screening process before their site access card is renewed.
- Regular auditing ensures the highest standards are being maintained.

Supporting suppliers facing challenges

As a result of coronavirus, it is likely that some of SSE's suppliers and contractors will be exposed to ongoing cash flow concerns which may impact them and their sub-contractors and suppliers. Our Procurement and Account Payable teams are regularly reviewing payments to ensure they are being made on time and to intervene if required. Further options to ease cash flow challenges are also

being explored if required on a supplier-by-supplier basis, with any supplier or contractor experiencing issues encouraged to contact SSE to discuss how we can find a solution.

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 coronavirus. 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.

We are committed to providing transparent disclosure of our community funding and will shortly publish a comprehensive report on www.sse.com/coronavirus which provides detailed information on the funds which have been awarded to support community coronavirus responses.

To date we have adapted our approach to community funding in the following ways:

- **Making £1m immediately available:** We immediately brought forward up to 10% of our annual SSE Renewables community funds, making this available to communities to ready themselves for and respond to the impact of the virus. We've also repurposed our SSEN Resilient Communities Fund, making the full £350,000 available to support the community response to the coronavirus pandemic. Grants of up to £3,000 will be issued in May to community, town, parish and borough councils supporting members of the community who are self-isolating or social shielding.
- **£550k so far awarded to communities:** Within just over a month, we have awarded over £550k to community councils and groups across the UK and Ireland to help support their emergency response to coronavirus. By mid-May this figure is expected to be close to £1m.
- **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 coronavirus 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.
- **Providing future resilience:** As well as providing support in the early stages, we will continue to operate our multi-million community funds in the years to come. We anticipate the need to adapt the funds so they can play a critical role in the recovery period.