

Permitted Development Rights to support ground investigations and survey for electricity network infrastructure

Response submitted 3 September 2026

Consultation description

The government proposes introducing a new Permitted Development Right to allow temporary, low-impact ground investigations and surveys for electricity network projects to proceed without a planning application, reducing avoidable delays and administrative burden while maintaining all existing environmental, heritage, and landowner protections. This change supports the accelerated Clean Power by 2030 mission by enabling faster, more efficient delivery of critical electricity network infrastructure, strengthening energy security, lowering long-term consumer bills, and ensuring developers, LPAs, and archaeological advisers can focus resources on proportionate, higher-impact planning decisions.

This consultation is seeking feedback on the scope and design of the proposed PDR. The consultation focuses on the types of ground investigations and surveys that should be covered by the PDR, which developers should be eligible to use it, and the conditions and limitations needed to control impacts. We want to ensure that any changes are proportionate and effective, enabling appropriate development while managing potential risks and impacts.

The consultation documents can be found here [Permitted development rights for electricity network ground investigations - GOV.UK](#)

Question Number	Question	POS response
1a	Do you agree that permitted development rights (PDRs) should allow for ground investigation and survey works to support the delivery of electricity network infrastructure?	Yes. POS recognises the importance of enabling early-stage, low-impact investigations that support the timely delivery of nationally significant electricity infrastructure. As the consultation notes, these works are “typically low impact and temporary” and delays can lead to “late-stage design changes or delays to the consenting process”. In principle, POS supports proportionate measures that facilitate essential preparatory work where impacts are genuinely minimal. However, given the linear nature of electricity transmission projects, ground investigations have the potential to extend across substantial lengths of land and affect multiple receptors. This raises concerns about cumulative landscape, environmental and amenity impacts that cannot be

		adequately addressed through a blanket permitted development right. Consistent with POS's wider approach across recent consultations, where development has the potential to generate impacts requiring assessment, it should be considered through the normal planning application process. This ensures that site-specific issues are properly evaluated, cumulative effects are understood, and appropriate mitigation can be secured.
1b	Do you agree that the proposed PDR should apply on both operational and non-operational land?	Given the linear nature of electricity transmission projects, investigations often need to occur beyond operational land. A consistent approach is appropriate.
1c	Please explain your answers.	
2 Eligible Projects	Q2a: Do you agree that the PDR should apply to electricity network developers (i.e. distribution and transmission licence holders) and third parties acting on their behalf? Q2b: Please explain your answer.	Yes. This is consistent with existing PDRs and reflects industry practice where investigations are commonly undertaken by specialist contractors.
3 Conditions	Q3a: Do you agree that the maximum depth of tests should be limited to 15 metres? Q3b: Do you agree that the maximum surface area of tests should be limited to 90 square metres? Q3c: If you do not agree, what other depth or surface area restrictions would you propose? Q3d: Please explain your answer.	Yes. This appears proportionate and aligns with typical GI methodologies. Yes. This provides flexibility while limiting potential impacts. 3c) POS is concerned about the cumulative impact of multiple ground investigations undertaken under PDR, whether along a single linear route or concentrated within a local area. While individual investigations may be low-impact, repeated activity can collectively affect landscape character, environmental receptors and local communities. To avoid uncoordinated or repeated disturbance, Government should introduce mechanisms to ensure effective coordination between infrastructure providers and prevent an over-concentration of investigations in any one location. A limit of 1-2 investigations with an appropriate separation distance between schemes would provide a clear and enforceable safeguard against cumulative

		impacts that would otherwise require assessment through the normal planning application process. Publication of the results of investigation should also be published. 3d) Subject to POS's concern about the potential proliferation of schemes, the proposed thresholds for depth and surface area strike a reasonable balance between operational need and environmental protection. These limits are proportionate for genuinely low-impact investigations, provided they are accompanied by safeguards that prevent cumulative effects and ensure that more extensive or repeated works are considered through the normal planning application process.
4 Trees	Q4a: Do you agree that the PDR should be subject to the condition that there would be no damage to, or removal of, trees? Q4b: Please explain your answer	4c) Yes. POS supports this safeguard. 4d) Trees contribute significantly to landscape character, biodiversity and amenity. A clear prohibition is appropriate, and additional protection should be included to cover the Root Protection Area.
5 Time Limits	Q5a: Do you agree that works should be limited to 28 days? 12 Q5b: If you do not agree, what time limit would you propose? Q5c: Please explain your answers. Q5d: Do you think that the proposed PDR should specify a prescribed process where archaeological impacts are uncovered and require preservation in situ? Q5e: Please explain your answer.	5a) Yes 5c) A 28-day limit ensures works remain genuinely temporary. It is consistent with other temporary PDRs and provides a clear, enforceable boundary. 5d) Yes. 5e) POS supports a prescribed process to ensure appropriate management of archaeological assets. Given that GIs may uncover archaeological deposits, a clear process would support consistency and safeguard heritage interests.
6	Q6a: Do you agree that the PDR should be subject to the condition that any land would need to be restored, so far as practicable, to its original	6a) Yes 6b) Restoration is essential to maintain land usability and minimise environmental and landscape harm. However, the phrase "as far

	condition on the completion of works or within 28 days? Q6b: Please explain your answer.	as practicable” should be deleted to ensure clarity and enforceability.
7	Q7a: Do you agree that the PDR should include provisions for temporary buildings and structures associated with the investigations? Q7b: Please explain your answer. Q7c: Do you agree that the maximum permitted height of temporary buildings and structures should be limited to 10 metres? Q7d: Please explain your answer. Q7e: Do you agree that temporary buildings and structures should be permitted for no more than 28 days? Q7f: Please explain your answer.	7a) Yes. 7b) It is recognised that these are often necessary for welfare, safety and operational reasons. Temporary compounds are standard practice and can be managed through clear limits. 7c) No. 7d) A 10-metre height allowance is excessive for temporary ground investigation works, particularly in rural or sensitive landscapes where such structures would appear visually intrusive. Typical welfare units and portacabins are around 3 metres in height, and POS considers it unlikely that GI activities would require temporary structures significantly larger than this. A lower height limit—such as 4 metres—would provide sufficient flexibility for essential welfare and operational needs while ensuring that temporary compounds remain proportionate, unobtrusive, and consistent with the low-impact nature of the proposed PDR. 7e) Yes 7f) A 28-day limit is appropriate and aligns with the temporary nature of GI works themselves (as addressed under Q5). It ensures that any associated structures remain short-term and proportionate, preventing longer-term impacts on amenity or landscape character.
8 Prior Notification	Q8a: Do you agree that prior notification to the Local Planning Authority should be required? Q8b: Please explain your answer. Q8c: Do you agree that this should be submitted at least 14 days before the works begin?	8a) No. 8b) POS has consistently raised concerns that prior approval or notification processes create confusion for applicants and communities, add workload for LPAs, and reduce the transparency of the planning system. If Government considers that certain impacts require assessment, the more proportionate and clearer approach is to exclude those circumstances from PDR entirely, rather than layering additional procedural requirements onto LPAs.

	Q8d: Please explain your answer	8c No 8d POS does not support any prior notification requirement. Introducing a 14-day notice period would add delay, administrative complexity and uncertainty. If impacts need assessment, they should be addressed through the normal planning application process rather than through a quasi-planning notification regime.
9	Q9a: Do you agree that the PDR should be permitted in designated land, sites and areas? Q9b: Please explain your answer. Q9c: Do you agree that the PDR should not be permitted on the site of a Scheduled Monument? Q9d: Please explain your answer.	9a) No. POS does not support the application of this PDR within designated land, sites or areas. These locations contain sensitive landscapes, heritage assets, ecological interests and nationally important features that require careful, site-specific assessment. The August 2026 NPPF reinforces this position: policies for National Parks, National Landscapes and the Broads require that <i>great weight</i> be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty, and that development is sensitively located and designed. Likewise, NPPF policies for World Heritage Sites, SSSIs, Registered Parks and Gardens, Battlefields and other designated heritage assets require decision-makers to give great weight to their conservation. Even temporary ground investigations can have meaningful impacts on these designations. Consistent with POS's wider approach across recent consultations, where development has the potential to generate impacts requiring assessment, it should be considered through the normal planning application process rather than permitted development. Allowing PDRs in designated areas risks undermining statutory purposes, landscape character, heritage significance and ecological sensitivity. A clear exclusion is more transparent, enforceable and aligned with the protective intent of the new NPPF (Aug 2026). 9c) Yes 9d) Scheduled Monuments represent heritage assets of the highest significance. The NPPF (August 2026) requires that <i>great weight</i> be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, with substantial harm to assets of the highest significance—including Scheduled Monuments—only permitted in <i>wholly exceptional circumstances</i>. POS therefore supports their

		exclusion from PDRs and considers that this level of protection should extend to other designated areas where impacts require assessment, reinforcing the need for full planning consideration rather than reliance on PDRs.
10	Q10a: Are there any other likely impacts or matters that should be considered if permitted development rights are extended to allow for ground investigation and survey works by electricity network developers? Q10b: Please explain your answer.	10a) Yes. 10b) A key concern is the potential for landscape scarring, particularly given the linear nature of electricity network routes. Repeated or closely spaced investigations could cumulatively affect landscape character, public access and local amenity, and this risk should be explicitly addressed through conditions or limitations that prevent over-concentration of works and ensure coordination between infrastructure providers. POS also notes that contamination risks have not been fully addressed within the proposed conditions. Ground investigations may expose previously unidentified contamination, posing risks to human health and sensitive habitats or species. A standard requirement—mirroring established planning practice—should be included to ensure that works cease immediately upon discovery of contamination and that appropriate assessment and mitigation are undertaken before activities resume.
11	Q11a: Do you think that the proposed extension of the temporary permitted development rights to allow for ground investigation and survey works by electricity network developers could impact on: a) businesses b) local planning authorities c) communities? • yes • no • don't know Q11b: Please provide your reasons. It would be helpful if	LPAs: Additional administrative burdens will arise from a prior notification process. See response to Q 8 Communities: temporary disturbance is possible, and although this should be limited in scale and duration, the public will not have had an opportunity to understand what is being undertaken. The legislation should therefore include a duty on the developer to follow a clear publicity procedure, including site notices in the locality.

	you could specify whether your comments relate to a) business, b) local planning authorities, or c) communities, or a combination.	
12	Q12a: Do you think that the proposed extension of the temporary permitted development rights to allow for ground investigation and survey works by electricity network developers will have any impacts on people who share a protected characteristic? (Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation). Q12b Please provide your reasons.	No comment

Conclusion

POS supports the principle of introducing a Permitted Development Right (PDR) for temporary, low-impact ground investigations and surveys that enable the timely delivery of electricity network infrastructure. The proposed limits on depth, surface area, duration, reinstatement and temporary structures are proportionate and provide appropriate safeguards. POS also supports clear prohibitions on tree damage and the introduction of a prescribed process for managing archaeological discoveries. These measures collectively ensure that essential early-stage investigations can proceed efficiently while maintaining environmental, heritage and amenity protections.

However, POS does not support the introduction of prior notification requirements, which would add bureaucracy, reduce clarity and undermine the purpose of PDRs. POS also does not support applying the PDR within protected areas and designated landscapes, where even temporary works may have meaningful impacts and should be subject to full planning assessment. These positions reflect POS's consistent approach across recent consultations: where development has the potential to generate impacts that require assessment, it should not fall under permitted development but instead be considered through the normal planning application process, where site-specific issues can be properly evaluated. This avoids introducing procedural steps that resemble planning control into PDRs and maintains the clarity and simplicity that PDRs are intended to provide. Accordingly, POS supports the proposed PDR in principle, but only on the basis that prior notification is removed and designated areas are excluded.

POS highlights the risk of cumulative environmental and community impacts from repeated ground investigations under PDR and calls for Government to introduce coordination mechanisms, limits on the number and proximity of investigations, and mandatory publication of results to prevent unplanned or excessive disturbance.

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Report of the Policy Manager to Board