

SSEN Transmission & Orkney Islands Council

CASE STUDY

Strategic infrastructure in support of Scotland's green economy while addressing the issue of vacant homes.



LOCATION: Orkney

STATUS: Current

 ENERGY TRANSITION

 DEMAND DYNAMICS

Summary

Orkney Islands Council has partnered with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks-Transmission (SSEN Transmission) to address two challenges: the high number of vacant homes on Mainland Orkney, and the need for accommodation to support major infrastructure delivery. This initiative demonstrates how infrastructure and housing challenges can be addressed through a responsive and place-based approach with mutual benefits for both national infrastructure and local communities.

Background

SSEN Transmission is responsible for maintaining and investing in the electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland. The network has a strategic role to play in supporting the delivery of the UK's and Scotland's net zero targets. The Orkney transmission link will enable the connection of up to 220MW of new renewable energy electricity and will require staff to be accommodated in Orkney for the project's duration.

However, housing project staff represented a challenge as Orkney has the third highest proportion of empty homes in Scotland, with 6.3% of its housing stock lying vacant. To address this challenge, SSEN Transmission and Orkney Islands Council are working together to help bring empty homes back into use.

Strategy

The scheme provides financial support to property owners to refurbish their homes, in return for a reduced rental rate to SSEN Transmission management staff. The scheme is in support of



Orkney's broader strategy to revitalise the housing stock and reduce the number of vacant homes, while supporting Scotland's broader infrastructure needs.

Investment

SSEN Transmission and Orkney Islands Council developed a scheme that offers homeowners up to £25,000 to renovate long-term empty properties. Once brought up to a habitable standard, the homes are leased to SSEN Transmission management staff at a reduced rate. The lease agreements will typically run to summer 2028.

Delivery

The scheme is a joint delivery model between SSEN Transmission and Orkney Islands Council. The Council's Development and Empty Homes Officer plays a key role in identifying suitable properties and supporting owners through the process. Homeowners then undertake renovations using the provided funding and lease the property to SSEN Transmission under agreed terms.