

BCS announces winter survey 2025 findings

1 year ago



The UK planning system remains an area of major concern and is seen as a significant barrier to the development of data centres. This is according to the latest independent industry survey, which captures the views of over 3000 senior data centre professionals across Europe, including owners, operators, developers, consultants and end users.

James Hart, CEO at [BCS](#), the specialist services provider to the digital infrastructure industry who commissioned the report, which is now in its fourteenth year, said: "It is clear from the response to our survey that the planning process needs reform as the sector believes it has been hindered by an overly complex planning system that has lacked clarity."

As a result, the UK government's recent decision to consider addressing this issue within the context of wider planning reform by revising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been welcomed by over 92% of the survey respondents. Additionally, its announcement that it is to designate the data infrastructure, including data centres, as Critical National Infrastructure has also proven popular with a similar percentage welcoming the initiative.

"The government is considering categorising large data centre developments as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects which is a promising step. This would shift decision-making from local authorities to the national level, potentially expediting approvals for substantial projects. However, as of December 2024, this remains under consultation.

"However, alongside planning issues, sustainable power in the UK is the major challenge and without addressing this too, the current deployment conundrum facing our industry will continue. As the demand

for data continues to surge, the power requirements of these facilities have become a pressing issue in the UK, raising concerns about sustainability, grid capacity, and energy resilience,” comments James Hart.

This view is echoed by 90% of survey respondents who stated that the single largest constraint on new data centre development in the UK is the limitations of power supply, with 92% citing *availability of power* in either of the top two positions as the key driver to the location of their data centre expansion. 87% of participants felt that restricted power availability and appropriate data centres with the capability to handle concentrated workloads is already impacting the speed of AI adoption.

“The UK government and energy regulators must play a proactive role in addressing these power challenges. Investments in upgrading the national grid are essential to ensure it can handle the rising demand from data centres while supporting the broader transition to renewable energy. Policies that incentivise decentralised energy generation—such as on-site solar panels or local wind farms—could also help alleviate pressure on the grid.

“Innovation will be key to tackling power issues in the long term. At BCS we are working closely with our clients advising on technologies like liquid cooling, modular data centres, and artificial intelligence-driven energy management systems which can dramatically improve efficiency. We are actively supporting relationships with energy providers to pave the way for smarter, more resilient energy ecosystems.

“Ultimately, the UK faces a delicate balancing act. Data centres are critical to economic growth and technological advancement, but their power needs must be managed sustainably and equitably. Addressing the power issues facing data centres requires a coordinated effort between government, industry, and energy providers. Without decisive action, the UK risks falling behind in its digital ambitions—or compromising its environmental commitments. The time to act is now,” concludes James Hart.

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