



Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

2027 - 2032

Working together to
shape Northern Ireland's
energy future



Delivering a cleaner
energy future



At a glance

This Strategy explains how SONI will engage with **stakeholders across industry, government and wider society** over the next five years.

This Strategy sets out:



The principles
guiding our
engagement



How stakeholders
can influence our
work



How we will
report back



How we will
keep improving

Who is it for?



Industry



Government



Wider Society

Designed for anyone with an interest
in **Northern Ireland's energy future**



CEO Foreword

Achieving Northern Ireland’s collective renewable energy and net zero ambitions will require a whole energy system, and whole society approach. It is a challenge that demands collaboration, innovation and shared commitment across all sectors.

At SONI, we are embracing a broader and more ambitious role than ever before. Our Strategy 2025–2031: Meeting Northern Ireland’s energy needs, today and in the future sets out how we will contribute to delivering a more secure, affordable and cleaner energy system for everyone. Central to this ambition is our commitment to meaningful stakeholder engagement.

We recognise that transforming the energy system cannot be achieved in isolation. It requires us to listen carefully, engage openly and work collaboratively, with the wide range of stakeholders who have a role to play in delivering Northern Ireland’s energy future.

As a regulated organisation, we must balance diverse and, at times, competing stakeholder priorities. While it is not possible for us to satisfy the asks of all of our stakeholders, all of the time, we value the insights, expertise and perspectives of our stakeholders in helping us to make informed, balanced decisions. We believe that openness and honesty are fundamental to building and maintaining trust, and we are committed to being transparent about the constraints within which we operate, and to explaining clearly how decisions are made in the wider public interest.

Our new Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2027–2032 builds on the foundations of our previous strategy and is informed by the valuable feedback we have received from stakeholders, including through the Evaluative Performance Framework established under SONI’s price control. It will underpin delivery of our new Corporate Strategy and will align with the new SRP27 price control period, ensuring that meaningful engagement is embedded in how we plan and deliver our work over the years ahead.

Our new five-year strategy is underpinned by a clear framework: one that prioritises early and purposeful planning, transparency about the parameters of influence, and engagement that is proportionate and tailored to stakeholders’ needs. We are committed to demonstrating how stakeholder feedback shapes our thinking and decision-making, and to continuously improving how we engage.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of this strategy and who continue to engage constructively with SONI. Your input is vital as we work together to deliver a more secure, affordable and sustainable energy future for everyone in Northern Ireland.

Alan Campbell
Chief Executive Officer,
SONI Ltd





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Executive Summary

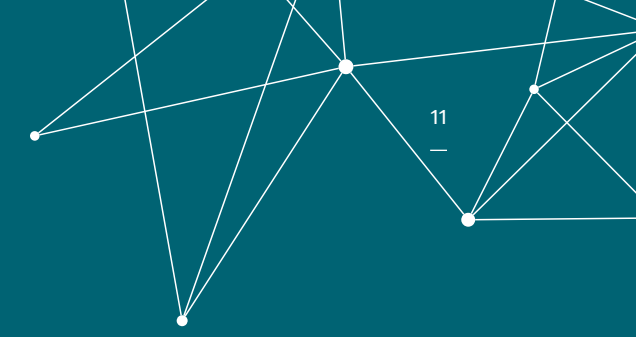
A clear and consistent approach to engagement—enabling better information, earlier input, stronger feedback and continuous improvement.

This Strategy sets out how SONI will engage with stakeholders from 2027 to 2032. It sets out the consistent standards people can expect when they engage with us, the methods we will use, how we will report back, how we will embed and evaluate our approach and improve our performance.

Stakeholder engagement is fundamental to how we operate the electricity system today, plan for the future, and support Northern Ireland's transition to more secure, affordable and cleaner energy sources in the interests of Northern Ireland's consumers, economy, and environment. Meaningful engagement with stakeholders across industry, government and wider society enables SONI to make better decisions, identify issues earlier, understand different perspectives, strengthen our plans, and build and maintain trust with our stakeholders.

The aim of this new five-year strategy is to ensure engagement is not only more consistent, but more useful, helping stakeholders to understand SONI's work, influence it where possible, and see how their input has shaped decisions.





About SONI

SONI is Northern Ireland's independent electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO). We have **three** key responsibilities:

01

We manage the electricity grid, second by second, all year round, to ensure power can flow safely, securely and reliably from where it is generated to homes, farms and businesses across Northern Ireland.

02

We are transforming how the electricity system is planned and operated in an unprecedented way to meet Northern Ireland's future energy needs and collective climate change targets.

03

Working with EirGrid, our counterpart in the Republic of Ireland, we operate the All-island Single Electricity Market.

We **do not** generate or sell electricity or own any network assets. This allows us to focus on acting in the best interests of Northern Ireland's consumers.





Why engagement matters

Northern Ireland's energy system is undergoing a once-in-a-generation transformation as industry, government and wider society work together to deliver ambitious energy and climate change targets. Keeping the system secure today, while building the secure, sustainable and affordable system consumers need for tomorrow involves, and affects, many different people and organisations. That is why engagement matters.

For SONI, effective engagement means listening as well as informing. It means understanding the needs, concerns and ideas of stakeholders, and using these insights to inform how we plan, operate and explain our work.

It also means being honest about the legal, regulatory, technical and financial constraints within which we operate.

When engagement is done well, it improves the quality of decisions, reduces the risk of misunderstanding and frustration, and helps create better outcomes for consumers and communities. It also supports trust, which is especially important at a time of significant change for the energy system.



Supporting SONI's Corporate Strategy

In February 2025, following close collaboration with our stakeholders, SONI published a new Corporate Strategy 2025-2031: **Meeting Northern Ireland's energy needs, today and in the future.**

This Corporate Strategy centres on our collective purpose, our ambition for the future, and the enabling actions we need to take to realise this ambition. It is built around four strategic goals: **Advise, Plan, Deliver and Operate.**



Figure 1: Our Strategic Ambitions

Engagement Supporting Delivery

Strategic Ambition	How engagement supports delivery
 Advise Be an independent, trusted advisor on electricity systems and markets.	We will use stakeholder insight to provide robust, evidence-based advice and build trust with policymakers, regulators and wider partners.
 Plan Plan the future design of the electricity network and the all-island electricity market.	We will involve stakeholders early in the planning process.
 Deliver Support the unprecedented transformation of the transmission system needed to help meet Northern Ireland's energy and climate change ambitions.	We will work closely with market participants, existing and future customers, wider industry, government, regulators, landowners, local communities and wider civic society to enable success.
 Operate Operate the power system safely, reliably and economically on a continuous basis.	We will work closely with EirGrid to operate the Single Electricity Market and with statutory partners to deliver better outcomes for Northern Ireland consumers.

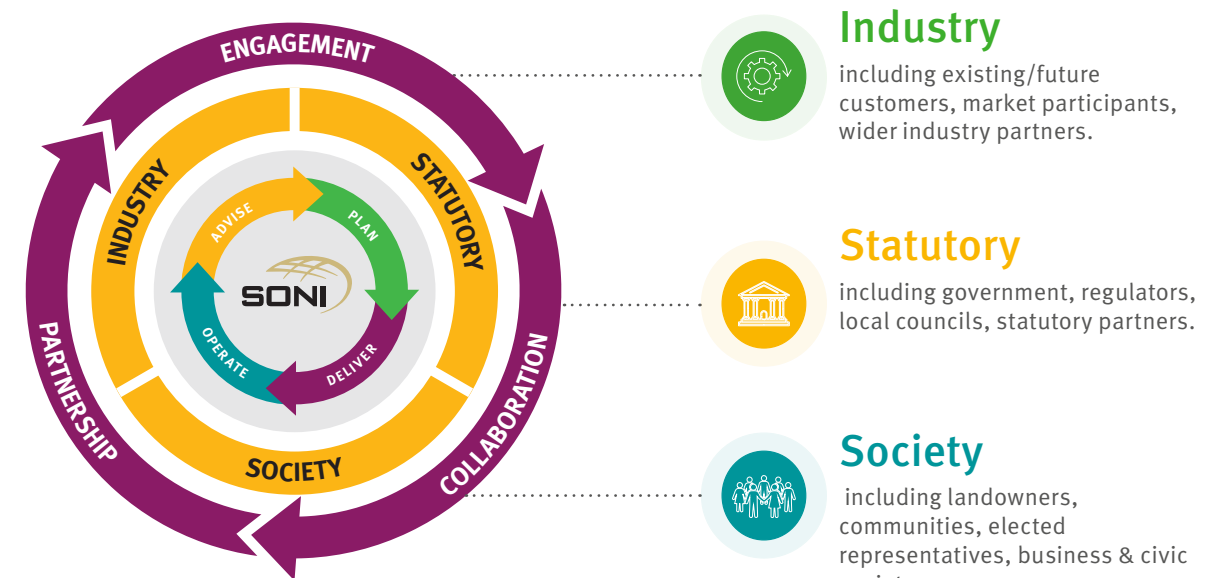


Figure 2: Stakeholder engagement - a strategic imperative

Our Principles of Engagement

These are the core principles that will guide SONI's engagement so our stakeholders know what they can consistently expect when they engage with us. We are committed to delivering on these principles in practice.



Figure 3:Our Principles of Engagement

Our Approach to Engagement

Our approach to stakeholder engagement is based on a Continuous Improvement Framework, ensuring we design engagement with purpose, tailor it to the issue and audience, use the insight we receive, and learn from every major engagement activity to improve future outcomes.

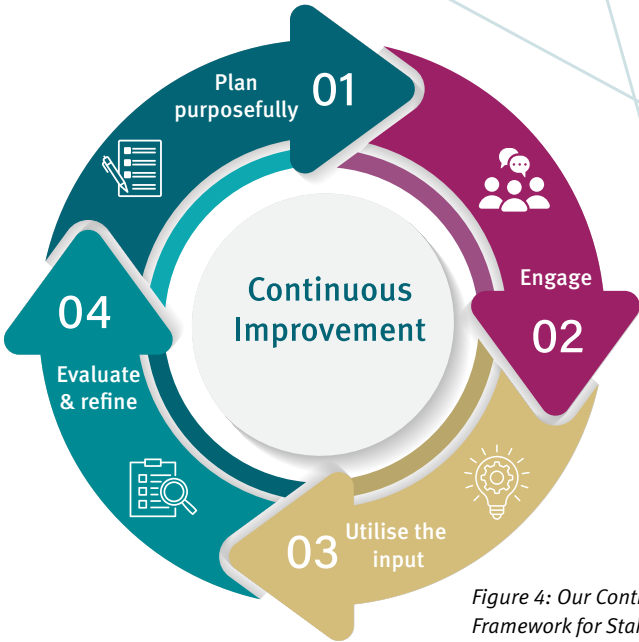


Figure 4: Our Continuous Improvement Framework for Stakeholder Engagement

Stage	What we will do	What this means for stakeholders
Plan purposefully	Be clear early on about why we are engaging, who are engaging with, when and how. Identify the parameters of influence and what information stakeholders need from SONI.	Stakeholders should have a clear understanding of the purpose of engagement from the outset, know what is, and is not, open to influence, and when and how they can engage.
Engage appropriately	Choose methods that are timely, proportionate, tailored to different audiences and issues. Seek to address barriers to participation, including digital exclusion and limited technical knowledge. We will draw on best practice from other sectors and jurisdictions.	Stakeholders should receive information in a format and at a level of detail that meets their needs and helps them participate and engage meaningfully.
Use the input	Capture insight, consider feedback and 'close the loop' by explaining at key junctures how input has informed our thinking and decisions. Where input has not been acted on, we will explain why.	After taking time to share their insights, stakeholders should be able to see how input has been used to inform SONI's thinking and decisions and if not, why not.
Evaluate and refine	Review what worked well, what could be improved and how learning should shape future engagement.	Stakeholder experience of engagement should improve driven by this consistent process of evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency.

Table 1: Our Engagement Approach

Continuous improvement in practice

 1 Were the objectives met?	 2 Were the right objectives set in the first place?	 3 Were the right stakeholders engaged?	 4 Was the timing and format appropriate?	 5 Was input clearly captured and impact explained?	 6 How can future engagement be improved?
Did we achieve what we set out to do?	Did we focus on the right issues and outcomes?	Did we involve the people and groups who should have been part of it?	Did we engage at the right time and in the right way?	Did we capture input well and explain how it influenced our decisions?	What will we do differently next time to be even better?



How stakeholders can influence our work

The level of influence stakeholders can have will vary depending on the issue. Some aspects of SONI's work are determined by legal, licence, safety, technical, market or regulatory requirements. Where this is the case, we will be clear about what is fixed, explain why, provide accessible information and respond to questions in a timely manner.

Where there is scope for influence, we will clearly explain what stakeholders can help shape. This may include how information is communicated, the timing and format of engagement, how options are developed and assessed, how local knowledge is considered, and how impacts are understood and managed.

For more complex issues, or those affecting a broad range of stakeholders, we will use more collaborative approaches such as workshops, forums, working groups and community engagement processes to explore challenges, test options and identify practical solutions.

In practice, we will often use a combination of the approaches outlined below for a single issue or project.

Whatever the level of influence, we will be transparent from the outset about what can and cannot be changed, how feedback will be considered, and how the outcomes of engagement will be communicated.

To make it easier for stakeholders to understand who does what within SONI, we will publish and regularly update an organisational chart on our website. This will provide clear information on our main areas of work and the key contacts responsible for them.

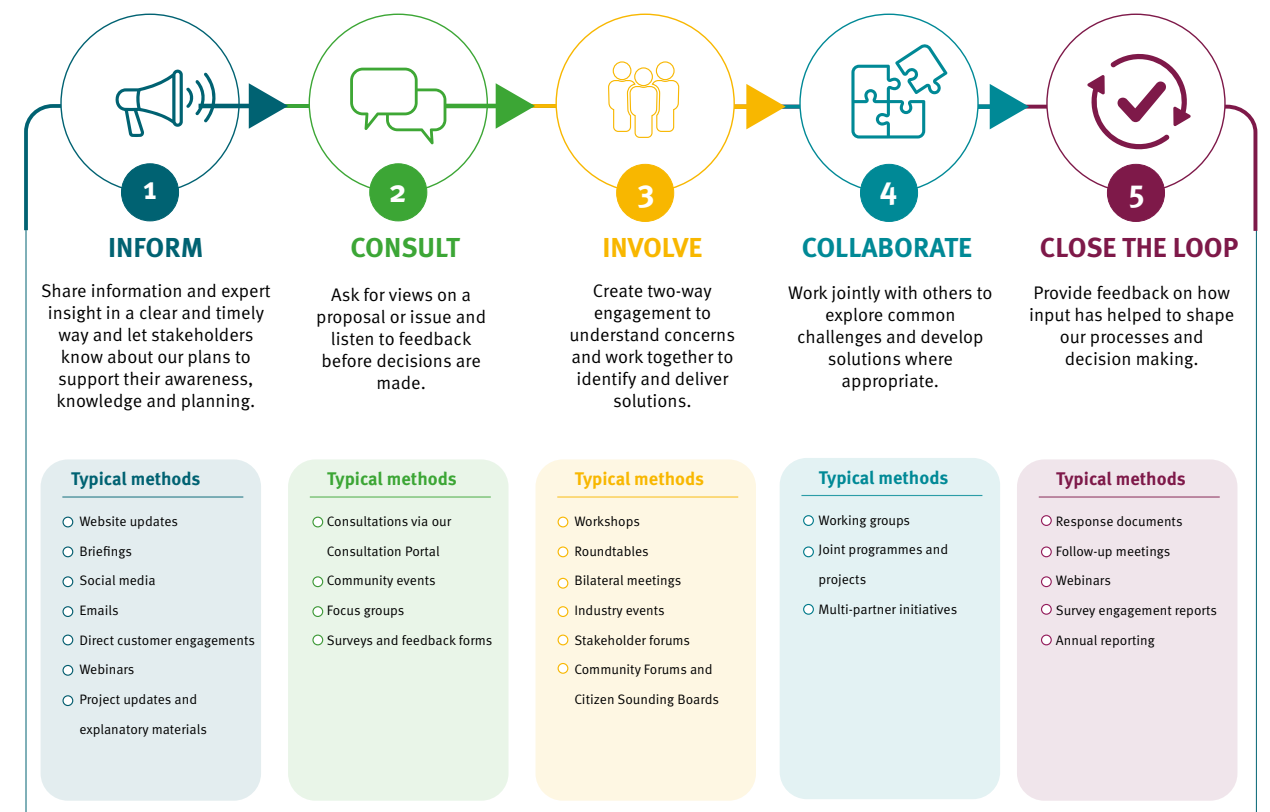


Figure 5: How Stakeholders influence our work

Our Stakeholders

SONI works with a wide range of stakeholders who each have different interests, responsibilities and perspectives on Northern Ireland's energy system. Following extensive stakeholder needs assessment work in the development of our new Corporate Strategy and our new five-year stakeholder engagement strategy, we have mapped three core categories of stakeholders: **society**, **industry** and the **statutory** sector.

The stakeholder wheel below shows the sub section of stakeholders we have identified within each category.

We will keep these stakeholder maps under review, so they remain accurate and inclusive.

Society includes consumers, communities, landowners, elected representatives, business representative bodies and civic society organisations who are affected by, or have an interest in, the energy transition.

Industry includes market participants, existing and future customers, generators, suppliers, developers, network companies, Transmission System Operators and other organisations involved in delivering and operating the electricity system.

Statutory includes government departments, regulators, local councils, public bodies and statutory consultees who have formal roles in policy, regulation, planning, consenting or delivery.

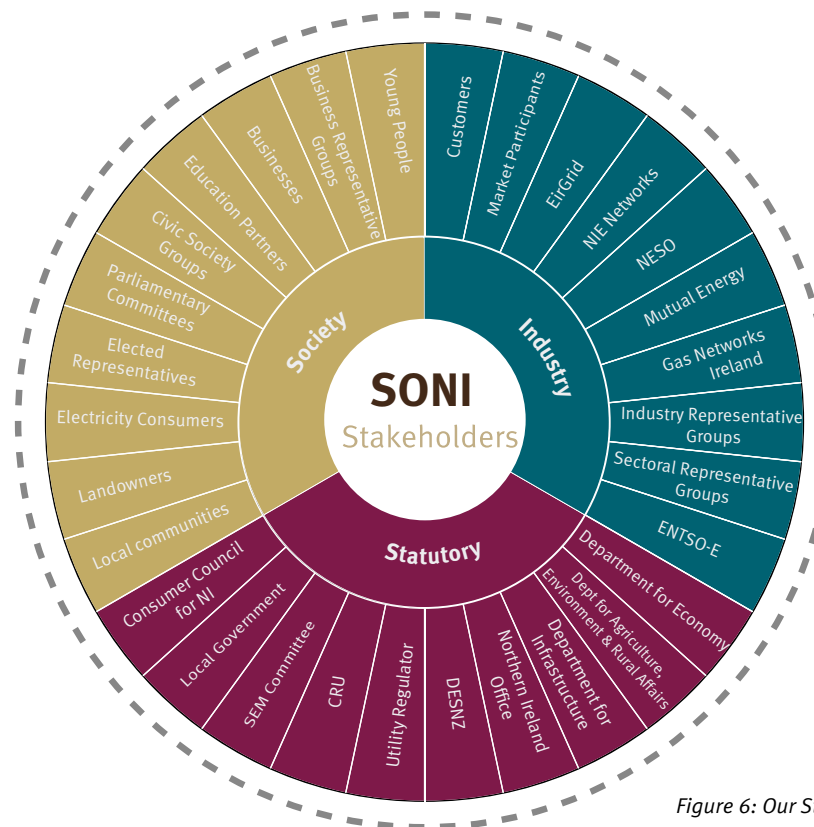


Figure 6: Our Stakeholders



Engaging with landowners and local communities

To deliver the energy transformation needed to meet Northern Ireland’s renewable energy and climate targets, significant new grid infrastructure will be required. While some landowners and communities will experience this more directly than others, SONI is committed to engaging early, treating people with respect, and providing meaningful opportunities to understand proposals and share their views.

Landowner Charter at a glance



Respect

We treat your land and livelihood with care and respect.



Early engagement

We engage early and maintain open communication throughout every stage of our projects.



Clear information

We provide clear and practical information at every stage of a project.



Fair treatment

We apply fair, consistent and transparent processes in all our interactions.



Long term relationships

We build lasting relationships based on trust, collaboration and mutual benefit.

Why we’ve updated the Charter



Reflects our commitment to continuous improvement



Incorporates stakeholder feedback



Sets clear expectations for landowners



Provides practical detail on the engagement process



Supports respectful, accessible and transparent engagement

Why this matters

By hosting essential infrastructure, landowners play a vital role in maintaining a safe, secure and reliable electricity supply for Northern Ireland. Our updated Landowner Charter sets out the standards and practical process landowners can expect when we get in touch about new or upgraded infrastructure.

It reflects our commitment to clear communication, fairness, regular consultation and respectful engagement, while explaining what landowners can expect at every stage, including discussions on access, land rights, safety, compensation and professional representation.

“ We are committed to being a trusted partner to landowners and communities, listening early, acting fairly and explaining decisions clearly. ”



Supporting Local Communities

We recognise that local communities must be at the heart of our plans to develop the grid and should be meaningfully engaged from the earliest possible stage. We are committed to discussing our proposals early with local communities and their elected representatives, explaining why projects are needed, listening to their views, and responding openly to their concerns and insights.



SONI’s 3-Part Process for Grid Development

SONI’s Three-Part Process for Grid Development guides our engagement with local communities and goes beyond the requirements of the statutory planning process. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we will continue to strengthen and enhance this approach.



Figure 7: Our 3-Part Process



Where appropriate, we will use more deliberative approaches, such as Community Forums and Citizen Sounding Boards, to strengthen local engagement. Insights gathered through these forums will help inform decisions and shape outcomes in the best interests of consumers.



Alongside this strategy, we have also published a refreshed and improved version of our Public Engagement Model. Now titled Engaging Communities, this document sets out what local communities can expect from us throughout the engagement process.



Recognising the important role that host communities play, we will continue to work with relevant partners to explore opportunities for a community benefit model for grid transmission infrastructure in Northern Ireland, in line with wider practice across Great Britain and Ireland.

What this means locally



Listen early

We know the crucial role landowners and communities play in hosting new or upgraded grid infrastructure.



Explain clearly

That is why we will engage early, explain proposals clearly, listen to local knowledge and concerns.



Work together

Be open about what can and cannot be changed and explain how views have been considered.



Use feedback

Listen, learn and improve how we engage with landowners and communities.

What stakeholders can expect from SONI

This Strategy is intended to be practical. It is designed to give stakeholders across industry, government and wider society a clear understanding of what they can expect when they engage with SONI.



Engage Early

Early and purposeful engagement wherever possible, particularly on issues with a significant stakeholder or community impact.



Be Clear

Clear explanation of the purpose of engagement and the level of influence that is available on the issue in question.



Make Information Accessible

Information that is proportionate, accessible and tailored to the audience, avoiding unnecessary jargon wherever possible.



Communicate Responsively

Respectful and timely communication from SONI teams and, where appropriate, named points of contact.



Close the Loop

Clear follow-up on how input has informed our thinking, processes or decisions, and if something has not changed, an explanation of why.



How we will deliver this strategy

To ensure this strategy is not just a statement of intent, SONI will embed stakeholder engagement systematically and consistently across the organisation. To do that we are strengthening internal governance, improving co-ordination, building capability and putting in place clear systems to support delivery.



Stronger internal capability

Develop an internal toolkit, run workshops and provide support so that teams across SONI understand the strategy and can apply it consistently.



Stakeholder Champions

Appoint Stakeholder Champions across the organisation to support good practice, co-ordination and shared learning.



Central tracking and follow-up

Develop and use a centralised stakeholder engagement tracker to record activity and actions, capture insights, and support stronger closing-the-loop feedback.



Annual action planning

Publish forward looking Annual Stakeholder Engagement Action Plans at the start of each business year setting out key strategic engagement activities, the lead owner in SONI, our target audience, and timeline to provide advance visibility and transparency for stakeholders.



Transparent reporting

Publish an Annual Engagement Evaluation Dashboard to provide transparency for stakeholders on how SONI is performing.

How we will measure success

Measuring Our Performance

In line with our commitment to transparency and continual improvement, SONI will report publicly on its engagement performance each year through an Annual Engagement Evaluation Dashboard using a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures.

What We Will Measure

These will include operational measures, engagement-specific feedback and broader insight into stakeholder experience. SONI will use metrics from planned engagement activities, annual pulse surveys, post-engagement surveys and qualitative insights from focus groups and case studies to assess the quality of our engagement.

We have listened to stakeholders and we understand the importance of timely response times, accessible and useful engagement and the quality of closing the loop communications as meaningful measures of performance for stakeholders.

We will also use media sentiment analysis and social media engagement data to understand what is working and what needs to improve.

Stakeholder Satisfaction

We are also committed to achieving a stakeholder satisfaction target of maintaining or exceeding 70% stakeholder satisfaction. Aligned to our new continuous improvement framework, this target exceeds our regulatory SRP27 submission of 60% and will be measured through annual pulse surveys and post-engagement surveys.

We will report results transparently and, where possible, by stakeholder category (industry, statutory and society). We will keep the target under review, and benchmarked against industry best practice, to ensure it remains stretching and meaningful.

Annual reporting and continuous improvement

This Strategy will be supported by annual delivery and reporting.

01 At the start of each business year, we will publish a forward-looking Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan setting out the strategic engagement activities we expect to undertake, the corporate strategic goal it aligns with, the SONI lead for this engagement, key stakeholder audience and expected timeline.

02 At the end of each business year, we will publish an Engagement Evaluation Dashboard showing how we have performed. Together, these documents will ensure transparency and enable stakeholders to track progress over time.

03 SONI will review the effectiveness and efficiency of its strategic engagement regularly, looking at whether the right stakeholders were reached, whether the timing and format were suitable, whether duplication or gaps arose, and whether the influence of stakeholder input was clearly explained.

04 Learning from these reviews will be used to improve future engagement. This learning will ensure that our strategy is not static. This stakeholder strategy provides the framework SONI will work within, but the methods we use, and its delivery will evolve in response to feedback, evidence and changing stakeholder needs.



Conclusion

Ensuring Northern Ireland's electricity system is operated safely, securely and reliably today, while at the same time building the secure, affordable and sustainable energy system Northern Ireland needs tomorrow requires meaningful engagement, strong partnerships and shared commitment across industry, government and wider society. As Northern Ireland's independent Transmission System Operator, SONI has an important role to play in enabling this transition, but we know we cannot do it alone.

This Strategy sets out how we will engage in a more consistent, transparent and purposeful way over the next five years. We will involve stakeholders earlier, be clear about what can and cannot be influenced, tailor our approach to different audiences, explain how feedback has been considered, and continuously improve how we engage.

Through annual action plans and public reporting on our performance through an Annual Engagement Evaluation Dashboard we will ensure we are accountable for delivering on these commitments. The success of Northern Ireland's energy transition will depend on the contributions of many individuals and organisations. Through this Strategy, we are committed to engaging openly, listening carefully and explaining clearly how stakeholder insight informs our work. By doing so, we aim to strengthen trust, improve decision-making and build enduring relationships that help enable the collective delivery of Northern Ireland's evolving energy future.



**Delivering a cleaner
energy future**

12 Manse Road, Belfast,
Co. Antrim, BT6 9RT.

T: +44 (0)28 907 94336
W: soni.ltd.uk