

Evaluative Performance Framework

Forward Work Plan 2025-26

SONI Self-Assessment



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We are assessed by the Independent Panel using the UR’s Evaluative Performance Framework Guidance document (see Chapter 4, pages 17-23 of the UR’s Evaluative Performance Framework Guidance).

The Forward Work Plan will be assessed on the following:

ASSESSMENT
CRITERIA

01

SERVICE AMBITION
The degree of ambition for improvements over time included in the plan, in relation to the four SONI outcomes, relative to past performance and existing working practices and processes.

02

UR SERVICE PRIORITY ALIGNMENT
The extent to which the new initiatives and areas of focus presented in the plan are aligned with the Service Priorities set by us (which in turn would be informed by stakeholders) or otherwise supported by strong evidence.

03

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
The quality of stakeholder engagement and participation in developing the plan, and the responsiveness that the plan shows to the views and concerns of stakeholders (to the extent not captured under alignment).

04

SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY
The degree of clarity on the SONI’s planned activities and initiatives and how the success or performance in relation to these would be assessed (e.g. detailed specification of deliverables and measures of success).

In this document, we have highlighted our views against how the plan meets the assessment criteria and what changes have been made since the previous assessment.

We have provided our self-assessment of our performance for the Forward Work Plan 2025-2026 in the table below.

SONI Self-Assessment Grading

	Role 1 - System Operations & Adequacy	Role 2- Independent Expert	Role 3 - System Planning	Role 4 - Commercial Interface
Weights	27.5	25	25	22.5
Criteria				
1. Service Ambition	1	1	1	0
2. UR Service Priority Alignment	0	0	0	0
3. Stakeholder Engagement	0	1	1	0
4. Service Accountability	0	0	0	0
Assessment Total (Criterion 1 score X2)	2	3	3	0
Assessment Grade	4	5	5	3
Overall Grade	4.275			

SONI Self-Assessment

Role 1 System Operations and Adequacy

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
Service Ambition	<p>The projects under Role 1 demonstrate our ambition to lead Northern Ireland’s transition to a secure, low-carbon electricity system. Initiatives like the Future Arrangements for System Services (FASS) and Scheduling and Dispatch Programme will modernise operational systems to integrate new technologies, enable higher levels of renewable generation, and deliver a more competitive, transparent electricity market. The System Strength Programme and Minimum Stability Trial are tackling technical barriers by building a stronger, more resilient grid while reducing reliance on fossil fuel generation.</p> <p>Through initiatives like the Northern Ireland Negative Reserve Trial, and the Multi-Year Development Plan, we are delivering practical and measurable improvements to resilience, recovery capability and future market design. These initiatives directly support Decarbonisation by enabling secure operation with higher renewable penetration, while Grid Security is strengthened through our detailed technical studies and operational trials. These projects also contribute to System-Wide Costs by reducing dispatch down, improving efficiency, and creating clearer investment signals for market participants. The Service Quality is raised with these projects by improving our operational systems, policy, clarity and transparency, ultimately benefitting all stakeholders.</p> <p>Together these projects represent a collection of ambitious, technically complex, and high-impact initiatives that go beyond business-as-usual system operation. We consider that this set of projects exceed expectations for the service ambition criterion by demonstrating leadership in innovation, driving consumer-focused outcomes, and laying the foundation for a secure, decarbonised power system.</p>
UR Service Priority Alignment	<p>The initiatives in Role 1 demonstrate strong alignment with the UR Service Priorities through practical, delivery-focused initiatives that prioritise collaboration, transparency and innovation. Initiatives such as the Northern Ireland Minimum Stability Trial and Northern Ireland Negative Reserve Trial are hands-on, real-world initiatives designed to test new operational policies, proving our ability to learn and adapt from live trials rather than relying solely on planning-based reviews. Similarly, our support for the Multi-Year Market Development Plan reflects our commitment to working closely with the Utility Regulator, providing expertise and evidence to help shape regulatory policy in a way that delivers better consumer outcomes.</p> <p>We work closely with NIE Networks to strengthen whole-system collaboration, particularly around planning and operational interfaces, ensuring that actions across the TSO and DSO boundaries are coordinated, transparent, and efficient. Initiatives like System Strength, and FASS are key examples of our efforts to innovate and create opportunities for new technologies, helping to future-proof the market and encourage competition.</p> <p>Together the initiatives under Role 1 show that we are addressing the UR’s call for practical innovation, deep stakeholder engagement and whole-system collaboration while providing the Utility Regulator with clear, timely information to support its duties.</p>

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
	<p>Our work in Role 1 is delivering real improvements to grid stability, market efficiency, and consumer value, and therefore we consider that we have met expectations in this criterion.</p>
Stakeholder Engagement	<p>The projects included in Role 1 demonstrate our structured and consistent engagement with key stakeholders to ensure operational policies, market development and system security initiatives are transparent and collaborative. A strong example is our work on the Multi-Year Market Development Plan, where we are actively supporting the Utility Regulator by providing expertise, analysis and stakeholder insights to shape a robust consultation process. This collaboration ensures market design priorities are aligned with energy transition goals while reflecting stakeholder needs. Technical policy developments such as the Northern Ireland Minimum Stability Trial and Northern Ireland Negative Reserve Trial are being progressed through close governance with the Operational Policy Review Committee (OPRC), enabling clear oversight and industry input. Regular updates, formal approvals, and transparent reporting within these forums ensure stakeholders remain informed and have opportunities to provide feedback on operational changes.</p> <p>While Role 1 engagement is often technical and specialist, we consider it is well-structured and consistent, ensuring stakeholders are meaningfully involved in shaping system operations and policy. We consider stakeholder engagement under this role to meet expectations, reflecting a high standard of collaboration and clear communication across operational and market facing initiatives.</p>
Service Accountability	<p>We views Role 1 as demonstrating strong accountability through clear project scopes, well-defined milestones, and robust governance structures that ensure transparency and confidence in delivery. Initiatives such as FASS, and Scheduling and Dispatch, are supported by our structured timelines, regulatory decisions and implementation plans that provide assurance of progress to stakeholders and the Regulatory Authorities.</p> <p>Our operational trials, including the Northern Ireland Minimum Stability Trial and Northern Ireland Negative Reserve Trial, are overseen by the OPRC, ensuring rigorous reporting, approvals, and lessons learned before any enduring changes are introduced. Similarly, our work on System Strength follows defined study phases, reporting processes, and stakeholder engagement to ensure robust and evidence-based decision making.</p> <p>Our contribution to the Multi-Year Market Development Plan demonstrates our ability to provide detailed expertise, structured inputs, and transparent reporting into regulator led initiatives. Collectively, these efforts reflect a disciplined and consistent approach to performance management, allowing us to meet expectations for accountability under this role.</p>

Role 2 Independent Expert

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
Service Ambition	<p>Role 2 highlights our ambition to continue to be a trusted, impartial voice shaping Northern Ireland’s energy future. With initiatives like our Price Control (SRP27) and Stakeholder Engagement Programme, we are embedding transparency, collaboration, and evidence-based decision making into every stage of system planning and market development. Our Digitalisation Strategy (joint with NIE Networks) and Innovation Strategy are modernising how we engage with stakeholders, ensuring information is accessible and actionable, while our Plan-Led Policy Proposal and Dispatch Down Programme are addressing critical industry issues, leading to improved system efficiency and stakeholder confidence.</p> <p>These initiatives directly contribute to Decarbonisation by influencing policies and investments that accelerate renewable energy integration. Similarly, they contribute to Grid Security by ensuring that future operational and infrastructure plans are supported by technical expertise. We believe that by working closely with DfE, UR, industry and communities, we are building trust and fostering meaningful dialogue, thus strengthening Service Quality and improving stakeholder confidence in the long-term. Role 2 also supports System-Wide Costs by advocating for efficient planning approaches, reducing duplication, and aligning investment signals with consumer value.</p> <p>We consider that the projects detailed in Role 2 show that we are not only responding to stakeholder needs but also driving innovation, collaboration, and policy alignment at a strategic level. We believe that this approach exceeds expectations in ambition by going beyond consultation to shape practical, forward-thinking solutions for Northern Ireland’s energy system.</p>
UR Service Priority Alignment	<p>Role 2 reflects our role as a trusted, impartial advisor. The initiatives contained within this role demonstrate strong alignment with the UR’s priorities for collaboration, innovation, and transparency. Through initiatives like the SRP27 Price Control Business Plan Engagement Program, Plan-Led Policy Development, and Digitalisation Strategy, we are embedding stakeholder engagement into our culture. We continue to work closely with the UR, DfE and industry stakeholders to ensure feedback actively shapes our proposals, particularly in areas like our Price Control, which sets the foundation for our funding and delivery approach over our price control period (2027-2032).</p> <p>Innovation is central to Role 2 with initiatives like the Innovation Strategy and Dispatch Down Programme reflecting our ambition to deliver practical real-world solutions to complex system challenges while encouraging industry to design solutions and shape our activities. We believe that we are not only sharing knowledge but also learning from industry, policymakers and other stakeholders to ensure that our strategies and operational approaches are informed by the latest thinking and actual experience.</p>

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
	<p>Our Digitalisation Strategy, being jointly developed with NIE Networks, demonstrates our commitment to a holistic approach. It uses data not only to improve our internal processes, but also to empower customers, market participants, and stakeholders to make more efficient operational and investment decisions. Similarly, our work on the Plan-Led Proposal builds transparency and alignment with planning and investment priorities, giving stakeholders more clarity and confidence.</p> <p>Role 2 also covers our commitment to whole-system collaboration. We work closely with NIE Networks and other key stakeholders to ensure a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities at the TSO/DSO interface, and to explore solutions that can help reduce costs and minimise system reinforcement needs. The engagement on these projects is structured, fostering confidence in our ability to deliver value for money while enabling Northern Ireland’s energy transition.</p> <p>Collectively these projects demonstrate our ambition and therefore we consider that we have met expectations by embedding engagement and collaboration into our culture, driving innovation and ensuring our plans are reflective of stakeholder and consumer needs.</p>
Stakeholder Engagement	<p>Role 2 demonstrates a change in the quality, breadth, and impact of stakeholder engagement within our approach, going well beyond expectations. Initiatives such as our Price Control (SRP27) Business Plan and our dedicated Stakeholder Engagement Programme have established a new standard for transparency and collaboration. Through early and extensive engagement, including bilateral meetings, industry forums and the Stakeholder Advisory Challenge Group, formed last year, we are ensuring that stakeholder perspectives are directly influencing the development of our business plan and long-term strategy.</p> <p>Our Plan-Led Proposal and Dispatch Down Programme have also shown strong responsiveness to consultations, feedback, and clear evidence of stakeholder input shaping policy decisions. Similarly, our leadership in developing our Innovation Strategy, and Digitalisation Strategy, highlight our role as a trusted expert voice, ensuring industry and government perspectives are embedded in decision-making at every level.</p> <p>The level of engagement demonstrated in Role 2 is comprehensive, iterative, and designed to build lasting trust. We have created meaningful opportunities, often designing solutions with stakeholders, and providing clear visibility around how feedback has influenced our work. We consider that the engagement approach for Role 2 exceeds expectations, setting a benchmark for openness and responsiveness, while strengthening confidence in SONI as a trusted, independent system operator.</p>

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
Service Accountability	<p>Our Role 2 projects demonstrate a high level of accountability through clear scoping, transparent reporting, and structured governance. Our Price Control (SRP27) work is supported by a detailed engagement and governance plan, including oversight from our board and structured engagement and reporting to the Utility Regulator, ensuring stakeholder trust in the process.</p> <p>Initiatives such as our Digitalisation Strategy, Innovation Strategy and Grid Forming Strategy follow defined milestones, consultation timelines and collaborative governance arrangements with NIE Networks, EirGrid and key stakeholders, ensuring alignment with regulatory expectations. Our Dispatch Down Programme operates under robust oversight with clear decision-making pathways and regular reporting through the Operational Policy Review Committee (OPRC).</p> <p>The development of our Plan-Led Proposal also reflects a disciplined approach to delivery with engagement, feedback, consultation responses and policy drafting linked to measurable deliverables that will demonstrate progress. Across this role, projects are underpinned by evidence-based plans and transparent governance, enabling us to meet expectations for service accountability.</p>

Role 3 System Planning

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
Service Ambition	<p>Within Role 3 we consider that the projects detailed demonstrate our ambition to deliver a fit-for-purpose transmission system through a proactive, coordinated planning process. Initiatives like the Transmission Cluster Policy, North Sperrin Generation Cluster, and Connect West are focused on strategic, anticipatory investment to unlock renewable generation potential while minimising costs and disruption. Our Joint Project Management Office (JPMO) ensures projects are delivered with accountability and transparency, with progress tracked and delays proactively addressed.</p> <p>The Transmission Development Plan (TDPNI), Ten-Year Transmission Forecast Statement (TYTFS) and Transmission System Security and Planning Standards (TSSPS) review projects are ensuring that our planning framework remains robust and responsive to the changing energy landscape in Northern Ireland. These projects will enable Decarbonisation by identifying and fast-tracking essential reinforcements to meet renewable targets. Grid Security will be strengthened using a forward-looking approach for system reliability with these projects. By optimising reinforcement and avoiding unnecessary duplication, Role 3 will also deliver value for consumers, supporting System-Wide Costs. Additionally, clear consultation processes, collaboration with NIE Networks, and early engagement with planners, landowners and communities demonstrate a high standard of Service Quality ensuring that all voices are heard.</p> <p>A key project in Role 3 is the implementation of our Northern Ireland specific Transmission Cluster Policy, a major innovation in how grid infrastructure will be planned and delivered to accommodate the connection of renewable generation onto the grid. This policy is designed to accelerate the connection of these projects by grouping them into clusters, enabling faster, more coordinated delivery of reinforcements. It is a key enabler to Decarbonisation, ensuring the transmission system can keep pace with the rapid growth of renewable generation required to meet renewable targets. By taking this innovative approach, we are setting a new benchmark for how infrastructure can be delivered efficiently, strategically, and with strong alignment to consumer and policy goals.</p> <p>The projects included within Role 3 reflect a change in ambition, with a key focus on accelerating infrastructure delivery and embedding whole-system thinking. we consider that this role exceeds expectations in ambition by setting a new benchmark for transparency, stakeholder engagement, and efficient network planning.</p>

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
UR Service Priority Alignment	<p>Role 3 focuses on our responsibility for transmission system planning, delivery transparency, collaboration and forward-thinking solutions to enable Northern Ireland’s energy transition. The initiatives under this role, such as the Ten-Year Transmission Forecast Statement (TYTFS), Transmission Cluster Policy and Joint Project Management Office (JPMO), show clear alignment with the Utility Regulator’s priorities for collaboration, organisational learning, and whole-system thinking.</p> <p>We are embedding a culture of effective engagement and collaboration by ensuring stakeholders, including NIE Networks, government departments and local communities, are closely involved at every stage of the Grid Development Process. Through consultations, engagement with elected representatives, and collaboration with NIE Networks, we are making sure system planning decisions are transparent, inclusive and informed by a wide range of perspectives.</p> <p>Innovation and organisational learning are key to this role. Initiatives like our Transmission System Security and Planning Standards (TSSPS) review and FAQ Methodology Review aim to improve processes, methodologies, and tools for planning. We are also delivering practical real-world change through projects like the JPMO, which strengthens joint working arrangements and looks to drive acceleration of infrastructure delivery.</p> <p>We continue to strengthen our whole-system approach by coordinating closely with NIE Networks. These efforts will not only improve planning decisions but also deliver more efficient and cost-effective solutions for consumers in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Overall, we consider that Role 3 demonstrates a consistent and transparent approach to meeting the UR service priorities. Through stronger collaboration, early engagement and clear alignment with regulatory expectation, we are continuing to build confidence in its plan and ensure that Northern Ireland’s transmission system can evolve to meet future challenges. While there is more work to do to optimise the planning process, the projects included in this role show that we have met expectations and are helping to achieve faster, smarter delivery of infrastructure projects.</p>
Stakeholder Engagement	<p>The initiatives within Role 3 demonstrates our commitment to transparent engagement and whole-system collaboration, essential to delivering the transmission network Northern Ireland needs. Initiatives such as the TDPNI, Transmission Cluster Policy and TYTFS are all supported by structured consultations, ensuring that policymakers, industry, NIE Networks, and local communities can directly influence methodologies, investment priorities and timelines.</p> <p>The development of the JPMO with NIE Networks will transform transparency and coordination in system planning. By jointly managing timelines and publishing updates, SONI and NIE Networks will provide unprecedented visibility of delivery progress and ensure alignment across organisations. Initiatives like Connect West and the North Sperrin Generation Cluster also highlight SONI’s focus on early engagement with planners, public representatives, and communities to reduce risk, build trust, and secure support for key infrastructure.</p>

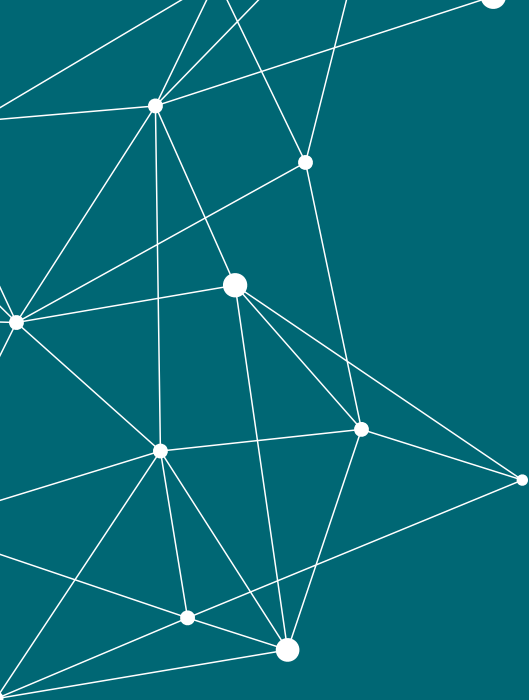
Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
	<p>We consider that we have moved beyond traditional consultation by embedding engagement at every stage, and by fostering collaboration that reflects stakeholder feedback in decision-making and delivery. Our approach will not only strengthen confidence in our leadership but also set a new benchmark for whole-system transparency. For these reasons, we consider Role 3’s stakeholder engagement to exceed expectations, demonstrating a proactive, coordinated and highly responsive planning process.</p>
Service Accountability	<p>We believe that the initiatives detailed within Role 3 show a clear commitment to accountability with each project supported by defined milestones, structured approvals and strong governance frameworks. The TDPNI and TYTFS are statutory publications with transparent timelines, public consultation, and formal Utility Regulatory approval, ensuring visibility and trust in our planning process.</p> <p>Initiatives such as the Transmission Cluster Policy and FAQ Methodology Review allow us to demonstrate accountability through structured industry engagement, detailed analysis, and clear decision-making processes that link feedback directly to published outcomes. Large infrastructure projects, including the North Sperrin Generation Cluster and Connect West, are advancing through our established Three-Part Grid Development Process, which provides a clear and traceable path from scoping to handover, supported by governance from the Joint Project Management Office (JPMO).</p> <p>This role reflects a rigorous, transparent approach to planning Northern Ireland’s transmission system, ensuring that all work is measurable, reportable, and fully aligned with regulatory requirements. we therefore consider service accountability to meet expectations in Role 3.</p>

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Role 4 Commercial Interface

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
Service Ambition	<p>Initiatives within Role 4 are focused on creating clear, reliable commercial arrangements that will enable the energy transition. Our Low Carbon Inertia Services (LCIS) Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects are central to this, as they aim to procure new services from innovative technologies to reduce reliance on traditional fossil fuel generation and support secure, low-carbon operations of the power system. Similarly, the Flexibility Needs Assessment for Long Duration Energy Storage (LDES) is establishing a new, EU-aligned methodology to plan for the flexibility required to integrate more renewable generation and long duration storage, shaping future market and investment signals.</p> <p>These initiatives support Decarbonisation by enabling low-carbon technologies to participate in system services and ensuring long-term stability as Northern Ireland transitions to a renewable-led grid. These initiatives also contribute to System-Wide Costs by identifying efficient investment pathways and procurement frameworks. Similarly, by ensuring clarity for developers and technology providers on future service needs, we are contributing to Service Quality.</p> <p>While there are fewer projects in Role 4, these initiatives are delivering meaningful, measurable change by creating the commercial environment required to meet renewable targets. We consider these projects to meet expectations in the service ambition criterion, demonstrating ambition through innovation while maintaining a consistent focus on transparency, collaboration, and value for consumers.</p>
UR Service Priority Alignment	<p>Role 4 focuses on our role as the commercial interface for customers and market participants,min key services such as connection offers and the Moyle Interconnector arrangements. Initiatives under this role such as LCIS Phase 1 and 2 and the LDES Flexibility Needs Assessment demonstrate our strong commitment to supporting innovation, coordinating across the system, and ensuring processes are simple and accessible for all stakeholders.</p> <p>We have embedded a culture of collaboration in this role through our close working relationship with NIE Networks and ongoing engagement with developers and the Regulatory Authorities. These partnerships ensure that connection offers and system services reflect customers’ needs while supporting efficient, whole-system delivery.</p> <p>Innovation and organisational learning are supported through these projects by exploring new service models and integration emerging technologies. Initiatives like the LCIS and LDES Flexibility Needs Assessment demonstrate our commitment to developing market opportunities while ensuring system stability. These projects provide practical, real-world learning that strengthens SONI’s ability to support government decarbonisation goals.</p> <p>Overall, Role 4 meets expectations by delivering a consistent and reliable service to customers, fostering trust in connection and market processes, and supporting the development of innovative solutions.</p>

Assessment Criteria	SONI Actions
Stakeholder Engagement	<p>Stakeholder engagement in Role 4 is highly targeted, reflecting the technical and specialist nature within this role’s projects: LCIS Phase 1, LCIS Phase 2, and the LDES Flexibility Needs Assessment. Each of these initiatives involves structured engagement with policymakers, Regulatory Authorities and technology providers to ensure that the development of new services and flexibility mechanisms aligns with policy objectives, market needs and technical capabilities.</p> <p>Regular collaboration with EirGrid through governance structures such as the OPRC ensures that decisions are coordinated across the all-island power system, while the engagement with developers, and conventional and renewable generations, provides essential feedback on design, feasibility, and implementation timelines. For the LDES Flexibility Needs Assessment, we work closely with ENTSO-E and the EU DSO Entity, as well as NI stakeholders, to ensure Northern Ireland’s flexibility requirements are fully represented at a European level.</p> <p>While engagement in this role is more specialised compared to other areas of the plan, it is structured, transparent, and outcome driven. This ensures that these critical projects are designed with industry input and stakeholder confidence. We consider that the stakeholder engagement for Role 4 meets expectations, delivering clarity and collaboration on projects that are key to enabling a secure and flexible low-carbon electricity system in Northern Ireland.</p>
Service Accountability	<p>Accountability within Role 4 is demonstrated through well-defined processes and clear documentation. Initiatives such as LCIS Phase 1 and 2 are governed through structured oversight by the OPRC and Regulatory Authorities, ensuring transparency as these services and policies are developed. The LDES Flexibility Needs Assessment is overseen through close coordination with EirGrid, NIE Networks, ACER, and Regulatory Authorities, providing strong governance and alignment across all stakeholders.</p> <p>Key commercial activities such as managing Connection Offers, TUoS Agreements, and coordination with NIE Networks, are underpinned by robust procedures, published methodologies, and clear contractual frameworks. These processes give developers and market participants visibility over requirements, timelines, and costs, ensuring a consistent, transparent experience.</p> <p>Our strong focus on formal governance, clear milestones, and regulatory engagement ensures these projects are well-managed and visible from initiation to delivery. This consistent approach reflects a high standard of accountability, providing stakeholders with confidence in our commercial and market-facing activities. As a result, we consider that Role 4 meets expectations in service accountability by providing a reliable and transparent interface for all stakeholders.</p>



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