

**SONI Evaluative Performance Framework Panel: Independent Expert Panel Appointment Guide**

**1 x Chair**

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| Prior to completing the application form we recommend that applicants familiarise themselves with the contents of this guide which includes:  **Section 1** A Message from John French, Chief Executive  **Section 2** About Us, Northern Ireland’s Utility Regulator  **Section 3** About the Panel, Evaluative Performance Framework (EPF) Panel  **Section 4** About the Role, Essential Criteria  **Section 5** Terms of Appointment  **Section 6** The Selection Process |

1. **A Message from John French, Chief Executive**

*Dear Applicant,*

*Thank you for your interest in becoming an Independent Expert Panel Chair**with Northern Ireland’s Utility Regulator.*

*Electricity, Gas, and Water are essential services that support all homes and business in Northern Ireland. As an economic regulator, our role is to enable, incentivise and hold energy and water companies to account for providing the very best for consumers and society both now and in the future.*

*We are ambitious about the future and we are looking for passionate people who can help us achieve our goals, and actively display our organisational values.*

*These appointments will play a vital part in bringing additional skills, insights and knowledge to our review of SONI’s electricity Transmission System Operator performance as part of an Evaluative Performance Framework Panel.*

*Thank you for your interest in working with the Utility Regulator, and hope that the following information helps you understand the role of the Panel.*



**John French**

**Chief Executive**

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| 1. **About Us, Northern Ireland’s Utility Regulator** |
| We were first established in 1992, following privatisation of the Northern Ireland electricity industry, and our role extended in 1996 to cover gas. From April 2007, we also became the economic and customer service regulator for NI’s water and sewerage industries.  We are a non-ministerial government department. Our board currently consists of a chair (Dr Bill Emery) and four other members (Teresa Perchard, Jon Carlton, Alex Wiseman, David De Casseres and Claire Williams), plus the Chief Executive, John French. The office currently employs approximately 92 staff.  The Chief Executive heads our Senior Management Team (SMT). The SMT also currently includes the Directors for Retail Markets, Wholesale Markets, Networks and Corporate Affairs. It meets weekly to review matters of common interest, and provides the collegiate leadership of the office.  Our Corporate Strategy and annual Forward Work Programme together with further information about organisation, its strategy and our work, may be viewed at [www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk) |
| **Our mission:**  To protect the short and long-term interests of consumers of electricity, gas and water.  **Our vision:**  To ensure value and sustainability in energy and water.  **Our values:**  Be a best practice regulator: transparent, consistent, proportionate, accountable and targeted.  Be professional: listening, explaining and acting with integrity.  Be a collaborative, co-operative and learning team.  Be motivated and empowered to make a difference.  **Electricity**  Our principal objective is to protect the interests of consumers of electricity supplied by authorised suppliers, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition between persons engaged in, or in commercial activities connected with, the generation, transmission or supply of electricity.  More information can be found at [www.uregni.gov.uk/electricity](http://www.uregni.gov.uk/electricity)    **Retail and Customer Protection**  The Retail and Customer Protection directorate was created in 2009 to remove barriers and drive forward work on encouraging gas and electricity suppliers to enter the domestic energy market in Northern Ireland, in order to provide consumers with a choice of supplier.  Competition has long been at the heart of the European Union (EU), United Kingdom (UK) and Northern Ireland vision of energy markets. A range of steps at all three levels have sought to promote wholesale and retail energy market competition.  The statutory remit given to us places a high value on competition as a means to deliver consumer benefits in the energy retail sector in Northern Ireland. The Directorate also undertakes the role of social protection for consumers.  We also have a vital role to play in promoting sustainability, as we are the main gate keepers to infrastructure investment in three sectors with high environmental impact – electricity, gas and water.  More information can be found at[www.uregni.gov.uk/retail](http://www.uregni.gov.uk/retail) |
| **Water**  Our main aim is to regulate the water and sewerage industry in Northern Ireland in a way that encourages and incentivises Northern Ireland Water to achieve the highest possible service for customers in terms of both quality and value.  More information can be found at [www.uregni.gov.uk/water](http://www.uregni.gov.uk/water)  **Networks and Markets**  The Networks and Markets Directorate is structured to achieve synergies and efficiencies by taking a cross utility approach to our regulation. This applies a cross utility (gas, electricity, water and sewerage) networks approach and a separate markets approach to regulation. Regulation of markets further divides into the Wholesale Electricity Market regulation of the Single Electricity Market for the island of Ireland and retail regulation in Northern Ireland.  **Gas**  Natural gas first arrived in Northern Ireland in 1996 and has since brought considerable environmental, economic and social benefits to Northern Ireland. It is the least polluting fossil fuel and its availability in an area provides greater fuel choice for industry. Natural gas also provides domestic customers with the opportunity to convert from inefficient central heating systems to highly efficient gas condensing boilers and in due course to domestic combined heating power.  We are responsible for regulating Northern Ireland’s gas industry. Our main duties are to promote the development and maintenance of an economic, efficient and co-ordinated gas industry. We also aim to protect the interests of gas consumers with regard to price and quality of service.  More information can be found at [www.uregni.gov.uk/gas](http://www.uregni.gov.uk/gas)  **Corporate Affairs**  Corporate Affairs includes the Corporate Services team, which is led by the Head of Corporate Services. The team serves the organisation by carrying out a number of key functions including HR, Finance, ICT, Information Management, Facilities and Procurement. Corporate Affairs also includes three other teams covering a range of functions including sustainability, communications and strategy and the in-house legal team.  **Other Work Streams**  We hold concurrent competition law powers and are Northern Ireland’s competition authority for the industries it regulates.  Being uniquely placed as the UK’s only cross-utility regulator creates challenges and opportunities, which we are keen to address over the coming years.  We have quasi-judicial powers to determine certain complaints, disputes and appeals. |

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| 1. **About the Evaluative Performance Framework (EPF) Panel and selection**   **Background**  SONI is the electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO) for Northern Ireland. Its performance can significantly affect consumer bills, security of supply and decarbonisation. Its influence on these outcomes is becoming even more important as our energy system rapidly changes, becomes more complex and integrates as we decarbonise.  As part of our 2020 to 2025 SONI price control we introduced a new framework: the Evaluative Performance Framework (EPF).[[1]](#footnote-1) The framework aims to incentivise SONI to take advantage of new opportunities and proactively respond to system issues, to bring the greatest benefit to Northern Ireland consumers - for example, a key aspect is in relation to NI consumer bills - across its full range of TSO roles, during this time of rapid change.  A key element of the new EPF framework is to bring additional skills, insights and knowledge to our review of SONI’s performance. We want to bring together independent expertise - the EPF Panel - to assess and constructively challenge SONI’s performance. This is important for tackling the information asymmetry between SONI and ourselves.  We are now setting up the EPF Panel to include up to 7 members (including an independent expert chair). The panel will independently assess SONI’s performance annually under two phases: an assessment of SONI’s forward plan (how it is going to perform) and an assessment of its performance (how it has performed). The EPF Panel will provide recommendations to UR under each phase. In doing so, the EPF Panel will also draw on evidence and views provided by UR, SONI’s customers, consumers, their representatives and other stakeholders (or stakeholder groups) in making its evaluation as part of each phase.  As the decision making body, the UR will take full account of the Panel’s recommendations across each phase and then the UR will make its decisions including financial incentive payments or penalties to be applied to SONI for each phase.  We have published detailed guidance to support and guide the Panel in making its recommendations and in setting out the process that should be followed which has been summarised above.[[2]](#footnote-2)   1. **About the Role**   This role presents an exciting new opportunity for an Independent Chair to become part of the EPF Panel. Once appointed, we expect the Independent Chair to then support us in appointing the remaining Independent expert panel members in early new year 2022 so that the panel is in place when SONI submits its first forward plan in early to mid-March 2022 to kick off the framework.[[3]](#footnote-3)  We are looking for candidates with **mid to senior level experience\*** who have the ability to effectively challenge and evaluate SONI’s performance to further the interests of Northern Ireland consumers.  *\* “Mid-Senior/Board-level” may include working at: organisational board level; or senior civil service level; or equivalent; or working at senior manager, director or CEO level or demonstration of a significant deputising role, or leading divisions or personnel or teams within an organization to be considered as evidence of working at mid to senior level. We note that this list is comprised as a guide and is not intended to be exhaustive and so we are open to other appropriate evidence.* |
| **Independent Expert EPF Chair Role**  As an independent expert EPF chair you will:   * Chair panel meetings. * Ensure the Panel makes its recommendations according to the evaluation criteria in the UR Guidance and the evidence provided. * Prepare Panel documents such as the forward plan and performance assessment recommendations reports and submit to UR for its consideration. * Encourage views from other independent experts and support the group in scoring. * Challenge and assess SONI’s performance based on a range of (potentially conflicting) evidence. * Score and provide a recommendation according to UR guidance and evaluation criteria based on this assessment. * Work well within a team of other panel members and stakeholders, and be able to engage in a way, which clearly and constructively challenges SONI.   **Person specification and essential criteria:**  As an independent expert EPF chair you will demonstrate **all** the following skills:   * Ability to evaluate critically based on a range of (potentially conflicting) evidence, and provide recommendations based on objective criteria as set out in the UR guidance; * Ability to think strategically and ‘see the big picture’; and * Ability to listen and challenge in a constructive manner and have the drive to proactively engage to deliver results. * Display strong communication skills to make an effective contribution to discussions across multiple stakeholders. * Demonstrate experience of chairing meetings or panels.   Applicants must **also** be able to demonstrate expertise, knowledge or experience in **essentially one or desirably two or more** of the following areas:   * Proven knowledge, experience and understanding of **electricity system operation** and its effects on system operator customers, stakeholders, and consumer outcomes: energy bills, security of supply and decarbonisation. * Demonstrable understanding or expertise in **energy system strategy and energy transition issues** which may be relevant to SONI’s role. Such expertise or knowledge could, for example, relate to system adequacy and operability, and/or system planning during times of change and uncertainty, and/or system flexibility, and/or digitalisation and access to data, and/or customer engagement, and/or need for adaptive testing, and/or coordination and collaboration across an increasingly integrated energy system (whole systems thinking). * Proven track record of **operating at a strategic level or as an independent expert in other jurisdictions** (perhaps applying electricity system operation knowledge) **and/or from other regulatory utility sectors to the benefit of consumers.**   **Furthermore, any and all actual or potential conflicts of must also be declared and submitted with your application using the form at Annex A**  **UR will provide secretariat support.** Such tasks may include organising EPF panel meetings and briefing meetings with the EPF Panel; carrying out bespoke pieces of research for the EPF panel, analysis and information gathering that the Panel requests and/or to briefing Panel on additional information in light of review of SONI’s reports; supporting Panel Members with questions they have about their role and the process in line with the UR EPF Guidance; creating and providing the EPF Panel with a template to set out its draft recommendations; Acting as point of coordination and contact between SONI and EPF panel.   1. **Terms of Appointment**   **Period of Appointment**  Appointed members will serve an initial period until the end of the new price control period (2025). The appointment will be subject to review after this initial period and may be extended by the UR following review.  **Time commitment**  We expect a maximum of 9 working days per regulatory annum will be required for the role of Chair. This will depend on the volume and nature of SONI reports and other submissions that are received and the timings of the rewards. Because the first year beginning in March 2022 and ending in June 2022 will be a transitional year with only a forward plan assessment element (and not an end of year performance report assessment) we expect the working days to be less for this 2021 to 2022 year.  The majority of the commitment will be to review and assess SONI’s reports and take account of stakeholder submissions, but will also include panel meetings with UR, SONI and stakeholders, meetings to agree recommendations to UR, short briefings with UR and a brief mid-year review with SONI. More information on the timings, milestones and process and what is expected of the Panel is set out in our Draft Guidance as set out in the link above.  Given the current COVID environment and a move to more flexible ways of working, we expect the **EPF panel meetings to be largely on-line where possible**. Where we anticipate that it may necessary to meet in person and these meetings will be held at UR’s offices in Queen’s House, Belfast.  **Remuneration**  Members of the Panel are an expert advisory body and individuals will be appointed under a service contract for that purpose. Accordingly, the status of the Panel members and chair is 'contractor'. This means the appointed members would not be employees of the UR. Fees will be subject to attendance and fully satisfactory performance. The Independent Chair will be paid a fee at a rate of £700 per day.  **Expenses**  Panel members will be reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence expenses where claims are supported by receipts. The most economic method of travel must be used and claims will be assessed for reasonableness against the rates outlined, in line with in the UR Travel and Subsistence Expenses Policy (to be provided on appointment). All claims are paid on the basis of receipted actuals.  **Conflict of interests**  Conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived, can be damaging to the individual pane member, and the Utility Regulator. Although panel members are not Utility Regulator staff, applicants are required to familiarise themselves with the definitions of interests and requirements of the Utility Regulator’s Staff Interest Statement, a copy is attached to this pack at Annex B and to abide by them if appointed.  *All applicants, having read the Utility Regulator’s Staff Interest Statement, must fully complete and return the Conflict of Interest Declaration and Statement of Integrity form with their application by the closing date. You should note that this information is regarded as part of your application and failure to fully complete and return this part of your application will result in disqualification.*  **Confidentiality**  Panel members will be bound by the general restrictions on the disclosure of information as contained in the Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 (as amended) or the Enterprise Act 2002. Panel members will be provided with and are required to familiarise themselves with, and abide by the detail of, these statutory provisions, and are asked to note that contravention of each aforementioned provision is (in each case) a criminal offence. Where applicable, panel members shall abide by the provisions of the Official Secrets Act 1989. These pieces of legislation can be accessed on the OPSI website at: [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk) |
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| **6. The Selection Process** |
| **How to Apply**  Please submit, in MS Word format an up-to-date CV, and a covering letter which includes a suitability statement demonstrating the essential requirements set out in the person specification (see page 7&8) to [Appointments@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:Appointments@uregni.gov.uk)  Applications must be received by **5pm on Tuesday 25 January 2022.**  Applications will be acknowledged by email within seven days from close of competition. **If you do not receive an acknowledgement, please contact the Utility Regulator at** [Appointments@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:Appointments@uregni.gov.uk) **028 90316324** or **028 90316646.**  **Applications**  In order to help you make this application and ensure that each applicant is provided with the same opportunity, the following advice is offered:   * Listing the titles of the various jobs which you have held will not show how you meet the criteria. The Panel will not make assumptions about skills and experience gained from these or the nature/name of the organisation, so ensure that there is enough detail in the information you provide to demonstrate the required criteria. * If you are addressing criteria specifically, in your cover letter write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write “I” statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out the piece of work that the Panel will be interested in. * Identify relevant examples – this is very important as the examples which you provide may be checked out at interview and you may need to be prepared to talk about these in detail if you are invited to interview. It is your unique role the Panel are interested in, not that of your team.   The Panel may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information they have provided on their submission, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability.  Please note to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:   * Submit your CV and covering letter in **MS Word format,** this will allow your submission to be anonymised before it is passed to the Panel for shortlisting. * Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications. Applications received after the closing deadline will not be accepted. * Please note that the time of receipt of emailed applications will be defined by the Utility Regulator server, not the time and date sent. * Only the details provided by you in your submission will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining eligibility and shortlisting for the post.   **Eligibility Sift**  After the closing date, the first stage in the selection process will be to conduct a shortlisting sift of submissions against the essential eligibility criteria. **You must demonstrate in your covering letter and suitability statement, how you meet each of the criteria, this should be supported by the information in your CV.**  **If you do not fully demonstrate by how you meet each of the eligibility criteria, in your submission you will not be progressed to the next stage of the process.**  You will be notified of the outcome (successful/unsuccessful) by email.  **Interview**  Following shortlisting, it is intended that the selection process will involve an interview against the criteria, key skills, knowledge or experience for the role.  **It is intended that the interview process will take place online on Friday 28 January 2022.**  You will be notified of the outcome (successful/unsuccessful) by email.  **Disability requirements at interview**  We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments (special requirements), due to disability, to enable you to attend interview. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.  If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please email [susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk)  **Applicant’s Privacy Notice**  The Utility Regulator is the data controller of the personal information you provide to us as an individual submitting and application. This means the Utility Regulator determines the purposes for which and the manner in which any personal information relating to a candidate’s application and the procedure generally is processed. We are required under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to notify you of the information contained in the Utility Regulator Applicant’s privacy notice. This privacy notice describes how we collect and use personal information during the process and afterwards in accordance with the GDPR and can be downloaded in full from <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/publications/gdpr-privacy-notices>  **Further Information**  Further information about the work of the Utility Regulator can be found at <http://www.uregni.gov.uk>  Should you have any further queries about the selection process please email [susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk) |

1. Chapter 4 within the final link sets out our decision and context on the EPF. Chapter 2 sets out strategic expectations of how we are looking for SONI to change to benefit consumers : <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/files/uregni/media-files/Final%20determination%20main%20body.docx.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/files/uregni/documents/2021-11/epf-guidance.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. We note that this the first year of the panel will be a transitional year where only Steps 2 to 5 of the process set out in the draft guidance are likely to be required. Contrary to that set out in the draft guidance the process for this first year of the panel’s works will be from March 2022 to end of June 2022. It will essentially comprise just under half of the work typically required under the enduring EPF arrangements for subsequent years. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)