



FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

2025-2026

Our business plan for
the second year of our
Corporate Strategy
2024-2029

FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce this Forward Work Programme (FWP) 2025/2026 which sets an ambitious agenda for the Utility Regulator (UR) over the next year. The range of projects set out in the FWP will help us deliver on our Corporate Strategy 2024-2029, Protecting Consumers on the way to Net Zero, which was published in April 2024.

Our priority remains on protecting consumers. We introduced a code of practice to improve customer protect measures for consumers. Our award-winning Consumer Energy Charter was developed further to extend the range of protections to small business customers. We also launched a consultation on potential measures to improve the retail energy market for non-domestic consumers. Our scrutiny of regulated energy prices has ensured that energy prices reflect costs, and we were pleased to welcome a reduction in consumer bills in March 2025.

In a busy year we also completed our electricity network price control review, called RP7. This is an important milestone, with an over £2 billion package on investment in the electricity network. As well as ensuring that there is the necessary investment in the electricity network, this will enhance our energy infrastructure to ensure that it can deliver the benefits of the energy transition. We also worked closely with the Department for the Economy (DfE) to implement the energy strategy action plan and engaged in cross government carbon reduction work. Our commitment to efficient investment in the water and sewerage network, saw us complete our mid-term review of the NI Water price control. The operation of the Single Electricity Market also continued to be critical to securing our energy supply and we have committed to investing more resources to support our critical work in this area.

This FWP is aligned to the strategic direction in Protecting Consumers on the way to Net Zero. The projects in the FWP demonstrate our commitment to delivering a Just Transition to net zero. Ensuring that Northern Ireland enjoys a secure energy and water supply is paramount and this includes protecting consumers during extreme weather events. Price control reviews provide us with the opportunity to deliver on our strategic objective of enabling best in class energy and water companies. This FWP also makes a commitment to learning and ensuring that are price controls are effective by reviewing how we do future price control reviews. Our aspiration that Northern Ireland energy and water consumers deserve the best, is reflected in the suite of consumer protection projects in our FWP.

I appreciate the time taken by those who responded to our FWP consultation. This feedback has helped us shape our FWP by, for instance, clarifying the scope of projects. We will continue to engage with and collaborate with our stakeholders to help us meet our objectives.

In a year when there was major progress on our organisational transformation programme to help us meet the challenges of the future, I am proud of the enthusiasm and dedication of our team – from those that have worked at UR for many years to those that have just joined us. I also would like to thank Bill Emery and Teresa Perchard, for their considerable contribution as they stepped down from the UR Board in 2024. As we move forward as an organisation, with an exciting agenda I am looking forward to working with our team to deliver this FWP.



John French Chief Executive

ABOUT THE UTILITY REGULATOR

The Utility Regulator is the economic regulator for electricity, gas and water in Northern Ireland. We are the only multi-sectoral economic regulator in the UK covering both the energy and water sectors.

Our roles are defined by legislation. We are an independent non-ministerial government department. Our main statutory duty is to promote and protect the short, and long-term interests of consumers in Northern Ireland.

We are governed by a Board of Directors, who are publicly appointed, and accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

We are based in Belfast. The Chief Executive and two Executive Directors lead teams in each of the main functional areas in the organisation: CEO Office; Price Controls; Networks and Energy Futures; Markets; and Consumer Protection and Enforcement.



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

ACCOUNTABLE:

We take ownership of our actions.

TRANSPARENT:

Ensuring trust through openness and honesty.

COLLABORATIVE:

Connecting and working with others for a shared purpose.

DILIGENT:

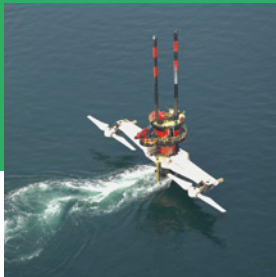
Working with care and rigour.

RESPECTFUL:

Treating everyone with dignity and fairness.

ABSTRACT

This Forward Work Programme is our annual business plan that sets out the non-routine projects that we plan to undertake during 2025/2026. The projects are organised under the four corporate strategy objectives that we set out in our Corporate Strategy 2024-2029.



AUDIENCE

This document sets out our projects for 2025/2026 (over and above our routine activities) and therefore is likely to be of interest to industry participants, other regulators, government bodies and consumer representatives.



CONSUMER IMPACT

The projects will contribute to protecting and empowering consumers in Northern Ireland.



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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 and the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 requires the Utility Regulator (UR) to annually publish a Forward Work Programme (FWP).

The FWP should “contain a general description of the projects, other than those routine activities in the exercise of its functions, which it plans to undertake during the year”.

This FWP lists the projects that we will do during 2025/2026.

On 19 December 2024, we published a draft of this plan for consultation. It set out the projects we proposed to undertake during 2025/2026. During this consultation, we asked for feedback on whether we had identified the right projects or had not included certain projects. It also encouraged people to give us general comments on our draft document.

The consultation closed on 26 February 2025, and we received 19 responses (via email and through the CitizenSpace online portal). We have published these responses on our website at www.uregni.gov.uk/publications/.

The comments we received endorsed, overall, our proposed programme of projects. Respondents’ comments related to broader issues, including joint working opportunities to work and we will consider these in our planned work. Specific comments around the projects, such as around scope and prioritisation, have been considered and will be reflected in the FWP. We will provide direct feedback to all respondents following the publication of our final FWP.

Key terms used in the plan are explained in a Glossary (at the end of the document).



THE STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

SECTION 2

sets out the context for developing the business plan;

SECTION 3

outlines how we decide on our business plan projects, our core business and the resourcing of our work; and

SECTION 4

lists our business plan projects – with new projects shaded in blue.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR OUR BUSINESS PLAN

In this section we briefly outline the key areas influencing the development of our business plan and set out our corporate planning framework.

EXTERNAL



DELIVERING ON NET ZERO TARGETS

In June 2019, the UK Government passed legislation requiring the UK Government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% (relative to 1990 levels) by 2050. Following this, the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2022 passed the Climate Change (Northern Ireland) Act, which set out local statutory targets for reducing emissions. To achieve these targets, a very significant increase in renewables, and energy efficiency will be needed. In September 2024, the Northern Ireland Executive launched a draft Programme for Government which, included a mission around 'Planet' that is focused on 'taking urgent action to reduce carbon emissions'. The energy system we currently have will have to adapt, to be able to accommodate low carbon technologies, whilst continuing to meet the needs of consumers through a reliable, efficient supply. The principle of a Just Transition is a core element of the Climate Change Act 2022 and underscores the need to promote fairness across all sections of society in the journey to net-zero.



ADDRESSING AFFORDABILITY CONCERNS FOR CONSUMERS

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Northern Ireland households and businesses, like those in the rest of the UK and Europe, experienced significant increases and volatility in their energy costs. Unfortunately, energy prices remain high in comparison to historical prices. The impact of this increased food and other costs, that has resulted in UK inflation rates at one stage being the highest for 40 years. While the headline rate of inflation has decreased recently, and energy prices have fallen from their peak, current prices remain at above trend levels. The need for regulators to support consumers to mitigate affordability concerns remains a key issue.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR OUR BUSINESS PLAN



ENERGY AND WATER POLICY AND STRATEGY

Our legislation sets out the role and duties of UR. In 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive published its Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland, called “The Path to Net Zero”. This Strategy sets out a pathway for energy to 2030 and sets out a vision of net zero carbon and affordable energy by 2050. The targets within the Strategy were further strengthened by the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 which set a target of at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Act also sets carbon budgets (the maximum total amount of emissions permitted for a budgetary period) and other sectoral targets (including at least 80% of electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2030). Northern Ireland departments are also required to produce and publish various sectoral plans setting out how specific sectors will contribute to meeting the emissions reduction targets. In water, the Department for Infrastructure is working within its long-term strategy, “Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015–2040)”, to help achieve a vision of a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland.



SECURING ENERGY AND WATER SUPPLY

The need for a secure and reliable supply remains a key statutory duty and strategic priority for us. It is one of the key principles of the Northern Ireland Executive’s Energy Strategy. This has a focus on making Northern Ireland more self-sufficient in generating and supplying its own energy and reducing our reliance on others. Decarbonisation presents a further challenge, as we will seek to facilitate the right mix of technologies to meet business and household demand, as older forms of generation are replaced by new technologies. The need to attract investment in new types of energy generation will also be important. Running together with this is the need to modernise energy networks to ensure that they can accommodate new technologies, while meeting customer demand. In electricity, the capacity arrangements in the Single Electricity Market (SEM) provide a basis for managing long-term security of supply risks. In gas, continuing to ensure there is a reliable supply will be essential, and in water, the Long-Term Water Strategy’s high-level aims are to provide sustainable, reliable water and sewerage services that meet customers’ needs.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR OUR BUSINESS PLAN



PROTECTING CONSUMERS IN ENERGY MARKETS

We continue to regulate our energy markets to ensure that businesses and households get a fair deal. As well as putting in place robust market monitoring regimes to protect consumers, we also proactively act when required to address any market abuse or non-compliance. Protecting consumers also means that we take action to protect the most vulnerable when required. For instance, in recent winters, we led a partnership with the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland and energy suppliers to introduce the Consumer Energy Charter. We have continued with this initiative into the winter of 2024/2025 and further enhanced these commitments by also introducing a non-Domestic Customer Charter for the first time.

INTERNAL



OUR REGULATION

Given the need to meet net zero targets, we recognise that as a regulator we need to be agile and adapt to the new strategic landscape. We will work to ensure we stay ahead of consumer expectations and anticipate the changes that are required. In practice, this will mean that we need to be more pragmatic, and focused, on achieving the best possible outcomes for Northern Ireland. We need to support the development of world-class efficient electricity, gas, and water companies, that are focused on providing the best levels of service to households and businesses and are fully compliant with their licence conditions and codes of practice. Protecting consumers and providing a long-term stability for the electricity, gas, and water sectors, is an important responsibility for us. We aim to be fully transparent, and accountable, for our work, and we will look to constantly improve our own performance, to maximise the benefits to consumers.



ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

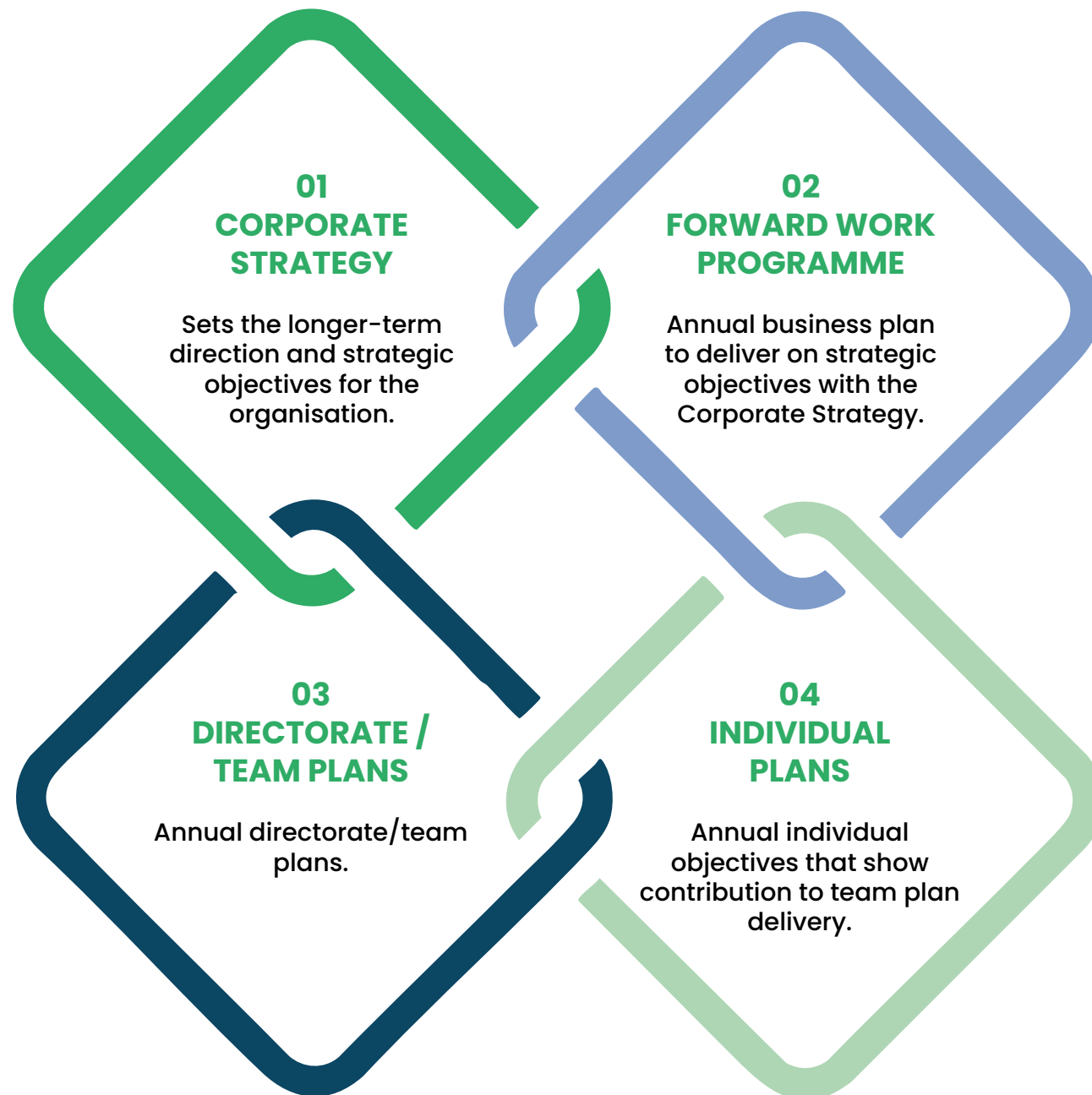
Our Corporate Strategy identifies key enablers which are critical to the kind of organisation we aim to be. We have implemented an organisational transformation programme, “Shaping UR for the Future”. By reshaping our organisation we are ensuring we can deliver on the ambition set out in our Corporate Strategy 2024-2029.

THE PERFORMANCE CHAIN

The FWP is one element of an interlinked corporate planning framework which joins up our Corporate Strategy to all other plans.

CORPORATE STRATEGY 2024-2029

Our new Corporate Strategy 2024-2029, “Protecting Consumers on the way to Net Zero”, was published in April 2024. The strategy sets out four strategic objectives which provide the framework for the FWP.



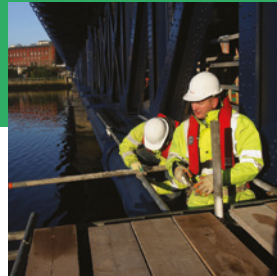
STRATEGY OBJECTIVES



**SUPPORTING THE JUST
TRANSITION TO NET
ZERO**



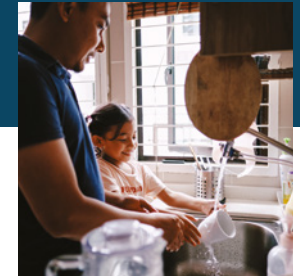
**SECURING OUR
ENERGY AND WATER
SUPPLY**



**ENABLING BEST IN
CLASS ENERGY AND
WATER COMPANIES**



**PROVIDING THE
HIGHEST LEVEL OF
CONSUMER SERVICE
AND PROTECTION**



3. OUR BUSINESS PLAN AND RESOURCES

In this FWP we have set out our projects for 2025/2026, that will help us meet our Corporate Strategy's objectives. Some of these projects will take more than one year to deliver. Our business plan projects are set out in section four.

This is the second year of the implementation of our corporate strategy.

In assessing the projects that are in this FWP, we have identified those that should be included in the business plan because they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- 1 legislative or statutory requirements;
- 2 government policy requirements;
- 3 regulatory requirements; and
- 4 contribute to the delivery of our corporate strategy objectives.

We have previously estimated that around half of our resources (in terms of staff time across the organisation) will be involved in delivering non-routine projects that are included within this FWP.

Our corporate strategy, "Protecting Consumers on the way to Net Zero", sets out the strategic direction for the organisation. To help us fully deliver this strategy, our statutory powers will need to be reviewed and updated so that the Utility Regulator can play a full part in helping the Northern Ireland Government meet its targets within the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

OUR ROUTINE BUSINESS

This FWP provides a list of the non-routine projects that we intend to undertake during 2025/2026.

In terms of monopolies, an ongoing part of our work is reviewing the regulated electricity and gas tariffs and water charges which affect consumers' bills. We also make sure compliance obligations regarding electricity, gas or water networks (infrastructure) are met and if not, we pursue according to our enforcement policy.

Ensuring that our energy and water networks are resilient is also paramount. This ongoing focus on resilience is critical to the ability of our networks to safeguard the energy and water supply from severe weather events.

Our work to develop this infrastructure includes approving changes to network codes and extensions to the gas network. Our monitoring and cost reporting activities, relating to regulated companies, are also significant commitments.

To achieve our targets on network company performance we have established cost and performance monitoring frameworks. We also ensure regulated utilities, as part of our network price controls, enhance their approach to asset management so that they compare favourably with their peers.

An important part of our day-to-day work on energy markets relates to the wholesale electricity market. For the Single Electricity Market (SEM), there is the routine business associated with the ongoing governance, market operations and monitoring arrangements. The SEM's Market Monitoring Unit (MMU) is based at our offices in Belfast. There is more information on this work on the website at www.semcommittee.com. We also regulate the transmission system operator for Northern Ireland and the Single Electricity Market Operator (SEMO) and support the SEM Committee.

More generally, we monitor the way the wholesale electricity market and the retail electricity market works in terms of the issuing and monitoring compliance with licences that allow gas, electricity and water companies to operate in Northern Ireland.

We have also put in place codes of practice relating to consumer protection. Over recent years we have seen a significant increase in the number of regulatory appeals, complaints and disputes which has led us to set up a dedicated compliance and enforcement team.

NI Water continues to improve its relative efficiency and builds on the improvements that have been over the previous price control period. We concluded a mid-term review of the PC21 price control review for NI Water during 2024.

As we work within policy frameworks established by Department for the Economy (DfE) (for energy) and Department for Infrastructure (DfI) (for water), we help these departments by providing regulatory support and carrying out analysis. We also have previously supported the Northern Ireland Assembly's Economy and Infrastructure Committees and frequently provided evidence to meetings of these committees. Finally, we also operate the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP).

As a non-ministerial government department, we also are focused on communicating with and involving industry, voluntary organisations and the public. This includes regular meetings and hosting forums (for example consumer and business protection, and renewable development). We actively use clear and upfront communications to explain our work and inform consumers on how to ensure they are getting the best deal from the electricity, gas, and water industries. We also comply with a range of finance, Human Resources, accountability and communication related reporting requirements.

Finally, we regularly respond to correspondence and requests for information from people and organisations (including those relating to Freedom of Information).

DELIVERING OUR BUSINESS PLAN – RESOURCES

Due to the scope and scale of our routine business and the non-routine projects set out in this business plan (as listed in Section Five), we often have to make choices about how to use our resources. This includes prioritising our resources to make sure we target critical projects (for example, in respect of price controls) which affect the timing of other work that contributes to our strategic objectives. The evolving strategic landscape in both energy and water sometimes affects the timing and scope of some of our FWP projects.

Supporting our staff is essential if we are to successfully carry out the projects and meet the objectives set out in our corporate strategy and this plan. We are committed to supporting the development of our staff, promoting the benefits of working for us, recruiting and keeping

competent staff. In doing this, we must make sure we have the skills, experience, processes and culture needed for this challenging business plan. We implemented a new leadership programme to support our aspirations.

As a non-ministerial government department, we must ensure good governance, and keep relevant policies, processes and controls up to date.

To support our aim to follow best practice, we will continue to improve our processes and communications with stakeholders.

Our focus is on making sure that we apply our resources efficiently and this business plan will be challenging to fund and deliver. If new priorities emerge during the year, we will take steps to make sure we have the resources for these. However, doing this may mean we have to delay or reduce our commitment to other FWP projects. In these situations, we will, as far as possible, let relevant stakeholders know the reasons behind the delay.

With the increasing net zero agenda, there remain some exceptional and significant pressures on our budget, such as in relation to the implications of the energy strategy. The need to ensure that we support the development of the SEM (which is worth over £2 billion) at that market evolves to address the challenges of a low carbon future, will require increased investment by us during 2025/2026. To deliver on our final FWP, existing core business requirements and to fund increased investment in the SEM, the opening budget for 2025/2026 will be higher than our opening budget for 2024/2025. Our budget is approved by our Board.

This business plan is currently based on a complement of 197 staff. However, the complement may increase going forward to help meet the demands of the wider water and energy agenda.

4. OUR BUSINESS PLAN

CATEGORY KEY:

1. New project
2. New project dependent on support from other government departments/agencies
3. Ongoing project from previous FWP.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

Supporting the Just Transition to Net Zero

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD DIRECTORATE	TIMING	CATEGORY
1.1	Smart Meter (SM) rollout	<p>To develop the regulatory frameworks that will be needed to support the implementation of DfE's smart meter project. It will define arrangements and timescales to ensure consumers are considered and protected throughout the rollout.</p> <p>Establish a Smart Meter team (Quarter 2).</p> <p>Develop a plan with key stakeholders to deliver the Smart Meter programme (Quarter 3).</p> <p>Deliver early priorities as agreed in Smart Meter programme plan (Quarter 4).</p>	Networks and Energy Futures Directorate	Multi-year set-up project. First year of a three-year project.	2
1.2	Electricity Time of Use (ToU) tariffs and dynamic tariffs	<p>To develop regulatory frameworks to ensure that time of use and dynamic electricity tariffs are cost reflective.</p> <p>Scope out the project, milestones and decision points. Gather case study evidence on the approach in other jurisdictions (Quarter 2).</p> <p>Engage with NIE Networks to scope out its work on Use of System (UoS) charges, digitalisation strategy and collecting data from smart meters. Outcome will be timescale for UoS charges to support time of use and dynamic tariffs (Quarter 4).</p> <p>Engage with electricity suppliers on data requirements and process to introduce time of use and dynamic tariffs (FWP 2026/2027).</p> <p>Consult on options and timescales to introduce time of use and dynamic tariffs (FWP 2027/2028).</p>	Price Control and Networks and Energy Futures Directorates	Multi-year project. First year of a four-year project.	2

1.3	Biomethane regulatory framework	<p>To develop a regulatory framework for biomethane injection into the transmission system and assist DfE with the development of its biomethane policy.</p> <p>The aim of this project is to provide clarity to potential developers who may wish to inject biomethane into the gas transmission network.</p> <p>To work with the gas network operators to develop a framework for injection of biomethane into the transmission network (Quarter 4).</p> <p>To assist DfE as required on their biomethane policy, following their Call for Evidence (Quarter 4).</p>	Networks and Energy Futures Directorate	Multi-year project. Second year of two-year project.	3
1.4	Northern Ireland energy system model	<p>To assess the desirability and feasibility of developing a Northern Ireland energy system model. This work will seek to enhance the Utility Regulator's modelling capability and benefit the delivery of the energy transition.</p> <p>Phase One: We will work with DfE to consider the desirability and feasibility of developing a 'Whole System' model for Northern Ireland (Quarter 2).</p> <p>Phase Two: Should the feasibility work lead to a decision to pursue the development of a 'Whole system' model, we will commence an exercise to develop the buildout of a model for Northern Ireland (Quarter 4)</p>	Markets and Networks and Energy Futures Directorates	Throughout 2025/2026	2
1.5	Preparation work for potential firm access review in 2026-2027	<p>This project will scope out, set principles, and consider potential customer impacts, ahead of consulting on any amendments to the process for awarding firm access to large renewable generators.</p> <p>Should the scoping exercise demonstrate that changes could be considered, a Firm Access Review would be undertaken in 2026/2027 (Quarter 4).</p>	Networks and Energy Futures Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	2

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Securing our energy and water supply

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD DIRECTORATE	TIMING	CATEGORY
2.1	SEM capacity auctions	Deliver SEM capacity auctions and ensure the appropriate volume of capacity is secured for future capacity years considering constraints and other factors while optimising security of supply with cost to consumers. (T-1 2025/2026, T-4 2029/2030)	Markets Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	2
2.2	Interconnection regulation	Develop a robust regulatory process to facilitate interconnection that promotes further market competition. Continue the two-step approach regarding future interconnection, through assessing the need for a regulated operating revenue regime (Q4 2026) Progress work on the TSO Certification via assessment of the appropriate time for the opening of an application window to potential interconnectors for certification in the future (Q4 2025).	Markets Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	2
2.3	Security of supply regulatory tools	To monitor adequacy and engage with key stakeholders on any issues relating to the electricity and gas transmission systems to ensure that they are mitigated appropriately. Develop or modify regulatory tools relating to fuel security across the electricity and gas industries (Quarter 1). Develop/approve modifications to industry rules to implement any SEM related initiatives (Quarter 4).	Markets Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	2
2.4	Governance arrangements for SEM All-Island Programmes	To review requests for funding of All-Island Programmes from Q1-Q4 within tailored governance structures in order to issue approvals for work to proceed and verify costs incurred on All-Island Programmes. Establish a Programme Management Office to coordinate and facilitate programme inputs and progress/expenditure reporting (Quarter 1). Facilitate consultative stakeholder workshops in Q1 to assess a multi-year plan for All-Island workstreams. Publicly consult on proposed plan (Quarter 2).	Markets Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	2

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

Enabling best in class energy and water companies

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD DIRECTORATE	TIMING	CATEGORY
3.1	SEMO price control review	To ensure that the company produce quality outputs at reasonable cost to consumers and has sufficient revenues to run its business. Final decisions on SEMO's business plan (Quarter 2).	Price Control Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	1
3.2	Price control approach for NI Water (PC28)	To develop a price control framework methodology to support an efficient, affordable, proportionate and deliverable NI Water business plan to meet Northern Ireland's water needs. Engage with stakeholders to define the draft PC28 approach and publish for consultation (Quarter 2). Publish the information requirements and final PC28 approach (Quarter 4).	Price Control Directorate	Multi-year project. First year of a four-year project.	1
3.3	Regulatory approach to Future Electricity Network price controls	To build on RP7 lessons learnt and commitments to develop a programme of regulatory activities to support the development of the electricity transmission and distribution networks and the development of the next price control. Scoping paper and call for evidence published (Quarter 1). Publish our findings and next steps (Quarter 2).	Price Control Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	3
3.4	Regulatory approach to Future Gas Network price controls (GT27 and GD29)	To ensure early and robust scoping and planning of future gas network price control regulation. Continue our FWP 2023/2024 scoping for the gas distribution and transmission companies (GD29 and GT27 and priority GD23 in-period issues). Publish our initial findings and/or decisions and/or next steps for priority workstreams relating to future gas network price control regulation strategic issues, GD29 Tax treatment, and GD23 Revenue Recovery timing (Quarter 4).	Price Control Directorate	Multi-year project. First year of a four-year project.	2
3.5	Regulatory approach for future Gas Retail price controls (SPC27)	To ensure early and robust scoping and planning of future gas retail price control regulation. Continue early engagement with the gas retail companies to develop a plan and approach for SPC27. Publish approach consultation for SPC27. (Quarter 3)	Price Control Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	1

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

Providing the highest level of consumer service and protection

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD DIRECTORATE	TIMING	CATEGORY
4.1	Ex-ante market outcomes and price formation evolution in the SEM	To conduct an analysis of ex-ante market outcomes with a focus on trends in market participant bidding behaviour and changes in supply and demand dynamics.	Markets Directorate	Quarter 4	1
4.2	Review of energy retail markets in NI	To commence a review of the Northern Ireland energy retail markets, including the opportunity for innovation. Instigate information-gathering sessions via desk-top research and engagement with key stakeholders in Q1-2, publish a consultation in Q3, and develop a decision by Q4.	Markets Directorate	Quarter 4	2
4.3	Consumer Protection Programme (CPP24) for 2024-2029	To deliver our Consumer Protection Programme (CPP24) for 2024/2029 which includes:	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Multi-year project. Second year of a five-year project.	3
(i)	Annual domestic and non-domestic consumer insight trackers	Conduct annual Domestic and Non-Domestic Insight Trackers to continue to develop our evidence base. Publish report of results for 2024/2025 (Quarter 1). Survey development and fieldwork, data analysis and report writing for 2025/2026 results (Quarter 4).	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	3
(ii)	Debt and affordability	Facilitate improvement in suppliers' approach and response in dealing with customers in debt and affordability related issues. Customer bill/debt payment process mapping (Quarter 3). Develop recommendations for measures to enhance protection (Quarter 4).	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	1
(iii)	Supporting the Just Transition to Net Zero: Understanding consumer expectations around Just Transition	To complete the Utility Regulator report benchmarking Just Transition approaches in other jurisdictions (Quarter 2). Complete deliberative research on consumer understanding of Just Transition (Quarter 2)	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	1

(iv)	Consumer energy charters	<p>To develop domestic and non-domestic Consumer Energy Charters to provide enhanced protections for small businesses and households, in particular for vulnerable consumers, during the winter period.</p> <p>Review of consumers energy charters for 2024/2025 and development of charters for 2025/2026 (Quarter 2).</p> <p>Launch and implementation of both Consumer Energy Charters and have protections in place (Quarter 3).</p>	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	3
(v)	Farming sector experiences in utilities	<p>To develop our understanding of the farming sector's engagement with regulated utilities.</p> <p>Scoping and conduct of research to understand the experience of Northern Ireland farmers with gas, electricity and water in Northern Ireland (Quarter 3).</p> <p>Publish research report and consider recommendations for improved protections (Quarter 4).</p>	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	1
(vi)	Improving the non-domestic consumer experience	<p>To improve the non-domestic consumer experience to remedy gaps identified in the existing non-domestic regulatory framework.</p> <p>Publish decision paper on the consultation on Improving the non-domestic consumer experience and consult on new and/or amended licence conditions if required (Quarter 2).</p>	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	1
(vii)	Energy literacy	<p>To develop an in-depth understanding of energy literacy issues and how these can be addressed, in relation to both the current energy market, future market and Just Transition</p> <p>Design and procure qualitative research on consumer engagement with energy market (Quarter 2).</p> <p>Conduct and publish research (Quarter 4).</p>	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	1
(viii)	Energy Hardship: Non-domestic consumer lived experiences	<p>To conduct qualitative research to identify gaps in our knowledge on how best to support non-domestic consumers experiencing debt or struggling to pay their bills.</p> <p>Research outcomes could help the UR to protect the interests of non-domestic energy consumers in Northern Ireland (Quarter 4).</p>	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Throughout 2025/2026	1
(ix)	Best practice framework project for electricity, gas and water	To work with industry groups on the development of a new Customer Care Register structure as identified as per the Best Practice Framework decision paper. (Quarter 4).	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Multi-year project. Second year of a five-year project.	3

Organisational projects

5.1	Implementation of a stakeholder management system	To implement a stakeholder management system across the whole organisation (Quarter 4).	CEO Office	Throughout 2025/2026	1
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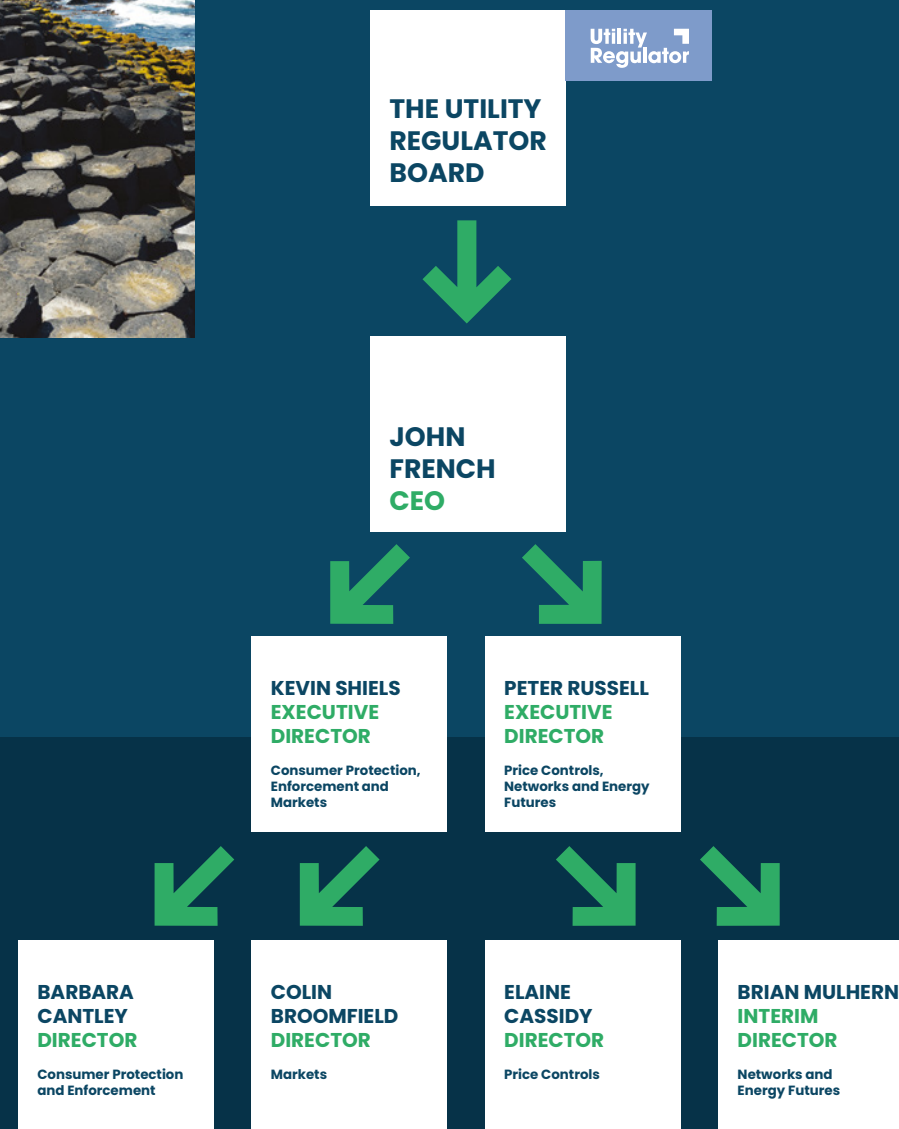
01 ABOUT US



WHO WE ARE

We are the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland's electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries. We are governed by a Board whose members are publicly appointed by the Minister for Finance. We are accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and our work contributes to Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government (PfG).

Organisationally, we are structured to help us deliver our corporate strategy and work efficiently with stakeholders (the wide range of people and organisations we work with). We are organised under two groups with four directorates (see below).



02 WHAT WE DO

Our work is based on the duties which are enshrined in legislation (our statutory duties), which include the following:



ENERGY ELECTRICITY AND GAS

Protecting the interests of electricity consumers in relation to price and quality of service, by promoting effective competition where appropriate.

Promoting the development and maintenance of an efficient, economic and co-ordinated gas industry.



WATER AND SEWERAGE

Protecting the interests of consumers by promoting an efficient industry delivering high-quality services.

OUR WORK INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- ▶ Granting licences that allow gas, electricity, and water companies to operate in Northern Ireland.
- ▶ Making sure licensed companies meet relevant laws and licence obligations.
- ▶ Setting the minimum standards of service which regulated companies must provide to consumers in Northern Ireland.
- ▶ Making sure that consumers only pay what is necessary for the services they receive now and into the future.
- ▶ Challenging companies to make sure they operate efficiently and provide good value for consumers as well as shareholders.
- ▶ Working to provide more choice and encourage effective competition in the gas and electricity markets.
- ▶ Making sure that regulated companies can fund their activities and are open to new technologies and ways of working effectively.
- ▶ Acting as an adjudicator on individual complaints, disputes, and appeals.

We have wide-ranging statutory duties relating to regulation and competition. We share our duties relating to competition, with the UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

03 WHO WE WORK WITH

We work with a wide range of stakeholders across several areas to help us protect the interests of consumers.

In carrying out our duties relating to gas and electricity, we work within a policy framework set by DfE. Our statutory duties are the same as DfE's. In carrying out our duties relating to water and sewerage services, we work within a policy framework set by DfI.

The SEM Committee (SEMC) regulates the all-island single electricity market (SEM). We work with the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU), the energy regulator for the Republic of Ireland, on the SEMC. The SEMC's role is to protect the interests of electricity consumers on the island of Ireland by promoting effective competition.

We also work closely with the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI), the organisation set up by the Government to represent consumers and other groups across Northern Ireland.

Our work sits within a broader setting, and we work closely with other regulators. These include the energy and water regulators for Great Britain (Ofgem, Ofwat and the Water Industry Commission for Scotland).

We also work with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and with other regulators across the UK through the United Kingdom Competition Network (UKCN). This provides a co-ordinated approach to identifying and responding to competition issues and promoting best practice.

Finally, we are active members of the United Kingdom Regulators Network (UKRN), which includes representatives from economic regulators across the UK. The network seeks to ensure the effective co-operation between sectors and has produced a range of publications.



04 GLOSSARY

CLEAN ENERGY PACKAGE (CEP)	The European Commission's proposals designed to increase energy efficiency, boost renewable energy usage, reform the European energy market, introduce new governance measures for the Energy Union and support clean energy innovation.
CLEAN GROWTH STRATEGY	The UK government strategy setting out a set of policies and proposals that aim to accelerate the pace of 'clean growth' (i.e. increased growth and decreased emissions) in the context of the UK's legal requirements under the Climate Change Act.
CODES OF PRACTICE	Documents that provide information on the standards of a range of services.
DECARBONISATION	All measures to reduce the carbon footprint, primarily greenhouse gas emissions, carbon dioxide and methane, in order to reduce the impact on the climate.
ENERGY TRANSITION	The energy transition is a pathway toward transformation of the global energy sector from fossil-based to zero-carbon by the second half of this century.
JUST TRANSITION	The Just Transition seeks to ensure that the substantial benefits of a green economy transition are shared widely, while also supporting those who stand to lose economically.
NETWORK CODES	Contractual arrangements between the network system operator and network users to make sure the network runs efficiently.
NET ZERO	Refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. Net Zero is reached when the amount we add is no more than the amount taken away.
PRICE CONTROL	Price controls are one of the main tools we use to protect consumers. This involves the regulator studying the business plans of utility companies and calculating the revenue they need to finance their activities while providing incentives to invest in the business.
RETAIL ENERGY MARKET	The activities of electricity and gas suppliers and their interactions with consumers.
SINGLE ELECTRICITY MARKET (SEM)	The SEM was originally set up in November 2007. It is the single wholesale market for electricity which operates in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It aims to improve the reliability of supplies and the range of suppliers, encourage market efficiencies and economies, and promote greater competition. An enhanced SEM market came into operation on 1 October 2018.
TRANSMISSION SYSTEM OPERATOR (TSO)	The organisation that makes sure the energy networks run efficiently.
WHOLESALE MARKET	The wholesale market is where generators sell their electricity to suppliers.

Utility Regulator



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