

Title: Review of the Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service (GSS) and Overall Standards of Performance (OSP)	Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)
	Date: October 2025
	Type of measure: Secondary Legislation
Lead department or agency: Utility Regulator (UR)	Stage: Development
	Source of intervention: Domestic NI
Other departments or agencies: Department for the Economy (DfE)	Contact details: Sinéad Dynan
	Head of Consumer and Business Protection
	Utility Regulator

Summary Intervention and Options

What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary? (7 lines maximum) The GSS Regulations set out prescribed service levels which individual consumers (domestic and non-domestic) can expect from electricity companies, including payment requirements when the company has failed to adhere to the standards. OSP set out general required performance targets that apply to the overall customer base and do not carry a payment if breached. The Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations Northern Ireland 1993 came into force in January 1994 and were last amended in October 1999. This review is to update the GSS to reflect the current industry structure, to reflect current consumer expectations and to bring the standards further in line with those for electricity customers in Great Britain. UR is responsible for making the regulations for GSS (under Article 42 of the Electricity (NI) Order 1992). DfE is responsible for laying the GSS regulations before the NI Assembly (under Article 93 of the 1992 Order). The OSP are specified in a Determination made by the UR under Article 43 and 43A of The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.	
What are the policy objectives and the intended effects? (7 lines maximum) The objective of the review is to introduce updated electricity standards of service across a range of electricity Distribution Network Operator and Supplier activities with the intended effects of enhancing protection for all electricity consumers in Northern Ireland. The GSS regime aims to acknowledge the inconvenience caused to the customer when company performance falls below the prescribed level, in recognition of poor company performance. The payment values do not reflect or attempt to remedy the actual loss, either partial or whole, experienced by each customer in the unique circumstances of every case.	
What policy options have been considered, including any alternatives to regulation? Please justify preferred option (further details in Evidence Base) (10 lines maximum) Option 1: Status Quo/Do Nothing - This option would fail to address any gaps in consumer protection as a result of electricity GSS that have not been updated since 1999. Option 2: Refreshed GSS and OSP standards (PREFERRED OPTION) - Updated GSS and OSP standards to be (i) on par (at minimum) with provision for Northern Ireland's gas consumers and (ii) informed by GB electricity standards of performance. This option takes account of current consumer expectations, given the passage of time since the existing GSS were implemented and as informed by consumer research. Evidence from consumer research indicates high levels of support for standards of service, including additional standards that are not currently in place in NI. A summary of this research is included in Annex 1. Final decisions on the updated GSS and OSP will be informed by responses to the 2023 and 2025 electricity GSS and OSP consultation papers. Responses to both consultations will be published alongside the Final Decision Paper.	
Will the policy be reviewed? It will be reviewed. This option provides an incremental pathway to aligning with future GB regulations through subsequent review.	If applicable, set review date: Ongoing.

Cost of Preferred (or more likely) Option		
Total outlay cost for business £m	Total net cost to business per year £m	Annual cost for implementation by Regulator £m
Unknown at present. As part of the consultation, UR has invited estimates from electricity companies and the business community of key monetised costs and benefits expected from the implementation of the proposed changes to the GSS and OSP.	Unknown at present. As part of the consultation, UR has invited estimates from electricity companies and the business community of key monetised costs and benefits expected from the implementation of the proposed changes to the GSS and OSP.	Unknown at present. Minimal amounts based on staff time on monitoring and reporting as the regulatory cost of administering current GSS and OSP regimes across Supply and Distribution companies is already included within baseline expenditure of the Utility Regulator.

Does Implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?		YES ☐	NO ☒
Is this measure likely to impact on trade and investment?		YES ☐	NO ☒
Are any of these organisations in scope?	Micro Yes ☐ No ☐	Small Yes ☐ No ☐	Medium Yes ☐ No ☐
			Large Yes ☐ No ☐

The final RIA supporting legislation must be attached to the Explanatory Memorandum and published with it.

Approved by: Date:

Summary: Analysis and Evidence

Policy Option 1

Description: **No change to existing electricity GSS and OSP**

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 1)

Costs (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy)		Average Annual (recurring)	Total Cost
	(constant price)	Years	(excl. transitional) (constant price)	(Present Value)
Low	Optional		Optional	Optional
High	Optional		Optional	Optional
Best Estimate	£0		£0	£0

Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups' Maximum 5 lines

No change from current situation therefore no additional monetised costs.

Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups' Maximum 5 lines

No change from current situation therefore no additional non- monetised costs.

Benefits (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy)		Average Annual (recurring)	Total Benefit
	(constant price)	Years	(excl. transitional) (constant price)	(Present Value)
Low	Optional		Optional	Optional
High	Optional		Optional	Optional
Best Estimate	£0		£0	£0

Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' Maximum 5 lines

No change from current situation therefore no additional monetised benefits.

Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' Maximum 5 lines

No change from current situation therefore no additional non-monetised benefits.

Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks Maximum 5 lines

No change to situation: electricity consumers in NI continue to not receive the same individual protections as NI gas consumers. NI protections in electricity distribution and supply fall further behind those of electricity consumers in GB with no glidepath to parity of protection.

BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 1)

Direct Impact on business (Equivalent Annual) £m				
Costs: £0	Benefits: £0	Net: £0		

Cross Border Issues (Option 1)

How does this option compare to other UK regions and to other EU Member States (particularly Republic of Ireland) Maximum 3 lines

In GB, The Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations and The Electricity and Gas (Standards of Performance) (Suppliers) Regulations have been subject to regular review and multiple amendments since their implementation. The NI standards have not been updated since 1999.

Specific to payments for supply restoration in severe weather conditions (which will be consulted upon):

- The GB Electricity Regulations include a Standard of Performance payment for Supply Restoration in Severe Weather Conditions.
- The ROI electricity network repair guarantee is not offered during 'exceptional cases such as storms or extensive disruption to electricity.' The Department for Social Protection's Humanitarian Assistance Scheme provides income tested financial assistance to households affected by a severe weather event. This scheme is administered by the Community Welfare Service.

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 2)

Economic Assessment (Option 2)				
Costs (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy)		Average Annual (recurring)	Total Cost
	(constant price)	Years	(excl. transitional) (constant price)	(Present Value)
Low	Optional		Optional	Optional
High	Optional		Optional	Optional
Best Estimate	Unknown at present		Unknown at present	Unknown at present
Description and scale of key monetised costs by ‘main affected groups’ Maximum 5 lines The main affected groups are considered to be the electricity DNO, electricity suppliers and the wider business community (as non-domestic electricity consumers). The estimated monetised costs in the final RIA will be input following consultation.				
Other key non-monetised costs by ‘main affected groups’ Maximum 5 lines Estimated non-monetised costs will be input in the final RIA following the consultation.				
Benefits (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy)		Average Annual (recurring)	Total Benefit
	(constant price)	Years	(excl. transitional) (constant price)	(Present Value)
Low	Optional		Optional	Optional
High	Optional		Optional	Optional
Best Estimate	Unknown at present		Unknown at present	Unknown at present
Description and scale of key monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’ Maximum 5 lines Unknown at present. This section will be updated following consultation at the final decision stage.				
Other key non-monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’ Maximum 5 lines Unknown at present. This section will be updated following consultation at the final decision stage.				
Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks Maximum 5 lines This section will be updated following consultation at the final decision stage.				

BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 2)

Direct Impact on business (Equivalent Annual) £m				
Costs: Unknown	Benefits: Unknown	Net: Unknown at present		

Cross Border Issues (Option 2)

How does this option compare to other UK regions and to other EU Member States (particularly Republic of Ireland) Maximum 3 lines This option would bring the electricity standards of service further in line with those for electricity consumers in GB across multiple electricity supply and network standards. Specific to compensatory payments for supply restoration in severe weather conditions: - The GB Electricity Regulations include a Standard of Performance payment for Supply Restoration in Severe Weather Conditions. Implementation of a similar standard for NI will be consulted upon. - The ROI electricity network repair guarantee (which includes payments for those without power for 24 hours after the network operator was notified of the fault), is not offered during 'exceptional cases such as storms or extensive disruption to electricity.' The Department for Social Protection's Humanitarian Assistance Scheme provides income tested financial assistance to households affected by a severe weather event. It is administered by the Community Welfare Service.
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Evidence Base

The evidence base to inform this RIA will be updated following the consultation which closes on 19 December 2025. This RIA (currently at development stage) will then be updated, as appropriate, depending on responses from consultees.

Problem under consideration

The Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations Northern Ireland 1993 came into force in January 1994 and were last updated in October 1999. A review is required to update the GSS and OSP to bring the standards in line with those for Northern Ireland's gas customers (implemented in 2014) and further in line with those for electricity customers in Great Britain.

Rationale for intervention

To enhance protection for all electricity consumers (domestic and non-domestic) in Northern Ireland.

Policy objective

The objective of the review is to introduce updated electricity standards of service across a range of activities with the intended effects of enhancing protection for all electricity consumers in Northern Ireland. UR is responsible for making the regulations for GSS (under Article 42 of the Electricity (NI) Order 1992). DfE is responsible for laying the GSS regulations before the NI Assembly (under Article 93 of the 1992 Order). The OSP are specified in a Determination made by the UR under Article 43 and 43A of The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

Description of options considered (including do nothing), with reference to the evidence base to support the option selection

- Option 1 – Do nothing (no change to current electricity GSS and OSP)
- Option 2 – Update electricity GSS and OSP (Preferred option)

The review has involved a benchmarking exercise to our local NI gas GSS Regulations¹, consideration of similar GSS and OSP provisions in GB and consumer research with domestic and non-domestic consumers to gain insights into consumer views on the requirements². Final decisions on updates to the electricity GSS and OSP will be informed by responses to the 2023 and 2025 electricity GSS and OSP consultation papers.

Monetised and non-monetised costs and benefits of each option (including administrative burden)

Option 1 (No change) - No change from current situation therefore no additional monetised or non-monetised costs or benefits.

Option 2 (Updated electricity GSS and OSP) – Currently unknown. As part of the consultation, UR has invited estimates from electricity companies and businesses of key monetised and non-monetised costs and benefits expected from the implementation of the proposed requirements.

Wider impacts (in the context of other Impact Assessments in Policy Toolkit Workbook 4, economic assessment and NIGEAE)

An equality screen has been completed by UR and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) has been completed by DfE, with input from UR. Both assessments have been published along with the consultation paper and both will be reviewed and updated following the consultation.

Consultation

Final decisions will be informed by responses to the 2023³ and 2025 electricity GSS and OSP consultation papers.

¹ [The Gas \(Individual Standards of Performance\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2014](#)

² [Consumer Research Electricity GSS OSP.pdf](#)

³ [Review of Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service and Overall Standards of Performance | Utility Regulator](#)

Annex 1 – Consumer Research and Stakeholder Engagement

2021 research

Survey research with 1,211 domestic and 500 non-domestic consumers was completed between November 2020 and March 2021 to assess consumer views in relation to guaranteed standards of service (GSS) and overall standards of performance (OSP) for electricity. This research was completed by Perceptive Insight on behalf of UR. The research explored consumer views with regards to standards across a range of areas. This included seeking consumer views on the importance of new standards in these areas.

Findings included:

- 94% of domestic consumer respondents and 97% of non-domestic respondents felt that it was important to have GSS and OSP standards.
- 85% of domestic respondents and 87% of non-domestic respondents supported a payment being made when a standard has not been met.
- 91% of domestic respondents and 90% of non-domestic respondents agreed that there should be similar standards for electricity companies as for gas companies in Northern Ireland.

Table 1.1 below (from the research report) demonstrates high levels of support for having standards in place across the individual areas that we sought consumer opinion on.

Table 1.1: Importance of having standards of service

	Domestic customers	Non-domestic customers
Meter disputes		
Time taken to deal with a problem with a pre-payment electricity meter	84%	-
Time taken to deal with a problem with any other type of electricity meter	86%	87%
Receiving an incorrect bill due to an incorrect meter read	88%	80%
Receiving an incorrect bill due to a faulty meter	90%	86%
Charges, payments and complaints		
The time taken to respond to a requested change in payment method	82%	66%
The time taken to respond to a query about your bill	88%	81%
The time taken to respond to a complaint	90%	86%
The time taken to respond to a query about a payment related to a set standard of service	86%	78%
The time taken to issue payment to customers for failure to keep to set standards	88%	81%
Supply interruptions		
Time taken to restore your supply in normal weather conditions	93%	96%
Time taken to restore your supply in normal weather conditions when more than 5000 households are affected	91%	93%
Time taken to restore your supply in very poor weather	87%	88%
For the notice given for a planned interruption to your electricity supply	86%	99%
For customers who experience four or more supply interruptions in a 12-month period, each lasting more than 3 hours	92%	97%
Appointments		
Offering and keeping appointment slots	94%	92%
Allocating 2-hour slots for appointments at any time of day, or morning/afternoon slots if acceptable to the customer	93%	92%

Providing a supply		
Length of time taken to arrange an appointment to install a new meter	86%	76%
Keeping an appointment to provide a brand-new electricity supply	89%	83%
Length of time taken to provide a cost estimate for a brand-new supply	85%	80%
Notice of rights		
The provision of information about these set standards.	93%	90%
Other services		
Supply interruptions on a rota basis	92%	92%
Voltage problems	93%	93%
Replacement of a faulty main fuse for electricity supplying your home	97%	97%

Source: [Consumer Research Electricity GSS OSP.pdf](#)

2025 research

In July 2025 and August 2025, survey research was completed with domestic and business consumers to explore opinion regarding the provision of compensatory payments to those who experience electricity loss during periods of severe weather. This research was completed by Cognisense on behalf of UR. The survey research covered views on whether consumers who go without power due to storm damage should be entitled to claim a payment in acknowledgement of the inconvenience caused, who they think should fund such payments, whether they would be willing to pay extra on their bills to fund these payments and how much extra they would be willing to pay.

A summary of this research is included in chapter two of the consultation paper. The full research report is published alongside the consultation paper.

1,000 domestic and 204 non-domestic consumers participated in the research.

Domestic survey findings included:

- Respondents were asked to rank what was most important to them during the period they were without power. 57% stated that getting their electricity back on was most important, 29% considered being kept informed of when they could expect their supply to be restored as most important, 6% felt being made aware of supports they could access in the area while without a supply was most important and 2% stated receiving compensation for the inconvenience was most important.
- 77% agreed that electricity consumers who go without power due to storm damage for over 24 hours should be entitled to claim a payment in acknowledgement of the inconvenience caused.
- If a payment was introduced for those who had lost electricity supply because of severe weather, 45% of respondents felt that this should be funded by NIE Networks, followed by 29% who stated such a payment such be funded by Government. 15% of respondents stated that consumers (either all consumers, household consumers only or business consumers only) should fund the payment. A further 10% were not sure who should fund the payment.
- If a payment was introduced, 62% reported that they would be unwilling to pay extra on their future electricity bills to fund such a payment, while 17% were willing to pay extra and 21% were unsure.

Non-domestic consumer survey findings included

- When asked to rank what was most important to them during the period they were without electricity, 54% stated that the health and safety of their staff was most important. 23% stated the restoration of electricity was most important to their business. No respondents considered compensation for the inconvenience to be the most important factor during the period without power.

- 86% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that customers without power for over 24 hours should be entitled to a payment for the inconvenience.
- If a payment was introduced for those who had lost electricity supply because of severe weather, 33% of respondents felt that the payment should be funded by all consumers (both domestic and business) followed by 32% who were of the view that such a payment such be funded by Government. 26% thought that such a payment such be funded by NIE Networks and a further 9% felt the payment should be funded by business customers only.
- If a payment was introduced, 56% of respondents stated that they would be willing to pay extra on their future electricity bills for over a certain period of time to fund a payment for consumers who were without power during severe weather. A further 27% were unwilling to pay extra, while 17% stated they were unsure.

Stakeholder engagement

UR held a stakeholder engagement session with domestic consumer representative bodies on 30 July 2025. Representatives from the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, National Energy Action, Disability Action and Advice NI attended. Representatives largely felt that payments were a secondary issue. Consumers they represented were more concerned about receiving support at the time of need than payments after the storm. Updates on when supply was expected to be restored, access to essentials (including food, water and heat) and information on how to manage without electricity were the top priorities for consumers.

UR held a stakeholder engagement session with non-domestic consumer representative bodies on 5 August 2025. Representatives from the Ulster Farmers Union, NI Chamber of Commerce⁴, NI Food and Drink Association (NIFDA), Consumer Council for Northern Ireland and a company who is a high energy user attended. Building the resilience of the network and provision of timely communications from NIE Networks during an outage were considered to be of primary importance by representatives, rather than a GSS payment scheme. It was stressed that businesses need a reliable and constant supply of electricity as interruption to this supply is the biggest cost to members.

A more detailed summary of the stakeholder engagement is included in chapter two of the consultation paper.

⁴ The NI Chamber of Commerce disclosed at the start of the meeting that NIE Networks are members of the CoC.