



FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

2026/2027

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

www.uregni.gov.uk

FOREWORD

I am delighted to present our draft Forward Work Programme (FWP) 2026/2027, which sets out our proposed priorities for the third year of our Corporate Strategy 2024-2029. The projects outlined in this year's draft FWP are designed to ensure we continue to deliver at pace and drive meaningful outcomes for consumers and stakeholders.

Our core commitment continues to be the protection of the short- and long-term interests of Northern Ireland's consumers of electricity, gas, and water, as we progress towards net zero. With the energy sector evolving at an unprecedented pace, our regulatory work must be equally agile, innovative, and responsive.

We are proud of the progress we have made over the last year. Notably, we have continued to make progress against our Consumer Protection Programme. In February, we introduced a new Code of Practice on customer service, further bolstering our commitment to ensuring Northern Ireland consumers receive world-class service from their energy and water suppliers.

Recently, we launched a public consultation on our review of the Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service (GSS) and Overall Standards of Performance (OSP) to ensure that they continue to provide an enhanced level of consumer protection to Northern Ireland consumers.

We have been preparing for the next price control periods for gas supply (SPC27), gas transmission (GT27) and gas distribution (GD29). Alongside this, we also published a consultation on our approach to PC28, the next NI Water price control. These reviews are critical to enabling best-in-class electricity, gas, and water companies.

As we strive to meet Northern Ireland's statutory climate change ambitions, we have worked at pace to establish regulatory frameworks that will enable carbon reduction. Earlier this year, we consulted on biomethane licence modifications to facilitate the delivery of biomethane. We look forward to progressing this work further in collaboration with the Department for the Economy.

We continue to play our part in shaping the strategic direction for the Single Electricity Market (SEM), and over the last year have co-hosted with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) several workshops to gather stakeholder views on the SEM Committee's future plans.

I am grateful, as ever, for the passion, knowledge and dedication of the Utility Regulator team, whose hard work and enthusiasm have been instrumental in the progress we have made.

Over the last year, we welcomed two new Board members, Anthony Pygram and Paul McGowan, who bring a wealth of experience. We also bid farewell to Jon Carlton and Alex Wiseman, to whom I extend sincere thanks for their invaluable contributions.

Our recent move to Millennium House has provided new opportunities to collaborate, both internally and with external stakeholders. We were delighted to have the office officially opened in September by the Minister for the Economy, and to host the Committee for the Economy in the Northern Ireland Assembly in October.

As we look ahead to another year of delivering against our objectives, we welcome your valuable input to our FWP consultation. We remain committed to ongoing engagement and collaboration with stakeholders to ensure we accomplish what we have set out.



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

The Forward Work Programme is our annual business plan, setting out the non-routine projects that we intend to undertake during 2026/2027. These projects are aligned with and organised under the four strategic objectives established in our Corporate Strategy 2024-29, ensuring that our work continues to support the long-term vision and priorities of the organisation.



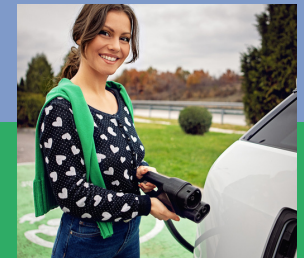
AUDIENCE

This document outlines the projects we plan to undertake in 2026/2027, in addition to our routine activities. It is therefore expected to be of interest to industry participants, other regulators, government bodies and consumer representatives.



CONSUMER IMPACT

The projects set out in this Forward Work Programme will contribute to protecting and empowering consumers in Northern Ireland by strengthening consumer confidence, ensuring fair outcomes, and supporting the long-term sustainability of the energy, water and sewerage sectors.



CONTENTS

1. About this document	6
2. The context for our business plan	7
3. Our business plan and resources	11
4. Our business plan projects	13

ANNEXES:

1. About us	17
2. What we do	18
3. Who we work with	19
4. Glossary	20

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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

This legislation sets out that 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 draft FWP sets out the projects that we propose to undertake during 2026/2027. During the consultation, we would particularly like your views on:

- whether we have prioritised the right projects;
- any objections to our proposed projects; and
- any other comments.

We also welcome observations on the timing of projects, as some of the proposed work will extend beyond a single business planning year.

Responses should be sent by 19 February 2026 at the latest to ceoffice@uregni.gov.uk.

A glossary explaining key terms used in the plan is provided 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.

SECTION 4

Lists our business plan projects, separated into new projects and those we previously consulted on

ANNEXES

More information about the UR, what we do and who we work with.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR OUR BUSINESS PLAN

In this section, we provide an overview of the key factors shaping the development of our business plan and explain the corporate planning framework within which our work is structured.

EXTERNAL

DELIVERING ON NET ZERO TARGETS

In June 2019, the UK Government passed legislation committing to reducing the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100%, relative to 1990 levels, by 2050. Building on this, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed the Climate Change (Northern Ireland) Act in 2022, which established statutory targets for reducing emissions. Meeting these targets will require a substantial expansion of renewables and energy efficiency measures in Northern Ireland.

In February 2025, the Northern Ireland Executive launched its Programme for Government, which included a mission around, 'Planet' focused on 'taking urgent action to reduce carbon emissions'. This commitment highlights the need for our energy system to evolve, integrating low carbon technologies while continuing to deliver a reliable and efficient supply that meets consumer needs.

The principle of a Just Transition, embedded in the Climate Change Act 2022, reinforces the importance of ensuring fairness across all sections of society as Northern Ireland progresses towards net zero.

ADDRESSING AFFORDABILITY CONCERNS FOR CONSUMERS

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, households and businesses in Northern Ireland, and across the rest of the UK and Europe, faced significant increases and volatility in energy costs.

Although energy prices have since fallen from their peak, they remain high compared with historical levels. This has contributed to wider cost pressures, including rising food and other essential expenses, which at one stage drove UK inflation to its highest rate in forty years.

While the headline rate of inflation has eased more recently, current prices continue to be above long-term trends. Against this backdrop, the need for regulators to support consumers in mitigating affordability concerns remains a critical priority.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR OUR BUSINESS PLAN

ENERGY AND WATER POLICY AND STRATEGY

Northern Ireland energy and water legislation defines the role and duties of UR. In 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive published its Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland: The Path to Net Zero, setting out a pathway for energy to 2030 and a vision of achieving net zero carbon and affordable energy by 2050.

The ambitions were further reinforced by the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, which established a target of a reduction of at least 100% in net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Act also introduced carbon budgets; setting the maximum total amount of emissions permitted for a budgetary period and sectoral targets, including that at least 80% of electricity consumption should be generated from renewable sources by 2030.

To meet these obligations, Northern Ireland's government departments must produce and publish plans detailing how individual sectors will contribute to emissions reduction targets.

In water, the Department for Infrastructure is implementing its long-term strategy, "Sustainable Water - A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)", which sets a vision for a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland that supports environmental, social and economic needs.

SECURING ENERGY AND WATER SUPPLY

Ensuring a secure and reliable supply is one of our key statutory duties. It is a core principle of the Northern Ireland Executive's Energy Strategy, which emphasises the importance of making Northern Ireland more self-sufficient in generating and supplying its own energy and thereby reducing our reliance on other jurisdictions.

Decarbonisation adds further complexity, requiring us to facilitate the right mix of technologies to meet household and business demand as older forms of generation are phased out and replaced by new, low carbon alternatives. Attracting investment in innovative energy generation will be critical, alongside the modernisation of energy networks to ensure they can accommodate new technologies while continuing to deliver reliable service to consumers.

In electricity, the capacity arrangements in the Single Electricity Market (SEM) provide a basis for managing long-term security of supply risks. In gas, maintaining a reliable supply remains essential. In water, Department for Infrastructure's Long-Term Water Strategy sets out high-level aims to deliver sustainable and reliable water and sewerage services that meet the needs of customers across Northern Ireland.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR OUR BUSINESS PLAN

PROTECTING CONSUMERS IN ENERGY AND WATER MARKETS

We continue to regulate Northern Ireland's energy and water markets to ensure that businesses and households get a fair deal. Alongside maintaining robust market monitoring regimes to safeguard consumers, we take proactive steps to address market abuse or non-compliance.

Protecting consumers also means acting to support the most vulnerable in our society. In recent winters, we led a partnership with the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland and energy suppliers to introduce Domestic and Small Business Consumer Energy Charters.

OUR REGULATION

We recognise the need to be agile and responsible as an economic regulator, adapting to a rapidly evolving and ever complex strategic landscape. Our aim is to anticipate the changes required to deliver fair, reliable and sustainable outcomes.

In practice, this will mean adopting pragmatic and focused approach to regulation, ensuring that our decisions achieve the best possible outcomes for Northern Ireland.

We are committed to supporting the development of world-class, efficient electricity, gas, and water companies, that provide the highest levels of service to households and businesses, while maintaining full compliance with their licence conditions and our codes of practice.

Protecting consumers and ensuring long-term stability across the electricity, gas, and water sectors is our core responsibility. We are committed to being fully transparent and accountable in all aspects of our work, and we will continue to strive for ongoing improvements to our performance. By doing so, we aim to maximise the benefits delivered to consumers and maintain confidence in the essential services we regulate.

CORPORATE STRATEGY 2024-2029

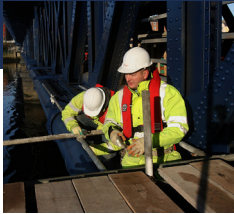
Our Corporate Strategy 2024-2029, “Protecting Consumers on the way to Net Zero”, was published in April 2024. The Strategy sets out four strategic objectives which provide the framework for the FWP.

STRATEGIC 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 the 2026/2027 projects that enable us to deliver on the objectives of our Corporate Strategy. Some of these projects will extend more than one year, reflecting the scale and the complexity of the work required.

Our business plan projects are set out in Section Four. This is the third year of the implementation of our Corporate Strategy.

In determining which projects should be included in the 2026/2027 FWP, we have identified those that meet our legislative requirements, align with government policy, fulfil regulatory obligations, or contribute directly to the delivery of our Corporate Strategy objectives.

OUR ROUTINE BUSINESS

This FWP provides a list of the non-routine projects (i.e. in addition to business as usual) that we intend to undertake during 2026/2027.

In addition to the non-routine projects set out in this FWP, we continue to deliver a wide range of core regulatory responsibilities that are essential to the effective functioning of Northern Ireland's electricity, gas, and water sectors. These activities form the foundation of our work and ensure that consumers are protected, markets operate fairly, and essential services remain reliable.

Our day-to-day responsibilities include undertaking price controls to ensure that regulated companies deliver value for money, reviewing tariffs to confirm that charges applied to consumers are necessary and justified, and monitoring both retail and wholesale markets to safeguard against unfair practices. We issue licences to new entrants, assess proposals for network extensions, and develop consumer protection measures that strengthen trust and confidence in the sectors we regulate.

Compliance and enforcement remain central to our role, ensuring that companies meet their obligations under licence conditions and codes of practice. Where necessary, we take action to address non-compliance and uphold consumer interests.

We also play a key role in regulating the all-island Single Electricity Market (SEM), working jointly with the CRU in Ireland. This collaboration ensures that the SEM operates efficiently and securely, providing a stable framework for electricity trading and supply across the island.

We place a strong emphasis on communicating with and involving industry, voluntary organisations, and the public in our work. This engagement takes many forms, including regular meetings and the hosting of forums that address issues such as consumer and business protection and the development of renewable energy. These forums provide opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas, ensuring that our regulatory approach reflects the needs and perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders.

Clear and upfront communication is central to our role. We actively explain our work and provide information to help consumers understand how to secure the best possible deal from the electricity, gas, and water industries. In June 2025, the Utility Regulator became the first regulator in the UK to partner with the Plain Numbers organisation, reinforcing our commitment to accessible and transparent communication.

We also comply with a wide range of reporting requirements across finance, human resources, accountability and communications, ensuring that our organisation operates with integrity and transparency. In addition, we regularly respond to correspondence and requests for information from individuals and organisations, including those submitted under Freedom of Information legislation.

Together, these activities demonstrate our commitment to openness, accountability and meaningful engagement, ensuring that consumers and stakeholders remain informed, involved and confident in the work we do.

These routine activities complement the non-routine projects outlined in this FWP.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES TO OUR ROUTINE BUSINESS

We will continue to focus on identifying and implementing improvements to operations and design. During 2026/2027, we will engage with industry and other stakeholders to develop a strategy for the SEM, supporting the electricity Transmission System Operators (TSOs) with a multi-year plan of workstreams and priorities.

In the year ahead, we will review our Enforcement Approach and Procedure to ensure it remains agile, enabling us to protect consumers through consistent, transparent and effective enforcement action.

We will also undertake a series of regulatory decisions to implement the Department for the Economy's (DfE) decision on socialising reinforcement costs. Following a licence modification consultation, we will consider stakeholder views before reaching a decision. Subsequently, we will assess and decide on NIE Networks' revised Statement of Connection Charges.

Looking ahead, we will engage with electricity system operators as they develop a joint Digitalisation Strategy and Action Plan. Following consultation, NIE Networks and SONI must adopt a joint Digitalisation Strategy by 30 September 2026, ensuring it is accessible to all interested stakeholders.

We also expect to consider a range of future network proposals aimed at improving resilience and enhancing contestability at transmission level. This will include reviewing and approving future Statements of Connection Charges to facilitate new connections, including hybrid connections at cluster substations.

Finally, we will continue to work closely with the DfE to develop the regulatory framework for offshore wind development in Northern Ireland. This collaboration will be vital in supporting the transition to net zero and ensuring that Northern Ireland can harness the benefits of renewable energy.

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 Four), we must make careful choices about how to use our resources. This requires prioritisation to ensure critical projects are delivered on time. The ever-evolving strategic landscape in energy and water also influences the timing and scope of some of our FWP projects.

Supporting our staff is essential to the successful delivery of these projects and meeting the objectives set out in our Corporate Strategy. We are committed to supporting and developing our people, promoting the benefits of working for the UR, and recruiting and retaining skilled staff. To achieve this, we must ensure that we have the right mix of skills, experience, processes, values and culture to deliver this.

As a non-ministerial government department, we are responsible for maintaining good governance, and ensuring our policies, processes and controls are up to date.

To support our aim to follow best practice, we will continue to improve our processes and communications with stakeholders, ensuring transparency and accountability in all aspects of our work.

We are focused on applying our resources efficiently, recognising this business plan will be challenging to fund and deliver. If new priorities emerge during the year, we will take steps to allocate resources accordingly. However, doing this may mean delaying or reducing our commitment to other FWP projects. In such cases we will, as far as possible, explain the changes to relevant stakeholders.

4. OUR BUSINESS PLAN

PART 1 - MULTIYEAR PROJECTS

We will continue to progress a series of multiyear projects that have previously been subject to consultation. These projects represent significant commitments of resources and are central to achieving the objectives set out in our Corporate Strategy.

Project Categories

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

Strategic objective 1: Supporting the Just Transition to Net Zero

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD TEAM	TIMING	Category of project 1-4
1	Establish the regulatory frameworks required to support the implementation of the DfE's Smart Meter Design Plan decision.	Once the Programme Plan has been agreed between UR and DfE, we will commence implementation in collaboration with the Expert Groups during Quarter 1 2026/2027.	Networks and Energy Futures Directorate	Year 2 of 3	4

Strategic objective 2: Securing our energy and water supply

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD TEAM	TIMING	Category of project 1-4
1	Establish the regulatory frameworks required for interconnectors.	The development of robust regulatory frameworks for interconnection that strengthen Northern Ireland's energy markets, promote competition, and support the transition to a low carbon future.	Markets Directorate	Year 3 of 9	4

4. OUR BUSINESS PLAN

Strategic objective 3: Enabling best in class energy and water companies

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD TEAM	TIMING	Category of project 1-4
1	Price controls	Undertake work on the following price controls: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SONI Price Control (2027 to 2032). 2. NI Water (PC28). 3. Gas Distribution Price Controls (GD29). 4. Gas Transmission Price Controls (GT27). 5. Gas Supply Price Controls (SPC27). 	Price Control Directorate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year 4 of 5 2. Year 2 of 3 3. Year 2 of 4 4. Year 2 of 3 5. Year 2 of 2 	3

Strategic objective 4: Providing the highest level of consumer service and protection

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD TEAM	TIMING	Category of project 1-4
1	Year 3 of the Consumer Protection Programme 2024-2029 (CPP24).	Deliver our Consumer Protection Programme (CPP24) for 2024-2029 which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual domestic and non-domestic consumer insight trackers. • Consumer Energy Charters. • Best practice framework programme for electricity, gas, and water. • Private Rented Sector (PRS). • Domestic consumers supplied by non-domestic contracts. • Bereavement support. • Research into consumer issues arising as part of the energy transition. • Improving energy literacy. • Company vulnerability strategies. • Mid-term Review of the Consumer Protection Programme. 	Consumer Protection and Enforcement Directorate	Year 3 of 5	4

4. OUR BUSINESS PLAN

PART 2 - NEW PROJECTS

In addition to the multiyear projects already underway, we will initiate a series of new projects and areas of work that will be subject to consultation. These projects are designed to respond to emerging challenges in the energy and water sectors, ensure alignment with government policy, and deliver on our Corporate Strategy objectives.

Strategic objective 1: Supporting the Just Transition to Net Zero

REF	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	SCOPE, ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND KEY MILESTONES	LEAD TEAM	TIMING	Category of project 1-4
1	Undertake a public consultation on firm access arrangements in Northern Ireland, building on the findings of the scoping exercise completed in 2025/2026.	Building on the outcome of the 2025/2026 scoping exercise, this project will involve close collaboration with SONI, detailed analysis of potential impacts, and a public consultation on policy options. The work will provide the evidence base for future regulatory decisions on firm access, balancing consumer protection with the need to incentivise renewable generation.	Networks and Energy Futures Directorate	Year 2 of 2	2
2	Develop tariff structures that are cost reflective, encourage efficient energy use, and support the transition to net zero through the introduction of Time of Use (ToU) and dynamic pricing models.	To work with NIE Networks, suppliers etc. to design tariff structures that reflect actual system costs and incentivise demand-side flexibility. This will involve integrating smart meter data into tariff design, with the aim of increasing bill transparency, whilst ensuring consumer protection.	Price Control, Networks and Energy Futures Directorates	Year 1 of 4	1 (This project was originally included in the 2025/2026 FWP, but did not commence due to competing priorities.)
3	Develop a regulatory framework for offshore wind.	To consult on, assess, and develop regulatory processes for offshore transmission assets in Northern Ireland, ensuring alignment with the DfE's Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan.	Networks and Energy Futures Directorate	Year 1 of 2	2

4. OUR BUSINESS PLAN

SUMMARY

There are seven projects included in this 2026/2027 Forward Work Programme:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	CATEGORY 1. New project	CATEGORY 2. New project dependent on support from other government departments/agencies	CATEGORY 3. Ongoing (multi-year) project from previous FWP	CATEGORY 4. Ongoing (multi-year) project from previous FWP dependent on support from other government departments/agencies
1: Supporting the Just Transition to net zero.	1	2	-	1
2: Securing our energy and water supply.	-	-	-	1
3: Enabling best-in-class energy and water companies.	-	-	1	-
4: Providing the highest level of consumer service and protection.	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	1	2	1	3

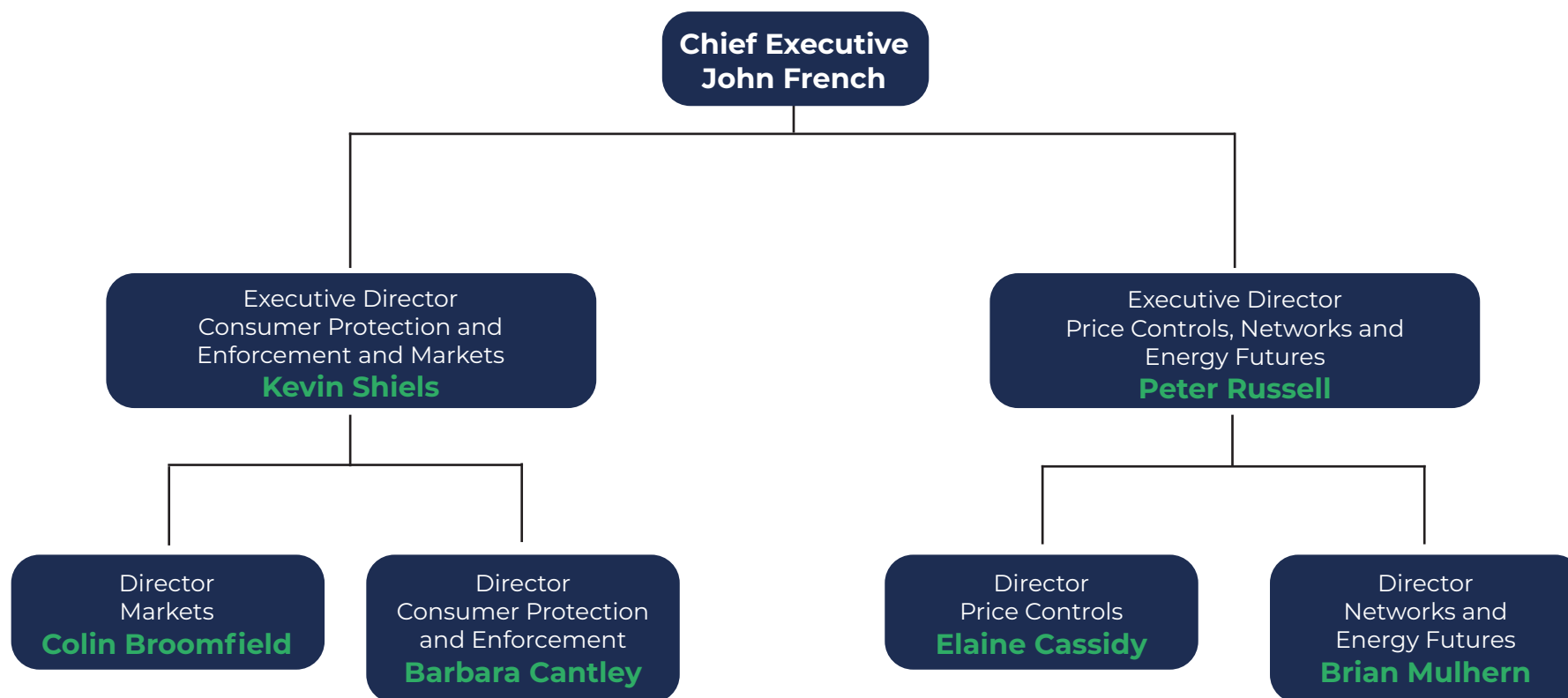
ANNEX 1: ABOUT US

WHO WE ARE

We are the independent, non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland's electricity, gas, water, and sewerage industries. Our statutory role is to ensure that these essential services are delivered safely, efficiently, and in the best interests of consumers.

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 the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government.

Organisationally, we are structured to help us deliver our Corporate Strategy and work efficiently with stakeholders across industry, government, and consumer groups. Our structure is designed to ensure clarity of responsibility and alignment with strategic priorities. We are organised under two groups with four directorates (see below).



ANNEX 2: WHAT WE DO

Our work is founded on duties enshrined in legislation. These statutory duties define our role and responsibilities across electricity, gas, water, and sewerage, ensuring we act in the interests of consumers, and Northern Ireland's economy.

Our principal duties are:

ENERGY (ELECTRICITY AND GAS):

- Protect the interests of electricity and gas consumers in relation to price and quality of service, by promoting effective competition where appropriate.
- Promote the development and maintenance of an efficient, economic, and co-ordinated gas industry.

WATER AND SEWERAGE:

- Protect the interests of consumers by promoting an efficient industry that delivers high-quality services.

We have wide-ranging statutory duties relating to regulation and competition. In fulfilling these, we share responsibilities with the UK's Competition and Markets Authority, ensuring that markets operate fairly and effectively for the benefit of consumers.

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.

ANNEX 3: WHO WE WORK WITH

WHO WE ARE

We work with a wide range of stakeholders across several areas to help us protect the interests of consumers and deliver our statutory duties effectively.

Policy frameworks

- In carrying out our duties relating to electricity and gas, we operate within a policy framework set by the DfE. Our statutory duties mirror those of DfE.
- For water and sewerage services, we work within a statutory framework set by the Department for Infrastructure.

Energy market regulation

- The Single Electricity Market 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 Ireland, through the SEMC. The SEMC's role is to protect the interests of electricity consumers across the island of Ireland by promoting effective competition.

Consumer representation

- We work closely with the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, the statutory body established to represent consumers.
- We also engage directly with domestic and non-domestic consumer representatives, both individually and through our Consumer Protection Advisory Group and Non-Domestic Energy Forum.

Other regulators

- Our work sits within a broader regulatory setting. We collaborate with energy and water regulators in Great Britain,

including Ofgem, Ofwat and the Water Industry Commission for Scotland.

- We also work with the Competition and Markets Authority and other regulators across the UK through the UK Competition Network. This provides a coordinated approach to identifying and responding to competition issues and promoting best practice.
- We are active members of the UK Regulators Network (UKRN), which brings together economic regulators from across the UK to ensure effective cooperation between sectors. We currently chair the UKRN Compliance and Enforcement Forum and the UKRN Vulnerability Network, helping to shape cross-sector approaches to enforcement and consumer protection.
- We are a member of the Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER), which plays a central role in facilitating the creation of a single, competitive, efficient and sustainable internal market for gas and electricity across Europe. CEER provides a platform for cooperation, information exchange and mutual assistance between Europe's national energy regulators. It also acts as their interface at EU and international level, ensuring that national perspectives are represented in wider policy discussions and that best practice is shared across jurisdictions. Our active participation in CEER strengthens Northern Ireland's regulatory framework by:
 - Ensuring alignment with European energy market developments.
 - Enabling access to international expertise and best practice.
 - Supporting the delivery of competitive, consumer-focused energy markets.
 - Enhancing cooperation with regulators across Europe and beyond.

ANNEX 4: GLOSSARY

Codes of Practice	Documents that provide information on the standards of a range of services.
Consumer Protection Programme (CPP)	Our principal vehicle to deliver positive outcomes for electricity, gas, and water consumers in Northern Ireland.
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.
Distribution Network Operators (DNO)	The organisations that manage the energy infrastructure which delivers utilities to consumers.
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.
Firm access	Refers to a user (like a generator or large consumer) having guaranteed and financially backed rights to use the grid up to a certain capacity, meaning they get compensated if network issues limit their supply or export under certain conditions. Users which want to connect where reinforcement works would be required to provide their required capacity may be offered a non-firm connection, until the network has been reinforced to provide the capacity that they require.
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.

ANNEX 4: GLOSSARY

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 UR 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 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.
Wholesale Market	The wholesale market is where generators sell their electricity to suppliers.