

EPF Independent Expert Panel

Ref: NET/E/EC/1418

03 February 2026

Dear SONI EPF Panel members,

Utility Regulator decision on SONI Forward Work Plan (FWP) 2025/26

Thank you for the hard work and valued contribution you have made to the continued effective regulation of SONI. I wish to confirm our acceptance of the Panel's recommendation on the grading of SONI's 2025/26 Forward Work Plan (FWP).

Background

SONI is the electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO) for Northern Ireland. As part of our 2020 to 2027 SONI price control we introduced the "Evaluative Performance Framework" (EPF).¹ The EPF framework aims to incentivise SONI to demonstrate collaboration with stakeholders, innovation, greater transparency and accountability in its operations in planning and performance reporting, ultimately to the greater benefit of the Northern Ireland consumers.

As you are aware, the Panel was appointed to independently assess SONI's FWP and make recommendations to us. In conducting their review, the Panel has stated their consideration of views from stakeholders and has referenced their participation in meetings whereby they listened to SONI who presented to a wide range of stakeholders. The Panel were also present when the stakeholders were offered the opportunity to question SONI and the Panel were also given the opportunity to question SONI directly in a closed session. In keeping with the published Guidance, the Panel has considered a wide range of evidence for their recommendations, and we welcome the adherence to this process.

UR's Decision

We received the EPF Panel's Evaluation Report in December 2025. The report provided a comprehensive assessment of SONI's FWP for 2025/26, in line with the Guidance². The

¹ Chapter 4 within the final link sets out our decision and context on the EPF. Chapter 2 sets out strategic expectations of how we are looking for SONI to change to benefit consumers : <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/files/uregni/media-files/Final%20determination%20main%20body.docx.pdf>

² <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/files/uregni/documents/2021-11/epf-guidance.pdf>

report provided clear recommendations and set out the Panel's grading of the FWP. As you are aware, this is the fourth year of the EPF where there is provision for a financial incentive for SONI. The UR has taken full account of the Panel's recommendations and has made its decision on grade and financial incentive for the FWP phase. We agree with the Panel's recommendation and support its proposed grade of **4.275** and subsequent financial incentive of £512k³ for the Forward Plan phase⁴. The financial incentive for the year will be adjusted after the end of the year to reflect SONI's performance against its plan. This assessment of the financial incentive for the Forward Work Plan is calculated on the assumption that SONI's performance against its plan will be graded as 3 (meets expectations).

In coming to our decision, we have taken full account of the Panel's grades for each SONI role. We agree with the Panel that SONI's performance under the FWP is deemed to be between "good" and "excellent", in line with our Guidance.

We agree with the Panel's views on SONI's 4 Roles, which we summarise as follows:

- **System Operation and Adequacy:** overall, the plan was rated as good under this role.
- **Independent Expert:** overall, the plan was rated as excellent under this role.
- **System Planning:** overall, the plan was rated as excellent under this role.
- **Commercial Interface:** overall, the plan was rated as baseline under this role.

We share the Panel's views that there have been improvements in SONI's FWP. However, we expect to see further improvements in next year's FWP. This is not a static process, and we need evidence of improvements year-on-year to achieve the same level of incentive as part of this iterative process. We trust that SONI will be responsive to the Panel and our feedback.

Next steps

We will publish our decision letters on the EPF, on our website, accompanied by the EPF Panel's report. We look forward to meeting the Panel later this month at the Performance 2024/25 stakeholder event in our offices.

If you have any questions on the content of this letter, please contact Ciara Brennan (ciara.brennan@uregni.gov.uk).

³ Nominal Year = April 2026 prices

⁴ As per section 7 of the Guidance, the EPF provides for financial incentives in relation to two phases of assessment in each financial year i.e., SONI's Forward Plan and its Performance Plan, ultimately arriving at an overall incentive outcome. A positive incentive amount, across these two phases, will lead to a corresponding increase in SONI's maximum regulation revenue from SSS/TUoS tariffs revenue under the price control framework and a negative incentive amount will lead to a corresponding decrease in SONI's maximum regulation revenue from SSS/TUoS tariffs.

Yours sincerely,



Elaine Cassidy
Director of Price Controls

[Letter sent via email]