



UR Forward Work Programme 2026/2027

UR – Consultation

SSE Response



SSE welcomes the opportunity to respond to the UR's draft Forward Work Programme 20206/2027. Below we detail the areas we believe should be given the most focus in the coming year, noting NI is lagging behind its counterparts in Britain and Ireland in the energy transition.

The midterm review of the Energy Strategy indicates there is still much to deliver in key projects noting it is now half way through the programme to 2030.

Firm Access

The Forward Work Programme should focus on a decision on Firm access within the year. The scoping exercise with SONI should be sufficient to develop options and consult at pace within the first quarter of the year. Working at this timeline would enable detailed analysis of consultation responses and a decision to be reached within the subsequent 9 months.

Interconnector Policy

Developing a robust interconnector policy will require a detailed assessment of the needs case. Given the current market interactions with interconnectors, it would be advisable to ensure that the necessary market changes associated with Clean Energy Package and reintegration with EU (Celtic coming online) before attempting to develop the needs case. SSE therefore suggests this is deprioritised in lieu of accelerating firm access policy as above.

Meter Responsibility for suppliers

Resolving the meter responsibility issue is a critical priority for SSE and is absorbing a significant amount of resource for us and other suppliers. Therefore, it is crucial that this matter is prioritised and resolved by the UR in early 2026 to restore certainty to the market. SSE has detailed a pathway that is minimally disruptive via our recent response to the GSS consultation in January supporting the common services model for metering infrastructure. We encourage UR to further consider this proposal so efforts can instead focus on delivering Smart Metering for NI customers. It is our firm view that, similar response to previous FWPs, that resources are focused on projects that deliver real change and choice for customers.

Smart Meters

We welcome the inclusion of the Department for the Economy's Smart Meter Design Plan in the draft Forward Work Programme, noting the timeline for the publication is currently unknown.

We stress the importance of involving suppliers in expert and oversight groups to ensure effective coordination amongst DNO, suppliers, Regulator and Department for Economy. The governance group model in the Republic of Ireland is noted as a strong example of stakeholder engagement. We look forward to the publication of the Smart Metering High-Level Design. SSE has extensive experience in smart metering programmes and is readily available to provide expertise and supplier insight, along with other suppliers considering our collective experience in other jurisdictions with similar programmes.