

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND AUTHORITY FOR UTILITY REGULATION (THE 'BOARD') HELD ON THURSDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2026 IN MILLENNIUM HOUSE, BELFAST, AND ONLINE, AT 09:00 A.M.**

**Present:**

Rosamund Blomfield-Smith (Chair), John French (Chief Executive), Isolde Goggin, Claire Williams, David de Casseres, Anthony Pygram, Paul McGowan.

**In attendance:**

Kevin Shiels, Peter Russell, Barbara Cantley, Elaine Cassidy, Colin Broomfield, Brian Mulhern, Roisin McLaughlin, John Mills, Barbara Stevenson, Jillian Ferris, Leigh Greer, Sarah Teer, Marie-Therese Campbell, Shauna McAuley, Ciaran Mac Cann, Sean Lyons, Jean-Pierre Miura, Paula McCann, Greg Irwin.

Colin Magee (agenda item 4), Rachel Allister (agenda items 5, 8 and 9), Veronika Gallagher (agenda item 6), Donna Maye/Eimear Kerr (agenda item 7).

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 None.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 None.

2.2 Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Board was updated on the Office for Environmental Protection investigation in closed session.

**3. REQUEST TO ESTABLISH A SMART METER ISSUES GROUP**

3.1 Jillian Ferris introduced this item relating to the proposal to develop a Smart Meter Issues Group.

3.2 The Board noted an update on the smart meter programme. There was also a brief discussion around the composition of the group.

3.3 The Board approved the establishment of a Smart Meter issues group.

**4 THIRD PARTY INTERMEDIARIES IN THE ENERGY MARKET – POSITION PAPER**

4.1 Barbara Cantley introduced this item about the operation of Third Party Intermediaries (TPIs) in the Northern Ireland non-domestic energy retail market. Colin Magee provided further detail, including an overview of responses to the TPIs consultation.

4.2 The Board noted the consultation comments. There was discussion around the scope of the project on TPIs and the coverage of both the retail and wholesale markets. The situation

relating to TPIs in Great Britain was covered. The potential for TPIs developing a representative association was also touched on. Finally, the overall regulatory positioning on TPIs was considered.

- 4.3 Board members also commented briefly on the position paper and identified some general drafting suggestions.
- 4.4 The Board approved the implementation of measures as presented and detailed within the appended position paper.

## **5 DRAFT OPENING BUDGET 2026/2027**

- 5.1 Paula McCann introduced this item which set out UR's draft opening budget for 2026/2027. Rachel Allister provided an overview of the budget.
- 5.2 Claire Williams, as Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), provided an overview of ARC's consideration of the draft budget paper at its meeting on the previous day.
- 5.3 The Board discussed the draft budget and noted the likely outturn position for 2025/2026. The focus of the Board's discussion was around assumptions on salary expenditure in the context of recruitment plans for 2026/2027. There was also discussion on the proposed professional and consultancy expenditure.
- 5.4 Following an extended discussion, the Board approved the draft opening budget for 2026/2027 subject to a 1% reduction in the vacancy rate element of salary expenditure.

## **6. BIOMETHANE UPDATE**

- 6.1 Veronika Gallagher introduced a presentation to update the Board on biomethane, covering the legal and the policy context and the regulatory position and challenges.
- 6.2 In discussion, Board members availed of the opportunity to clarify issues and questions. The discussion focused on the potential to increase the amount of biomethane in the network, costs associated with biomethane expansion, roles and responsibilities in relation to this expansion and any associated risks and impacts.
- 6.3 In noting the update, the Board asked that it be apprised of any further significant developments in relation to biomethane.

## **7. LIRLC REGULATED REVENUE REGIME OPERATING FRAMEWORK**

- 7.1 Marie-Therese Campbell introduced this item which set out the proposed approach to a regulated operating revenue regime for the proposed LirIC interconnector between Northern Ireland and Scotland. Donna Maye and Eimear Kerr provided further briefing to the Board. Aspects of the proposed operating revenue regime were clarified by Board members.

- 7.2 The Board discussed the policy context relating to interconnector development. Engagement between UR and key stakeholders was also considered.
- 7.3 The positioning of UR in enabling the development of the LirIC interconnector was also explored. While noting the process and timing risks, the Board endorsed the general direction that would support the delivery of the LirIC interconnector.
- 7.4 The importance of producing a robust assessment which would determine the appropriate regulated regime operating revenue was emphasised by the Board. In clarifying next steps, the need for a critical path for delivering the interconnector was also emphasised.
- 7.5 Subject to consideration of the Board’s comments, the Board endorsed the proposed approach to progress the assessment of the cost data in September 2026, in parallel with work on the needs case for a regulated revenue support mechanism for interconnection.

## **8. FINANCE REPORT SUMMARY**

- 8.1 Rachel Allister provided an update on the financial outturn to 31 January 2026, noting key variances. There was a discussion on the current budgetary position and factors contributing to this.
- 8.2 The Board approved the finance report summary.

## **9. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2025/2026**

- 9.1 Rachel Allister updated the Board on the corporate risk register.
- 9.2 Board members commented on individual risk assessments, steps being taken to manage these risks and also discussed potential emerging risks.
- 9.3 The Board approved the corporate risk register subject to consideration of comments made by Board members.

## **10. MINUTES**

- 10.1 The minutes of the Board meeting on 22 January 2025 were approved for publication, subject to one amendment.
- 10.2 The Board also considered a note of the strategy day on 21 January and endorsed the high level conclusions.

## **11. ACTION POINTS**

- 11.1 The action points were reviewed by the Board.

## **12. OFFICE REPORT**

- 12.1 John French introduced the Office report. He noted the OEP investigation, ongoing litigation, tariff reviews, media coverage of new measures to protect non-domestic electricity and gas consumers and UR's new LinkedIn newsletter.
- 12.2 Claire Williams provided an overview of the ARC's most recent meeting and focused on the committee's discussion on finance and budgetary items, the risk register, internal audit reports and the freedom of information update.
- 12.3 Isolde Goggin, as Chair of the Remuneration Committee (Remcom) provided an overview of business at that committee's most recent meeting. She drew the Board's attention to the UR People update, mental health first aider training, and diversity and inclusion. She also noted Remcom's discussion on recruitment plans. A Board member query about office accommodation and new staff was addressed.
- 12.4 The Board noted the management update in the Office report.

## **13. UPDATES**

- 13.1 Updates were provided on the following:

a) Single Electricity Market

Colin Broomfield briefed the Board on the T-4 capacity auction, Market Monitoring Unit work on the bidding code of practice and recent wholesale prices trends. The Board noted the update.

b) Security of Supply update

Leigh Greer briefed the Board on the latest situation regarding security of supply, noting the work on a review of generator financial resilience, the generator run hours limit issue and progress in relation to a related litigation issue. The Board noted the update.

c) Litigation

Shauna McAuley provided an update on litigation issues and ongoing developments. The Board noted the update.

d) Compliance and Enforcement

The Board noted the Compliance and Enforcement update and also noted recent UR enforcement panel training.

## **14. CORRESPONDENCE**

- 14.1 The Board briefly discussed some items of correspondence. One of the items of correspondence had been considered as part of earlier discussions on the agenda. The Board considered a letter from a regulated entity and the implications flowing from this. The Board asked that a 'teach-in' be provided to the Board providing background and context for Board members on issues relating to the regulated entity.

**15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

15.1 None.

15.2 There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 13.05.