

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND AUTHORITY FOR UTILITY REGULATION (THE 'BOARD') HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2026 IN MILLENNIUM HOUSE, BELFAST, AND ONLINE, AT 14.00 P.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, Tristan Huegelschaefer, Greg Irwin.

Jody O'Boyle/ Emma Todd (agenda item 3), Naomi Lusty/ Evan Taylor (agenda item 4). Debbie Quinn (agenda item 5), Graham Smith (agenda item 7), Rachel Allister (agenda items 8 and 9).

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 None.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 None.

**3. UPDATE ON OFFSHORE WIND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

3.1 Emma Todd introduced this information item which provided the Board with an update on offshore wind development in Northern Ireland.

3.2 Board members clarified jurisdictional responsibilities for offshore wind development and legislative provisions and constraints.

3.3 There was also a discussion around the drivers for offshore wind development. UR's role relating to offshore wind development was also discussed. The costs implications and timeframes for offshore wind development, and the challenges associated with designing an appropriate regulatory framework, were also considered.

3.4 The Board also discussed ongoing engagement with the Department for the Economy (DfE).

3.5 The Board noted the update.

**4 ALL ISLAND RESOURCE ADEQUACY ASSESSMENT 2026-35**

4.1 Leigh Greer introduced this item which was a high-level overview of the All-Island Resource Adequacy Assessment (AIRAA) 2026-2035, with a focus on those areas relevant to Northern Ireland. Naomi Lusty outlined key elements of the AIRAA.

- 4.2 The Board welcomed the clarity of the presentation on the AIRAA and the importance of the analysis.
- 4.3 Board members discussed the assumptions in the analysis, focusing on the continuing absence of the second north-south electricity interconnector. Board members emphasised their disappointment that the interconnector had not yet been delivered. The impact of not having the interconnector, and the consequent benefits that have not been realised, was discussed. There was also a discussion on annual run hour limit restrictions on some generators and the impact of this on security of supply.
- 4.4 The Board noted the high-level overview of AIRAA 2026-2035.

## **5 FWP Q3 2025/2026 PROGRESS**

- 5.1 Debbie Quinn introduced this item which provided an update on progress against Forward Work Programme (FWP) projects at the end of quarter three.
- 5.2 Board members noted those projects that were complete or on-track. Further information was provided on the steps being taken to progress those projects that were currently at risk of not being achieved.
- 5.3 The Board noted the update.

## **6 SONI TRACK 2 GOVERNANCE COST REQUEST**

- 6.1 Elaine Cassidy introduced this item relating to certain governance cost requests (called Track 2 funding) for SONI.
- 6.2 The Board discussed the timing of the request submission by SONI, the information that has been received and additional stakeholder correspondence provided.
- 6.3 There was a wider discussion on the implementation of the SONI governance review. Board members considered the level of regulatory oversight and the nature of cost submissions linked to the requirement for the company to implement managerial and resource separation. Board members also discussed these cost submissions in the context of the forthcoming regulatory price control review.
- 6.4 Overall, the Board endorsed the request for Track 2a funding as presented and agreed that additional cost allowances under Track 2b funding should be considered as part of the forthcoming regulatory price control review.

## **7. FUTURE CONSUMERS: BENCHMARKING REVIEW OF APPROACHES TO THE JUST TRANSITION**

- 7.1 Barbara Cantley provided context and background for this item which presented an overview of the findings of the project to benchmark approaches to a Just Transition to Net Zero. Graham Smith provided further briefing to the Board on the findings.

- 7.2 The Board noted the discussion around the definition of the Just Transition. Board members welcomed the findings of the benchmarking report as a valuable contribution to the discussion on the Just Transition.
- 7.3 Board members discussed the following items: the Just Transition principles and challenges, the role of UR, evidence-based decision making by UR and the Just Transition, the overall focus of the project (such as on the domestic consumer), and the impact of the Just Transition on different stakeholders.
- 7.4 The Board endorsed the establishment of an internal cross-directorate group to progress the development of a principles-led approach and associated internal preparatory work.

## **8. FINANCE REPORT SUMMARY**

- 8.1 Rachel Allister provided an update on the financial outturn to 31 December 2025, 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 updates to the corporate risk register. The Board welcomed the changes to the register following the Board's risk workshop in November.
- 9.2 Board members availed of the opportunity to comment on individual risk assessments, steps being taken to manage these risks and also considered potential emerging risks.
- 9.3 The Board was also provided with the Single Electricity Market (SEM) Committee's strategic risk register and commented on risks identified in the register.
- 9.4 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 11 December 2025 were approved for publication.

## **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 ongoing enforcement action and the consultation on Guaranteed Standards of Service. He also noted a wide range of stakeholder engagement activity, such as a recent successful drop-in session held at Parliament Buildings and a well-attended workshop on UR's draft Forward Work Programme.

- 12.2 Barbara Cantley briefed the Board, and addressed Board member questions, on the Office of Environmental Protection's investigation. She noted that the Board would receive a paper on this at the next scheduled Board meeting.
- 12.3 The Board was also briefed on research commissioned by DfE on the SEM and developments relating to the PC28 price control.
- 12.4 The Chair updated the Board on the competition to appoint new Board Members and the delay to the launch.
- 12.5 The Board approved proposed changes to the terms of reference of the Audit and Risk Committee as presented.
- 12.6 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 provided an overview of the SEM Committee's recent meeting and the issues raised. Jean-Pierre Miura also provided the latest update on market prices. The Board noted the update.

b) Security of Supply update

Leigh Greer briefed the Board on the latest situation regarding security of supply. The Board noted the update.

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c) Litigation

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

d) Compliance and Enforcement

The Board noted the Compliance and Enforcement update.

13.2 The Board noted the updates.

### **14. CORRESPONDENCE**

14.1 The Board briefly discussed some items of correspondence.

### **15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

15.1 Tristan Huegelschaefer provided feedback on his attendance at the Board meeting.

15.2 The Board approved an extension to the deadline for the SPC27 price control consultation to the end of January.

15.3 There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 17.05.