

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND AUTHORITY FOR UTILITY REGULATION (THE 'BOARD') HELD ON THURSDAY, 16 APRIL 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, Sarah Teer, Marie-Therese Campbell, Shauna McAuley, Jean-Pierre Miura, Sinead Dynan, Ciaran Mac Cann, Sean Lyons, Paula McCann, Chris Goodman, Greg Irwin.

Mabel Stevenson (agenda item 3), Debbie Quinn (agenda item 4), Emma Todd/ Eimear Kerr/Donna Maye (agenda item 5), Jaid Mullani (agenda item 7), Rachel Allister (agenda item 8 and 9).

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 None.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 None.

**3. REVIEW OF ELECTRICITY GSS AND OSP**

- 3.1 Barbara Cantley introduced this item which set out a proposed decision regarding the introduction of a Guaranteed Standard of Service (GSS) standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions and an update on plans to amend primary legislation on metering responsibilities. Mabel Stevenson briefed the Board on the decisions relating to GSS and the Overall Standards of Performance (OSP)
- 3.2 The Board noted and considered the feedback to a consultation on a supply restoration GSS. The options for introducing a supply restoration GSS in severe weather conditions were discussed. The Board also considered the potential for financial provision being made and the impact on consumer bills, the impact on NIE Networks of unpredictable severe weather GSS payments without any threshold and the benefits of investment in network resilience versus the funding of severe weather payments.
- 3.3 The timing of plans to amend primary legislation on metering responsibilities was clarified. The Board discussed the implications of this for decisions relating to metering GSS and OSP.
- 3.4 There was also a discussion on the handling publication of decisions on metering GSS and OSP in the context of proposed amendments to the legislation being made and the overall timelines for publication. This included consideration of the approach to engaging with the

Department for the Economy (DfE) and any legal risks arising from the publication in the context of legislative amendments.

- 3.5 The Board approved decisions on GSS and OSP (excluding metering) and the approach to publication of final decisions for all GSS and OSP. It was agreed that a further update would be provided at the June Board meeting

#### **4. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME OUTCOME QUARTER 4 2025/26**

- 4.1 Debbie Quinn introduced this paper which updated the Board on the 2025/26 Forward Work Programme (FWP) projects outcome at the end of quarter 4.
- 4.2 The Board explored the reasons for any delays to projects. Opportunities to amend the drafting of progress reports, on individual projects to improve clarity and reduce text length, were identified by Board members.
- 4.3 The Board approved the FWP RAG status and project outcome, subject to consideration of Board member comments.

#### **5. FUTURE INTERCONNECTION REGULATORY FRAMEWORK – APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT OF A REGULATED OPERATING REVENUE REGIME**

- 5.1 Marie-Therese Campbell introduced this discussion item about the future interconnection regulatory framework and the approach to the assessment of a regulated operating revenue regime for the proposed LirIC interconnector between Northern Ireland and Scotland. Emma Todd provided further detail for the Board.
- 5.2 The Board reviewed the progress on the LiRIC interconnector to date, and the approach taken by the Utility Regulator (UR), particularly in relation to the Board's decisions on initial licensing arrangements for the interconnector.
- 5.3 There was a broader discussion around the impact of interconnectors. The focus of this discussion was on the development of interconnector policy, existing policy analysis, and UR's engagement with DfE.
- 5.4 The discussion also focused on the question of the regulated operating regime for the LiRIC interconnector. Board members explored the possible financing models for the LiRIC interconnector and discussed regulated operating regimes for interconnectors in other jurisdictions. The question of State Aid implications was also touched on.
- 5.5 The Board was briefed on next steps and endorsed further regulatory work on the LirIC interconnector. The Board also emphasised the importance of ongoing engagement with DfE in relation to policy considerations relating to interconnectors. It was noted that a paper on financing models for future interconnection and a summary of responses would be provided to the Board as soon as possible.

## **6. 2027-2032 SONI PRICE CONTROL UPDATE**

- 6.1 Elaine Cassidy introduced this overview of the SRP27 SONI Business Plan (BP) submission for the five-year period from October 2027 to September 2032.
- 6.2 There was an initial discussion around aspects of the business plan submission including: Opex allowances, financeability issues, uncertainty mechanism provisions, the parent company guarantee, the stakeholder challenge group and key performance indicators.
- 6.3 The Board also discussed issues arising from the business plan submission and the engagement with SONI on the price control. It was agreed that a high-level meeting between the UR Chair and Chief Executive, and their SONI counterparts, should be organised as soon as possible to discuss the progress of the price control review.

## **7. RENEWABLE METHODOLOGY IN DEVELOPMENT**

- 7.1 Brian Mulhern introduced this discussion item which provided a presentation outlining an analysis of renewables costs. Jaid Mullani presented the analysis.
- 7.2 Board members availed the opportunity to clarify aspects of the presentation, including the analysis period and the assumptions underpinning the assessment, and explored key issues. There was a discussion around renewables investment and the consequences for electricity demand and the impact of renewables on consumer prices.
- 7.3 The Board welcomed the analysis undertaken to date, noting that further analysis would be undertaken, and noted the key findings.

## **8. FINANCE REPORT SUMMARY**

- 8.1 Rachel Allister provided a verbal update on the financial outturn to 31 March 2026, noting key headlines.
- 8.2 The Board approved the finance report summary.

## **9. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER – 31 MARCH 2026**

- 9.1 Rachel Allister provided an overview of the corporate risk register at the end of March 2026.
- 9.2 The Board discussed the assessment of risks and the nature of controls and actions in place. There was a discussion around risks relating to the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, and biomethane. An emerging risk related to heat was also mentioned.
- 9.3 The Board approved the corporate risk register at the end of March 2026.

## **10. MINUTES**

- 10.1 The minutes of the Board meeting on 19 March 2026 were approved for publication subject to an amendment.

## **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 ongoing crisis in the Middle East and the potential impact on tariffs, an overview of media coverage and a recent briefing for the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee.

12.2 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 results and outcomes, the SEMC strategy, and ongoing litigation. The Board noted the update.

b) Security of Supply update

Colin Broomfield provided an overview of a small number of planned generator outages, indicated that there were no concerns regarding gas security of supply and noted the recent staff visit to the SONI control centre. The Board noted the update.

c) Litigation

Shauna McAuley provided an update on litigation issues and ongoing developments focusing on EP-related matters and a separate item of litigation before the European Court. The Board noted the update.

d) Compliance and Enforcement

Barbara Stevenson provided a Compliance and Enforcement update, and briefed the Board on recent developments. The Board noted the update.

e) NI Water issues group

Elaine Cassidy provided an overview of the issues considered at the recent meeting of the water issues group. The Board noted the update.

f) Smart meters group

Brian Mulhern briefed the Board on the recent meeting of the smart meters group. The Board noted the update.

## **14. CORRESPONDENCE**

14.1 None

## **15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

15.1 The Chair noted that this was the last Board meeting for David de Casseres and Claire Williams and thanked them for their commitment and contribution as Board members and wished them well for the future.

- 15.2 On the invitation of the Chair, Chris Goodman provided his feedback as an attendee for the full Board meeting.
- 15.3 There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 13.00, to allow the Board to participate in a Board Effectiveness workshop.