

**UTILITY
REGULATOR**

**CONTESTABILITY
WORKING GROUP
(TRANSMISSION)**

Expression of Participation

11 August 2026

About the Utility Regulator

The Utility Regulator is the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland's electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries, to promote the short and long-term interests of consumers.

We are not a policy-making department of government, but we make sure that the energy and water utility industries in Northern Ireland are regulated and developed within ministerial policy as set out in our statutory duties.

We are governed by a Board of Directors and are accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through financial and annual reporting obligations.

We are based at Millennium House in the centre of Belfast. The Chief Executive and two Executive Directors lead teams in each of the main functional areas in the organisation: CEO Office; Price Controls; Networks and Energy Futures; and Markets and Consumer Protection and Enforcement. The staff team includes economists, engineers, accountants, utility specialists, legal advisors and administration professionals.

OUR MISSION

To protect the short and long-term interests of consumers of electricity, gas and water.

OUR VISION

To ensure value and sustainability in energy and water.

OUR VALUES

ACCOUNTABLE:

We take ownership of our actions.

TRANSPARENT:

Ensuring trust through openness and honesty.

COLLABORATIVE:

Connecting and working with others for a shared purpose.

DILIGENT:

Working with care and rigour.

RESPECTFUL:

Treating everyone with dignity and fairness.

1. Contestability Expression of Participation

Background

- 1.1 Contestability in electricity connections was first identified by the Utility Regulator (UR) in its 2014-15 Forward Work Programme as a mechanism to introduce competition into the connections market, increase customer choice and improve the efficiency of connection delivery.
- 1.2 Following the publication of UR's Contestability in Connections Decision Paper in July 2015, UR, SONI and NIE Networks developed a framework for contestable electricity connections in Northern Ireland (NI). While the original March 2016 Guidelines envisaged contestability for both distribution and transmission connections, subsequent implementation focused on distribution connections, with transmission works remaining non-contestable. This approach was reflected in the publication of the NIE Networks Distribution Contestability Guidelines and remained the basis for the operation of contestability in NI. More recently, attention has turned to extending contestability to transmission connections, supported by renewed collaboration between the UR, SONI, NIE Networks and industry stakeholders through the Contestability Working Group¹ (CWG).
- 1.3 The CWG will provide a forum for industry participants and stakeholders to discuss the practical arrangements required to facilitate transmission contestability, including governance, processes, technical requirements and implementation issues. The group is focused on implementation and delivery rather than revisiting the policy decision to introduce contestability.

Timeline of events

Date	Description
July 2015	UR Contestability in Connections Decision Paper ²
October 2015	Consultation on implementation guidelines prepared by SONI and NIE Networks ³

¹ <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/contestability-working-group>

² https://www.uregni.gov.uk/files/uregni/media-files/Contestability_in_Connections_-_final_decision_paper_-_July_2015.pdf

³ <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-implementation-contestability-guidelines>

Date	Description
March and May 2016	Publication of SONI/NIE Networks Contestability Guidelines (Version 1 ⁴ and 2 ⁵)
July 2021	UR publishes Expanding the Scope of Contestability in Northern Ireland – Next Steps ⁶
July 2026	Transmission Contestability Working Group re-established to support practical implementation of transmission contestability

Invitation

- 1.4 The Utility Regulator invites expressions of participation from organisations and individuals with relevant experience or expertise who wish to contribute to the CWG.
- 1.5 Expressions of participation are welcomed from:
- ◆ Existing and prospective transmission customers;
 - ◆ Independent Connection Providers (ICPs);
 - ◆ Generation, storage and demand project developers;
 - ◆ Industry representative bodies;
 - ◆ Technical, engineering and legal specialists; and
 - ◆ Other stakeholders with an interest in transmission connections

Scope of the Working Group

- 1.6 Topics for discussion may include:
- ◆ Governance and implementation arrangements;
 - ◆ Network Entrance Requirements (NERs);
 - ◆ Technical standards and documentation;

⁴ https://www.uregni.gov.uk/files/uregni/media-files/Contestability_Guidelines_-_2016-03-14.pdf

⁵ <https://cms.soni.ltd.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/Contestability-Guidelines-Version-2-2016-05-30.pdf>

⁶ <https://niopa.qub.ac.uk/bitstreams/b9d5f2ef-50a3-4aff-b95b-9480b79167d6/download>

- ◆ Roles and responsibilities of participants;
- ◆ Risk and liability arrangements;
- ◆ Connection and adoption processes;
- ◆ Industry guidance and readiness requirements; and
- ◆ Regulatory and licence framework considerations.

The scope may evolve as implementation progresses.

Membership Expectations

1.7 Members will be expected to:

- ◆ Attend and participate in meetings;
- ◆ Share expertise and practical experience;
- ◆ Engage constructively with stakeholders; and
- ◆ Provide feedback on implementation proposals and supporting documentation.

How to Apply

1.8 Please Provide

- ◆ Organisation name;
- ◆ Contact details;
- ◆ Proposed representative(s); and
- ◆ A short statement (maximum 500 words) outlining your interest, relevant expertise or experience and the contribution you believe you can make to the CWG.

1.9 The Utility Regulator will review all submissions and seek to ensure an appropriate balance of stakeholder representation, expertise and experience within the CWG. In assessing applications, UR will take into account factors including relevant knowledge, expertise and experience, practical involvement in transmission connection projects or related industry activities, and the contribution an applicant is likely to make to Working Group discussions. To maintain an effective and manageable Working Group that supports productive engagement, UR intends to appoint only a limited number of additional members and may therefore be unable to accommodate all applicants. Following the review process,

successful applicants will be formally invited to become members of the Group. Expressions of participation should be submitted to:

Kenny.mcpartland@uregni.gov.uk by **5pm on 14 September 2026**.